

Alpine Garden Club
of
British Columbia



Vol 55 No 4

Bulletin

Autumn 2012

CLUB BUSINESS

David Sellars

A New Website for the Alpine Garden Club

The Alpine Garden Club of BC was one of the first garden clubs to develop a website. This was possible because of the expertise and dedication of long-time member Chris Klapwijk. Chris not only developed the website but also incorporated a way to manage memberships and send emails out to members. But his finest achievement was to initiate the on-line seed exchange. This became an essential service for many of our members, particularly those overseas who have come to depend on the on-line seed exchange for ordering seeds with ease. Chris developed a number of innovative features for the seed exchange such as the ability to access a Google search of a species with one click on the seed name. Subsequently Chris developed a similar on-line seed exchange system for the North American Rock Garden Society.

The complexity of the website depended on the expertise of Chris to maintain it for the benefit of members and when Chris decided to resign earlier this year, not unreasonably after more than 10 years of dedicated service to the club, the Executive was faced with a quandary. To maintain the existing site would have required us to identify another member with the same level of website programming expertise as Chris, quite an impossible task. The solution was to access funds from the Willie Dickenson Bequest and contract with a specialist company to develop a new website.

Fortunately there are new software tools available that make website management today much easier. The new site includes a Content Management System that allows users with little knowledge of web programming to create and manage the website material including editing and adding pages. This means that it will be much easier in the future for the club to find a webmaster who has the ability to manage the site.

The new website includes a seed exchange system that builds on the many innovations that Chris developed. We will still have the ability to access Google searches with one click and will be able to review our selections before sending in our requests.

Some pages on the website will be set as “members-only” so that only members who are logged-in with their email address can see them. Those pages would have content including the details of open gardens and special programs such as

tours that are only for members. This feature is particularly important for communication to members when there are changes to the program.

For those who have not yet registered their email address with the club, I encourage you to do so. There are many benefits of having your email on our system including:

- receiving timely reminders of meetings and other events
- obtaining notifications of meeting changes
- managing your contact details on the website using a secure password
- renewing your membership on-line using PayPal
- making on-line seed requests through the Seed Exchange
- access to information updates on open gardens and other members-only programs
- receiving email copies of the Bulletin if you so choose.

If you want to take advantage of these website member benefits please send your email address to the Membership Secretary, Ian Gillam at membership@agc-bc.ca and visit the site www.agc-bc.ca

And whenever you use the website, remember the debt of gratitude we owe as a club to Chris Klapwijk, webmaster extraordinaire.

Membership Notes

Ian Gillam

The close of the year will bring the time to renew your subscription. We hope you'll be with us again for 2013 so as not to miss any information on our new website. Subscriptions remain at \$30 for the year.

Our new website offers simple means to subscribe through payment by PayPal. (If you do not have a PayPal account you may still use the service as a guest by charging to your credit card. We cannot otherwise accept credit card payments.)

Please note that our computer recognizes you only by your e-mail address. To log in you'll also need a temporary password which you can obtain from the Membership Secretary. You'll be prompted to change it to something more secure. (As you may likely not use again for another year, please choose something memorable, perhaps write it down or better, keep a note of clues to your chosen password.)

Logging in gives you access to your membership file and allows you to edit it for changes in address etc. as well as renewing your subscription.

If any of this presents problems please contact the Membership Secretary for resolution.

Bulletin Editor

Starting this new year, in January the Alpine Garden Club will need a new editor for its Bulletin. In our days of instant communication, there is no need for the editor to be a BC resident. If you are a club member anywhere and have an interest in editing the Bulletin, contact David Sellars at sellars@shaw.ca.

PROGRAMS

David Sellars

AGC-BC Program

The program for the winter and early Spring 2013 includes a variety of presentations ranging from the ecology of alpine zones to a tour of gardens in Scotland. For more information on the speakers visit our website:

<http://www.agc-bc.ca/events>

SPECIAL MEETING. Wednesday, November 7, 2012.

Harvey Wrightman: Clay-Crevise Constructions - New Method for New Plants

A photo presentation of the clay-crevice method, a thin-walled lamination method that works well for moisture sensitive plants. It is also useful for creating vertical constructions, which can make for very dramatic gardens and troughs.

