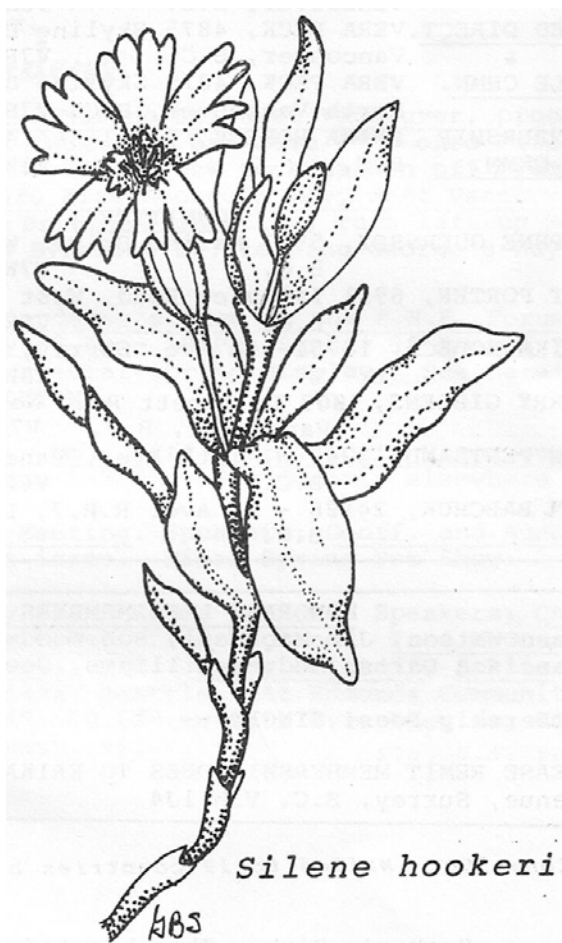


Alpine Garden Club  
of British Columbia



Vol.51 No. 2 Bulletin SPRING 2008



Web Address: [www.agc-bc.ca](http://www.agc-bc.ca)

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**Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month except July & August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00pm and Meetings start at 7:30pm with the educational talk. Don't forget to bring a prize for the raffle which goes a long way to paying for the hall rental.**

**Cover:** *Recently I fell heir to a number of back issues of the Bulletin dating from 1992 collected by past Honorary Life Member Frank Dorsey. What a wealth of articles and drawings; not to mention a sort of condensed history of our Club. The cover drawings are all by members, sadly some of whom are no longer with us. However, it is our intention to have a gallery of our members' drawings on our website as a permanent record and I am starting this month to share with you some of these treasures. This month we have Silene hookeri drawn by Gerald Straley who was Director of the UBC Botanical Garden before his untimely death on December 11, 1997. ~ Moya Drummond*



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## PROGRAM:



### **April 9th Harry Jans - Iran in focus**

Website: [www.jansalpines.com](http://www.jansalpines.com) . A rock gardener for more than 25 years, specializing in rare and unusual alpiners. Founding member of the Dutch Rock Garden Society and president of the Society for 6 years. Member of four AGS Expeditions, Frequent lecturer at International Conferences and Study Weekends in Holland, Germany, England, Scotland, USA and Canada. He has written several articles for international journals on the subjects of rock gardening and alpine plants.

### **April 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> The Annual Alpine Garden Club of BC Spring Show**

will be held in the Floral Hall at VanDusen Garden, 37<sup>th</sup> and Oak Street, Vancouver. Hours of opening are Saturday, 12 noon to 4 pm and Sunday, 10am to 4 pm. Plants may be entered for the Show between 6 and 9 pm on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup>. The BC Primula Group will hold a sale on the walkway from 10am on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> Spring Sale:** 1pm to 4pm at St. David's United Church, 1525 Taylor Way, West Vancouver.

**May 14th Linda Jennings:** Collections Manager of the UBC Herbarium: *A History of Women in Botany on the West Coast.*

**June 11th** Possible tour of UBC [E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden](#) led by **Brent Hine**, Curator of Collections.

**Sept 10th** Brent Hine – *Dry Land Odyssey (to be confirmed)*

**Oct 8th Linda Veerbeek:** *Alpines along the West Coast*

The 2009 NARGS speakers tour features **Joseph Halda**. He will be speaking to our group **Sunday March 15th, 2009**. Please note this is not our regular date and the venue may change. We may also hold our regular meeting on Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009.



