

"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Newsletter of
The Alpine & Rock Garden Special Interest Group
of the
Qualicum Beach Garden Club

Issue # 5

March 2012

From the Editor:

It is great to go out in the garden and see signs of life. The saxifrages in my 'new' trough are starting to bloom - I have a north sloping garden with some shade from trees in the winter, so they have only been getting some warmth and sun the past couple of weeks.



Saxifraga oppositifolia ssp. Latina



Saxifraga Bohunka

I was thrilled this week to find that a number of pots of Fritillaries, Saxifrages and other seeds that I sowed in the fall are now sprouting. They have endured full outdoor treatment under a screen over the winter. Now to keep them alive and growing !!

SIG PLANS FOR 2012

March 12th - CARPOOL TO AGCBC MEETING, Van Dusen Gardens, Vancouver & **Visit to David & Wendy Sellars' Garden** in afternoon. In the evening **Malcolm McGregor** will speak on "Saxifrages around the world and in the garden". Malcolm is editor of the NARGS "Rock Garden Quarterly" and author of **Saxifrages: A Definitive**

Guide to the 2000 Species, Hybrids & Cultivars. Malcolm was the Editor of the Scottish Rock Garden Club Journal from 2000 to 2006 and is the current Editor of the NARGS Quarterly. He lectures regularly on alpine plants and rock gardening and has travelled widely in North America, Europe, Turkey and the Himalayas observing and photographing plants in the wild. Choice of taking late Tsawassen ferry in the evening (BC Ferries willing), or staying overnight.

Itinerary:

10:15 a.m. ferry from Departure Bay to Tsawassen

1 p.m. Visit to David & Wendy Sellars' garden

DIRECTIONS from David Sellars: "To get to our place take Hwy 99 south to Exit 8B. Head east on 32nd Avenue to 168th street. Turn right on 168th street and second left is 30A Avenue. We are on the left about 100 m along the street."

16877-30A Avenue, Surrey BC, V3S 0A5, [604-535-0763](tel:604-535-0763)

7 p.m. - AGCBC - "meeting is at Van Dusen Garden in the Floral Hall. There is plenty of parking in the Van Dusen parking lot. The Sprinklers restaurant there has undergone a fancy upgrade complete with a new name. Doors open at 7.00 pm; meeting starts at 7.30 pm. Break for coffee (bring your own mug) at about 8.00 pm. We usually have an informal bench show. Could be a few things of interest. We usually wrap up between 9.30 and 10.00 pm. The last thing is a raffle so don't buy raffle tickets !

I think you should aim to leave Van Dusen about 9.30 pm and not later than 9.45 pm."

10:45 p.m. Ferry from Tsawassen to Departure Bay

Sellars' Garden Preview by David Sellars

Wendy and I purchased an undeveloped wooded acre on a sloping site in South Surrey, British Columbia in 1986. Once the land was cleared and the house was built, we shaped the land using heavy machinery to create steep banks, valleys, hills, streams, waterfalls and ponds. Planting began in the Fall of 1987 primarily with rhododendrons and specimen trees. We now have a large collection of species rhododendrons and a few may be flowering on March 12.

The soil is a glacial till and contains many boulders some of which are quite large. These boulders were used to develop a rock garden in 1998 which now extends along a steep bank almost the full width of the property. The north facing exposure is particularly suited to growing Saxifrages and other rock garden plants that appreciate some shade in the height of summer. Construction of a tufa cliff in the garden was featured in an article I wrote in the Fall 2011 edition of the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly.

On March 12, most of the garden will only be stirring, mostly below ground. However, assuming the weather cooperates, our collection of *Saxifraga oppositifolia* is likely to be in flower. We grow a number of forms including Vaccariana, Michaud, Splendens, Florissa and our favourite, Theoden. *Saxifraga burseriana* and other Kabschias are also likely to be flowering. *Douglasia nivalis* is currently in flower in the Alpine Shed and one in the garden has buds and may be flowering on March 12.

For early March we must assume it is likely to have recently rained and/or be raining so you should bring waterproof footwear.

March 26th - MARCH REGULAR MEETING: at June Strandberg's, 1980 Island Hwy, between Village Way and Bennett Rd. in QB, 1 p.m. June will lead a mini workshop on taking cuttings and potting them up. Bring sharp secateurs, small pots with potting compost, and rooting hormone, if you have it.