Harvey and Irene Wrightman established Wrightman Alpines in 1984 specifically to grow and to provide dwarf plant material that is appropriate for alpine gardens. Harvey continued working as a stone mason until 2003 when he decided to "stay home", gladly turning over his client list to son Dan and daughter Maria - more time now for plants. It has to be fun.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Wednesday, November 14.

Chris Czajkowski: Ginty's Ghost

Chris will be introducing her 10th book: Ginty's Ghost. Ginty Paul was an eccentric spinster who used to live on the derelict homestead Chris now inhabits.

The book is partly about her efforts to build a home - through fire and flood - and partly about Ginty herself; her story is told through letters she wrote and comments from people who knew her. The talk will include photographs of the local alpine plants.

Chris Czajkowski grew up in England, travelled the world with a backpack for a decade, and arrived in Canada in 1979. Three years later she was building her first off-road cabin in the wilderness, about 150 km inland from Bella Coola. In 1988 she moved to a higher location on a fly-in lake where she built three more cabins and created the Nuk Tessli Alpine Experience, an ecotourism business catering to hikers and naturalists. She has written ten books about her nearly thirty years of wilderness living.

ANNUAL POTLUCK AND SPECIAL PLANT AUCTION.
Wednesday, December 12, 2012.

Bring in your treasures (plants for the auction and tasty dishes (light snacks and finger food)) for this traditional annual event. All proceeds from the auction go to the CKNW Orphans' Fund.

Wednesday, January 9, 2013. Andy MacKinnon:
Adaptations to Life in the Alpine

Andy MacKinnon is a co-author of a number of popular field guides to plants in our area (Lone Pine Publishing) and is a research ecologist with the BC Forest Service, Coast Region. Andy has worked, on-and-off for the BC government since 1982, in research, ecosystem classification and land use planning in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. He's also an adjunct professor in Resource and Environmental Management at Simon Fraser University, and teaches field courses for UVic and UBC in Bamfield and Haida Gwaii. Andy is co-author of five field guides to plants of western North America, and of a new field guide to alpine plants due out (with any luck) by the end of 2012.

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. She enjoys learning about new plants and sharing her photographs and experiences with people.

**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 -- how we focus on, and try to make our own, the legions of small plants that we see in the mountains, admire in garden visits, or perhaps that we have only glimpsed in slide shows, or found in seed lists and dusty old books. We build bogs in deserts, deserts in rain forests, and generally move mountains into our back yards, and yet many of us seem to take pride in "mausoleums" of old labels ("I did bloom it, once!"). Surely this is yet another example of a human tendency to follow hope over experience. Geoff's poem implies that we do all this because we think our errors are correctable, that we can recognize why our plant dies, and that we will learn to do better the next time. In that spirit, I show my current garden projects -- a tufa cliff and alpine house, where alpines will at last prosper and bloom.

Dr. Russell has been a NARGS member since 1985 and writes and lectures on many aspects of rock gardening. Among his publications are chapters in *Bulbs of North America*, *Rock Garden Design and Construction*, and several articles in *Rock Garden Quarterly*. He has previously given presentations to the Alpine Garden Club of BC most notably on the alpine flora of the French Alps.

**Wednesday, April 10, 2012. 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. At the meeting, they'll be showing us pictures of those gardens.

Jan and Dave Dobak have been looking at plants and gardening longer than they can remember. They have travelled and photographed in North America, South Africa, Britain and Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and Argentina. Avid joiners, they are members of North American Rock Garden Society, Alpine Garden Society, Scottish Rock Garden Club, Native Plant Society of Oregon, Washington Native Plant Society, Hardy Plant Society of Oregon, Botanical Society of South Africa, and Western Australia Native Orchid Society and Conservation Group. Their in-basket is always full. They garden on a small city lot in Portland, Oregon.

ARTICLES

A Neglected Sweetheart

Linda Verbeek

Viola cornuta is a mountain wildflower native to the Pyrenees, growing in sub-alpine or alpine meadows. It makes a tidy clump of small, round, toothed leaves,



Viola cornuta, lilac form

and relatively large flowers, about 3 cm across. The lower petal is wedge-shaped, the others fairly narrow, which gives the whole flower a very elegant, airy look, unlike most violets. The flowers are produced abundantly all summer, and are faintly but sweetly scented. Its only drawback is that it self-seeds, but it isn't that hard to keep under control. And you'd have some plants to give away.