## AGCBC-NARGS AFFILIATION PROPOSAL

~ by *Linda Verbeek*

Several times in the past decades it was proposed that the AGCBC should become a chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS). The proposal has always been voted down at the annual general meeting, but it was raised again in the last couple of years, and this time we decided to involve the whole membership, not just those who can and do come to the monthly meetings. So in the last (Winter 2008) issue of the Bulletin, we presented two articles outlining the arguments pro and contra. We hope that many of you will consider the proposal and send us your comments (to the Editor, Sue Evanzetz). We will publish the arguments (excerpted if we get too many similar views) in the next bulletin, together with a ballot. Unfortunately, the ballot has to be non-binding; our Constitution specifies that these kinds of decisions have to be made by the members present at the Annual General Meeting, but we promise that we will take your views into account.



### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

In this issue we are delighted to include articles from Paul Cumbleton and Meg Morgan at the RHS Garden, Wisley, England; and from Patrick Healey who gardens on the Prairies in Manitoba, Canada. We are looking forward to hearing from a curator of the trough garden at the New York Botanical Garden, and we are extremely fortunate to have a wealth of people here in and around Vancouver who are prepared to share their love of plants and their extensive knowledge.

Do YOU have a story to share? A favourite plant; a special experience with something; a funny story you heard somewhere? Do you know someone whose gardening skills you admire? Have you built a rock garden or planted a scree?

We'd LOVE to hear from you. You can send in your garden-related items – long or short or somewhere in-between – as an email, on a CD or 3 ½ inch disc or on paper. Photos can be printed or slides. We will do our utmost to return material to you, but it's best not to send precious originals if you can avoid it.

~ *Sue Evanzetz*



**THE WAY FORWARD:  
THE BULLETIN AND ITS DISTRIBUTION**  
~ by *Ian Gillam, Vancouver, BC*

In the past couple of years our Editor, Sue Evanetz, and her associate Moya Drummond, responsible for layout, locating illustrations and getting the proofs to and from the printer, have taken the request to improve the Bulletin and acted. Articles have been commissioned from outside sources, several pages of colour illustrations inserted and items such as Pot Show results, of interest primarily to local members, have been banished to inserts directed locally. (Once mailed the Bulletin seems to fall into a black hole and there is little actual evidence anyone reads it.)

The Bulletin and Seed List have in recent years been posted on the Club's website, available to anyone interested. This brings the Club to the notice of growers anywhere in the world and encourages a trickle of new members. Valuable as this is it raises questions about anyone being able to read the latest Bulletin on the web free of charge while members pay to receive the paper version. Colour printing and the ever-increasing cost of postage make this an expensive project. We have visualized saving some costs by distributing the Bulletin electronically and have asked members if they are willing to receive it in this way. Currently around 20% have agreed to do so; 40% don't wish to. The remainder have indicated no preference and possibly don't read it. (But could some members value the paper copy enough to want to keep it for reference?)

One solution to the economic situation is simply to increase the annual subscription. (It has remained at \$25 over many years.) This is likely to be unpopular and lead to loss of some members. Another under serious consideration is to continue publishing hard copies of the Bulletin for those requesting it but only printing in black-and-white. Colour illustrations would be available in the electronic version. Current issues would be available electronically only to members, who might wish to print it out themselves. Back issues over a year old would be continue to be available free to all on the web.

Whatever solution is attempted some changes are needed. If the Bulletin is to continue to publish material of interest the support of members is required. Surely with all that experience with the thousands of packets of seed distributed each member has gained some fresh insight into the problems of growing interesting plants. Your notes, questions and answers will be of value to other members. They need be no more than notes and can be shaped into publishable form by our talented editorial staff.

**DESFONTAINIA SPINOSA**  
~ by *Charlie Sale, Woodlands, BC*

At our February 2008 meeting the raffle was kind to me and I came home with a tight little *Desfontainia spinosa* grown from wild collected seed (DPCH #132). Our new baby looks like it could develop into something really special.

Most of the literature advises planting this handsome holly-like shrub from Chile & Peru in part shade in a moist woodland setting. Here at Buckethill Margaret planted our first acquisition in 1990 in such a location. It did beautifully but never flowered!

