



"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the
Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

<http://alpinegardenersofcvi.wixsite.com/agcvi>

Issue # 44

Winter 2016-2017

FROM THE EDITOR: My heartfelt Thank You to all the contributors to this issue !! Please consider sharing YOUR photos, tips & tricks, sources, portraits of favourite plants, reviews of useful books, etc. Contributions are gratefully received at Melanson.valerie@gmail.com.

Deadlines for 2017: March 15th for Early Spring, June 15th for Late Spring-Early Summer, August 15th for Late Summer, October 15th for Fall.

NEW WEBSITE: You will notice that our website address, above, has changed. Our new webmistress, Teri Hyde, has set up a lovely new site, and has a new email for business to do with it: alpinesrock@shaw.ca.

And Teri has an **Announcement about a New 'Members Garden Spotlight'** for all AGCVI members. "Please send photos of your garden or alpine plants from a trip and any information you would like with them to alpinesrock@shaw.ca. Every month or two there will be a new **Garden Spotlight** here at <http://alpinegardenersofcvi.wixsite.com/agcvi/pictures> If you have any ideas or suggestions email them too, all ideas are welcome. Thank you!" Teri

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SOURCES / LINKS TO NOTE:

Buddleja: Peter Moore, breeder of Buddlejias at Longstock Park Nursery in Hampshire, UK, and holder of the National Plant Collection has created a new website:

www.buddlejacollection.com (The Garden, November 2016, p. 13)

Erythronium:

A 278-page monograph on *Erythronium* is now available as a pdf download:

Grahame Ware (via Bill Bischoff of the AGC-BC) reports that "Ian Young of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, etc., has just published this guide that has been years and years in the making. *Erythronium* and its hybrids are, by and large, well-suited to N. Scotland and their conditions. They are also well-suited to conditions here on the east coast of Van Isle and possibly even better suited to conditions on N. Vancouver Island where it is wetter and colder. They are a great forest/woods denizen and are very useful at knitting the understory together as many of you probably know. A wealth of info is contained here. Let's all thank Ian for this great effort! "

<http://files.srgc.net/general/ERYTHRONIUMS-IN-CULTIVATION%20-2016-IanYoung.pdf>

UPCOMING AGCVI SPECIAL EVENTS

MARK THESE 2017 SPECIAL SPEAKERS ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW. MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW IN THE EARLY SPRING ISSUE.

Monday, April 24th - David Sellars, Topic TBA, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 1 pm.

Monday, May 8th - Alan McMurtrie of reticulatas.com, on his work breeding new cultivars, good *Iris* for the rock garden, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 1 pm

Monday, June 12th - Jiri Papousek from the Czech Republic, Topic TBA, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 1 pm.

ALSO...

Saturday, April 29th - Our BIG ANNUAL PLANT SALE, more details in next issue.

ESWYN ALPINE & ROCK GARDEN REPORT

By Karen Unruh



In June 2016, the group of Eswyn's Alpine Caretakers created our own workshop to place plants in Tufa for later planting as a Tufa specialty area in Eswyn's garden. Here Elaine Peterson is drilling the holes in Tufa rock while Elaine Bohm, Toine Rhemtulla, with Gladys Kinsman in behind, are starting the planting of small plants.

We were especially pleased to use the plants given to us by David Sellars. The second picture shows the Tufa rock which has *Daphne x reichsteinii* on the top right, along with the *Primula allionii* 'Neon' in the centre.



The tufa rock was planted in Eswyn's garden in September. And imagine my delight when I went back to the garden later in the fall, and found the *Primula allionii* 'Neon' with one full bloom and one spent bloom. This may not be the usual blooming time for the *primula*, but given its special planting in Tufa, it has pleasantly surprised us. And we have this third photo to share with you.



Thank you, David Sellars, for encouraging us to take on this project with the gift of such sweet miniature alpine plants ... you have given us such joy.

THE FOUR *ERYTHRONIUM* OF VANCOUVER ISLAND

By Paul Spriggs, Victoria, B.C.

Did you know that there are four species of *Erythronium* growing wild on Vancouver Island?

Yes. It's true. That charming little wildflower, so cherished by woodland gardeners all over the world is well represented here on the island, yet they all come from very different habitats, presenting a welcome challenge for gardeners. The four species that occur on Vancouver Island are *Erythronium oregonum*, *E. revolutum*, *E. grandiflorum*, and *E. montanum*.

Erythroniums, one of our most beautiful spring ephemerals, belong to the lily family (liliaceae). Like many lilies, they stem from a deep underground bulb. In the springtime (summer for the alpine species), this bulb pushes up a pair of basal leaves, clear and un-marked in some species, and heavily mottled in others. Following almost immediately after the appearance of the leaves, the flower bud then rises above to open into a beautiful, reflexed flower.