March 28th - SIG SPECIAL PRESENTATION: DAVID SELLARS -

Wednesday, here at QB Civic Centre, 1 TO 3 PM., **doors open 12:45 pm**. David will speak on "Alpine Jewels of the Olympic and Wenatchee Mountains, Washington State". He plans to bring plants to sell and will also present a show of photos entered in the 2011 NARGS Photo contest.

April 14th - CARPOOL TO VIRAGS SPRING PLANT SHOW & SALE IN

VICTORIA. Location: Cadboro Bay United Church, 2625 Arbutus Road, Victoria, 9 am to 3:30 p.m. Admission by donation, VIRAGS Member Plant Sale at 11 am, Specialty Nurseries sales all day, **Please contact June Strandberg re: carpooling**. We plan to arrange visits to some gardens and/or nurseries. Further details TBA

April 17th, AFTERNOON - CARPOOL TRIP TO BERNIE GUYADER'S GARDEN IN COURTENAY. Further details TBA

April 28TH - ALPINE SIG SPRING PLANT SALE at Louise Cotterill's, 886 Primrose St., QB. Further details TBA

April 23rd **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE TBC - APRIL REGULAR**

MEETING: BUILDING HYPERTUFA TROUGHS AND DISHES, at June Strandberg's, 1980 Island Hwy, between Village Way and Bennett Rd. in QB, 1 p.m. more info to follow. If you wish to use one for the Crevice Garden in a Trough Workshop in September, here are the dimensions suggested by Gordon Mackay: 6" deep - the deeper the better for the rock and personal preference for the rest but suggested 16" X 12" rectangular.

May 28th - MAY REGULAR MEETING: at Eswyn Alpine Garden at Nanoose Place, Nanoose, TBC with more info to follow.

June 25th - JUNE REGULAR MEETING - VISIT TO OWL & STUMP RARE PLANTS NURSERY. TBC on this or another date in June.

July 30TH - JULY REGULAR MEETING - WILDFLOWER WALK AT PARADISE MEADOWS, TBC

SEPTEMBER - WORKSHOP ON BUILDING A CREVICE GARDEN IN A TROUGH with Gordon Mackay. More details to follow.

FOLLOW UP ON EVENTS

MENTORING OFFER FROM MIKE MILLER: "I would like to offer to mentor anyone who is going to try to plant their tufa. Maybe a small group or individuals at my convenience. Participants will need some plants ready and that may take a while as they need to be young. They do not need to have all the plants at the same time. If we work together on two or three they could then manage to complete the planting on their own. "Anyone interested, please contact Mike Miller at stelmike@telus.net

BOOKS FOR SALE: As shown at our Jan 14th seminar with Zdenek Zvolanek - 3 copies of his book, "The Crevice Garden and its Plants", available at \$12.56 each. (actual cost). Please contact Valerie Melanson at Melanson.valerie@gmail.com

GRAHAME WARE DONATES PLANTS TO NEW CREVICE

BEDS - Not long after the Jan 14th seminar, Grahame flew down to Victoria to furnish and install plants at ZZ's new crevice beds at the Carruthers' home. Please see photos in the February issue of "The Crevice".

LIST OF DONATED PLANTS:

Heuchera pulchellum 'Sandi Crest form'
Iberis tauricola (**Pavelka**...hereafter known as P)
Gypsophila aucheri (P)
Arenaria pseudoacantholimon (P)
Penstemon 'Vaclav's dwarf' (original seed from Plestil and rogued for whiteness/dwarfness by me for 15 years)
Thymus cilicicus (P)
Arabis caucasica var. brevifolia (P)
Edraianthus graminifolius
Dianthus monspessulanus
Globularia orientalis (P)
Penstemon cinicola
Penstemon uintahensis
Pieris 'Litttle Heath' Very small shrub. Great rock garden type. Variegated and small.
Tanacetum armenum (P) Bolkar Dag
Thymus zygioides (P)
Veronica orientalis (P) Bakir Dag
Veronica polifolia (P)- Tahtali Dag, East Turkey 2000 m

Editor's Note: The above are some of the many choice perennials available at Grahame's **Owl and Stump Rare Plants Nursery at Yellowpoint,** <http://www.owlandstumprareplants.com/>

Lewisiopsis tweedyi (Gray) Govaerts



Lewisiopsis tweedyi at Wedge Mtn, Wenatchees, WA
Paul Slichter

Photo courtesy

Synonyms:

Lewisia tweedyi, *Cistanthe tweedyi*, *Calandrinia tweedyi*

I remember over twenty years ago when alpines became akin to a flask of gasoline being thrown on my bonfire of passion for herbaceous perennials. In

turn, THE alpine plant that was the Molotov cocktail of choice for this defenceless soul was known then as *Lewisia tweedyi*. How could one resist this succulent Siren with its large bi-toned flowers and thick, evergreen foliage? BOOM!- this was an incendiary that I've yet to recover from.