Then two things happened. When in New Zealand we saw many

well-grown *D. spinosa*, all in full sun; and we also saw a rooted cutting with one flower in a greenhouse at Cistus Design in Portland - proof that they like sun and will flower early. That's when Margaret moved ours to higher, much sunnier, ground after removing a poor form of *Garrya elliptica*. This spot had great drainage – essential for this plant. It liked the new place, and once re-established, flowered nicely. Its long tubular red/orange flowers have the great virtue of remaining on the plant for an exceptionally long time. The brutal early winter of 2006-7 didn't touch it even though many other shrubs here got hit. This puts the lie to it being tender.

This is a fine ornamental shrub for West Coast gardens, but don't believe anyone who



tells you it wants semi-shade.

**Courtesy Friends of [St. Andrews Botanical Garden](#), Scotland:**

***Desfontainia*** is a monotypic genus, named for the French botanist and professor at Jardin des Plantes in Paris, René Louiche Desfontaines (1752-1833). A native of the Andes, principally Peru and Chile, but also recorded north to Costa Rica, *Desfontainia spinosa* is generally placed in the family *Loganiaceae*. Recent taxonomic work suggests it be placed in a family of its own - *Desfontainiaceae*, separated from *Loganiaceae* by having a berry-like fruit.

*Desfontainia spinosa* is an evergreen shrub which, in sheltered situations on the east coast of Scotland, will reach a height of about 2 metres (6'). It has holly-like leaves and therefore is commonly referred to as Chilean Holly. The flowers are tubular up to 5cm (2") long and are scarlet with five, shallow, yellow-lobed flowers. Sometimes the yellow colour is quite prominent.

*Desfontainia spinosa* was first introduced by William Lobb about 1843/44, the same time as he collected *Araucaria araucana*, the Monkey Puzzle, and made it more widely grown. Lobb's introduction is featured in Curtis's Botanical Magazine t.4781 (1854) and it received an Award of Merit in 1931.

William Lobb collected widely in Chile and western North America in the 1840's and 1850's, primarily for the famous Veitch nursery. The next collector to make an impact on Andean plant introductions was Harold Comber (father of renowned BC botanical artist, Mary Miles Comber) whose father was Head Gardener at Nymans in Sussex, England. Harold Comber advanced his training at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh and, in 1925, was invited by Henry McLaren (later Lord Aberconway) of Bodnant, to collect in Chile and Argentina. From that expedition, Harold Comber introduced a form with vermilion coloured flowers and, *Desfontainia spinosa* 'Harold Comber', justly received an Award of Merit in 1955.

Both Lobb and Comber introduced a large number of Chilean plants to British gardens that are very popular today. *Berberis darwinii* and *Buddleja globosa*, for example.

In Chile, *Desfontainia spinosa* grows in lightly-shaded forest areas over a wide range of latitude including Chilean Patagonia where it is reported as growing in association with *Drimys winteri* and *Nothofagus betuloides*. The flowers are pollinated by Firecrown Honeybirds. Recent reports of tree felling may indicate it no longer exists in this locality.

[This report comes from Bob Mitchell, a Friend of St. Andrews Botanical Garden in Scotland, and longtime member of our Club. On the site is a marvelous photo by Dennis Dick – a visit to the site is strongly recommended [www.st-andrews-botanic.org](http://www.st-andrews-botanic.org) click on Plant of the Month.]



## ALPINE TROUGHS AT WISLEY ~ by Paul Cumbleton & Meg Morgan

Here at the [Royal Horticultural Society's Garden at Wisley](#) there has been a display of troughs for a great many years. Arranged on the area around our two display glasshouses they form an important element of the area's "feel" along with several raised beds and our two new sand beds.

Over the years their fortunes have gone up and down, the latter usually due to periods of staff shortages. This means we have not always been very proud of the way our troughs have looked! Gladly in recent years we have had good staffing and the troughs have had something of a renaissance. This has been due in no short measure to the enthusiasm of Meg Morgan. Meg was one of the Wisley trainees, spending a year in the Alpine Section to specialise in studying alpine gardening. We were so impressed with her we offered her a permanent job when she graduated. She has taken on the troughs with enthusiasm, bringing fresh ideas and re-planting many of them over the past couple of years. She has kindly co-authored the following account with me.