There are roughly twenty known species of this genus. The great majority occur here in North America, with the greatest distribution in the West. Europe hosts 3 species, the best known being the the Dog Tooth Violet (*E. dens-canis*), and Asia has only *E. japonicum*. They come from many different habitats, suggesting that one cannot assume they all want the same treatment. Like many bulbs, all Erythroniums have one common need: good drainage and varying degrees of humus if they are to survive in the garden. Gardeners may be familiar with the oft seen cultivars and selections 'Pagoda', 'White Beauty', and 'Lilac Wonder', but the purity of the true species is what enchants gardeners far and wide.

Perhaps the most recognizable of the genus to Vancouver Islanders is the Fawn Lily (*E. oregonum*). The reason for its familiarity is because of its tendency to grow in the Mediterranean rain shadow of the island's south-east coastal plain, where most of the population lives. This lowland species can be so abundant that it is not uncommon to find natural colonies right in people's rural backyards!



It is a plant associated with the Oak and Camas meadows of the island and so, naturally, it doesn't mind a slight drying period in the summer. That being said, the bulbs usually dig themselves so deeply into the meadow loam, that there is likely some moisture way down there. So they shouldn't be baked in summer. Like all bulbs, ample water during the growing season is a requirement. This plant has mottled leaves and a creamy-white flower, the inside of the petals, ringed with exquisite reddish-brown markings, and a yellow center at the base.



Being native to where many of us garden, it is generally not difficult to grow, and with the right conditions of rich meadow loam, spring water and a summer rest, will thrive and even naturalize. Those lucky enough to be gardening on Garry Oak loam can have success by simply scattering seeds about and waiting.

As mentioned above, this plant is so ubiquitous, that it can be seen in almost any of our natural parks and roadsides along the dry east coast of the island during its bloom period which typically happens in early to mid-April.

Another *Erythronium*, and probably the second best known to local gardeners is the exquisitely beautiful Pink Fawn Lily (*Erythronium revolutum*).



This is also a lowland species, but contrary to the above *E. oregonum*, this species inhabits the other side of the island, typically on its rainy and wild west coast, rarely far from the ocean.



On Vancouver Island, this is most commonly found in valley bottoms along the riparian zones of rivers and streams. Gardeners can take a cultivation clue from this. These areas are much wetter than the east side habitats, often flooding in winter, and never really drying out in summer.



This is a plant for irrigated gardens where it will naturalize freely in gravelly, almost sandy soil with some humus that stays wet all year. Allow it to dry out in the summer and you will certainly lose it. I am aware of one colony in a Victoria garden where it has naturalized on the screenings of an irrigated pathway! Here the colony has increased quite rapidly. If the irrigation system was not covering the path, this would never have happened.

Last year I found a surprise. Deep down in an almost inaccessible canyon of a remote west coast river, a colony of pure white *E. revolutum*!



Here it was growing alongside pink ones, and they had hybridized, resulting in all shades of white, pink and everything in between. One of the best places to see this on the island is in the Honeymoon Bay Wildflower reserve, ten kilometers past the village of Lake Cowichan. Here you will see acres of it carpeting the valley floor of the Sutton Creek watershed in late April.

As easy as the above two *Erythroniums* are to grow, the other two Islanders are sadly not so easy. This is mainly because they come from mountain habitats that are difficult to re-create in the garden. That the two hail from the mountains is reflected in their names:

Avalanche Lily (*E. montanum*), and Glacier Lily (*E. grandiflorum*).



E. grandiflorum



Glacier Lily is the most widespread of all four of our *Erythroniums*, ranging all the way from British Columbia south and east to the central Rockies of Colorado. This one is different because it is our only pure yellow species and unlike the aforementioned, its leaves are not mottled, rather a pure, shiny green. Island forms also tend to be smaller than mainland forms, with usually only one flower per stem. It is a snowmelt species, inhabiting south facing slopes and appearing immediately after the retreat of the snowpack. Like the above species, it can grow in great numbers, often carpeting the ground. The difficulty in cultivating this species is due to its habitat requirements. Dry, cold, snow covered ground in winter, and hot, dry summers. It is not common on Vancouver Island, and many of its localities are difficult to get to during its bloom period since it blooms so early. So often I have seen the ripening seed heads and withering foliage of this plant peppering the herbaceous subalpine meadows and wish I had visited a month

earlier. The steep, south facing meadow leading to the saddle between Mt. Cokely and Mt. Arrowsmith is a relatively accessible location for this plant. However, its bloom time can vary greatly depending on the snowpack, usually in June or July.



The last of our four island *Erythroniums* is the Avalanche Lily (*E. montanum*), above. This is another un-mottled leafed species, and the only one the four with a pure white flower. So pure is its whiteness, and so dense the colonies, that when it blooms, the ground can appear to be covered in snow! The center of the flower is ornamented with yellow, similar to the lowland Fawn Lily. Like the Glacier Lily, this is also a plant of the mountains, and consequently is difficult in cultivation.