Curiously, one doesn't see this plant that often anymore as all the *cognoscenti* have moved onto more obscure genera with the cachet of the exotic- high jazz instead of pop. During this time (over twenty years back) when I became all fired up about alpines and herbaceous perennials, I was living in the North Okanagan. When I had some time off early one summer, our family piled into my pickup truck and we went camping down to the Wenatchees in search of *Lewisia tweedyi* (as it was called then), *Lewisia columbiana*, *Douglasia nivalis*, *Leptodactylon pungens*. I wanted to see for myself the conditions in which they flourished and try to replicate them in my new garden outside of Armstrong, BC. To this end I constructed a huge boulder crevice garden (50' long, 5' high at the peak and 10' wide) that housed these plants in the light understory of fir trees.

I'd heard from many people (mostly Coasties) about the perils of sustaining *Lewisiopsis tweedyi*. I read everything I could at the time and was dismayed (not the first time and certainly not the last!) at the lack of horticultural and ecological information furnished by botanists. The exception to this rule was Arthur Kruckeberg. Fortunately I had purchased his book, "**Gardening With Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest: An Illustrated Guide**" and his advice was (and still is) good. Still, it wasn't until we had made our way down the Okanagan valley to the Icicle Creek campground outside of Leavenworth, WA that I saw it with my own eyes. It was just before sunset and we had set up the tent and I was going down to the creek to get some water.

I noticed a lot of plants growing in fir needle duff. 'Could it be *Lewisiopsis tweedyi*?', I muttered to myself. YES...but it was already twilight. The next morning I awoke to see them and a huge, H-U-G-E light bulb went off in my head. I realized- then and there- that one of the most important things about *Lewisiopsis* is what I would call the **aspect preference**.

Habitat in the wild: what this means to the gardener

All of these plants wanted an eastern exposure with protection from the afternoon sun from the overhead branches of the *Douglas fir.[*At lower elevations and different areas of the Wenatchees it could be Ponderosa

Pine.] This was confirmed later on this trip and every subsequent botanizing expedition throughout the Wenatchees. As an aside, I have gone into the Wenatchees at least 12 times and have some favourite spots- these include the Derby Canyon approach (Peshastin side) to Chumstick and the Swakane Canyon (from the Alt 95 route). In fact, one time I rounded the corner of a logging road in the Wenatchee National Forest and got out for a break. The whole hillside- all 1/2 mile high and at least that wide- was *Lewisopsis tweedyi*! All of their heads were facing east like good little soldiers. They had colonized this entire hillside beautifully and the only other things I glimpsed here was *Clematis columbiana* and *Epilobium*.

They are two things they like to grow in: 1) needle duff, and 2) loose, chunky granitic talus/scree. In duff, I note that the crown (where the root meets the leaves) was literally areated by the duff keeping the crown dry. [*Note that in the Okanagan or Okanogan (as it is spelled in the US) duff is drier than it would be here on the coast. Thus the duff angle (using it here on the coast) is a little suspect as a mimicking strategy unless you are prepared to replace it regularly/seasonally so that it doesn't rot.]

But back to that first moment at Icicle Creek in the Wenatchees...for me it was a huge Bingo moment! Armed with the knowledge of their aspect preference and need for overhead protection from afternnon sun, I successfully grew 100's and 100's of them. As a garden designer/installer, used them as a feature in practically every rock garden that I designed and installed in the Okanagan. Many of these plants have continued to flourish and have provided countless more plants for others. This is one of the great things about this plant- when you know how to make it happy- it is almost indestructable.

An evergreen alpine- the cultural approach here on Van isle

This monotypic species has the added benefit of being an evergreen alpine to boot. Reddish and bronzey tints will happen as the cold unfolds. Very nice. Here on Vancouver Island, to keep them happy they'll need boulder crevice culture and some protection for mid-summer scorch. A dwarf conifer or small dissectum variety of Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum var dissectum*) like 'Waterfall' or 'Seyru' will do the trick. I would not recommend planting on a north side of a rock garden as some have suggested. In this dank light it will not be terribly floriferous. I would still endorse an eastern exposure as the prime aspect if you want a happy, long-term plant.

