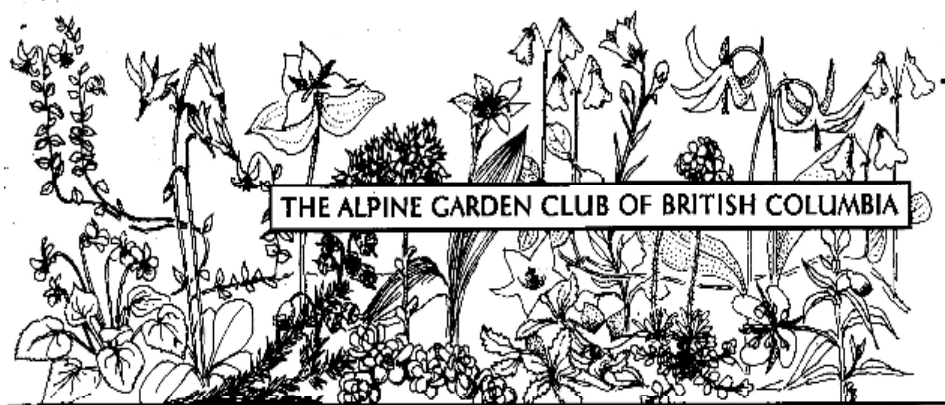


50th Anniversary
Commemorative Issue #1

1955 to 2005



Vol.48, No. 1

Bulletin

Winter 2005



Alpine Garden Club of B.C. - Executive 2004

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Stuart Scholefield

Honorary Life Members

Rosemary Burnham, Margaret Charlton, Grace Conboy,
Francisca Darts, Frank Dorsey, Pam Frost, Daphne Guernsey, Bodil Leamy,
Jim MacPhail, Vera Peck, Geoff Williams, Bob Woodward

Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month except June, July & August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00pm and Meetings start at 7:30pm sharp 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: An original drawing which was the border for Bulletins in the 1970's by Rosemary Burnham.

Illustrations: Throughout this issue, the line drawings are part of a wonderful collection we have from members past and present. We would welcome any contributions current members would like to share.



50th Anniversary Celebration! “Lohbrunner’s Legacy” ~ Brent Hine

Join us for a pot-luck party
Bring your Slides and Photos
Memorabilia & Tall Tales!

March 9th 2005
7:30 pm

AGC PROGRAM

February 9th 2005. Brian White & Peter Wharton will speak on their expedition to the mountains of Vietnam – an extremely exciting project to identify and locate new plants.

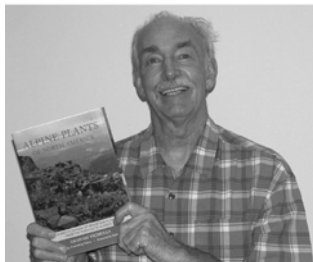
March 9th 2005. “Lohbrunner’s Legacy: The Evolution of the UBC Alpine Garden” Brent Hine, Curator. Brent’s presentation will cover the foundation of the garden and its history to the present day. This is also our **50th Anniversary Party!** Potluck (bring some good old-fashioned treats!); Please bring along your old slides & photos; memorabilia for ‘show & tell’; roasts & toasts; tall tales anecdotes & poems. **For members prepared to offer lifts, and for those unable to drive themselves to is event,** please contact Moya and we will try to coordinate.

April 1st 1 pm – 9 pm & April 2nd 9 am – 4 pm The Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society’s 2005 annual spring show and sale will be held at Cadboro Bay United Church, 2625 Arbutus Road, Victoria. This is a spectacular show of rock and alpine garden plants as well as plant sales, both member and commercial, refreshments, displays and door prizes.

April 9th/10th AGCBC Spring Show This will be held as usual in the Floral Hall at VanDusen Garden on **Saturday 12 noon – 4 pm, and Sunday 10 am – 4pm. Set-up: Friday April 8th, starting around 5 pm.** Entries for the Show should be brought in from about 7 pm. and definitely before 9 pm. Competitors may water and check their entries on Saturday morning between 8 and 9 am., then the Hall must be cleared for the start of judging. The show schedule will be available at the March meeting. (It remains unchanged and previous years’ copies are generally applicable.) Your support is needed both as entrant and as worker before, during and after the Show. Mark the dates on your calendar and plan to pot up something for the Show. If you don’t enter you can’t win and you will find entering both enjoyable and rewarding!

April 13th 2005. Alpine Gesneriads, Marilyn Allen will show slides from the US Gesneriad Society and suggest those suitable for pots and beds in our climate. Also you may like to check out the website www.gesneriads.ca for a remarkable selection of photos and information.

April 30th, Saturday. The Spring Plant Sale at St David's United Church (1525 Taylor Way in West Vancouver) As usual set up will be 5-9 pm on the evening before and 8:30-11 am the morning of the sale. The sale will be open to volunteers *only* at noon and to the public from 1-4 pm with cleanup until 5 pm. Your help is appreciated at all the above times.



May 11th 2005. Graham Nicholls Author of *Alpine Plants of North America: An Encyclopedia of Mountain Flowers from the Rockies to Alaska*. Check out his (great!) website at <http://members.aol.com/graplant/>

NARGS meeting in St. Johns, Newfoundland - July 14 – 17, 2005. There is a tour following the meeting from July 18 – 22. There is a suggestion that we might look into getting a group together to

attend this meeting and perhaps take advantage of a group rate for flights, etc. If you are interested, let Moya know (604-738-6570) and we will start to check out the viability of this plan.

Hikes: If you are keen to go to somewhere special, or would be willing to help/lead a hike, please let us know.



FROM THE PRESIDENT ~ DOUG SMITH

I am honoured to become president of our club. As mentioned at our last meeting, the executive and committee will commit to maintain the excellence set by my predecessors. Any comments for improvement will be appreciated. For many, many years the club has conducted an auction at our December meeting to benefit the CKNW Orphans Fund, which assists needy children. This December the members raised a record amount of \$1,257. Thanks to our auctioneers, Frank Dorsey, Charlie Sale, and Stuart Scholefield and to our donors and purchasers.

Many organizations are facing declining memberships, partly as a result of demographic shifts. At our January meeting, the membership approved the setting of membership dues at \$10 for students in recognized horticultural or environmental programs. Details concerning contacting the organizations and students are being investigated.

Just a quick note to encourage local members to support the **NARGS Northwestern Chapter's study weekend, February 25-27**, in Everett, Washington. The program looks interesting, these events are fun and educational, and as a bonus for local members, it is only a two-hour drive from the border.

We hope to see you at our Club Spring Show, Spring Sale and the Fall Plant Sale, which will be held on September 25th at VanDusen Floral Hall.

~ Doug Smith

AN HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT ~ Ian Plenderleith

March of 2005 will mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of our club.

In attempt to learn more of its beginnings I have searched our archives and spoken to several of the early members. Unfortunately the earliest bulletin in our library is volume 2, number 9, November 1959. Does anyone have earlier bulletins? I do have a review of the Club's history written by Thea Foster in February 1984 for the Ninth Western Winter Study Weekend in Port Townsend, Washington, which is very helpful and have spoken to Grace Conboy one of our original members. The following information comes from these sources.



Lilium washingtonianum
Kathleen Ressler

The Club was founded as The Canadian Primula and Alpine Society in March 1955. The original members, all members of the American Primrose Society, were Don & Iva Angerman, George Boving, Grace Conboy, Lance Taylor and Dr. Dale Worthington. Membership grew quickly and a number of early members remain active in the Club including Rosemary Burnham, Francesca Darts, Art Guppy, Bodil Leamy, Jim MacPhail and Bob Woodward. At the risk of missing out others, I won't go on.

The Bulletin, which was initiated in 1958, with Grace Conboy as editor, and produced monthly except July and August, documents monthly meetings with local or guest speakers, plant shows, field trips, displays at the Pacific National Exhibition and elsewhere as well as small scale plant sales. They were an active and knowledgeable group.

The name of the organization was changed to The Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia at the Annual Meeting in November 1965. The Seed Exchange began in 1970. The history of that appeared in Vol. 47, No. 3 (May/June 2004) pg. 51. It consisted initially of North American native seeds and has continued to expand to include seed from around the world.

