

Alpine Garden Club
of
British Columbia



Vol 53 No 2

Bulletin

Spring 2010



Alpine Garden Club of BC

Internet Home Page: www.agc-bc.ca

President	Linda Verbeek
1st V.P.	Philip MacDougall
2nd V.P.	David Sellars
Past President	Doug Smith
Secretary	Allison Carson
Treasurer	Amanda Offers
Membership	Ian Gillam
Programs	Philip MacDougall
Pot Shows	Dana Cromie
Library	Pam Frost
Annual Show	Diana Hume Karen Thirkell
Plant Sales	Mark Demers
Seed Reception	Marilyn Plant
Publicity	Joan Bunn
Open Gardens	Lisa O'Donnell
Refreshments	Dorothy Yarema
Webmaster	Chris Klapwijk
Bulletin Editor	Alan Tracey

Committee Members

Margot Ketchum - Mark Demers
Chris Klapwijk - Karen Thirkell - Lisa O'Donnell - Bob Tuckey

Honorary Life Members

Margaret Charlton
Francisca Darts - Pam Frost - Bodil Leamy
Ian & Phyllis Plenderleith - Geof Williams – Bob Woodward

Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month except, July and August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00 pm and the meetings start at 7:30 pm. Please bring plants for the plant draw; the proceeds of which go toward paying for the hall rental.

Front Cover: *Aconitum delphinifolium*: Photograph by Ron Long

Plant Finder

In order for this section to be of value to all club members, those who submit enquiries should provide some details of the plant characteristics: size, shape, flowers, and other properties that make this a desirable plant. The native habitat of the plant would also be of interest. The request for information can be directed to our Bulletin Editor, Alan Tracey or to our Webmaster, Chris Klapwijk.

From David Hale. I've been trying to find a source for Spanish Shawl (*Heterocentron elegans*) without success. It is listed in the book Plant Finder but the sources there do not have the plant. This plant is native to Central America and can be grown outdoors in the tropics or subtropics as it is hardy to freezing. It is attractive hanging from a trough and has 2cm diameter flowers of a bright red/purplish colour.

Could anyone knowing of a source for this plant reply to Alan Tracey or Chris Klapwijk with **Plant Finder** in the Subject Line.

Plant Sales Mark Demers

Alpine Garden Club of B.C. Spring Sale

Date and time: Saturday, May 1, 2010, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Location: St. David's United Church, 1525 Taylor Way (at Upper Levels Highway), West Vancouver, B.C.

Contact: agc-bc.ca

Features: A wide variety of alpine, rockery, native, woodland, and other unique and interesting plants from pot-size to trees. Featuring B.C.growers and local experts.

Free admission

Door prizes

Alpine Garden Club of B.C. Fall Sale

Date and time: Sunday, Sept. 19, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Location: VanDusen Garden Floral Hall, 37th Ave. at Oak St., Vancouver, B.C.

Contact: agc-bc.ca

Features: A diverse collection of fall-blooming and other specialty, native, and collectible plants of all

sizes suited to our local climate zones. Expert growers on hand.

Free admission.

Further information regarding the two sales is available from Mark Demers, 604 254-5479.

Programs

Philip MacDougall

April 14th.

Pam Eveleigh last spoke to us at the 2007 Western Study Weekend. Her talks on *Primula* are inspirational. Stunning photography and beautifully presented material, Pam's utter enthusiasm for this jewel of an Alpine genus make this a not to be missed evening. <http://www.primulaworld.com/PWWeb/Index.shtml>

May 12th.

David Sellars will speak on **Chaos in the Rock Garden: Putting Theory into Practice**. This presentation was previously given at the 2009 NARGS Western Winter Study Weekend in Portland, Oregon.

June 9th

Zdeněk Zvolánek is a leading Czech rock gardener and plant explorer. He is well-known for promoting the art of crevice gardening and has created stunning gardens across the United States, Canada and much of Europe. He is also a notable plant collector. He is responsible for the introduction of hundreds of spectacular alpine plants to rock gardens from Europe and Asia Minor. Such plants include *Campanula choruhensis*, *Matthiola montana* and *Centaurea achtarovii*. His presentation will focus on growing small daphnes (see p 16) and will



Daphne petraea

feature new clones recently introduced in Europe. Visit our website (<http://www.agc-bc.ca/gallery/index.asp>) for more details.