**Why Troughs?** With a rock garden containing over 2,500 plants and a collection of more than 6,000 pot plants for display in our Alpine House, you may wonder how we would find a use for troughs at Wisley. Troughs are perfect for growing those difficult plants that sulk in a pot but are overwhelmed by the open ground. One benefit of planting up troughs (sinks, crates, lumps of tufa etc.) is that you can create very specific landscapes in which to display a wide array of plants that might otherwise fall foul of the weather, pests or competition from more vigorous plants. A trough allows someone who gardens on acid clay to grow plants that require a free-draining chalky soil. It allows you to create all kinds of other micro-environments: leaf-mould rich compost with a bark topping for choice woodland plants; a rocky, crevice-filled sink for *Kabschia Saxifrages*, diminutive *Dianthus* and the ever reliable *Sempervivums* to colonise, or a rocky desert for brightly coloured succulents to bake in the sun. An added benefit of these containers is that they allow a certain amount of protection from the dreaded slugs and snails (although *Campanulas* seem to be a meal worth making the long hike for!). For the most delicate of plants you could even erect a protective roof to shelter them from the dreaded 'winter wet'.

We can heartily sympathise with Ian Plenderleith's comments (in the Spring 2007 issue) about the problems of gardening for the public. We too have troughs that are sat on, their plants prodded, poked and stolen, pulled apart by children, and severely commented on by people



who don't understand that weeds sometime have the audacity to grow in them without being immediately removed! Gladly there are many more visitors who give us the feel good factor by expressing their pleasure in them and being excited at the ideas they can take and try at home. That said, what about the troughs themselves and what have we learned in creating many over the years?

**Trough types and compost:** Most of our containers are old stone sinks or ceramic sinks covered in hypertufa. We have more recently branched out into resin-based lightweight troughs bought in from our plant centre and hypertufa-covered fish boxes! Let's start with the compost medium and filling the trough with it. Except for those troughs in which we might want some particular condition, such as an acid pH, we fill most of our troughs with our 'standard' alpine mix. This consists of equal parts (by volume) of loam, peat, perlite and grit. We add to this 3g of fertiliser per litre of mix (the fertiliser we use is a product called Vitax Q4 which has an NPK of 5.3 – 7.5 – 10.0). We also add dolomitic limestone to reduce the acidity of the peat fraction of the mix. We use 2.4g of this for each litre of peat in the mix. This results in a final pH of about 6.5 which is suitable for a large majority of plants. In his article on drainage materials (winter 2005 bulletin), Ian Gillam pointed out some problems with perlite, especially its tendency to float to the top where it looks awful. However, I find it has such beneficial effects in adding aeration that I still like to add it to almost all our mixes. If you put a sufficiently thick layer of grit topdressing on your container, be it a pot or trough, the perlite remains hidden underneath so the visual problem is solved.

**Drainage:** Many old sinks have a single drainage hole, usually at one end and often people leave it at that. If you do, make sure when siting the trough that it slopes a fraction towards the hole or water will collect – and we all know what that means for the plants! Better still is to drill extra drainage holes. Whilst doing this, you can add holes in the sides to plant shade-lovers such as *Primula allionii* or plants that do better on their sides such as *Lewisia cotyledon*. We were really pleased to read Douglas Justice's article about drainage (Spring 2006 bulletin) where he explained why it is a mistake to put grit or other materials beneath your compost. The old myth of adding such a layer "for drainage" seems almost impossible to kill, even though the science which shows why this doesn't work has been around for over a hundred years! So remember – add just your compost to the trough (or any container) and don't add anything else beneath it.

**Filling the Trough:** Before adding the compost we usually place a square of netting over the drainage holes to prevent the compost from falling through. Then we fill the trough with compost. One problem is that over time the compost will settle and if you are not careful the plants will end up below the rim of the trough.



Above: A May flowering trough  
Below: *Pleione formosana* 'Clare'





Above: A resin trough



Below: Examples of troughs



A short term planting

To counter this, there is a temptation when filling to firm the compost as much as possible to avoid future settling. But this simply drives out all the nice air spaces that you carefully created when formulating your mix and which the roots need to be able to function properly. We find the best thing to do is compromise a bit by firming the mix a LITTLE while filling the trough and firming rather more just in the corners (which always seem to sink the most). In addition, heap the compost up in the middle well above the edge of the trough, so that even after settling the final level will remain above the trough edge. This also creates a more appealing trough than a flat surface does. The extra depth also enables a longer root run for plants such as *Phlox* and many cushion plants that form long tap roots to search out water and nutrients at the bottom of crevices.

