

# "THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Newsletter of the

Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

(formerly The Alpine & Rock Garden Special Interest Group  
of the Qualicum Beach Garden Club)

<http://alpinegardenersofcvi.wordpress.com/>

Issue # 24

Part 1

Nov/Dec 2013

**FROM THE EDITOR:** Well this has been a confusing time for some of the alpine in my garden. After our hot weeks of summer, then some nice rain, then some nice fog, many plants, including the following, decided to have a fall bloom in late October that kept on going until we hit zero temperatures in late November:



L: *Dierama dracomontanum*: grown from RHS seed, sown Jan 2011, pricked out Feb 2011, planted out summer 2011, first blooms October-Nov 2013. Unfortunately buds on two more wands froze solid.

R: *Rhododendron impeditum*, from the Lapponicum Series of dwarf alpine rhodos, obtained at the Alpine SIG plant sale. What a treasure for my garden.



Tentatively identified as *Silene waldsteinii*.

This grew from a packet of *Silene acaulis* seed obtained from the RHS years ago. Half the seedlings grew into *S. acaulis*, half into this lovely *Silene* - a lovely tight bun of needle like leaves with tall flower stocks of these white flowers, tinged with pink.

Once the BIG FREEZE arrived, the only flowers hanging on were two *Primula auricula* in my mini greenhouse. It is not heated, but shrouded in bubble wrap and kept a bit warmer by grow lights:



These two lovely plants were offsets gifted to me by auricula enthusiast Marcia Hetherington of Qualicum Beach.

Items for the January 2014 "Crevice" can be sent anytime to [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com).

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## **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM CHRIS CHADWELL**



Chris at trekking lodge, 2013 expedition

(Greetings edited a bit) - "Thanks for the Christmas card - my first this year - and good wishes from yourself and the AGofCVI. I am in the midst of allocating expedition seeds - which, all-being-well, will be in the post by Xmas. The expedition went well. I have uploaded some images (many more to follow on the CD sent to shareholders with their seed). I would be happy if within your newsletter you draw attention to some of the sections of my website.



I have added a lot of fresh images to my website including some from my N. American lecture tour and expedition. I feel they should be of interest. If this appeals, you are welcome to reproduce one or two images from each section of the website. Must return to the expedition seed! "

Taking up Chris' kind offer, here are the links and some photos to whet your interest.

From <http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/nepal-2013>



*Rhododendron lepidotum*



Bridge across Kali Gandaki, Mustang District

From <http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/others>: crafts made by Nepali ladies from recycled chip, biscuit & chocolate wrappers; tires, etc., on sale in a shop at Kathmandu:



L: Christmas decorations made from wrappers, R: bags made from rice-sacks and tires

Some images of Chris' lecture tour:

<http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/alaska-2013> - Here is a lovely alpine:



Snow-bed buttercup

<http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/cascades-2013>: two lovely photos from the Cascades:



L: 'Sagebrush Violet' *Viola trinervata*, R: 'Hedgehog Cactus' *Pediocactus nigrispinus*



<http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/spokane-2013>

Chris was impressed by this plant, the 'Arrow-leaved Balsamroot', *Balsamorhiza sagittaria*, that he deemed to be of considerable ornamental merit as well as being edible and smoked like tobacco by local first nations.



"And on a gardening theme, should any members get the chance to visit, I thoroughly recommend Mt. Stewart in N. Ireland. (I was the main speaker at a seminar there prior to this year's expedition); it is exceptional":

<http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/mt-stewart-n-Ireland>



The Spanish Garden, one of many themed areas.



Drawing visitors to some of the wonders

## **UPCOMING 2014 AGCVI EVENTS - THE PLAN SO FAR**

**Please watch for more information on group events in our new AGofCVI Newsletter commencing in January, editor Jo Graham**

**Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, REGULAR AGCVI MEETING** - Shelly Road Centre, 186 Shelly Road (go past Cultivate about 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  blocks, the centre is on the right hand side), Parksville, doors open 12:30, meeting starts at 1 p.m. Rest of AGM items, postponed from October 28<sup>th</sup> and Valerie Melanson to show powerpoint: Seed Starting Part 2: Pricking Out & Potting Up & Cuttings, and also a repeat of Part 1 if enough new members are present and/or time permits.

**Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup>: AGCVI table at Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday.**

**Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, REGULAR AGCVI MEETING with guest speaker HANS ROEMER on GROWING BULBS ON THE DRY SIDE OF VANCOUVER ISLAND:** Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, Lions Room, 747 Jones Street, QB, doors open 12:30, talk at 1:00 p.m.

**Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING: Powerpoint on Seed Saving** - All about seeds: different plant strategies for making seed, assessing viability, saving, storing - getting ready for the new season!

**Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:** Cutting and Potting Up Session outdoors

**Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>: ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS SPRING SHOW & SALE** in Victoria

**Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup>: AGCVI Plant Sale at QB Farmers' Market**

**Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:** topic TBA - possibly Hypertufa or our annual Garden Tour or a Guest speaker

**Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:** topic TBA - possibly Hypertufa or Garden Tour

**Monday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, REGULAR AGCVI MEETING with guest speaker CLIFF BOOKER from UK**

**Monday, August 11 to Thursday, August 14 - EXPEDITION TO WHISTLER**

**Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:**

**Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:**

**Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup>: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:**

**Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup> - CHRISTMAS LUNCH**

## **OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **12TH ANNUAL QUALICUM BEACH SEEDY SATURDAY**

Theme: GROW IT!, Saturday, February 1, 2014

10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Seedy Saturday activities and Speakers

Where: Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 747 Jones St., Qualicum Beach, B.C.

Seed Swap: Lions' Room, Speakers: Windsor Room, Farmer's Market: Main Stage

**Speakers:** 10:30-11:45 a.m. KATHLEEN MILLAR on "The Elephant on your Dinner Table; why organic doesn't always mean nutritious"

Noon.-1:15 p.m. ARZEENA HAMIR on "GMOs 101"

1:30-2:45 p.m. KATHY CLAXTON, on "The Life & Times of the Tomato; from seed to seed saving"

Other Activities: 70+ Vendors, Farmer's Market, Seed Swap, Milner Garden's "Shoots With Roots" children's program, Master Gardeners, Seedy Café, Door Prizes, and Raffle.

**Raffle Tickets on sale outside Qualicum Foods, Saturday, January 25, 2014**

(9:30a.m.-1:30 p.m.)

**Cost: Admission by Donation**

A Town of Qualicum Beach truck will be in the parking lot to collect garden chemicals

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## **NEWS FROM THE BOTANIC GARDENS**

### **RBG EDINBURGH ALPINE UPDATE**

**By John Mitchell**

I am pleased to report that the two final pieces of the new alpine house development are now complete.

Due to the slope on the west side of the new alpine house we decided to build a crevice garden and alpine meadow.



Before the bench, this photo shows the s-curve of the crevice garden

Having the two different contrasts between the traditional alpine house with the cedar alpine house, frames and trough area and the new alpine house with natural landscapes & water features, the idea of having the crevice garden and alpine meadow was yet another way of showing the public that if you have a small space, sloping ground you can grow alpine plants. And if we can get more people growing alpines then we will all be happy people.



View from limestone wall to new - alpine house to crevice bed, meadow & bench.

With the slope already there, we incorporated sand and forked this through. Then it was just a case of getting vertical lines and trying to make it look pleasing to the eye. Having spoken with many people about building crevice gardens, the main problem is that people try and have the stones close together. This makes it look very nice but is not ideal for when you come to planting. So it is better to have the stones about 3 inches apart and then back fill with smaller stones and then top dress with, if you can, a mix from very small stones to largish ones, from say quarter inch to one and half inch.





This will finish off the crevice and help keep the soil in place and stop water sitting at the neck of plants. Plants, which we have planted in the crevices, are *Daphne*, *Saxifraga longifolia*, *Aquilegia*, *Leucogenes* and *Acantholimon* to name but a few.





In the alpine meadow we have sculptured the ground to make small mounds. This has been put down to grass and will be planted up in the springtime. Plants that we are looking at, are *Narcissus*, *Fritillaria*, *Tulipa*, *Muscari* and *Colchicum* and then on the other side of the bed we will look at planting steppe herbaceous plants like *Veronica*, *Eremurus*, *Gentiana* and *Panzeria*. This will give it interest for most of the season.

The last piece that was installed was a bench very kindly donated by Valerie herself, so people can sit overlooking the three beautiful buildings - the new alpine area, the traditional alpine area and then the old palm house.





I thought I should just give you an update on the tufa wall and landscape.

Plants are doing very well after our unusual very, very warm summer with temperatures reaching 32 degrees -- not ideal for planting a tufa wall. Plants that have done exceptionally well are the *Dionysia* -- *D. tapetodes* & *D. curviflora* have established very well and are starting to put on a lot of growth.



*Dionysia tapetodes*



*Corallodiscus kingianus*



The *Daphne* and *Primula allionii* have been a bit disappointing but these plants take time to establish and hopefully they will put growth on and establish next year. *Corallodiscus kingianus* has looked magnificent but *C. lanuginosus* has been a bit problematic.

The *Campanula* have done very well - *C. raineri* and *C. morettiana* have both flowered this year. The outside tufa area has established really well - *Primula forrestii* has flowered extremely well. *Daphne calcicola* has put on tremendous growth as has *Wikstroemia gemmata* and the Saxifrages have started to establish. We also planted out various ferns, which were wild collected from China and the Russian Altai - *Onychium* and *Dryopteris fragrans* - and these plants are starting to colonise and the lovely



*Sternbergia lutea* is in flower as we speak.

