



"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the
Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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

Issue # 30

June 2014

FROM THE EDITOR:

Summer Solstice has arrived and gone far too quickly for me this year. I have been so busy with renovating and adding to my rock garden that I am afraid "Crevice" and my propagating have suffered. Pleasingly some of my seed starts from last year are flowering and have proved lovely.

Especially dramatic is *Primula secundiflora*, grown from 2012 SRGC seed # 3198, ex SDR (Stella & David Rankin collection) #4401,



started January 20, 2013, surface sown on starter mix with outdoor treatment, germinated by mid March 2013. It is happy in the damp soil of my north-facing garden that only receives limited sunlight from mid May to mid September. The flower stem now sports a second umbel of flowers and is over 60 cm H.

If you have any items for the "Crevice" for July, please send in by end of day on July 15th to Melanson.valerie@gmail.com. The July issue will include reports on some of the May - June activities of the AGCVI not covered in this issue - the Kenton Seth talk, visit to the rock garden designed by Dany Fortin of Comox, trip to Paradise Meadows and other events.

More interesting blooms from the Editor's Garden



L: *Aquilegia moorcroftiana*, C: *Dactylorhiza foliosa*, R: *Phyteuma scheuchzeri*

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Pages 1 - 2 - Editor, Table of Contents

Pages 3 - 6 - AGCVI Upcoming Events: Cliff Booker Visit, July 28th

Pages 7 - 12 - AGCVI Event Reports: Plant Sale at QB Farmers' Market, May 24th

& Visit to Bernie Guyader's Garden, May 28th & National Garden Day, June 13th

Pages 12 - 14 - Plant Portrait: *Dicentra* 'Burning Hearts', by Todd Boland

Pages 14 - 18 - Plant Portrait: *Iris cycloglossa*, by Ian E. Efford

Pages 18 - 19 - What's New in My Garden: Kirsten Juergensen, Valerie Melanson

Page 20 - What is That Plant? - *Cerastium alpinum* subsp. *lanatum*

AGCVI UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS



welcome

Cliff Booker

from Lancashire in the U.K.

To speak on

'The Definitive Dolomites'

Monday, July 28th, 1 - 3 p.m.

(doors open 12:30) at the

Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 747 Jones Street
\$5 entry includes plant prize draw and coffee/tea.



Cliff's keynote presentation lasts exactly 73 minutes and features over 900 individual images of the amazing flora, unique wildlife and incredible scenery of these magnificent Italian mountains. Based on the Booker's twelve years of leading wildflower walks for UK travel company: Collett's Mountain Holidays, this beautifully illustrated lecture encompasses an astonishing array of alpine species.

Cliff Booker saw the 'alpine' light on a visit to Liverpool Garden Festival in 1984 when he chanced upon the Alpine Garden Society stand, and his life changed forever. He, and his lovely wife Sue, founded the East Lancashire Group of the AGS and started leading wildflower walks for Collett's. Lecturing soon followed and Cliff has presented his digital 'tour de forces' in Italy, Belgium, New Zealand, USA and Canada and extensively in the UK. With Gold and Farrer Medals for exhibiting, a bit of a reputation for his photographs and a book on alpinism under his belt, Cliff continues to spread the alpine word.

Further info? Call Valerie at 594-4423 or email:
Melanson.valerie@gmail.com



Cliff & Sue Booker write:

"Hi folks,

May we take this opportunity to introduce ourselves to your esteemed group and to (hopefully), promote interest in our forthcoming lecture visit to be held in beautiful Qualicum Beach on Monday 28th July at 1 pm.

We will be giving a Keynote digital presentation entitled 'The Definitive Dolomites' that takes a comprehensive and truly in-depth look at the incredible flora, the rare species, the amazing landscapes and the varied fauna of these utterly captivating Italian mountains.

Sue and I have been fortunate enough to lead wildflower walks in these truly impressive peaks (for UK based holiday company, Collett's Mountain Holidays) for eleven of the last thirteen years and have accumulated many thousands of images taken throughout the main flowering period from late May to early August, the very best of which we have compiled into a 73 minute presentation that will illustrate the vast majority of species and the tremendous range of habitats that these alpine gems inhabit.



(Sue in the Dolomites)

This particular presentation has proven popular in Belgium, Italy, New Zealand, the USA and on a recent lecture tour of Scotland for the Scottish

Rock Garden Club and, of course, to numerous Alpine Garden Society Groups in the rest of the UK.