There are a number of selected forms of *V. cornuta* in culture, including 'Bowles' Black', but the wild forms are just as pretty. I have two of them, one is a very clear lilac blue, and the other is a glistening white. In contrast to some other albino forms, *V. cornuta alba* is at least as vigorous as the wild type. In full sun it stays compact; if you plant it under a shrub it will scramble up through the branches and pop out its little butterfly flowers here and there. That is in fact the way I saw the white form for the first time, in a nursery demonstration garden, and the flowers must have been close to a metre up into the shrub. The effect was magical, and I wanted it right then and there, although it took me a while to actually get it. In my garden it is more in the open, and makes a white accent right through the summer. Violets are notoriously hard to germinate, unless the seed is very fresh, but I grew both forms of *V. cornuta* from seed from our exchange, and that was long before I started trying gibberellic acid treatment, so it must be less finicky than most.



Viola cornuta, white form

This is a very easy-going, undemanding and very satisfying little plant, and I am puzzled why it is so rare in gardens.

***Albuca shawii* and Other Interesting South African Bulbs** **Margaret Charlton**

On a trip to southern Africa a few years ago we traveled with a small group to the Drakensberg Mountains in the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa. These mountains are a wonderland of plants but sadly many are neither hardy nor adapted to rainy west coast British Columbia. However a surprising number are tough and durable.

In the Royal Natal National Park below Mont-aux-Sources on open grassy slopes a bubbling stream cascades down the mountain. Along the steep edges grow



Albuca shawii. Photograph by Charles Sale

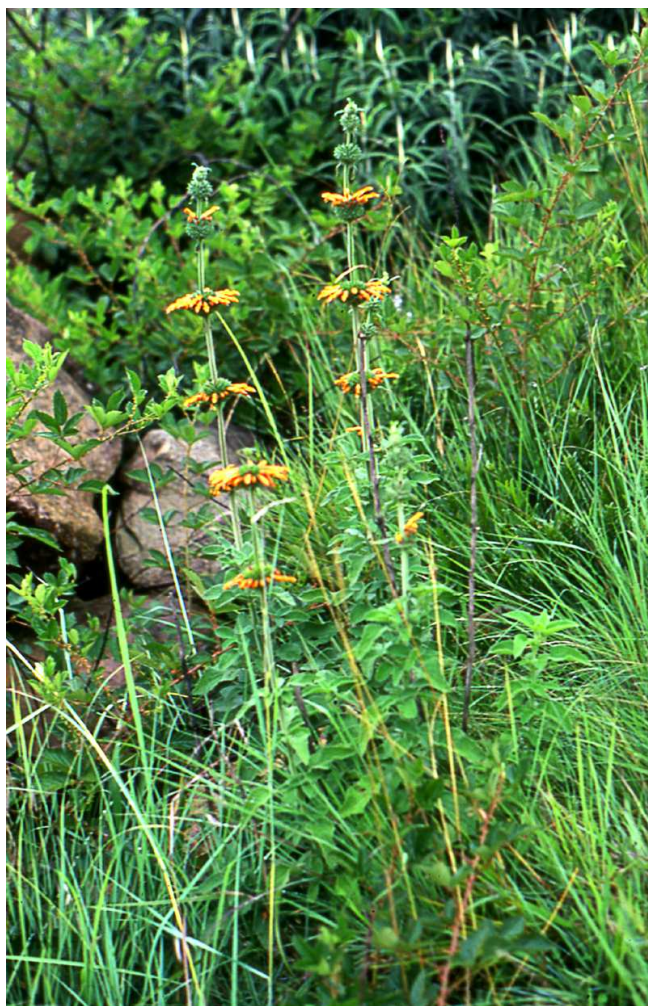
Eucomis species, *Scilla natalensis*, and *Phygelius capensis* as well as ***Albuca shawii***. I was not acquainted with this bulbous plant in the Hyacinthaceae family. It has a nodding scented yellow bell on a 12" tall stem. As the flower matures the stem can reach twice this. The foliage is allium-like. In the northern hemisphere this quite delightful plant blooms in July and August for at least a month. I spotted this on a seed list and immediately ordered it. It grew without any trouble and made a large patch on a well-drained sunny slope in our garden. Better yet, it has come through all the latest hard winters. This South African jewel also takes all the 2 to 3 metres of rain we receive each year in our area of Vancouver's north shore mountains. This is a delightful summer blooming bulb for the rock garden. Be sure to look for this charmer on seed lists.