The AGC co-hosted the First Interim Rock Garden Conference in 1976 entitled "Ipines of the Americas" welcoming delegates from all over the world. We hosted the fourth Western Winter Study Weekend in 1979 and have continued to host them every five years or so, other meetings being hosted by various chapters of The North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) and the Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society (VIRAGS). We have taken an active interest in the University of BC Botanical Garden, particularly the E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden, and the VanDusen Botanical Garden.

Membership has of course increased markedly since the early days (currently about 500) with an international membership nearly as large as our Canadian membership and larger than the local membership of nearly 200. We greatly value all of our members and welcome their input: seed donations, Bulletin contributions and comments. Plant sales and the seed exchange have kept pace with the increased membership. We look forward to the next 50 years of enjoying, growing, sharing and preserving the wonderful plants to which our club is dedicated and to enjoying the company of like-minded folks everywhere.

REMINISCENCES ~ A Memory Walk with Bob Woodward

Well, well, well, the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia is fifty years old! And the fourth "well" refers to just how old that makes me feel. Ai-yi-yi! Jim (MacPhail) and I joined sometime in the early '60's because Jim's mother and stepfather Iva and Don Angerman were charter members of the club and mad-keen alpine (and all sorts of other) gardeners. When we visited the homestead on Westview Drive the house was often filled with the likes of Alleyne Cook (Barbara came later), Grace Conboy, George Boving, Marion MacDonell, Lea Macey, someone known only as Old Sam – all members of the Alpine Garden Club. They would be going on about the poor behaviour of folks such as Nelly Moser and Pink Pearl and such. I thought they were very rude to talk that way about their friends (secretly I thought they must be consorting with dance hall queens) but it turned out they were talking about a clematis and a rhododendron, whatever they were. And when they launched into torrents of Latin, I simply put them down as dotty but harmless. Then Don became ill and we were recruited to give a hand in the garden. Neither of us knew a tulip from a daffodil but slowly but surely these wee bits of greenery and colour exerted a power over us and Iva persuaded us to join the Club (as it was known). The rest, as they say, is history. And what do I remember?

THE SHOWS: Iva had divided and shared her collection of shortias and schizocodons (a thing I would be petrified of doing to this day... she still has a great love of these plants at the age of 102 when we show her slides of them). We plunked them into our tentative garden and they thrived. She suggested we "show" them in the Spring Show. We gathered a few plants, bunged them into puts, and sneaked them onto the show benches. We thought we were being terribly forward and presumptuous. The next day we visited the Show and found that we had won (!) not only several blue ribbons but also a trophy or two. And we were smack in the middle of our first Alpine Garden Club Controversy. I had entered a plant of *Draba mollissima* with one flower on it (all it ever had). Thelma Chapman (who later became our great friend) had entered the same plant in the same class (Cushion Plants) but she had cut off all the myriad flowers in order to emphasize the "cushionness". My plant won, apparently because it had flowered (!) and the ruckus began. P.S. I still don't know the answer: should the flowers be removed if a plant is entered in the cushion class? You don't want to muck up with flowers a perfect cushion, as Jim once publicly remarked. But I just loved the Show (still do) with its marvelous array of potted plants. That year's Best in Show was Iva's *Ranunculus amplexicaulis* and that began my lifelong love affair with white buttercups.

Not surprisingly we became mad keen on the Spring Show. We'd empty our alpine house, dig up practically our whole garden, cover our windowsills to push plants ahead, plunge plants in deep shade to hold them back : the whole rigmarole. In those days the Show and the Plant Sale were the same day and visitors would enquire if they could have two or three of those nice eritrachiums and maybe a few of those ever-so-pretty shortias that they had seen on the Show benches. There were wonderful displays (I still have slides) of such things as Alpines of the World, showing the geographical distribution of displayed alpine plants. Thelma and Nan Sherlock did educational fern displays. There were bonsai displays and simulated rock gardens with such plants as *Eriogonum thymoides* and *Fritillaria purdyi*. In 1967 the Club presented a spectacular Centennial Display of Canadian Plants. Once the whole Show was

a Salute to Japan and that month's Bulletin was full of things Japanese including some lovely haiku. My favourite:

Rainy afternoon
Little daughter you will never
Teach that cat to dance.

In the competitive classes were large collection entries such as Jim's trillium collection with about 20 species. The Victoria people (as they were known) brought magnificent display plants such as Vern and Iris Ahiers' legendary *Daphne petraea* (always in perfect bloom) or Albert Demezey's saxifragas. Ed and Ethel Lohbrunner were often the judges and hard taskmasters they were.

There were strange happenings. Jim once won Best Plant in Show for a cushion of *Eritrichium nanum* with one flower (I was sorting slides the other day and came across a picture of said victor). Non-gardening friends attended the Show and I can still picture the convulsive laughter that overcame them as they gazed at the eritrichium and its trophy. Another time I won with a pot of *Fritillaria recurva*. I also grew the plant on a dry bank outside our garden fence. The day before the Show, while making my morning rounds, I came across the sweetest little girl smiling away at her clutch of posies she had picked for her teacher, the only one in Christendom, I'm sure, that had a student bring her a *Fritillaria recurva* bouquet. "How nice," I muttered. I entered every year a plant of *Gypsophila aretioides*, a form of the plant that made a rock-hard cushion. It won every year. No thanks to me. I did nothing. Proof of my theory that it's the plant, not the person that deserves the accolades. Jim later killed it at UBC.

There were wonderful plants I remember: Phyllis Munday's pot of *Anemone patens*; *Primula cusickiana*; *Trillium rivale* (usually Vera Peck); Show Auriculas (Amanda Offers' great green); *Ranunculus andersonii*; Ian Gillam's double trillium and, oh yes, *Cypripedium japonicum*; Daphne Guernsey's amazing rosulate viola; so many plants from Frank Dorsey, particularly his Pleiones; Muriel Ross's most unusual double red primula which she grew from seed; *Asperula suberosa*; *Gentiana verna*; *Tropaeolum tricolorum*; *Androsace vandellii* (which is No. 1 Plant on the project I am working on: my proposed Website of My Version of The World's Most Beautiful Plants): the pictures in my mind are legion.

And there were judging controversies (still are, I'm sure, but I don't get to hear about them now; out of politeness, I guess). Once Iva entered a collection of the notoriously difficult Siskiyou violas (*V. hallii*, *V. cuneata et al.*) all in bloom and it was beaten by a collection of sempervivums. "There were more of them," explained the judge. Iva in her second century still hasn't got over that one. And there were many more disqualifications in those days. I haven't got over the rejection of a good plant of *Cytisus demissus*, my favourite alpine broom, on the grounds of non-hardiness (!). I haven't been able to grow it since. Same with *Tchihatchewia isatidea* (I should have got a trophy just for being able to spell the label), a plant I dropped and smashed to bits as I was placing it on the show bench. Hoodooed plants, I call them.

Later Jim and I began judging the Show. Not a good idea as we were (and are) sometimes miles apart on what constitutes a great plant. That's why we resorted to averaging of several judges' decisions. But my favourite reminiscence of all, concerning the Show, was to watch Thelma Chapman sweep into the hall after the judging, hands on her hips, a scowl on her face, muttering as she surveyed the ribbons and trophies, "Who the hell judged this Show???" Then I would appear and confess. She had her standards did

Thelma and I so wish we had someone to rip the judging to shreds today with such panache. Later she became a judge. Guess what happened.