I will update you again next year once the plants have come through the winter and have started into growth.

## **ESWYN'S ALPINE & ROCK GARDEN REPORT**

**Report by Karen Unruh, photos by Elaine Bohm.**

This autumn gives us a time for reflection. It was October 2009 when the rocks were placed to reinforce the cleared south-facing bank on the right side of Nanoose Place, the community centre in the area.





And it was October 2011 when Paul Spriggs of Victoria designed and created the Crevice garden aspect of the garden--club members assisting. Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden is four years old! It has come a long way, but is still in it's infancy as an Alpine Garden. As we view the garden this fall, some observations and questions come to mind. Most of these we will share with club members in the first edition of the club Newsletter In January. One concern we would like to extend to members and "Crevice" readers far and wide.

Our challenge is to consider plant signs. Even the narrow white or green signs, which have been placed inconspicuously beside the plants, tucked deeply beside the lengthwise dimension of the crevice stone, are often pulled out and left on the surface to blow in the wind. This is a public garden with a walking trail in front of the garden. Many people walk by and take an interest in the garden and the plants. Ideas for plant signs in an alpine public garden need to be explored, and we welcome suggestions from readers both here on Central Vancouver Island and those from afar. What could be done to provide secure labels with information accessible to the public? What has been your experience with plant signs? Are we on the cusp of change to smart phone technology?

Kindly reply to "The Crevice" Editor, Valerie Melanson at [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com), who will collate all replies and pass them along to the Eswyn Garden Caretakers.

## **FOLLOW UP ON AGCVI ACTIVITIES & OUTINGS**

### **VIRAGS MEETING & MEMBER PLANT SALE - September 2013**

**Report by June Strandberg, photos by June & Sue Beatty**

On September 24<sup>th</sup> four of us set out for Victoria, leaving here about 1.30pm. Valerie was our driver, Lorraine, Barb and I were her passengers. We had our usual stop at Tim Horton's in Duncan and then Borden's Mercantile to look at their tufa rock - they had some nice pieces but it has gone up in price a few cents - maybe dried out some more? Valerie bought a bag of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " volcanic pumice.

Then it was White Spot for a nice supper and a leisurely drive to Gordon Head United Church. We were first there but not for long as the Members' Plant Sale had to be set up and running by 7.30.

Valerie had brought some of her plants down and set up a nice display. There were a lot of bigger plants this year - special Hydrangea and Peonies including *P. rockii* plus some small trees and shrubs. Various *Primula* and other rock plants scattered around. We met Amanda there.

Hans Roemer had his usual collection of bulb off-sets - a wonderful dollar's worth of anticipation and beauty!! I was in charge of getting the bulbs - some for Valerie, who was busy and some for Sue, who couldn't come. I started at the narcissus and got our choices - then the tulips, crocus and others so between us we have some very interesting little bulbs. At the moment the best of the bunch is *Sternbergia sicula* ssp. *graeca*. It is already flowering!! Yesterday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, the sun managed to get itself out of the fog for an hour or so and Sue took this photo of June's bulbs - it made her day!



*Sternbergia sicula* ssp. *graeca*



By 21<sup>st</sup> Oct: Sue had *Sternbergia lutea*

and by Nov 1<sup>st</sup> two autumn crocus in bloom, all from Roemer bulbs:



*Crocus asumaniae*



*Crocus cambessedesii*

List of bulbs from Hans Roemer follows - I added 3 different ones I got last year, marked\*. The *N. romieuxii* I got last year boomed bloomed in February so we certainly get our money's worth!

*Crocus asumaniae* - bloomed

*C. biflorus*

*C. cambessedesii* - bloomed

*C. malyi*

*C. sieberi tricolor*

*Fritillaria aurea*\*

*F. carica*\*

*Leucojum nicaeense*

*Narcissus assoanus*

*N. bulbocodium* - (Valerie bought these and they are sprouting)

*N. cantabricus* (dwarf white form)

*N. hedraeanthus*



*N. jonquilla* (winter blooming)  
*N. romieuxii* (dwarf white form) The ones I got last year bloomed mid Feb  
*N. zaianicus albus*  
*Sternbergia lutea* bloomed  
*S. sicula* ssp. *graeca* bloomed  
*Tecophilea cyanocrocus*  
*Tulipa batalinii*  
*T. clusiana*

Paul was there too, but he was late which I suppose is why I have him last. He had a nice collection of alpine plants and was soon surrounded by buyers, including us! Overall it was a very interesting plant sale with lots of diversity. We came home with some good stuff!!