Littonia modesta is a climber that uses leaf tendrils to reach to 2 to 3 metres. The flowers are a golden yellow and bell shaped with six pointed petals. It too flowers in summer. In late fall the dying stems should be cut back and this bulbous vine moved to a cool frost free place

and kept semi-dry for the winter. Plants should be repotted every three years. Gradually increase the water in spring to start new growth which will be slow until there is warm weather. This very attractive plant grows very quickly through the summer *L. modesta* is found up to 1450m from the East Cape to Limpopo Province.

Gladiolus flanaganii was greatly admired at a recent pot show. In the wild the large intense red flowers can't be missed. It is sometimes called the suicide gladiolus because of the difficulty photographing it clinging to the basalt cliffs at 2300 to 3300m. It is pollinated by malachite sunbirds - a much larger bird than our hummingbird. I was recently given a bulb but to my great sorrow it failed over winter in our frame.

Moraea spathulata has been grown successfully in our area for many years. It is the only dependably hardy moraea for us. It produces large yellow iris-like



Leonotis leonurus. Photograph by Charles Sale



Leonotis leonurus. Photograph by Charles Sale

flowers in spring. The leaves are very long and rather untidy. Weavers take note that traditionally these were used to make rope. We grow *M. spathulata* in a very dry area in full sun.

Shrubby ***Leonotis leonurus*** is a plant I longed to have after seeing it grow in the Drakensberg Mountains grasslands from the coastal plain to 2000m. It has bright orange clusters of velvety swirls of flowers on 2 to 3m tall stout stems. It blooms in summer through fall and will take a light frost. I grow it under a roof

shelter, bringing it in only when there is a risk of hard frost. It is much admired. Cuttings root easily. *L. leonurus* was traditionally used to treat snake bite.

A note on *Ipomopsis aggregata* **David Sellars**

An unusual flower in the October garden this year was *Ipomopsis aggregata* or Scarlet Gilia. The plant came from seed we collected on Mount Kobau in 2011



Ipomopsis aggregata. Flowering in October in the garden



Ipomopsis aggregata: foliage



Ipomopsis aggregata. In habitat in the Wenatchee Mountains

which we planted in the Fall and germination was excellent in early Spring of this year. The plants have formed attractive rosettes in the garden and one plant produced a long flower spike. With our recent extended sunshine it decided to start flowering in October. If the other *Ipomopsis aggregata* plants survive the winter they are likely to flower early next spring.

Ipomopsis aggregata is normally monocarpic but sets lots of seed so it can easily be started again. According to information on the web, the plant is not always monocarpic in the garden and multiple flower spikes in subsequent years are possible so we won't give up on the plant too quickly!

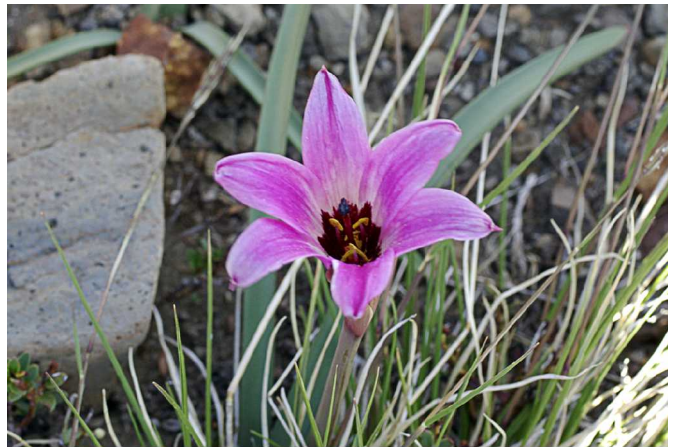
Ipomopsis aggregata occurs in dryland areas in much of the western United States and in the interior of BC. It is very drought tolerant and needs very good drainage in the garden. We grow it in Sechelt Sand with a small percentage of humus.

Argentinean Andes - Alan Tracey

The following are photographs taken in January 2012 of a few plants found in the region of the Andes mountains between Mendoza and Chos Malal.



Cistanthe species? Near Penitentes



Rhodophiala andicola. Near Las Leñas



Araucaria araucana near Chos Malal