It is just one of a number of similar talks that we have presented to fellow alpine enthusiasts around the globe that illustrate a range of subjects from 'Outstanding Gardens' to 'Cream of Alpines' and from 'Alpines in Focus' to 'The Peloponnese and Crete'.

We hope we may be permitted to expand a little on our alpine credentials in the next issue of this excellent Newsletter?

We are looking forward to meeting you all and to the creation of some more alpine friendships.

Cliff and Sue Booker - Whitworth, Lancashire. UK.

Cliff has sent along some recent photos of their alpine garden in Whitworth:



In the Booker Front Garden, May 2014, above and below



REPORTS ON AGCVI ACTIVITIES

AGCVI PLANT SALE AT Q.B. FARMERS' MARKET, Saturday, May 24th

Photos by Kirsten Juergensen

This was a successful sale, very ably co-ordinated by Louise Cotterill. A big thank you to Louise, all the volunteers at the stall, and plant donors.



AGCVI ROAD TRIP TO COMOX / COURTENAY, MAY 29TH

A number of members visited Bernie Guyader's garden and some rock garden installations built in Comox by Dany Fortin. Here is a report on Bernie's garden, with a report on Dany's work to follow in the July issue.

Bernie's Garden

Report and photos by June Strandberg

Bernie's garden was wonderful as always. The rhododendrons just at their best, I was afraid we would be too late but their season is about a week behind ours.

The rhododendrons along the sidewalk are coming along very well and had lots of bloom. I think it is only 2 years since the hedge went. We were too late for the alpine meadow flowers - the last, camas, just going over.

The troughs were in full bloom with some lovely, quite old, dwarf rhododendrons and conifers,



a beautiful *Lewisia columbiana*,

a nice flat *Azorella* hanging over the edge and a grey sedum with pink flowers. Only the gentians were over.



Next came the new crevice garden.

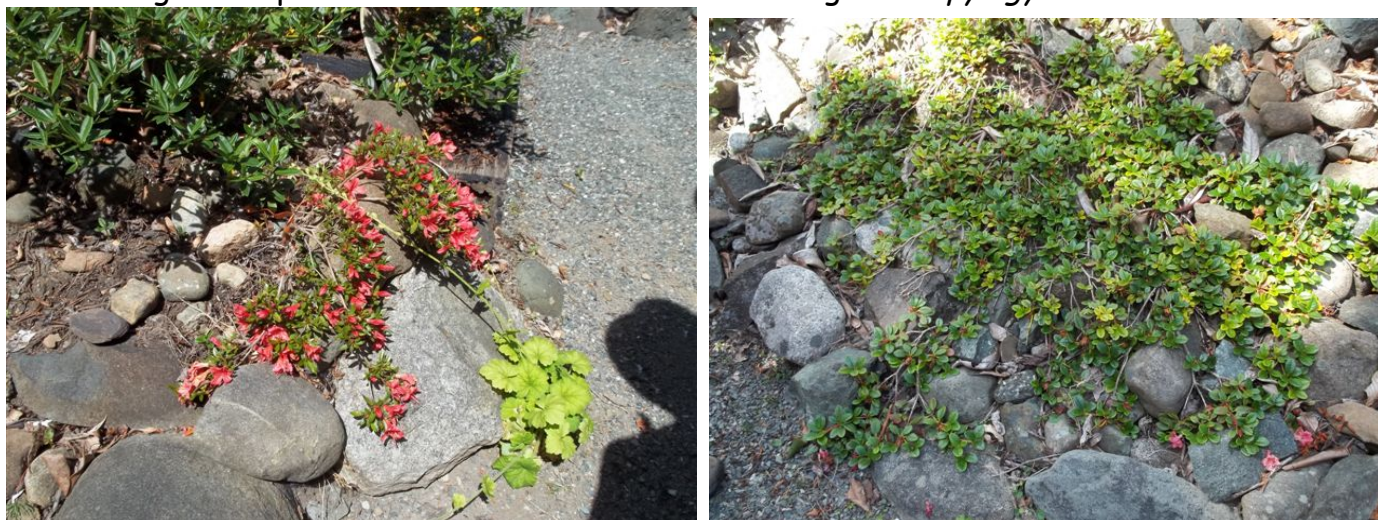
It is made with the rock originally used in the building of the big pond. Bernie has dismantled and re-cycled! Now there is only the little pond just behind the crevice bed. The crevices are all planted and it should be looking pretty good next spring.

Then we back-tracked to the bonsai -



first past the *Tulipa sprengeri*, which Bernie says seeds all over the place! With Rhododendron ? (and others) behind they look marvelous. And so on to twenty or so beautiful little trees displayed on shelves in a Japanese style structure and one lovely bonsai tree we found hidden away down a little path beside the potting shed.