Rockwork is important in a trough and you are free to create in whatever way you choose, building the compost up around the rocks to make various chambers, gorges, valleys and peaks.. The rock will also help to retain the gravel topdressing – which should be thick enough to stop compost splashing through when watering.

**Planting:** If you intend the planting to last a few years, don't over plant. This is one of the commonest errors our trainees make when we get them to plant troughs – they put far too many plants in and though it looks wonderful when just completed, we ask them to think about what it will look like in a year or more's time when the plants have all grown. Think tangled mess...! However, troughs needn't be always planted for the long term. Meg has introduced "short term" troughs here – troughs planted to have wow factor for one season which then get replanted the next year, or even the same year after flowering. With these you *can* cram more in for a great effect and not worry about what it will look like in a couple of years time because it isn't designed to last that long. We are also experimenting with alpine annuals – a rather underused group of very attractive and interesting plants.

Another technique we have started is to have a lot more troughs planted than are actually out on display. Many troughs look good for a short season while in flower, but are not so interesting for the rest of the year. We can bring them in after they have passed their peak and wheel out a replacement from our extras behind the scenes. Styrofoam troughs and a stout pallet truck make this an easier job than may at first appear, and it means the trough display area looks colourful for longer than it otherwise would. Though most of our troughs are mixed plantings, some very successful ones exhibit single species or genera. I particularly like ones we have planted solely with *Hepatica* which can be put out in a shady spot, a situation often neglected when considering the siting of a trough. We also have one planted entirely with *Pleione* which looks just stunning when in full bloom. For a sunny spot a trough with just *Rhodohypoxis* planted *en masse* can look fantastic. The joy of troughs is that they can be so varied. You can just as easily plug up your drainage holes, fill one with

peat and plant up a nice display of *Sarracenias* and *Dionaea* if you so choose. As long as you know what conditions the plants enjoy (or suffer!) in the wild you can select the correct compost mix to suit them. This enables you to experiment and grow as many different plants as your space will allow – and just as easily, if the trough is not working or the plants have become old and leggy, you can empty them out and start all over again. Whatever your planting scheme, troughs are a great way to grow and show off your alpine treasures. Plant and enjoy!

*Paul Cumbleton is the Senior Supervisor for the Alpine Garden section at Wisley RHS Gardens in England. Paul writes a interesting regular log for the Scottish Rock Garden Society*

[www.srgc.org.uk/wisley/2007/030807/log.html](http://www.srgc.org.uk/wisley/2007/030807/log.html) where he shares something of the work of the department - what they are up to, how they do it, what they have in flower at various times, plant portraits and....well whatever else he can come up with he thinks may be of interest. It is intended that the log will be fortnightly. You may also want to check out Ian Young's Bulb Log on the same site.



## ALL THINGS ORIENTALIS ~ by Patrick Healey, Belmont, Manitoba

My host pointed with pride. "That," he enthused, "is a Japanese hellebore." "Whoa," thought I, "there ain't no such animal." Aloud, I offered, "That's odd. Most hellebores are native to the Balkans and south-western Asia, although I believe there is one species which is native somewhere in China – *Helleborus thibetanus*." "Well," he replied, "at the garden centre they said it was *Helleborus orientalis*, so I assumed it was from Japan or at least that area." "Oops," I realized, "wrong orient." I tried to explain somewhat as follows.

During the late eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, when many species were being named, the orient was much nearer to Europe than it is now. The "east" then referred to the Balkans and south-western Asia, approximately what is now known as the Middle East as opposed to the Far East. Think of the Orient Express which travelled from Paris to Istanbul. In my experience at least, most species bearing the specific epithet "*orientalis*" or "*orientale*" are native in and around the Balkans, Turkey and the Caucasus. Many large genera, and some smaller ones, have species that are from that area. The list includes *Aconitum*, *Allium*, *Centaurea*, *Fritillaria*, *Iris*, *Lonicera*, *Papaver*, *Veronica* and many others.

For several years the only joker I found in this pack was *Thuja orientalis* (now placed by some in a separate genus as *Platyclusus orientalis*) which is actually native from north-western Iran to Korea. *Clematis orientalis* makes a nice try, being native from the Aegean

through Turkey and Iran into central Asia as far as north-western China. Recently I have come across *Heloniopsis orientalis* which is native to Japan and there must be more examples. But I doubt if the far east “orientalis” clan will ever balance those found around south-western Asia.