Open Gardens Lisa O'Donnell

May 29th

Come and sail away to the Sechelt Peninsula and be inspired by tours of 4 private gardens and the new Botanical Garden, located on the old Murray's Nursery tree farm! Call some fellow Alpine Club members and make a car pool, pack your lunch and on Saturday, May 29, catch the ferry in Horseshoe Bay at 9:20 am and head up the coast. Reservations for the ferry are highly recommended www.bcf ferries.com/schedules/mainland.vasc-current.html. There are free maps of the peninsula on the ferry.

Travel up Highway 101 just past Sechelt to Norwest Bay Road (major light), right up hill to stop sign at Mason Rd. and right again on Mason to the new Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden at 5941 Mason Road. Please be prepared to make a donation (\$5-\$20). Docents will be available to show us around the garden. Allow approx. 1 hour.
(www.coastbotanicalgarden.org)

Next, minutes away, visit the meconopsis garden of Bill Terry (author of "Blue Heaven") at ***** just above Snickett Park. Pray that our timing is right!

By now we will be getting hungry and we have been kindly invited to picnic in the garden of Paddy Wales (author and photographer). Proceed east on Highway 101 from Sechelt (towards the ferry) and just past the provincial campground, turn right on Flume Road, right on Beach Ave., right on Park Ave and Paddy is at *****
After lunch and a quick look at Paddy's garden, there are still 2 more gardens to see!

From Paddy's home, head east on Beach Ave. to Robert's Creek, jog left-right onto Lower Road. Verity Goodier lives at ***** and Karin Tigges is at the foot of ***** , east of Camp Byng (roughly 10 minutes from Paddy). If you need coffee or tea, there is a cute restaurant in Robert's Creek called the Gumboot Café; also great for lunch if you prefer not to pack your own!

Finally, before you head home, there are a couple of nice nurseries along the highway on the way back to the ferry: Sunshine Coast is

right on the highway as you head towards Gibson's it is on the left at 1826 Sunshine Coast Hwy (604 886-2796). If you continue towards Gibsons, turn right onto Pratt Rd and almost immediately there is B & K Garden and Landscape Supply at 629 Pratt Rd (604 886-0924) and a little further on Pratt Rd you will find Quality Farm and Garden Supply- at 325A Pratt Rd (604 886-7527).

(For those with lots of time...in Sechelt, you will find Willow Nursery at 6739 Norwest Rd (604 885-3989) and Casey's Country Gardens at 5612 Wharf Road (604 885-3606). Google Sunshine Coast Nurseries for more- these are ones I have shopped at before!

This is a fantastic opportunity to see some excellent gardens and I hope many are able to attend!

June 23rd

Larry Wick will kindly host a tour from 6-9 pm at his garden located at ******, North Vancouver. Come and spend an evening in a unique garden filled with exotic and unusual plants including palms, bananas, gingers, rhodos and azaleas. Larry also has over 60 bonsai and a large mural!

The Alpine Treasures of Pink Mountain

Ron Long

I have been plant hunting in British Columbia for more than forty years and nowhere else have I encountered the concentration of rare arctic/alpine plants that occurs on the summit of Pink Mountain. This botanical treasure trove is both accessible and totally unprotected.

Pink Mountain was well known in the butterfly community long before it became know to the botanical community. Twenty-five years ago when I first heard about the arctic butterflies that collectors found there it immediately occurred to me that rare butterflies must also mean rare plants – and so it turned out to be.

Pink Mountain is located about 1000 road miles from Vancouver and just off the Alaska Highway. A road was built from the highway to the summit of the mountain between thirty and forty years ago to facilitate oil and gas exploration. That road remains passable – sort of. It is

narrow and rough and at any given time can be closed by rock falls or washouts.

The drive up the road is a reward in itself because of the abundant wildlife in the area. Deer, Moose and Elk are seen on almost every trip. However these animals are so intensively hunted that they rarely stay in sight long enough for a photograph.

At the summit the wildlife parade continues with various kinds of Grouse and Ptarmigan and Horned Larks. On the animal side I have seen Silver Fox and Dall Sheep and there is a resident herd of Mountain Caribou that are more curious than frightened of visitors.



Fig 1. *Polemonium acutiflorum*

point that I could photograph them with the close-up lens that I use for flowers. When I returned twenty years later this had changed drastically. I saw only two or three marmots and they were so frightened it was nearly impossible to get a photograph at all. I presume the local “sportsmen” had discovered the thrill of shooting the tame animals. And that is the downside of the road.

I first visited Pink Mountain in 1983 and was stunned by the richness that I found there. The mountain is not very high, about



Fig 2. *Polemonium boreale*

5600 feet, but is so far north that the summit is a classic tundra habitat. And associated with that habitat I found many Northern BC

plants that were new to me as well as a large cross section of Canadian arctic plants.