Right next to the bonsai is a bed of bearded iris - all the colours of the rainbow and just at their very best. The first time I have been lucky enough to see them in flower. Opposite are more troughs and pots of dwarf *Rhododendron* including *R. campylogynum*.



L: *Rhododendron* 'Pink Pancake', R: *Rhododendron repens*

Round the large rhododendrons, it's shady here with big trees and cooler and beautiful with all kinds of interesting plants to see as we go by.



Thank you, Bernie for a wonderful visit and thank you both for coffee and goodies.



**AGCVI TABLE AT MILNER GARDENS
FOR NATIONAL GARDEN DAY, JUNE 13TH**

Photos by June Strandberg & Kirsten Juergensen





The refurbished green roof at Milner is growing well

PLANT PORTRAIT - *Dicentra* 'Burning Hearts'

by Todd Boland, Research Horticulturist,
Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden



photo by Todd of plant at home of David Sellars, President of AGCBC, 2013.
A lovely hummingbird enjoys the flowers too.

The dwarf bleeding hearts have always been popular garden ornamentals primarily due to their easy culture, attractive foliage and nearly everblooming habit. *Dicentra eximia* (eastern North America) and *D. formosa* (western North America) are the most popular species. In the Himalayas is the exquisite, very dwarf but somewhat difficult to grow *D. peregrina*. In recent years there have been several hybrid *Dicentra* released, utilizing combinations of the above species. The most recent to be released is perhaps the gem of all the hybrids, *Dicentra* 'Burning Hearts'.



Dicentra 'Burning Hearts', L: May 2013, R: July 2013

'Burning Hearts' was bred by Akira Shiozaki of Japan. It is a hybrid cross of *D. peregrina* (female parent) and *D. eximia* (male parent). It was released in 2008.

This hybrid has the darkest red flowers of any *Dicentra*. Their flowers contrast beautifully with their powder-blue, fern-like foliage. If the summer temperatures remain relatively cool and the plants kept relatively damp, they will retain their spectacular foliage all season.

Prompt dead-heading can result in flowering from mid-late spring onwards through the summer. Plants have a mounding habit, 20-25 cm tall, with a spread of 30-45 cm. They require part-shade in warm regions but will do quite well in full sun in cooler coastal areas. They are not particular about soil pH. In zones 5-9, they may be used as accent or edging plants in perennial borders, but are also ideal for woodland gardens, rockeries or even containers. Hummingbirds love it while deer and rabbits avoid it. Insects and disease do not appear to be a problem. The only factor that is required is proper drainage in the winter months. Too wet, and they have a tendency to rot. This feature is what makes cultivating the *D. peregrina* parent so challenging.

If I was to grow only one *Dicentra* in my woodland garden or rockery, this would be my first choice. As it happens, I love them all and have several others in my garden, but 'Burning Hearts' is by far my favourite. It may end up being yours too!

PLANT PORTRAIT: The Rare *Iris cycloglossa*

By Ian E. Efford

After ten years of raising iris species from seed in the severe climate of Ottawa, I moved back to the west coast to a cliff-side garden that was quite unsuitable for irises but very suitable for rhododendrons. Another ten years raising rhododendrons from cuttings and a change of gardens resulted in a garden containing about 200 irises and another 200 rhododendrons. Unfortunately, the irises are almost all hybrids raised from the British Iris Society seed exchange and my real interest is the biology and ecology of the wild plants.

I have just completed the construction of a rock garden and also decided to raise iris species again. In this light, I selected one species that I had failed to grow in the past but which is one of the rarest and most interesting of all irises. That is *Iris cycloglossa*. I soon discovered that previous sources of seed were no longer in business and most nurseries did not have this species even those that had sold it in the past. I have contacted one nursery in the U.S. that still sells the bulbs and one in the U.K. but the latter will not export to Canada. I also know of only one private grower in Canada and one in the U.K. It seems as if this lovely iris is slowly disappearing from the horticultural scene.

The Species

Iris cycloglossa has been seen twice in the wild and from only one location which is near Herat in western Afghanistan. It was collected once by P. Wendelbo in 1947 and all the horticultural stock is derived from that original collection. A disappearance of *I. cycloglossa* would be particularly unfortunate because it is one of the rarest iris and of particular interest biologically and evolutionarily. The iris is in the sub-genus *Scorpiris* [usually referred to as *junos*], a group of bulbous irises that are found throughout the eastern Middle East region from North Africa to Pakistan. They are relatively rare in nature and normally live on semi-arid hillsides where the summers are very dry. Unlike the other *junos*, *I. cycloglossa* was discovered in rather damp soil, not in a rocky gravel habitat.