Tulipa orphanidea
Geoff Williams

THE BULLETIN: Jim became Editor of the Bulletin and I was chief typist and bottlewasher. Like the Shows it was great fun and madly hectic. Jim was adept at humorous articles such as those his imaginary nursery company Whin, Furze, and Gorse and their various correspondence with one Carl Linnaeus about shipments of Love-lies-a-bleeding and Spotted Touch-me-not and Kiss-me-at-the-garden gate. (Sample line: "My thanks for the Live-forever. It died in transit"). Or Madame Flora's *Horoscope for Gardeners* by one Flora Bundy. The whole family was pressed into service. I did a monthly column on "Meet the Natives" (e.g. *Claytonia nivalis*), and later "What's in Bloom This Month". Iva wrote poems, did articles on her favourite plants (hepaticas, *Primula allionii*)

warned us to Beware the *Agriolimnax* (aka the Slug). She also had to illustrate Farreriana (favourite quotations from the greatest of all garden writers, Reginald Farrer). Here's one I remember her cartoon for: "*Leontopodium alpinum* (edelweiss) is not a rarity ...one is treading dense flat lawns of it in places where a dozen prams could race abreast without imperilling themselves, their conductors, or their inmates." Can you imagine the picture she drew? I rhapsodized authoritatively on such plants as *Gilia cephaloidea* (today I don't even know what it is: so much for rhapsody and authority). Francesca Darts roamed about her garden each month to tell us what was in bloom in *A Walk in the Garden*. I later did the same thing in our garden. Art Guppy, Geoff and Audrey Williams did travelogues of marvellous places to see plants. Geoff was later Editor and Audrey wrote such informative articles on a wide range of plants and places to see them. Best of all (for me) was the long-running mock epic battle between Cookie (Alleyne Cook) and me. Each month we would assault each other's horticultural prowess and taste. Many "fancy that's" and "who on earth would do it that way?" and "surely you wouldn't give garden space to that bit of nothing". It was all such a hoot.

Among my favourite articles: Jim's *Labelmanship* or *How to Acquire a Reputation as a Grower of Difficult Plants Without Actually Growing Difficult Plants*; his frantic *Plea for Adjectives* (to describe plants) and Art Guppy's reply with such suggestions as castaneous, disarticulate, basifixed, antrorse: quick, definitions, please); the report on our first trip to the Beartooth and the Bighorns, still etched indelibly in my memory; the symposium on the alpine house; the Bun Syndrome (all about cushion plants, silly); many how-to articles on how to build a peatbed or Thelma's upside-down scree; for Christmas A Festive Menu of Edible Plants (*mit* illustrations) etc. etc. A photography competition was initiated and the winning pictures were collected in *Albums of Western Natives*. I wonder

if the Club still has those albums. When Linda Verbeek was Editor I was allowed to write articles on such things dear to me as Arisaemas, Silver Plants, and Alstroemerias (not so dear anymore: too weedy). That was great fun and luckily for the world it came before I lapsed into my corydalis mania.

THE SEED EXCHANGE: Then Jim had the bright idea that the Club needed a Seed Exchange. So our summers were spent roving the land in search of seeds. At first the Exchange was limited to plants from North America and we spent most of our summers searching for seeds all over the place. I think it's worth repeating the list of the most popular plants on the first Club Seedlist: they are, I think, the creme-de-la-creme of North American flora. In order, they were: *Aquilegia jonesii* (those were the days we could grow, and even flower it; now it dies as soon as I look at it); *Campanula piperi*; *Viola flettii*; *Clematis tenuiloba*; *Douglasia nivalis*; *Kelseya uniflora*; *Penstemon barrettiae*; *Eritrichium nanum*; *Eritrichium howardii*; *Collomia debilis*; *Silene ingramii*; *Douglasia montana*; *Gilia spicata*; *Gentiana glauca*; *Synthyris lanuginosa*. Then the List expanded to include South America and we got to spend time there. Finally, thanks to Vera Peck and Pam Frost and many others, it grew into the wonderful worldwide list it is today. Seed collecting can be very exciting and it can be very painstaking. I remember once collecting phlox seeds in the Rocky Mountains. Collecting phlox seeds requires infinite care and infinite patience. I had little of either and when a passersby stopped to inquire what on earth I was doing, I replied, "Collecting seeds." Wan smile. "Oh, have you discovered a new vegetable?" Grin.

THE OUTINGS: Then as now there were many garden visits and explorations into the wild to see the plants as they should be (the Olympics and Mt. Rainier and the Wenatchees were two favourite destinations). We all trekked off to places such as the Columbia River Gorge (*Penstemon barrettiae* and the lowland *Douglasia laevigata*), Hart Pass, and every year Botanie Valley (trips often organized by Al Rose, who knew every nook and cranny of Western North America where good plants grew). On one trip to Botanie, Iva and her friend went early and camped out on the meadow, only to be harangued all night by a grizzly. It didn't phase her one bit. Also every year were The Great Tufa Hunts, where we all collected carsfull of tufa in what was known as The Agony Pit for our gardens. In 1971 Ed Darts organized a "club outing" to the International Conference in Harrogate, England. Some of us had to stay home but Jim and Iva went, and Jim was one of the judges of the Conference Show. Playing with the big boys. He later wrote a Harrogate Kaleidoscope about the trip and the conference and the show.

In 1976 the Club co-hosted (with the Seattle branch of the American Rock Garden Society) an Interim International Conference. We were all plunged into frantic activity. We had divided the continents into about twenty regions and mountain ranges. People chose their region and produced exhaustive plant lists and a living display consisting of huge troughs and backdrops with illustrations and information. First we had to make the troughs, then find the plant material, then find the illustrations, type the information, assemble the boards, and put up the displays. It was a monumental effort on the part of the Club. In the Vancouver part of the Conference were displays, panel discussions about favourite North and South American alpiners, a salmon barbecue etc., etc. Jim was Co-Chairman and our president Rosemary Burnham calmly led us through it all. After the Conference Roy Mansfield organized a trip to the Olympic Mountains in full bloom. Much appreciated by the visitors. A particularly popular presentation was the "How To" workshop where various members made

hypertufa troughs, sowed seed, pricked out, etc, etc. I seem to remember Thelma and I showed how to grow celmisias. As if we knew! I can't grow the wretched things to this day. Sherry Sutton later assembled a marvelous book on the whole enterprise. I must dig it out and do a little more nostalgia tripping. What I remember with a certain amount of wicked glee is that the American visitors had to pay extra money because the Canadian dollar was worth more than the American dollar.

Reading old Bulletins gives one wonderful ideas about where to go plant viewing today. Last summer we explored the Yalacom River near Lillooet and found wonderful plants (phacelia, white penstemon, chaenactis etc.) We had first heard about the area years and years ago from Evelyn Lamb. We visit quite often Cornwall Lookout, particularly to find what has come to be known as Evelyn's *Draba* (*Draba densifolia*).

STUDY WEEKENDS: Jim and Roy Davidson came up with another idea (to keep us out of the pubs) that ensured we couldn't all just rest on our laurels. In order to get through the horrors of winter we could all meet in February for plant chat, slide shows, etc. etc. The first one was held in Seattle and the chief speaker was John Watson. After his talks on the plants of South America, Margaret Williams, Alice Morris, Barbara Menzies, Jim and I decided we had to see for ourselves and that summer we roamed about Peru and Ecuador finding nototriches and red gentians and weird composites (wernerias) and even weirder valerians such as *Stangea henrici*, more insect than plant but strangely beautiful. Later the Study Weekend was several times held in Vancouver. Daphne Guernsey always managed to cajole an impressive array of international speakers.

THE MEETINGS: I remember learning so much: about New Zealand buttercups from a SFU university professor, Dr. Fisher; plants from New Guinea and other places by Keith Wade; Professor Kay Beamish on so many topics (ditto Ed Lohbrunner); Rex Murfitt on saxifragas; Roy Davidson on penstemons and so on – I'm beginning to sound like the King of Siam.

Then as now we all brought in plants for viewing. Francisca's cut branches from her many unusual trees and shrubs were a highlight of every meeting. Once we brought in a plant of the trillium relative, *Scoliopus bigelovii* but it so stenchd up the place we were asked to leave. "Me and my *Scoliopus* have been thrown out of better joints than this dump" we harrumphed.