The presentation for the evening was on the International Alpine Plant Conference in the Czech Republic - another reason why we were in Victoria that evening. Janice Currie presented 'Tripping with the Czech Republic's Best Rock and Alpine Gardeners' She showed us wonderful photographs of the garden tours - I forget how many gardens she visited but it was lots.

The visit was in May this year, so the very best time for flowers and such beautiful alpenes, just about every species it seemed. I remember best the wonderful gentians, how can they get to grow them like that? I suppose they are in the second best place from their mountains - I just love them. There were all kinds of bulbs, lots of daphnes and conifers, buns and mats, tall and short in fact everything!

The gardens are unbelievable! Some are all crevice work with a few paths for getting around, mostly on a gentle slope or with a few ups and downs. One was a garden just being constructed and was interesting, though I think it was not officially on the tour! Another looked as though you had to be a mountain goat to get to the top as it was on a very steep slope. Some have rocky outcrops surrounded with gravel and some it is hard to believe they are man-made they look so real. The rocks vary from very small to huge, from thin to very wide. In one garden there was a covered tufa wall, which I would like to inspect closely! Then there were the plant sales - they were something we just dream about!!

The visitors looked as though they were having lots of fun and enjoying themselves. We four all really enjoyed the presentation - thank you Janice.

If anyone wants to see photos of this conference, Google the Scottish Rock Garden website at [www.srgc.net](http://www.srgc.net)

## **REPORT ON PAUL SPRIGGS' CREVICE GARDEN**

### **DEMONSTRATION TO VIRAGS OCTOBER 20, 2013**

**Report by June Strandberg, photos by June Strandberg & Barb Lemoine**

We learned of this workshop on September 24<sup>th</sup> at the VIRAGS monthly meeting and members' plant sale. It was not an open event, so we asked if any of us could attend - two were invited to come. So on October 20<sup>th</sup> Barb and I headed for Victoria. It was held in Paul's own garden and most of us know that he does not have a lot of room left for people!



(L: Paul's crevice garden, R: Paul's front rock garden)

Paul started with his big box piled up with soil and lined up on this were bowls containing the soil ingredients: Sand, volcanic rock, tufa grit and pathway chippings, perlite (optional) all count as 'rock'. Leaf mold, worm castings, coir, peat and potting soil - he used *Growell* - count for 'dirt'.

Whatever your mix, use 50% rock and 50% dirt.



1<sup>ST</sup> Rock ready to place & bowls of ingredients

After removing the bowls Paul placed a large rock slanting across the middle - about the



biggest he could handle alone.

On one side he added slate rocks - being careful to always hide the joins and making the crevices about one inch wide.





Slate Side



Hiding the join.

On the other side he added sandstone - these rocks are the 'Bones' of the garden.



Sandstone side.

Paul does not recommend two kinds of rock in a small crevice garden but did this for demonstration.

Then the fun stuff for the on-lookers - pounding down the soil in the crevices, lots of help



and more soil is needed!

Then the pounding in of small rocks - with spaces left for plants or sometimes planting first



& then carefully adding the rock slivers.





For the plantings, he first put in one or two of the things he had for sale and then produced a pail of cuttings (see below for more about them).

An advantage of crevice gardens, beside good drainage and deep, cool root-runs, is their ability to provide a variety of microclimates for alpine plants requiring different conditions or soil. For example a north facing cliff for a cool shade loving plant or a south facing spot for a plant needing heat. A little lime can be added into a crevice for a lime lover.



finished as far as time permitted

Paul also did a tufa garden in a pot, and



here is a photo with the soil piled high



and finished as far as time permitted.

Barb and I had a wonderful time, met lots of people, had a good look round Paul's garden and bought plants!

Next year Paul is doing a Mid-summer Propagation Workshop. He is very good at putting these on and we learn so much. They are well worth going to - if you really want to join in, the best way of booking your spot is to join VIRAGS, a year's membership fee is \$20. For this you can go to their Members Plant Sale, which is extremely good (you can sell your own plants if you want!) and you have the opportunity to attend their presentations and workshops throughout the year.

## **PAUL'S CUTTINGS**

Scrub pails with soap and hot water, make drainage holes in the bottom and use new coarse sand. The cuttings in the photographs were taken during the last 2 weeks of July 2013. They



are growing in straight sand and he used #2 rooting hormone. The pails need to be kept out of direct sunlight but to be in the brightest shade possible. Cover with a pane of glass. Paul keeps his cuttings on his top deck, level with his neighbor's roof where they get lots of north light.



He takes the majority of his cuttings mid-summer while there is still new growth to work with and enough time left for them to root - most take about 12 weeks. He says bottom heat would speed things up a bit for cuttings taken at other times of the year.



Roots after 12 weeks