Some examples of the uniquely northern plants are *Polemonium acutiflorum* (Fig. 1), *Polemonium boreale* (blue listed, Fig. 2), *Aconitum delphinifolium* (cover photograph) *Corydalis pauciflora*, *Saxifraga flagellaris*, *Saxifraga tricuspidata*, *Taraxicum laevigatum* and, best of all, *Rhododendron lapponicum* (Fig. 3). When I first saw that gorgeous, dwarf Rhody I knew I was in a truly special place. This plant is extremely difficult to find in BC.



Fig 3. *Rhododendron lapponicum*

Of the thirteen species of pedicularis that occur in our province almost half, the rare

half, are found on Pink Mountain. I have photographed *Pedicularis lanata* (Fig 4), *P. capitata* (Fig 5),



Fig 4. *Pedicularis lanata*

P. oederi, *P. labradorica*, *P. langsdorfii* and one more that is a mystery. I have not been able to match it to any listing in the B.C.

or Alaska floras and it is exciting to think it could actually be a new species.



Fig 5. *Pedicularis capitata*

Examples of better known but still special alpiners are *Silene acaulis*, *Silene uralensis*, *Gentiana glauca*, *Gentiana prostrata*, *Androsace chamejasme* ((Fig 6, blue listed), *Androsace septentrionalis* (Fig 7), *Campanula uniflora* and *Cassiope tetragona*.

The above is just a small sampling of the flora on Pink Mountain. There are many more unique species as well as numbers of Arnicas, Fleabanes, Cinquefoils, Poppies, Peas, Anemonies and Antennaries.



Fig 6. *Androsace chamajasma*

Taken together, this is an assemblage of plants that is rarely found in BC let alone in a location that is more or less accessible.

A significant number of the plants that I have photographed on Pink Mountain represent range extensions, some to the north and some to the south, for the species.

For years I wrestled with the question of disclosing the richness of this remote location. Initially I felt that the fewer people who knew of it the better but my opinion on that has changed. Oil and gas development in the area

is so intense that at any moment the entire flora of Pink Mountain



Fig 7. *Androsace septentrionalis*

could be wiped out by one uncaring bulldozer operator. So I began to speak about Pink Mountain to select, plant oriented groups and slowly the word is spreading.

In 2003 my brother, who is a wildlife filmmaker, was working on a series for Discovery Channel

entitled **Time and Place**. I convinced him to do a segment on Pink Mountain. That segment called **The Blossoms of Pink Mountain** has

been widely shown on Discovery Channel and on the Knowledge Network.

A few years ago a unique marine fossil was discovered on the steep west side of Pink Mountain. To protect the fossil site a provincial park



Pedicularis oederi



Myosotis alpestris



Saxifraga flagellaris offset

was created. The boundary markers of the park run along the edge of the summit within spitting distance of the flowers. If the park boundary could be extended by only a few hundred meters the entire flora as well as the birds and animals that live there would be protected from development and hunting.

The next challenge would be to protect the plants from casual visitors. Hopefully the road will remain questionable and so restrict visits by any but the truly committed.

Desert Ephemerals

Alan Tracey

The deserts of North America contain a plethora of wonderful annuals that brighten the desert landscape in the spring provided there is enough rain over the winter. These offer a potential source of unique and beautiful plants for our own gardens. When thinking of desert plants many people sigh and think how wonderful it would be to grow them. However, in the case of the annuals, they frequently forget that the desert annuals grow over the late fall and winter and bloom in the late winter to early spring before the heat of summer blasts them away. There does seem to be little reason that we cannot grow at least some of them in our gardens and many people must have tried growing some of them in our west-coast climate.

Generally our weather patterns are such that we have significant rainfall in the spring followed by a warm, relatively dry but certainly not desert-like summer. This compares with winter desert conditions, particularly of the Sonoran desert which is characterized by mild to quite cold temperatures in the winter with occasional to significant rainfall but also plentiful sunshine without much heat followed by warming in the blooming period to moderately high temperatures. The Mohave Desert is similar but much colder in the winter. Our own weather pattern follows this, just retarded by a few months.