THE PEOPLE: When we first joined we met so many knowledgeable and friendly people: Bodil Leamy was into hypericums and potentillas. Oh yes! I'd better pay attention because she knows so much about plants. Now I'm into hypericums and potentillas. Susan Watson (who had started a B.C. Primula Society which melded and became the Alpine Garden Club of B.C.) had written and illustrated what is still one of the best monographs on the genus *Primula*. She became a good friend and she and I co-operated on a monograph on erythroniums. (You wouldn't know it today: I can't name one from the other). Margaret Charlton seemed to be a bit like me: hardly a plant she didn't like.



Roella ciliata
Mary Comber-Miles

Later she and Charlie Sale became our resident experts on arisaemas. Don Armstrong was very definite about which plants were worthy and which weren't. So many others: Thea Foster with her non-stop enthusiasm and marvellous eye for primulas; Peggy Guppy, one of the most organized and thorough gardeners I ever knew; Ted and Mary Greig (Iva visited them on Vancouver Island and returned with *Gaultheria sinensis*, with the most beautiful blue berries I have ever seen); the quiet artistry, especially for displays, of Helen Moor; the Scottish contingent of Harry and Fiona Green (we still grow Fiona's unnamed hardy moraea and Harry wrote provocative book reviews and asked impertinent botanical questions); Ruth Anderson and the marvelous plants she grew from seed (I still have her *Paeonia obovata* var. *alba*, one of my favourite plants); and Ernestine Lamoureux – always known as "our Kelowna correspondent". The Club was (and is) mightily blessed by so many excellent plant illustrators: Rosemary Burnham, Winona Pulleyblank, Mary Comber Miles (I wrote articles about her father Harold Comber, one of the great plant explorers of all time); Lyn Noble (she came to our garden this summer to study calochortus for several superb illustrations); Anne Aikins; Geoff Williams; Ann Hartman and so many others. And, of course, all the other people mentioned in this memory walk. Thelma Chapman, when I first met her, asked me, "How many varieties of clematis do you grow?" She was in her clematis period but I misheard her and thought she had said "tomatoes." "Oh God, you mean there are alpine tomatoes and I have to start collecting them? Let me out of here!" I have many many "Thelma" stories.

Perhaps the most interesting club member (to me) was Mrs. Bellow. She was a reclusive eccentric of French extraction who grew – or slaughtered – all her own food. She had a ramshackle garden with the most amazing plants, all grown from seed. On any given visit (you had to prove your mettle before you could visit) you might see such rarities as *Weldenia candida*, *Rhododendron ludlowii*, *Lilium brownii* subsp. *viridulum* and Aretian androsaces. Every square inch was fascinating: I was like a child in a toy shop.

We corresponded with overseas and American members and often visited and they visited us: Roy Davidson, Sallie Allen (the Ericaceae lady) Harold and Altha Miller, the Suttons, Laura Jezik (the frit lady) in Seattle; Linc and Timmy Foster and Paul Palomino and Ellie Brinckerhoff back East; Doris Page in Victoria; Boyd Kline and Lawrence Crocker in Oregon; Fritz Kummert in Austria; Roy Elliott and Jim Archibald and Brian Halliwell in England; Sheila Maule in Scotland. Once Iva and I were in Czechoslovakia and went to visit Olga Duchakova, whom we regularly corresponded with. It was the time of the troubles with the Soviets. The taxi driver drove up and down several streets hollering her name. Finally, he assured us he had found her place but she was not home. So we left our gifts and a note. Several months later we received a thank you letter from a total stranger who marvelled at how generous Canadians were, just dropping off gifts willy-nilly and what exactly were those pretty picture books with all the Latin names. Of course, we had got the wrong address.

All in all, the Club has been a wonderful part of my life and probably the main reason why I'm as ditzy about plants in 2005 as I was forty years ago. Thelma once quoted Bertrand Russell, the eminent philosopher, in our Bulletin: "*I didn't think Happiness was ever attainable until I talked with a gardener; yes, gardening is an old recipe for happiness*". "*He who loves a garden still his Eden keeps.*"

~ Bob Woodward

FROM THE EDITOR ~ Sue Evanetz

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this first commemorative issue of what is shaping up to be a year of memories and anecdotes from members from far and wide. We have been thrilled by wonderfully generous response to our call for reminiscences and will be extending this theme throughout this anniversary year. And if you have an idea or perhaps some photos or slides to share, please call or email me – we really do want to hear from you.

We shall continue to have “themes” throughout the year – this being late winter, we are concentrating on seeds. Our next issue will consider exploration from the High Arctic to Antarctica and everywhere else in between. In early summer we shall be looking at shrubs, conifers and other evergreens and woody plants suitable in both scale and appearance for a rock garden; your comments and suggestions will be very welcome indeed. We also hope perhaps to include some thoughts on bonsai.

The Bulletin will go from strength to strength with your help and input – thanks to everyone who has already sent in material, and if you haven't yet sent in something, I greatly look forward to hearing from you! ~ Sue Evanetz



2004-2005 SEED EXCHANGE

~ Ian & Phyllis Plenderleith

Apologies to those donors whose names did not appear with the seed list, either inadvertently or because their donations arrived too late for inclusion. Late arrival was often due to delays in customs, sometimes for weeks. The following donors should have been included: C. Bailey, R. Beecham, H. Blackman, J. Bridge, S. Eriksson, R. Gordon, J. & G. Jacklin, A. Leggatt, M. Korizkova, J. Lane Gay, Otago (NZ) Alpine Garden Group, D. Sierzega, M. Picard, and G. Williams. Thank you all, I hope that we have not omitted others.



Things progressed well and we had the seeds in the mail in early January. I must, however, apologize for the number of spelling and inclusion errors in the seed list. Perhaps we can blame these error and omissions on our inexperience.

It must be the first law of seed exchanges that the most desirable and requested seeds are also those in shortest supply. In some cases, seed listed was in very small quantity or did not arrive at all. We would like to fulfill everyone's wish lists, but that, sadly, is not possible.

We hope that you will enjoy your seeds and their results. Please keep our exchange in mind later this year at seed harvesting time – and why not write to us about your results?

THE AGCBC SEED EXCHANGE: A Personal Reminiscence

~ Pam Frost

I first heard of the Alpine Garden Club in 1978 when Geoff and Audrey Williams kindly offered plants to those of us potting up for the VanDusen Plant Sale. I remember my astonishment at the vast range of plants in their garden, which were totally unfamiliar to me, in particular the small Iris species native to North America, *I. lacustris*, *I. cristata* and others. "You should join the Alpine Garden Club and learn" said Audrey to me. And I did, and I have.

One of my early memories is of being exhorted, as a beginner, to enter something in the monthly Pot Show. With more enthusiasm than good sense, I dug a plant of *Pulsatilla patens*, which was looking extremely pretty and took it to the meeting. That formidable gardener and judge that evening, Thelma Chapman, took one look, pointed at it and pronounced, "That will die." Sadly, she was absolutely right.

Thelma had a legendary garden that I saw only once. Tiny, on a north-facing slope adjoining the commercial district, it was filled with rare and difficult plants. I remember particularly a vast range of dwarf rhododendrons and many, many different erythroniums. She left her plants to Don Armstrong who had helped her in her garden, and his garden in its turn contained treasures to marvel at. I feel very honoured to have inherited some of his exquisite bulbs and ferns, and I cherish them.

One of the greatest joys of gardening is that plants carry their history with them, so one can greet and remember friends as one is working in one's garden. Don and Barbara Durrant and Nan Sherlock and Marion McDonnell are all here in my garden together with many others from both near and far away. Since many plants have also been grown from seed, these too have their provenance. After all, "collected on a Kew/Edinburgh expedition to Nepal" does add a certain aura to a plant even if it becomes a complete thug, swamps its host and has flowers inferior to those at present in the trade – *Dicentra scandens* for example!

This leads to another early memory: all unwitting I offered to help pack seeds for our exchange. How hard could that be? As I sat very quietly at Barbara Durrant's house the talk flowed around me. "This is not aquilegia seed," "This seed does not look very good," "Oh dear! This is just chaff." How could they possibly tell? Little did I imagine that one day I too might share some of this arcane knowledge acquired through years of fascination with seed and with growing plants from seed. Nor would I have believed it possible that I would actually take responsibility for the seed exchange for twelve years.