The core strategy here on the east coast of Van Isle though should be planting them in a crevice and on an angle- almost sideways as it were. As for winter wet, the first thing in an overall approach are chips of granite (in gravel pit lingo it is called **manufactured sand* or you might opt for the even coarser and larger aggregate called *path sand*). [*If you'd like to know my reputable source in the Nanaimo area contact me.] They need to be heaped up around the crown at least once during the winter (before the November/December monsoons) and then again in April. in mid-Fall, I would be compelled to place a cover made of coroplast or polycarbonate over them to shed the water. And don't forget that a tufa trough with some pieces of slate crevices AND with a *bonnet on it*, will work very nicely. Your rewards for this attention to detail will be many as the size and beauty of the flowers and floriferousness of this plant are terrific. *Lewisiopsis tweedyi* has a large flowers but they are not gross in any way.

Lewisiopsis tweedyi selctions and cultivars

It is one of the more vigorous *alba* forms in the plant kingdom and is worth seeking. There was a lovely specimen at last year's Vancouver Island Rock & Alpine Garden Society pot show in April. Someone had obviously pushed it in their alpine house.



the *alba* form



the *rosea* form

Photo courtesy Mike Almond

There is quite a bit of variation within the *rosea* form. Seed is available from a few private seed companies as well as seed exchanges. It requires a fairly long period of cold/moist stratification.

Roger Simpson from Richmond found a natural, all yellow form in the Wenatchees. I acquired it from him in 1993 and dubbed it 'Roger's Gold'. I no longer have it but would love to have it again. I was able to divide the mother plant many times. Ashwoods Nursery in the UK has one they call Lemon form. It certainly is not as good a yellow as 'Roger's Gold'. Rick Lupp of Mt. Tahoma has some 'Yellow Forms' on offer which I have not seen...yet!



Lewisiopsis tweedyi 'Yellow Form' photo taken in Hannelotte Kindlund's Swedish Rock garden

Here's a link to a nice set of photos on Flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sierrarainshadow/5695228000/in/set-72157622683681077/>



Lewisiopsis tweedyi at Wedge Mountain, Wenatchees, WA

Conclusion

As you can see, there are many nice colour forms but the type is lovely and more than holds its own. They are all worth exploring and cultivating.

This is a tough plant but crown rot is its Achilles heel. Improper attention to its aspect will reduce floriferousness and longevity. It is a wonderful Pacific Northwest evergreen alpine (technically it is probably a subalpine) that will reward you over and over with a little attention to the details. Like the old saw, goes, the devil is in the details. And, if you've been Bedazzled, take heart...you won't have to sell your soul to get or keep this plant. Finally, a note on nomenclature- although *Lewisiopsis tweedyi* has been transferred to its own monotypic genera, all other *Lewisia* have retained their names. Whew!

-Grahame Ware, March 1, 2012 Yellow Point

GOOD READS / USEFUL LINKS

Another Seed Germination Database:

<http://tomclothier.hort.net/page02.html> .

Editor's Note: This is a really good list, a big thank you to Sue Beatty for finding it.

A BRITISH NURSERY WITH INFORMATIVE WEBSITE &

PHOTOS: Crug Farm in Wales. Bleddyn & Sue Wynn-Jones are well-known plant hunters who have collected many new & unusual new plants from around the world.

<http://www.mailorder.crug-farm.co.uk/default.aspx>

Editor's Note: Thanks to Grahame Ware for this link. Crug Farm has a large selection of *Codonopsis*, a genus on which Grahame knows I am keen.

A USEFUL NEW WILDFLOWER GUIDE:

MOUNTAIN FLOWERS: THE DOLOMITES by Cliff Booker & David Charlton, published by same, ISBN 978-0-9571628-0-8.

Those of you who subscribe to *Alpine-L*, the Electronic Rock Garden Society, hosted by the University of Utrecht, will have seen many lovely photos of alpines from the Dolomites taken by Cliff Booker. Now they have been brought together in a well-designed pocket wildflower guide. Cliff & David hope to produce similar guides to the Picos de Europa and/or The Pyrenees. "Mountain Flowers" can be ordered through Collett's Mountain Holidays, www.colletts.co.uk. Collett's offers guided or self-directed mountain hiking holidays in the Dolomites and Picos de Europa, amongst other locales.

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