During a recent survey of the carrot family, *Umbelliferae* or *Apiaceae*, I was delighted to come across references to *Lomatium orientale*. This genus is found only in western North America, and *L. orientale* grows naturally on the western Great Plains. What could be even faintly oriental about the central plains of North America other than the Chinese restaurants found in many prairie towns? Perhaps this species has the most easterly range of the genus, but I find it ironic that the native range of *L. orientale* lies just to the west of that of *Thuja occidentalis*. Further, isn't it interesting that both *Geranium ibericum* and many “orientalis” species are native in north-eastern Turkey and the Caucasus. At first glance this sound like Spain is brushing up against Japan, but continental drift hasn't gone that far yet. The name given to this geranium reflects the fact that Iberia was the name given by ancient Greeks to what is now a part of the Georgian Republic at the east end of the Black Sea.



A personal favourite from the “orientalis” crew is *Physochlaina orientalis*. The genus is a small one in the potato family (*Solanaceae*), with species native here and there in central Asia, and is probably not well known to many gardeners. *P. orientalis* is native to open, rocky sites in and around the Caucasus and is perfectly hardy in Canadian prairie gardens. The RHS Dictionary of Gardening guesses the genus not to be hardy beyond zone 8; this certainly doesn't apply to

this species.

What I particularly like about this plant is its early bloom. In my garden it is among the earliest non-bulbs to bloom along with the daffodils and the early tulip species. Here in Manitoba that is from early to mid-May. The flowers in no way leap out at you; they are light reddish purple bells with darker veins, each flower about one centimetre across. The clusters of six to twelve flowers are initially

upfacing and become more out- and then down-facing with age, on stems about 50 cms tall. There is a picture in Phillips and Rix, *Perennials, Vol.1.* such a plant probably would get little notice later in the summer, but is very welcome for its earliness. The plants thrive here in sun to light shade, in dryish soil. The only problem I have is that by late summer all have retreated underground leaving only dried stems and leaves.

After having quizzed several other prairie gardeners about where they obtained this plant, I found that they had all bought it at Bert Porter's Honeywood Nursery north of Saskatoon, as had I. That is an area which I believe was homesteaded by many immigrants from Ukraine and other eastern European countries. Perhaps Mr. Porter obtained this plant from one of his neighbours. Over the past decade or so, I have sent seed of this plant to several exchanges. I find it pleasant to think that many of the plants of this species in North American gardens may be descended from a plant or seeds brought over from eastern Europe by an immigrant (probably a woman) starting a new life in the bush of central Saskatchewan.

*Patrick Healey obtained an Honours degree in Botany at UBC and his PhD in marine biology from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography at the University of California. He is retired from the Department of Fisheries in Winnipeg where he studied algae and claims to know nothing about fish! He now spends his time in a very large informal garden in Belmont, Manitoba where he extends the seasons in his greenhouse and an ancient, stone barn which keeps his seedlings cool away from the hot prairie summer sun.*



## **THE SISKIYOU MADE A FIRST AND LASTING IMPRESSION** ~ by Brent Hine, Curator, [Lohbrunner Alpine Garden at UBC](#)

During the final week of September I finally heeded the siren song of the Siskiyou. An opportunity arose to explore this new (for me) area of botanical riches. I had heard fragmentary reports about this unique range and its flora over the years but not nearly enough good field accounts to beguile me. However, all was to be made manifest as I set out by bus to connect with a couple of Seattle area colleagues. We left Puget Sound at sunup the following morning by pool SUV and arrived mid-afternoon in Selma, Oregon. We stayed at the Siskiyou Field Institute ([www.sfi.org](http://www.sfi.org)) for our week's explorations, which is a former ranch of John Wayne-was-there repute turned educational centre. Our group's premise was simple, to gain experience with plant communities (chaparral, mixed forest, serpentine) while seeking collections of various representative



Approaching Whetstone Butte

perennial, shrub and tree species. In my case, I managed to make about 40 of these over the next three days. I will highlight some of them and illuminate various scenes which, while they are still fresh in my mind, delighted me during the stay.