The seed exchange, although it involved more hours of work that I could possibly have dreamed of, was for me a most rewarding experience. Through it I got to know many of our members, especially those who donated seeds, and I am very grateful for the notes of thanks, encouragement, descriptions of their plants and gardens, photographs and cards over the years. More than anyone else, however, it has been Vera Peck who kept me going with her humour and wealth of knowledge, and I do miss those lengthy telephone conversations. I once asked her what lewisia seeds should look like. "They should be round, black and shiny, and jump around like fleas!" Perfect – although Vera maintains that she never said that!

~ Pam Frost.

Founding members Lance Taylor, Susan (later Watson) & Dale Worthington, Grace Conboy in 1955



The AGCBC at Botanie June 4th, 1966. Including the Guppy family, the Bellingers, Bill Brandner, Rosemary Burnham and ??? Notice the *Erythronium grandiflorum* in the foreground.





Balsamorhiza sagittata, *Castilleja* (?*hispida*), *Delphinium nuttallianum* and *Senecio*: Botanie Valley, late June 1966



Lewisia pygmaea at Botanie Valley



The Letters of Carl Linnaeus

Introductory Note: In keeping with our historical emphasis in this year's issues of the *Bulletin*, the following correspondence between the great Swedish botanist Linnaeus and his nurseryman in England has recently come to light. It predates his invention of the binominal system of botanical nomenclature, and is published here courtesy of its discoverer, Jim MacPhail.

Messrs. Whin, Furze and Gorse,
Melton Mowbray, Yoiks!
Gentlemen,

Uppsala, Sweden,
21st day of March, A.D. 1728

I have been, of late, bitten by the gardening bug, and while browsing through the latest medieaval herbal, I encountered one of your ads. Could you be so kind as to send me one of each of the following: False bugbane, Stitchwort, Brown-eyed Susan, Spotted touch-me-not, Johnny-jump-up, and Kiss-me-at-the -garden-gate?

Horticordially yours,

C. Linnaeus.

Carolus Linnaeus Esq.,
Esteemed Customer,

Melton Mowbray, Yoiks!
7th day of April, 1728

To hand this day your missile of the vernal equinox, where be ordered various and sundry herbes and worts which be dispatcheth forthwith. Enclosed, as a mark of our esteem, is a sample of our latest introduction, "Live-forever". 'Tis a plant indeed with so many wondrous properties, that it is said the assiduous use thereof may render men immortal.

Your obedient servants,
Messrs. Whin, Furze and Gorse.

Messrs. Whin, Furze & Gorse,
Sirs,

Uppsala, Sweden,
27th day of May, A.D. 1728

Plants received this day. You seem to have confused false bugbane with true flea-bane. Wort-wise, I may not be with it, but I did ask for stitchwort and have received either mugwort, lousewort, ragwort, or possibly the greater toothwort! And when, may I ask, did Brown-Eyed Susan turn into Blue-Eyed Mary? I would say at first glance that the Johnny-jump-up is surely Johnny-go-to-bed-at-noon. I was pleased, however, with the Kiss-me-at-the-garden-gate. I note that you are now offering plants in collections. Would you ship off collection "A", one each of Wolfbane, Henbane, Bearbane and Wife-bane; Collection "B", one each of Star-of-Bethlehem, Summer Snowflake, Nap-at-noon, Sleepy Dick; Collection "C", one each of Joy-of-Spring, Farewell-to-spring, Hello-summer, Bye-bye Autumn, and Whoopee-winter.

Hoping you chaps can get on the ball, Anxiously yours,

C. Linnaeus.

P.S. My thanks for the Live-forever. it died in transit. C.L.

Carolus Linnaeus Esq.,
Honoured Customer, Sir,

Melton Mobray, Yoiks!
19th day of June, 1728

Consternation reigneth! Wretched handiboy misplaceth all the labels; for Brown-eyed Susan read Black-eyed Susan. Supply of Johnny-go-to-bed-at-noon depleteth. Wouldst thou care for Johnny-up-at-noon? May it please thee to note our newest Collection "D", Pussytoes, Pussypaws, Pussyears, Pussyweed, and Pussytails.

Always ready to please,

Messe/^rs Whin, Furze & Gorse.

Messrs. Broom Nos. 1 and 2 and 3
Sirs,

Uppsala, Sweden,
21st day of July A.D. 1728

Wifebanes will not grow in this country. Your Collection "B" (Star of Bethlehem and such potpourri) turn out to be all the same plant. Your Collection "C" arrived with all the plants in full bloom. The only plant that pleases me is Always-ready-to-please. Best you fire your handiboy forthwith.

Yours in anger,

C. Linnaeus.

Carolus Lunnaeus Esq.,
Sir,

Melton Mobray, Yoiks!
27th day of August, A.D. 1728

With our compliments thou wilt find encloseth our bonus collection, one adder's tongue, one cobra lily, one viper's bugloss, one death camass and two poison ivy.

Hortivenomously yours,

Messrs. Whin, Furze & Gorse.



*"Nomina si nescis, perit et cognitis rerum." - Linnaeus 1739
(Unless you know the names, your knowledge of those matters
perishes).*



A PERSONAL VIEWPOINT ~ Frank Dorsey

I would like to be numbered among the hoary old moss-backs who had the forethought and the energy to found the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia fifty years ago. Alas my own connection with the Club goes back only some twenty or twenty-five years. In my ignorance I'd long shunned alpine gardening and thought of rock garden enthusiasts as the stodgy people who made the dog's cemetery type of rockery still to be found in many an English front garden. My first contact with the Club occurred when I wandered into the Spring Sale in a dreary building in Burnaby. I was astonished to see so great and colourful an array of trees, shrubs and plants. I recall buying a sequoiadendron fortunately it died!



Grace Conboy and her daughter Wendy select plants for the Show, April 12, 1963

At the time, rhododendrons were my particular interest but I soon realized that the Woodward's "\$1.49 day" gallon-size rhododendron (and there were some very good ones) became five foot monsters in a very few years. Removing a couple of big ones left room for a couple of dozen alpines.

Propagating from divisions, cuttings and, in particular from seed, has filled just about every square inch in my smallish garden. Over the years the Club has afforded me with any number of areas of interest. The events that come to mind are the sales, the annual shows, the monthly pot shows and the hiking trips. For several years now we have had both a Spring and a Fall sale. The gems to be found on the specialists' tables and the treasures brought in by the backyard growers make for difficult choices at the

members' pre-sale. While I haven't yet seen any display of fisticuffs, there have been some vicious little snatch and grab incidents! Early in its history, I understand, the Club had a joint Show and Sale, The sale gradually became the dominant feature and the show simply disappeared. Fortunately some far-sighted and strong-minded committee members took the bull by the horns, rented the VanDusen Hall for the weekend and said "We're going to have a Show." The Show Schedule posed a problem but it was solved by simply using the Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Show Schedule with minor variations. The shows have been a success, perhaps not an overwhelming success as many members prefer not to exhibit ("I don't grow in pots".... I don't like to see plants lined up on a table".... etcetera.) The well conducted Pot Shows are a very popular part of the monthly program but again could do with a few more entries. Newer members are particularly attracted by the variety the exhibits and one frequently hears "Where can I get one of those?" (The answer is usually "Grow your own" or "Try the next Plant Sale").

My favourite Club activities are hikes taken over the years. In the Club's early days weekend camps during the Spring and Summer were a popular and regular feature of the AGC of BC. Members and their children would travel all over the Interior, set up Camp and botanize in the area. The club even had its own flag! The camps were discontinued and the Club seems to have taken fewer and fewer hikes. There has been something of a resurgence of interest in the last ten or twelve years but we could do better. I, for one, can think of no more enjoyable experience than seeing the *Campanula piperi* on Hurricane Ridge in the Olympics and *Saxifraga oppositifolia* in Manning Park, the *Calypso bulbosa* in Botanie Valley, the *Clematis columbiana* near Oliver, the *Erythronium oregonum* at Horth Hill, the *Lewisia tweedyi* in Manning Park and the *Lewisia rediviva* at Richter Pass. It is unfortunate that the close-by but low elevation North Shore mountains do not provide the same variety of plants. However, there is always the *Gentiana sceptrum* to be seen in the fall on Hollyburn Mountain.