As well as being rare and from a rather different habitat from that of others in the group, it is also very distinctive in having large standards, unlike the reduced standards of species in the sub-genus such as *I. magnifica* and *bucharica* which are both fairly commonly found in rock gardens and alpine house collections. In fact, although classified by Brian Mathews as a

juno, one has to ask if it is not an ancestral form with flowers that closely resemble other irises such as the Siberians.

Where can it be seen?

About 15 years ago, I saw one large plant growing in Denver Botanic Garden and, as far as I can determine, it is still growing there. As I was to be in England for much of April, I decided to visit a couple of gardens where I knew it would exist. My first visit was to The Royal Horticultural Society garden at Wisley. The information officer gave me the exact location in their magnificent rock garden. I searched the very large rock garden, the smaller new rockery and the alpine house to no avail. Finally, I waited until the gardeners from that section returned from lunch and visited them in the nursery area. They had to admit that the species had died out!



L: RHS Wisley Rock Garden



R: Wisley Alpine House

My travels also took me to the oldest botanic garden in England at Oxford University. Dotted around the rock garden were various junos that had just finished flowering but no *I. cycloglossa*.

At the end of the trip, I went to The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which also has a beautiful rock garden (below left). I initially asked a gardener about the species but she said that she was a woodland gardener and did not know anything about rock garden plants. As I walked into the rock garden itself the first label I read was *I. cycloglossa* (below right).



It was an absolutely magnificent clump over a metre wide. Just above it was another equally large clump and, after talking to the gardener responsible, another small clump just around the corner. This patch was smaller because it was in the shade and the plant prefers full sun. Unfortunately, despite the hot weather during the last days of April, the plants were covered in buds but not one flower was open! I spoke to the gardener for a long time and then decided to see the rest of the rock garden and visit the alpine house.

As I entered the alpine house, the first thing I saw was a pot of the species in full bloom. I had achieved my objective!

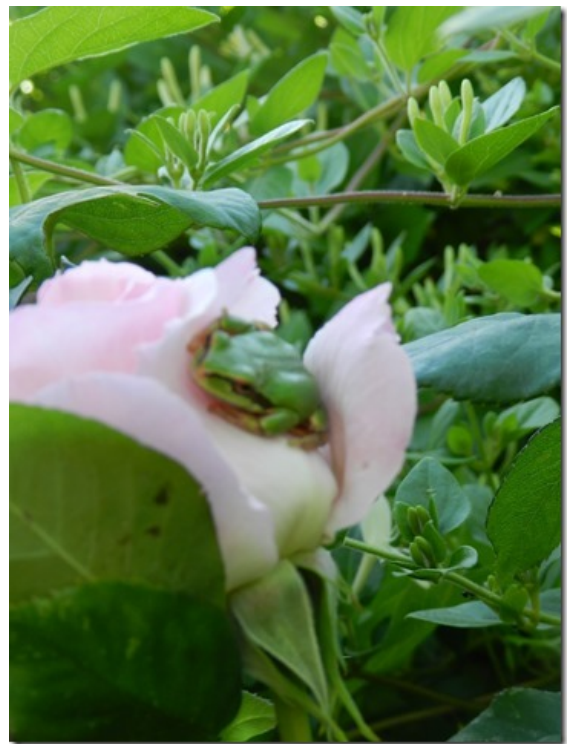




The Davies Alpine House at RBG Kew

All that remains is to find a source of bulbs or seed and establish a viable colony of this very interesting iris on Vancouver Island just in case the wild population has become extinct.

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - KIRSTEN JUERGENSEN



A little tree frog enjoying Kirsten's roses

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Valerie Melanson

Aquilegias continued:



L: *Aquilegia pyrenaica*, grown from AGS 2011/12 seed, sown January 2012.

R: *Aquilegia pyrenaica* ssp. *guarensis*, grown from AGCBC 2012/13 #554 seed, sown Feb 2013.



L: *Aquilegia triternata*, grown from AGCBC 2012/13 # 30 seed, sown Feb 2013.

R: *Lewisia rediviva*, returned for an encore performance this year.

WHAT IS THIS PLANT?

LAST MONTH: Margot Moser asked for help with identification on this plant:



Todd Boland, Research Horticulturist at Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden, identified it: "It is *Cerastium alpinum* subsp. *lanatum* (recognized by the super fuzzy leaves). I saw these in the wild when visiting Greenland several years ago."