Soon after we set out on the first full day, it became

clear that our expectations of where we would find the “best” locations to explore would easily be exceeded; we were in the Siskiyou! Due to multitudes of unforeseen plants and ever-changing scenery, we didn't actually arrive at our destination until hardly an hour before sunset, but more on that in a moment. Our choice was to head west along Eight Dollar Mountain road. We were heading up the side of Fiddler Mt. on FSR (forest service road) 4201 and eventually to the Kalmiopsis Rim trail. We didn't make a lot of quick headway; there was too much to stop for and inspect at nearly every turn. The territory was a pleasing blend of chaparral and mixed evergreen forest. Sclerophyllous plants were strongly represented, from distinctive *Arctostaphylos* in prostrate and architecturally elegant shrub forms and numerous *Ceanothus* species to wonderfully shrubby *Quercus vaccinifolia*, or Huckleberry Oak. This plant's congested form and small, entire to holly-like serrated leaves provide plenty of ornamental potential for garden use. We found it from our Illinois Valley ranch right up over 4000 ft (1200m) and it looked great in all situations. About the same time that morning we also encountered *Rhododendron occidentale* and *Darlingtonia californica*. For most alpine gardens (not *mine*!), *R.occidentale* is too large, reaching to 6 ft or more. As for general garden inclusion, however, its best attributes are more than worthy, including outstanding flower display, elegant fragrance and rich fall colour. *Darlingtonia* is an iconic Siskiyou plant, so it is enough to mention that whoever hasn't seen it massed in its natural fen habitat should, in order to better understand the wondrous diversity abounding in this region. Slowly we climbed, stopped, and wound along the forestry road. Then, simply as rounding a bend, a promising drainage with a

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\* *mine* being of course not personally so but the [E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden](#) I manage at the University of B.C., in Vancouver, Canada.



broad ribbon of now familiar *Darlingtonia* stretched up a hill before us. We quickly hopped out and scattered. After only five minutes strolling through the meadow, I was delighted to see what I realized was the rare Waldo gentian, *G. setigera*. At that moment a strong impression came over me of the overwhelming wealth all around. As I stood witness in that meadow it was as if the very biome itself was insisting itself upon my enthusiastic mind. It wasn't long before we were ready to be on our way again. We paused several more times in choice locations, all near the roadside. One in particular stood out more than others. This was a slatey cliff on which a fine home was made in ledges and crevices for lovely dwarf *Allium*, clumps of *Cheilanthes*, *Pellaea*, tumbling *Zauschneria* and so on, many which offered something to harvest. After a half an hour's investigation, we continued on again. It was already late afternoon, but we reached the road's end, and head of the Kalmiopsis Rim trail. It was cold up here at this late September summit elevation (ca. 4200 ft), but we set out under scudding clouds and declining sun for some last chance encounters. First we walked a half mile or so through a burnover, which had been caused by the enormous 2002 Biscuit fire. Along the trail, vivid greens of regenerating Manzanita, Oaks and Golden Chinquapin burst from the old forest floor among the silver skeletonized trunks. I spied some seed and dropped onto my knees to gather up *Lomatium engelmannii*, a rare dwarf biscuitroot. My companions soon spotted another unusual plant, *Garrya buxifolia*, or dwarf silktassel. Yet another plant "first" for me on this day. As each gathered cuttings, I scouted the immediate area. Soon we noticed a unique prostrate, grey leaved *Arctostaphylos*, and we agreed this was probably a cross between two species we could see nearby, *A. canescens* and *A. nevadensis*. I scooped up a handful of seed while they collected more cuttings. As soon we moved on, the remains of the ex-forest suddenly dwindled to nothing and we proceeded onto a barren serpentine, which in turn led us upward through a sudden snow shower to a rounded summit. Here, as we assimilated our surroundings in the day's final moments, we felt we'd found a special place. Each had a personal moment to savour this previously unknown world laying about our feet and around in all directions,



Richie Steffan photographing cliff plants

as far as we could drink in with our eyes. "Dangerously beautiful", was how one of us put it as we departed.

After our daily routine of supper, comparing notes, washing and a flop into bed, we awoke to a last, fine-weather day. We agreed on exploring to the northwest, which would take us to the edge of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, a vast roadless area of canyons, conifers, beautiful rivers and much more. By noon we reached another road's end and soon set off on a footbridge across the Illinois River, past crimson Poison Oak and up into what seemed like goat country, a narrow canyon trail high above the river bed. It wasn't long, or far – an hour and a half? two, three miles? before we'd come to York Creek. We literally turned a corner on the path away from the canyon drop-off, and there it was, what we'd especially hoped to see. *Kalmiopsis leachiana* was growing in abundance, right at the path side. I was stunned to see it in this situation. We reckoned the midsummer temperatures at the location to be at least in the high 30's Celsius, or 100 Fahrenheit. Although nearby the creek, it was much too high above it to glean any of its precious moisture. The lean, rocky soil looked very stingy as well. How could it have so many seed heads? Oh, to be there during early summer's bloom! Although by then it was very late in season, I gathered some heads in a bag in hope of next year's germination. Our final rendezvous with this grail plant, seen in such obviously pleasant health, offered a clue to understanding how happy plant life must be in these mountains. It was a fitting end to an extremely fruitful week.