There is one most enjoyable aspect of membership in the Club – the comradeship built up by a common interest. To visit a member's garden either informally or during an Open Garden Tour is always a pleasure as is the opportunity to show others around your own garden. I dislike to see anyone leaving my garden empty handed and I'm not shy about begging a plant! I picked today some *Iris unguicularis* that originally came from Jo Bridge's garden, I have a nicely budded *Kalmiopsis leachiana* from the Plenderleiths and I'm looking forward to seeing the slate-blue flowers of *Deinranthe caerulea* Vera Peck gave me.

~ Frank Dorsey

The Gardener's Curse

~

*Awake, my Muse, bring bell and book
To curse the hand that cuttings took.
May every sort of garden pest
His little plot of ground infest.
Let caterpillars, pascid bugs,
Leaf-hoppers, thrips, all sorts of slugs,
Play havoc with his garden plot,
And hard late frost destroy the lot!*

Lady Laura Maconochie (1887-1972) wrote this in response to complaints about visitors stealing cuttings from the Scottish National Trust Garden at Inverewe in Wester Ross, Scotland.

Thanks to Erica Dunn for this little poem.

MEMORIES OF EARLY DAYS ~ Art Guppy

The name "Alpine Garden Club", actually goes back to about 1930 in Britain with the founding of the Alpine Garden Society. In our province that name was adopted in the mid-1950's by a group of alpine garden enthusiasts led by Don and Iva Angerman. A short time earlier, a group of primula enthusiasts, among whom Roy and Margaret Boyce were prominent members, formed a club probably called the Primula Society, though its actual name is lost in the past. The two groups had so much in common they joined to form the Primula and Alpine Garden Society. (In those days the term "society" lacked the legal status it has today and was used rather informally.) Eventually, the Primula and Alpine Group became the Alpine Garden Club.



Fritillaria lanceolata
Anne Aikins

anne aikins

During the early 1950s I was a student at UBC, with my education being paid for by the taxpayers as a reward for having lugged a heavy rifle around for a time near the end of World War II. (Governments were much more generous in those days.) While walking about on the campus, I came upon a delightful little garden and fell into conversation with the man tending it. That man was George Boving, and he explained to me that it was an alpine garden – and so my botanical education began. I realize now that the education that started with my conversation with George Boving has become more valuable to me than all I learned from the courses at UBC, though the latter did enable me to earn a living as a teacher. George invited me to see his garden at his home on West 4th Ave., and I received another injection of valuable knowledge. I remember George telling me he was having difficulty growing *Cornus canadensis* (which was just bunchberry to me at the time), and I was very surprised. I had spent my early years at Tofino, and there bunchberry seemed to be everywhere, but was especially common on old tree stumps. If I had known then what I know now, I could have given advice to the master, and told George to keep the plant

slightly moist and to mulch it with old sawdust or decaying wood, which was the combination that made the plants grow so well at Tofino.

Of course George Boving was not the only member of what became the Alpine Garden Club who contributed to my education. Then, as now, the Club members have between them an immense wealth of knowledge, which rubs off on anyone associated with the group. A very early contributor to my education was Roy Boyce, who was an excellent flower photographer. From him I learned the fundamentals of photographing plants, especially wildflowers.

Having mentioned George Boving's little garden at UBC, which to me at the time was quite wondrous, I must also mention that after George retired, that little garden was taken over by Karl Wrase, who made it even more wondrous. Those tiny little gardens were nothing compared with the very impressive gardens at UBC today, but they had their charm, and at a time when

I was just beginning to learn something about botanical matters, they impressed me greatly. Karl had learned gardening in Europe and as a result his UBC garden was somewhat different from what one usually sees. Two things in that garden have remained in my memory. There was an extremely beautiful group of *Primula vialii*, a species I had not previously seen, and the brilliantly colored spikes of bloom impressed me greatly. The unopened buds towards the tips of the spikes were crimson, while the open flowers of the lower part of the spikes were a contrasting bluish purple. Higher up in the garden was a plant so strange I am at a loss to think of anything to compare it with, and I must admit my memory of it has been somewhat blurred by time. It formed a large, low dome on the ground, with small flowers and leaves around the edge. At the time I was too unfamiliar with botanical matters to understand what I was seeing, but I think now the dome must have consisted of spent flowers and seed capsules. I have often wondered about the identity of that plant. It was scarcely beautiful, but it certainly was strange.

Although Karl was a quiet person, he did have some rather blunt things to say when the university bulldozed away his little alpine garden to make room for a new building. He and his wife were for many years members of the Alpine Garden Club. As he spoke little, he attracted little attention to himself, which was unfortunate, as we could have learned much from him.

Of the many botanizing trips shared by members of the Club, the ones I remember best were to Botanie Valley. On a trip in early June 1966, we hiked up the steep slope west of Botanie Lake to the rolling meadows with their awe-inspiring carpet of millions of yellow *Erythronium grandiflorum* blooms interspersed with the white of *Claytonia lanceolata*. On a trip toward the end of June, perhaps in the same year, we saw the same meadows clothed in a multicoloured cloak woven of *Balsamorhiza sagittata*, *Lypinus arcticus*, *Delphinium nuttallianum*, *Castilleja hispida*, and much, much more. On that trip I led the group to a little hollow with a small population of perhaps a dozen *Lewisia pygmaea*, which delighted everyone. The species is not showy, but its dwarf size and comparative rarity make it rather special. One lady was so impressed that when the rest of us moved on, she remained behind and collected the entire population! In those days collecting in the wild was not frowned upon as it is today, but that lady was certainly terribly carried away by her excitement. However, to put things in perspective, I must mention that about that time the hillside to the west of Botanie Lake, which had numerous plants of *Cypripedium montanum* and many other lovely things, was logged of its rather stunted trees, and in the process deep gullies were cut across the slope, destroying millions of plants and depositing a vast amount of silt in the lake. Today my memories of Botanie, including the Club trips are both happy and somber.

PS: Regarding the lady who collected *Lewisia*, she is long dead, and I think that Peggy Guppy and I are the only ones who know who did it.



Xerophyllum tenax
Mildred Wells



THE MIRACLE OF SEEDS ~ Elke Knechtel, Maple Ridge, B.C.

After many years of producing plants for my nursery one job that continues to thrill me each year is growing plants from seeds. There is something wonderful in the abundant promise of seeds in those neat little packages carrying genetic material able to produce duplicate plants. Many times the genes are mixed up a bit producing slightly different offspring. This makes growing from seed more exciting than simply producing identical copies from cuttings or division. After many years of trial and error I have come up with a system that seems to work for me, producing large quantities of plants. Here are a few tips.

Collecting your own seed is always best as you have control of the quality. Collection can be a bit of a hassle as it has to be done on an almost daily basis from midsummer onwards. Some seeds go from unripe to exploding onto the lawn or floating away on the breeze in just one hot summer day. Ripeness and viability are often hard to judge as each genus has its own

characteristics. Poppies, for example, are easy with the dry shells making a rattling noise when ripe. Geraniums on the other hand may be unripe one day and have catapulted their seeds away by the next. Their seeds also require a drying period before being ready to germinate. Then there are the notorious hellebores, which may have pre-germinated seed attached to the parent plant, and if the seedling's root dries out it may germinate poorly or not at all.

Once collected, the seeds require temporary storage. Fortunately we have a barn with a warm, dry area upstairs and cooler conditions below. Seeds are collected on their stems (saving deadheading later) and placed in paper bags with the name written on them. Members of the *Ranunculaceae* don't like dry conditions and so go downstairs while members of the *Geraniaceae* and grasses do need

drying and go upstairs. Members of the *Apiaceae* do best if sown immediately without drying. Upstairs the bags are hung on a line with clothes pins; downstairs they are stored in baskets, packed loosely to allow airing.