Though common in the mainland ranges of the Cascades and the Olympics, the Avalanche Lily is only known to occur in one place on Vancouver Island: the San Juan ridge behind Port Renfrew. Although only 1000 meters high, this ridge receives an immense amount of snow, creating sub-alpine conditions at a fairly low elevation. What's interesting here is that it grows in the clearcuts leading to the ridge, and the openings left by the tree harvesting has improved its habitat. Further up the ridge, where it grows in the mottled shade of the forest, each plant hosts only a single flower. However, in the clearcuts, some incredibly robust plants can be found, some

with as many as ten blooms per specimen!! If only we could re-create this in our gardens. But alas, attempts to tame this wild child of the hills have proven to be fruitless, at least in my experience. Perhaps success may be had in highland gardens that experience colder winters, but for lowland island gardens this one is a no-go.

Fortunately, the colonies are easily accessed by car thanks to the logging roads that penetrate their hilly haunts.



(Kenton Seth views a colony on San Juan Ridge)

One cannot help but be charmed by this magnificent wildflower, coveted by gardeners the world over. Whether growing in a garden, ornamenting a wild meadow, streamside or mountainside, it never fails to impress. It catches the eye of the casual passerby, its enchanting blooms calling out to be admired. How lucky we should be that our island hosts such a fine representation of the genus, and that we can visit with relative ease such a treasure.

PLANT PORTRAIT: *Dionysia aretioides*

By Ger van den Beuken, The Netherlands

The home base for *Dionysia aretioides* is the Elburz Mountain Range in Northern Iran. There it grows in shaded, vertical, limestone cliffs at an altitude of more than 3000 metres. Dense cushions more than 40cm across are to be found in the wild. The rosettes are hairy with a wooly farina beneath. The sessile yellow flowers are solitary, occasionally two per rosette.

In the past I have grown some young plants from seed, collected by the JLMS (Jäger, Löbke, Mayr, Stopp) expedition. These forms did not have any meaningful difference from forms already in cultivation. The best cultivars in my collection are "Phyllis Carter" and "Bevere".



'Phyllis Carter'

"Phyllis Carter" is a very compact cushion plant with tiny rosettes and small bright yellow flowers 1 cm across, that flowers in early spring.



'Bevere'

My favourite, "Bevere", in contrast, has bigger rosettes and flowers that are up to 2 cm across. "Bevere" is a selected seedling from the collection of Ron Beeston in the UK. Some other good cultivars are "Paul Furse" and "Gravetey".



(forms of *Dionysia aretioides*)

Culture: *Dionysia aretioides* is one of the finest, floriferous and fast species and reasonably easy to grow. Sometimes plants can reach a size of more than 30cm across. There are documented results of cultivation in rock

gardens where they planted in an overhanging tufa rock or protected the whole year round with a piece of glass. Myself I have no experience with this practice and grow my plants in the alpine house in clay pots, inserted in a sand bed and provided with water from beneath. The pH 7 medium I use is a mix of coarse sand, seramis, pumice, perlite and a small amount of fine peat. A mix of 70% coarse sand and fine perlite is the substantial rooting medium for my cuttings. The best time for this job is spring time immediately after flowering when the plants start growing. Keeping the alpine house well ventilated is important to avoid fungal infections.

AGCVI MEETING REPORTS

October 24, 2016: Round Robin

Photos by Kirsten Juergensen

We had 3 demonstration stations: June Strandberg presented on potting on cuttings, Mike Miller on planting bulbs and Valerie Melanson on starting winter seeds.







L: rooted cuttings ready for pricking out, R: mini greenhouse made from lettuce boxes & clips

Christmas Lunch at the Shady Rest

November 28, 2017

Photos by Kirsten Juergensen



A special Thank You to Barbara Kulla for her many years of sterling service to the group organizing the refreshments at all our meetings.



January 30, 2017: AGM & Bernie Guyader
photos by Kirsten Juergensen

On a fine Monday at Shelly Road Hall, we held our AGM & heard from Bernie Guyader about "Smaller Rhododendrons for the Rock Garden".



Bernie Guyader gave us many ideas for using rhododendrons in our rock gardens.



L: Margot Moser (Membership Secretary) & Barb Lemoine handle membership renewals, R: the potential haul on the Prize Draw table.

February 4, 2017: AGCVI TABLE AT QUALICUM BEACH SEEDY SATURDAY



(Mike Miller and Barbara Kulla at the AGCVI table)

Snow cut attendance at this annual event, but Mike reports much interest was shown in our group & many seed packets sold.

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN

Kirsten Juergensen - January 1st



A pleasant treat for New Year's Day - *Gentiana acaulis*

June Strandberg - January 19th



L: *Cyclamen coum*, R: *Galanthus elwesii*, Scottish seed sown Sept 2009 and in their 3rd year of flowering



L: *Galanthus caucasicus* nearly out, grown from seed from Morley, R: Big daffodil nearly out



Narcissus 'Muslin' AGS seed sown January 2012, now in 2nd year of flowering,



Osmanthus heterophyllus 'Variegatus'. Not an alpine but it scents the yard around it. You have to lift the branches to find the flowers.

Vel Rhodes & Dan Schwarz - January 19th



Their garden still in the grip of the December freeze.

But the crevice dish garden created at our workshop in 2016 sports its first bloom for 2017



(a lovely *Gentiana acaulis*)

Valerie Melanson - February 5th



at 1 pm, all plants tucked up under a snowy blanket, somewhere ...