If seed were available, it certainly would be well worth attempting to grow any of the desert annuals. Any success would of course, have to be followed by collecting seed, as they ripen, for subsequent years. The experience I have had with these plants is restricted to only one species, Desert Bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), as it is the only



Phacelia campanularia

one for which I have had seed. It is generally found below about 1500 m in desert washes and other sandy or gravelly areas. This plant has wonderful blue flowers that rival those of the bluest of the gentians. This plant offers no problems when sown in pots: it flowers and

produces copious seed. In one case, where a pot was left in a winter-dry part of the garden under a roof overhang, it self-seeded into the surrounding soil as well as into the original pot. I expect that seeding it into an open sunny portion of a rock garden in mid-spring would prove successful. Another phacelia well worth trying would be *Phacelia crenulata*, a smaller-flowered phacelia having bright purple petals with a white centre to the flower.

Ghost Flower (*Mohavea confertiflora*) is a highly attractive plant often found in rocky, sandy hillsides and desert washes. It can grow to between 10 and 40 cm tall and has silky pale yellow flowers with maroon spots. The petals form a cup-like shaped flower. It is generally found below 1000 m in the Sonora Desert.



Mohavea confertiflora

A plant with flowers somewhat similar in character to those of Ghost Flower is Sand Blazing Star (*Mentzelia involucrata*) a plant closely related to the Blazing Star (*Mentzelia laevicaulis*) found as far north as the southern interior of British Columbia. It is found at elevations to about 1300 m, frequently on steep rocky slopes. Under favourable conditions it



Mentzelia involucrata

can grow to about 45 cm. It has pale yellow to almost colourless tissue paper flowers, generally with pink veins.

To us of the southern coast of British Columbia where Monkey Flowers (*Mimulus*) are plants of rocky seeps and stream banks it is a great surprise to come across them in the rocky hillsides and washes of the desert landscape. The one most likely to be encountered is *Mimulus bigelovii*, an outstanding plant with bright magenta flowers

that have yellow throats. The plants do not often reach a height of more than about 10 cm, and frequently are about half this, although they can reach to about 20 cm. There is some colour variation in the flower but all are great plants. *Mimulus bigelovii* is found from low-elevation desert washes to more than 2500 m in the mountains.



Mimulus bigelovii



Eremalche rotundifolia

Another wonderfully attractive annual of the deserts is Desert Five-Spot (*Eremalche rotundifolia*). This plant can reach to about 40 cm and has globular pink flowers with bright red markings in their interior. Desert Five-Spot is found at elevations up to about 1200 m in open gravelly places.



Langloisia setosissima ssp. *punctata*

For those who won't grow anything that stretches to more than 5 cm, there are numerous choices available to them. One of my favourites is Lilac Sunbonnet (*Langloisia setosissima* ssp. *punctata*). This small tufted plant is found at elevations up to about 1700 m in gravelly or sandy soils. The light-coloured petals with a

purple throat are also decorated with numerous purple spots and each petal also carries two yellow spots that can be indistinct in some plants. Bristly Calico (*Langloisia setosissima* ssp. *setosissima*) is a closely related plant but it is lavender-flowered without spotting.

Purple Mat (*Nama demissum*), as its name suggests, is a moderately spreading (to about 15 cm) but very low, mat-forming plant that hides behind its bell-shaped flowers in well-bloomed specimens. It is found in sandy and gravelly soils below about 1300 m. Flower colour can vary considerably but it usually is magenta to rosy purple.



Nama demissum

The Evening Primrose family also has a number of annuals that would be well worth growing. In particular the Suncups and Browneyes are wonderful plants. Golden Suncup, (*Camissonia brevipes* ssp. *brevipes*) can grow to 60 cm but typically it is not much taller than 25 cm and can be found at elevations to 1800 m. The closely related Browneyes that is found to similar elevations grows to between 10 and 40 cm in size. This plant can be found in both white (*Camissonia claviformis* ssp. *claviformis*) and yellow (*C. claviformis* ssp. *peirsonii*) forms.



Camissonia claviformis ssp. *claviformis*

There are many other equally attractive desert annuals. If you can find the seed, try them. Almost certainly, some of them will perform beyond expectation. Photographs of these and other plants of the Sonoran Desert can be found in our website (<http://www.agc-bc.ca/gallery/index.asp>).

Daphne Guernsey

It is sad for us to report the sudden and unexpected death of Daphne Guernsey at her home in Victoria at the end of March. Daphne was a long-time member and Honorary Life Member of the Alpine Garden Club of BC. She was an enthusiastic gardener and plant collector who had just recently moved from West Vancouver to her new home in Victoria where she was keen to show her new garden to all who would visit. She will be sadly missed.



Daphne cneorum pygmaea 'Czech Song'



Daphne cneorum 'Sweet Rock'