By early November all the bags come indoors for cleaning and packaging of the seeds. As the seeds vary from very fine dust to peanut-sized, each is a separate challenge. Viable seeds are heavier than chaff and the latter may be gently blown away from seeds, either on a sheet of paper or in a small stainless steel bowl. A range of sieves is also useful. Cleaned seeds are stored in Ziploc plastic bags, well labelled and ordered alphabetically. A small refrigerator is dedicated to their storage until sowing following complaints from



Ranunculus lyallii
Ronni Gordon

my children that space was being wasted that otherwise could be filled with food!

Sowing occurs over a long period starting in early winter with those seeds best sown fresh. Next come slow germinators like peonies and cyclamen. In midwinter seeds preferring cool conditions such as *Primulaceae*, *Ranunculaceae* and *Meconopsis* are sown. In early spring about February, I sow the cool germinators such as *Geraniaceae* and *Saxifragaceae*. In March many seeds requiring warmer conditions go in. There are always a few challenges in each group, but proper storage conditions and timing usually ensure a high success rate.

As seeding mix I use the same compost as for cuttings: a mixture of peat, perlite, vermiculite and granite grit with only a trace of fertilizer added. I don't otherwise fertilize until I see germination, when I begin to use an organic fertilizer weekly. My seeds are sown into nursery trays, often divided into six compartments. Larger seeds or quantities require a full tray. Any seeds known to require more than one season to germinate are sown into more durable pots. Seeds are sown onto the surface of the compost and covered with granite grit. This holds the seeds in contact with the damp medium, allows some light to reach them and discourages the growth of algae and liverwort. As I use no pesticides it is important that everything be kept clean and well aerated, especially so for seedlings like meconopsis that germinate readily but damp off easily. Sowing the seeds thinly helps guard against damping off and makes for easier transplanting. Seed trays are placed in a cool greenhouse (minimum temperature around $-1^{\circ}\text{C}/30^{\circ}\text{F}$). Very few of the seeds I grow require extra warmth to germinate. That is principally for annuals and tender plants.

Germination of many perennials is often irregular and I wait until March or April before transplanting. The plants are sturdier and easier to recognize when they have a few true leaves. Seedlings go directly into the pots in which they will be sold to minimize labour and transplanting shock. The pots stay in the greenhouse for a few weeks to establish before being put outdoors.

Much of what I have learned about seed collection and sowing has come from trial and error as there are few textbooks giving detailed information. The cycle of observing the pollinators at work, checking the ripening seeds, collecting and sowing them brings its rewards when cotyledons begin to emerge each spring, turning the seed trays that exciting green.

~ Elke Knechtel operates [The Perennial Gardens](#), a nursery specializing in hardy herbaceous plants located in Maple Ridge, a few km east of Vancouver in the lower Fraser Valley.



DRAINAGE MATERIALS ~ Ian Gillam, Vancouver

Roots need oxygen to live and to grow, as anyone who has inadvertently allowed a potted plant to become waterlogged can confirm. Provided it is well aerated, roots can grow in water, as in hydroponic culture or the old method of rooting cuttings in water. We are early taught that alpine plants are among those that require particularly well drained or aerated media yet a visit to the mountains in spring will show plants actively growing and beginning to flower in meadows running with snowmelt. The meltwater is undoubtedly well enriched in oxygen and is clearly not harmful to the roots. The

stagnant conditions in a waterlogged pot are very different and the mountain soil will later dry out. In cultivating these plants good drainage in the medium is indeed important.

Aeration of the medium serves two functions. It allows replenishment of the oxygen supply and it permits the products of respiration to escape. This interchange of air occurs by several means. First, gases simply diffuse through spaces in the medium, probably a slow process. Second, changes in barometric pressure and soil temperature will tend to pump air in and out of the soil space. Rainfall (or watering) will very efficiently push gases out of the soil's voids. Rainwater is obviously well saturated with oxygen and supplies some to the roots until the soil dries out somewhat. As water drains down through the soil (or is used by the plants) fresh air is drawn into the soil again. Thus both watering and drainage



are important in keeping the roots ventilated.

Drainage materials such as sand and crushed bricks or terracotta pots were components of the potting composts developed by Victorian gardeners and this term is still used. Among modern horticulturists it is disfavoured, with "aeration materials" preferred. The two names are reciprocals, corresponding to the difference between the glass being half full or half empty. The role of watering and drainage in refreshing the air spaces in the growing medium suggests that the older term remains perfectly valid and descriptive.

Broken terracotta pots are less plentiful than in the past and Victorian pot crushers are scarcer than garden boys. Pots crushed by hand with a hammer are still useful but most growers will prefer more plentifully available materials. The list below suggests some sources of materials useful for local members.

Dressing the surface of the growing medium with gravel is usual in growing alpenes, whether in pots, troughs or a rock garden. The top-dressing protects the plants from rapid changes in soil temperature, from soil splashed up by rain and provides rapid drainage around the sensitive crowns of the plants. It also gives a neatly finished yet natural appearance to the planting. To retain a reasonably natural look the grit used should be chosen with care. Few alpine plants grow in old streambeds, so gravels rounded by tumbling in water are inappropriate, as are evenly-sized crushed stone such as poultry grits. Randomly sized pieces, whether collected, from a commercial crusher or broken by hand are much more suitable.

Granite grit comes in various grades as a supplements for birds with sizes for canaries, chickens, turkeys etc. Available at feed stores, it isn't easy to locate in the metropolitan area. Otter Co-op, Langley, Cloverdale etc. stock it. Source closest to Vancouver may be a feed store in Surrey (The Country Ridge, 5825-136th St. @ Highway #10, 604-596-4704. Check that grit is in stock.) Elsewhere in B.C. shades other than light grey are to be found and make pleasing top-dressing.

Forestry sand is a fine screened river gravel available at Target (aggregate supplier, 7550 Conrad, Burnaby). The minimum order is about five 50-lb bags. This is a very useful size of gravel.

Aquarium gravel and sand are available in various grades and colours but tend to be expensive.

Pea or bird's eye gravel is available in bags at builder's supply yards or in bulk at Northwest Landscape Supply, Byrne Road, Burnaby. It is not easy to find the finer grades or much variety in colour.

Turf™ consists of low-fired clay particles relatively free of dust and intended for use by professional groundskeepers. It makes a good addition to potting mixes and is available in 50 lb bags from landscape suppliers such as Evergro (8206 Ontario St., Vancouver)

Cat litter may substitute for Turf and is available at pet stores in bags of convenient sizes. A form composed of fired or naturally hardened clay is a convenient and effective drainage material that seems to withstand frosts. It is essential to check the listed ingredients and select a product that has nothing added to control odour etc. **WC Cat**™ brand (Western Clay Products, Kamloops) has so far proven satisfactory and is widely available. Unfired clay products (clumping cat litter) turn to a sticky mass when wetted and must be avoided.

Crushed limestone is available in bags at builder's yards but is not well screened and contains too many fines. Locally it is dark grey in colour.

Pumice is available in medium bags at larger garden centres. It tends to contain a lot of fines and should be screened or washed to remove them.

Perlite is a useful additive for soil-less mixes but has some disadvantages for growing alpinists. The particles are light, both in weight and colour. With watering they tend to float to the surface of the medium, where they are not useful, and stand out as objectionably white. Vermiculite is used in soil-less mixes for bedding plants. It soon deteriorates into a wet mush and should not be used for mixes intended for outdoor use or longer term cultivation.

Roadside rock fragments provide naturalistic settings for plants and come in a range of colours and sizes. Permission of the landowner for collection is desirable. Do not remove rock from parks. Some rock types are inhibitory or toxic to many plants, so observe the local flora before collecting.



Himalayan Blue Poppies from Seed - Bill Terry

"Success with Meconopsis is the crowning achievement of any gardener".

So wrote the late Graham Stuart Thomas. True enough if you live in Australia, Texas or Regina. Not true if you have the good fortune to live in a moist and temperate climate with cool summers such as the Pacific Northwest coast.

