



"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

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Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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Early Spring 2016

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Just opening now in the editor's garden

L: *Fritillaria uva-vulpis*, R: *Fritillaria minuta* 'Brunette'

SPRING EPHEMERALS

words by Terry Taylor, photos by Rosemary Taylor

Although the alpine ridges and subalpine meadows are covered with snow during the spring, there are places we can visit that approach them in appearance and ecology. These are the

open low elevation hills along Georgia Strait. They are both rocky places with thin soil and lots of sunshine. They both have their perennial wildflowers, but there is one striking difference - annuals.

At low elevation the weather is more predictable and the growing season is long enough for plants to complete their life cycles in a single year. Annuals are extremely rare in alpine habitats. However, the term annual is for many of these species an exaggeration. For most of this time they remain dormant as seeds. As growing plants they are only here for about three months, and as seeds for nine months.

These ephemeral plants are cold resistant and germinate in late winter. In February you can find masses of seedlings along ridges such as Notch Hill, and by April these sites are covered by pink and blue tiny flowers. The perennials come out a month later, in May. Whereas the pink and blue in the mountains are long-lived plants like valerian and lupine, the colors of our local places are sea blush (*Plectritis congesta*), and blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*). Interestingly, sea blush is a miniature Valerianaceae. We also have a *Collinsia grandiflora*. Except for the flower size it is almost indistinguishable from the smaller plant.



L: sea blush (*Plectritis congesta*), R: blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*)

The yellows are supplied by species of monkey flowers. Later in the season around seepage cliffs we have the tall perennial *Mimulus guttatus*, but in April there is the diminutive *M.*

alsinoides, the lower lip of which is emblazoned with a big red spot. If there is no big red spot you probably have the small annual variety of the perennial plant.



Mimulus alsinoides

You can also search for some of the less common ephemerals, as well. In seepage areas, such as Harewood Plains, near Nanaimo, you can see the little white popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys scouleri*).



popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys scouleri*).

This site is probably the best local area for spring wildflowers, but there has been extensive impact here. It is one of our local treasures, and deserves better protection. On dry ridges you may also encounter red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*).



red maid (*Calandrinia ciliata*)

Its tiny blossoms are a striking rose color. Last year on the ridge above Horne Lake some of us found a small population of the red-listed small-flowered tarweed (*Hemizonella minima*).

These rocky sites are also excellent places to look at mosses and lichens, which dominate such habitats. The mosses also flower in the spring, and you can see their spore cases projecting into the air. The moss patches are also important for the wildflowers, for the moss mats contain and protect the seed bank for future years. These are very special and very fragile places, and we are losing them bit by bit.

SPRING NEAR PRAGUE

words by Zdeněk Zvolánek, photos by Stanislav Čepička

March 1st -

We have had early warm days and bulbs near Prague are seeing some flowers. The display is underway of near eastern flowers, which like my neighbour's southern slope. The neighbour is Stanislav Čepička, a retired man in a permanent romance with Juno Irises and in daily touch with all plants in his large rock garden in Praha Radotín. The natural soil, a rotten shale, is rich in minerals. All plants are grown outdoors with no protection. Well, there is a sting to

spring and today we have 15 cm of fresh snow. Stanislav (Standa) has a new ladies-like-it camera and is learning how to take photographs with it for lecturing.



L: *Crocus abantensis* & *Crocus olivieri*, R: *Crocus alatavicus* 'Lajin'



L: *Crocus michelsonii*, R: *Cyclamen kuznetzovii*



L: *Gentiana clusii* ssp. *clusii*, R: *Gymnospermium albertii*

Juno Irises:



L: *Iris galatica*, R: *Iris stenophylla* v. *allisonii*

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Lori Pross

Earlier this month, March 14th, Lori saw promises of spring blooms -



L: a white *Muscari*, R: a lovely pink *Anemone*



The promise of beauties - left several *Arisarum proboscideum*, right an *Erythronium*

WHAT'S NEW IN OUR GARDEN - Vel Rhodes & Dan Schwarz

March 25-26th -

"Here's a photo of our collection of *Fritillaria recurva* (orange) and *F. gentneri* (maroon). We collected the seed many years ago and have been enjoying the blooms for a few years now!"



Blooming in the garden are two special *Corydalis*:



L: yellow fern-leaf *Corydalis cheilanthifolia*, R: *Corydalis solida* "George Baker"



A portion of our large flower bed that has a lot of spring flowers that are not noticeable at any other time of the year because of rapid growth of the other plants.

AGCVI MEETING REPORTS **photos by Kirsten Juergensen**

SEEDY SATURDAY AT QUALICUM BEACH, Feb 6th



L: Mike Miller managed our table and brought along one of his choice dish gardens and some bulbs in bloom for show and tell. We sold a record number of seed packets.

R: The crowd was a record for the event.

AGCVI FEBRUARY 29TH MEETING - SEED SOWING ROUND ROBIN



June Strandberg (left), Valerie Melanson (right) and Mike Miller (below) did show, tell and demonstration about different seed starting techniques.



Show What You Grow: Mike brought some *Scilla bifolia* (left) and Valerie some *Iris reticulata* 'Spot On', an Alan McMurtrie creation.



AGCVI MARCH 21st MEETING with guest speaker JUDY FARROW,
who spoke on the FLORA OF BAFFIN ISLAND

photos by Kirsten Juergensen



Judy brought along some artifacts from her 15-year sojourn in the Arctic.

L: included are some of Judy's collection of ulus, scraping tools and an eider duck skin waterproof storage bag (on the right).

R: Judy displayed some herbarium specimens from her research projects on Baffin and useful floras.



L: Judy's kamiks. R: Judy now translates her experiences in fibre arts. A close up of a polar bear. And below, two of Judy's quilted panels:



L: The Northern Lights and Polar Bear, R: Mount Asgard, a volcanic plug

MORE SPRING COLOUR FROM THE EDITOR'S GARDEN



L: *Fritillaria davisii*, R: *Primula auricula*