By the following morning the weather had abruptly turned. Skies were their leaden northwest worst and slanting rain began with force just as we threw our gear into the vehicle. Although we had made plentiful collections, they were not particularly alpine this time around.



Days Gulch, *Darlingtonia ribbon*

During our quick snapshot of this corner of the vaunted Siskiyou, we got what we could yet came away thoroughly satisfied. Future plans are already in the works. This includes a return in late Spring 2008. This will be a reconnaissance visit to observe, record and photograph bulbous (*Brodiaea*, *Calochortus*, *Fritillary*) and other perennial plants (especially *Californicae Iris*) and will be followed by a collecting trip based on this about the first week of September. Now that I have discovered the Siskiyou for myself, my mind reels with thoughts of what may be possible to gain, professionally and personally, from ensuing visits to this wealthy and beautiful region.

~ **Brent A. Hine**



*An unexpected find!  
Scorpion on Thompson ridge*



**KING LAURIN'S GARDEN**  
***A Review of David Sellars Presentation to the AGCBC***  
***By Ian Gillam***

Members who were unable to attend our March meeting missed an exemplary presentation by David Sellars. His full title included "Following the Footsteps of Reginald Farrer in the Dolomites". David and Wendy have managed two visits to these spectacular mountains in northern Italy, both times in the peak flowering season of late June to early July. The Dolomite Alps are largely composed of the mineral dolomite, hard, brilliantly white or slightly tinted pink. The many peaks are sharply rugged and reach around 3000 meters/10,000 feet. The peaks themselves are inhospitable to plant life but the rubble slopes below them and the meadows beneath are home to classic alpine plants.

In planning their trip David concluded that the best guide to the mountains and their flora (at least in English) is Reginald Farrer's book "The Dolomites" subtitled "King Laurin's Garden" after a local fable's hero. The book was originally published in 1913 as the golden age was closing on a world arranged for the privileged few who didn't need to work and when leisurely travel was perhaps cheaper than living at home in Britain or America. Motor buses were in use in the mountains in Farrer's time though he preferred the slower horse-drawn transport and was a capable outdoorsman who spent much time exploring on foot.

Access to the mountains is now quicker and easier. David and Wendy could make trips of about a week, flying to Munich and then driving south across parts of Switzerland and Austria. Good roads lead to passes in the alpine zone and from them many well marked trails offer scenic routes and alpine plants. In fact it is not really necessary to leave the car to see a selection of these growing right down to the roadside and cable lifts ascend a few peaks.

David's presentation made full use of digital imagery (and of our new digital projector). The core of the show was of course the photographs of alpine plants in full flower, both close-ups and in habitat beneath those jagged peaks. The photographs were of enviable quality, sharply focused in nicely diffuse light and unblurred by wind. Even with modern equipment, exposure may have been challenging since many of the finest specimens grew out of fissures or scree composed of blindingly white dolomite fragments.

In the midst of the Dolomites there are contrasting mountains of volcanic origin, black and with acidic rocks. These support different species or subspecies from the alkaline, white peaks. Plants illustrated included *Gentiana*, *Potentilla*, *Primula*, *Androsace*, *Daphne*, *Saxifraga*, *Silene acaulis* and Farrer's beloved King of the Alps, *Eritrichium nanum*. The theme tying this story together was Farrer's book with occasional quotations interspersed among the photographs. David made good use of digital systems to present clear maps that sprouted coloured routes at the click of a mouse. Though the area is now readily accessible and so rewarding it is a pity that for us it is still a little too far away. A final quote from Farrer; "...if word of mine help to allure you to the Dolomites you will return again and again, and bless the hour that brought you this book."

The original edition of "The Dolomites; King Laurin's Garden" 95 years on is a collector's treasure. The 1985 paperback reprint is affordably available on the Internet.

~ Ian Gillam