Propagation: Obtaining seed: do not rely on commercial sources. Seed will very likely be DOA (dead on arrival). I have tested a few and only Thompson & Morgan's proved viable. A seed exchange is a better option (e.g. Alpine Garden Club of BC), but allocations are rather frugal. Best of all, get acquainted with someone who grows these poppies and gather a ripened pod in late summer. Whatever the source, keep the seed in the fridge until you're ready to start. Start seed in a controlled situation, whether indoors under lights or outside in a cold

frame. Do not plant directly in the garden. This is most unlikely to be successful. Garden books suggest starting in autumn. This works, provided night temperatures fall below 15C/60F. Sow the fresh seed in pots outside, on the surface of the compost described below, sheltered in a cold frame or under the eaves on the north side of the house. Keep out of the sun and do not let it dry out. However, there can be considerable loss of the tiny seedlings over winter. In our conditions, having tried starting the see in both fall and early spring/late winter – I get best results from the latter.

Beginning: Start seed indoors in February/March under fluorescent lights. Ordinary 40 watt tubes will do perfectly. You don't need expensive "grow lights". Lights should be controlled by a timer, providing 12 hours of light and 12 of dark. The seed trays should be as close to the lights as possible. I use plastic six-pack containers, of the sort that garden centres use for annual bedding plants. Any shallow plastic tray will do, with drainage holes of course. Whatever you use, sterilize first in a well diluted bleach bath. Do not use garden soil or your own compost. Buy a sterilized, soilless, peat-based mix such as 'Sunshine #1'. This is 70-80% sphagnum peat moss, with perlite, gypsum and small quantities of various minerals. To this I add roughly 10% by volume each of clean, coarse sand (no beach sand!) and perlite. This ensures perfect drainage. Alternatively buy 'Sunshine #4' and add no grit. Moisten the mix well. It should hold together when you squeeze a handful, but not drip. Fill the container to about 1.25cm (1/2") from the top with the damp compost, quite firmly pressed down. Scatter seed thinly on the surface, and push gently to ensure contact with the mix. Meconopsis need light for germination, so do not cover the seeds. You may (and I do) scatter a very thin coat of fine vermiculite, which helps to keep the seeds moist. Seeds need to be started in a cooler part of the house, or in a shaded, frost free, cool conservatory, where night temperatures will fall to 15°C or below. Do not use bottom heat. Keep moist, using a gentle, fine mist once or twice a day. Add no fertilizer. If your seeds are viable and if you start them as described, you'll have germination in 2-4 weeks. If by this time, there's little risk of severe frost, you may move them outside, to a space protected from slugs and out of the rain. Heavy rain can wash away all your efforts. You need to control the watering and you must make sure the seedlings do not dry out at any stage.

Transplanting: If the seedlings are very crowded, pull some out with tweezers and discard. When they have their first true leaves (tiny, hairy) they are ready to transplant, even though plants are no more than 1cm across. Use sterilized 10cm (4 inch) plastic pots, one plant per pot. Knock the seedlings out of the seed tray and very gently tease them apart, with as little disturbance as possible. Hold the plant only by a leaf, not stem, not roots. Fill a pot loosely with the sterile mixture as before, make a hole in the centre with your finger and, holding the seedling by the leaf, lower it to the correct depth. Hold it there and use your other hand to firm the compost, adding more as needed. Water gently with half-strength "plant starter", a liquid fertilizer with a high middle number (e.g. 10-50-10 or 5-15-5). This promotes root growth. Scatter a few grains of slow-release fertilizer on the surface and leave the seedling as before, sheltered from rain, sun and slugs. The transplants will be slow to start and you may lose a few. Once underway they grow rapidly. Never let them dry out.

Cultivation: Plant out in the garden at about 10-15 cm (4-6") size. Leave about 30 cm, or 1' between plants. This should be done from July to September. They need to grow on more in the garden before dormancy. Do not let them dry out. The ground should be deeply dug and enriched with lime free compost and

manure (do not use mushroom manure). In short, aim for humus-rich and well drained. Top-dress each plant with a slow-release fertilizer. Himalayan poppies are very heavy feeders. There should be no competition from tree roots. The area should be partly shaded, protected from hot afternoon sun. Deciduous shade is good, which admits plenty of winter light. Over winter, the plants will disappear entirely. Frost or snow will not damage them. However, if water pools around the crown, they'll die. In spring, all being well, you'll see furry noses emerging, followed by a rosette of hairy leaves up to 30 cm long or more and a flower spike. In summer, if the plant is preparing for a second season, you'll see new green leaves emerging at the base. If not, it's finished. Some say you should cut off the flower stem as soon as it appears in year one, in order to build up strength in the plant and ensure survival in year two (these plants have a habit of flowering themselves to death). I have never been able to bring myself to do this. However, I have observed that a plant flowering in year one, if not killed, will be much weakened. So now I remove the flowering stem from alternate plants. And, knowing there will be losses, I raise a batch of replacements every year, selecting seed from the finest plants.

Conclusion: Why is this gorgeous plant rare in cultivation? It's easily germinated, takes well to transplanting and, with care can do well in the garden.

BUT

- It's a short-lived perennial and will in time disappear from the garden unless replacements are grown.
- Few garden centres stock it, because they don't want customers returning dead plants for a refund.
- Commercial seed is usually dead on arrival.
- Slugs consider *Meconopsis* a great delicacy.
- Even a day dried out can kill them and, if not misted they may die exposed to hot afternoon sun.
- They need to be moist, but will not survive in poorly drained soil.
- They will not flower if insufficiently fed.

Membership: We are delighted to welcome the following new member:

Elsbeth Bradbury, 4939 Water Lane, West Vancouver, V7W 1K4

604-926-9390

& Returning Members:

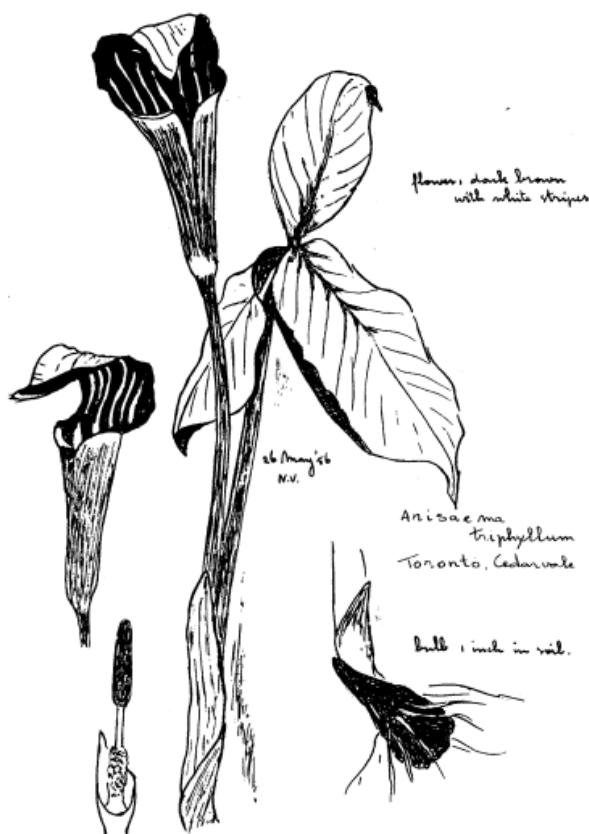
Mirka Vint & Harry Taylor, 42 – 4900 Cartier Street, Vancouver, V6M 4H2

604-265-2754

New Membership lists will be out very shortly. Please call me if I can help you in any way on **604-738-6570**

If there is a "Sad Face" on your Bulletin – please send in your renewal!

If you have a "Sad Face" and you have already sent in your renewal, please get in touch with me as soon as possible so we can set the record straight.



Membership runs from 1st Jan to 31st Dec. or, from 1st Sept. to 31st August. Members joining after 1st Sept. may take part in the seed exchange for that year, or have their membership extended to the following year – but may take part in **only one** seed exchange in the year their membership is current. You can pay your dues by Cheque, Money Order or Credit Card. Cash is not secure in the mail and while it most often does arrive safely, we cannot be responsible for cash, which is lost.

Dues: Canadian \$25, US\$20, £13, €20.

Club pins with the name & emblem (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) are available for \$4 & **make great gifts!**