



"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the
Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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

Issue # 40

Part 1

Early Spring 2016



The promise of a new growing season. *Pinguicula grandiflora* re-grow from their hibernacula in the editor's damp bed. (March 26, 2016)

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FROM THE EDITOR: The joys of spring have started to arrive here on the wet West Coast along with so many opportunities to enjoy our alpinists and rock gardens. Try something new - see page 9 for Ger's portrait & recommendation of *Morisia monanthos*. Please share 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 rest of 2016:

June 15th for the Late Spring-Early Summer issue,

August 15th for Late Summer issue,

October 15th for Fall issue.

If you are missing any of the earlier issues of "Crevice", please get in touch and I will send them along.

UPCOMING AGCVI SPECIAL EVENTS

The AGCVI will welcome **Two Special Speakers** this spring. Please mark your calendars for the following at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre - doors open 12:30, talk at 1:00 pm:

On April 25th - Malcolm McGregor from the UK will speak on A World Full of Saxifrages. \$5 at door includes coffee/tea & goodies. \$3 for Plant Prize Draw ticket.



Malcolm training a new generation in the art of rock gardening.

A World Full of Saxifrages: This is a spectacular survey of the world of saxifrages from geological times to the present day in the wild and the garden.

Saxifrages are beautiful, easy to grow, and among the most desirable of all rock garden plants. They have been around for over 100 million years evolving to fill niches from woodland shade to grasslands to high bare mountain habitats. Across the world the saxifrage genus and the wider saxifrage family have become intriguingly diverse with around 2000 species, cultivars, and varieties in genus *Saxifraga* alone. And this means that saxifrages can be found that will suit a much wider range of garden conditions than is often recognised. During this

presentation, we'll be seeing examples of this charismatic diversity from around the world and see how many of these can find a home in the garden.

Most of the saxifrages traditionally associated with the rock garden stem from species of the European mountains and there will be plenty of these represented in the presentation but there will also be plenty of examples from much further afield which can provide the gardener with charismatic saxifrages flowering in the garden in every snow-free month of the year.

From Europe we will see plants from northern Norway to southernmost Spain, and then on into the mountains of Northern Africa. In Asia there are examples from the Himalayas in Nepal, India and Tibet, and also from Japan. And then in North America we will see saxifrages from the Bering Straits all the way down to the Mexican border.

Alongside these there will be plenty of chance to see many of the exquisite garden cultivars that are so beloved by enthusiasts - dwarf cushion Kabschias and hybrid mossy saxifrages, the far-eastern hybrids from section Irregulares - and to look at their place in the gardening calendar.

As a leading world authority on saxifrages, Malcolm McGregor will look at examples from across the genus and family. Beautiful and intriguing examples are drawn from Malcolm's extensive travels and research and his more than thirty years experience growing all types of saxifrage. So, "A World of Saxifrages," will as always be presented in his inimitable and enthusiastic style.

MALCOLM MCGREGOR has been growing alpine plants for around 35 years. He has been Editor for the North American Rock Garden Society since 2010, and previously for the Scottish Rock Garden Club (2000-2006) and of the Saxifrage Society (1993-2003).

Malcolm has travelled widely, particularly in the last fifteen years, in Europe and North America, as well as visiting Turkey, Morocco, Western Australia, the Himalayas, and Far Eastern Asia. A professional lecturer for over thirty years, he has also worked in arts administration and in writing computer software. He is well known as an enthusiastic lecturer and he now lectures on literature, as well as on alpine plants and gardening.

Malcolm is a world authority on the saxifrage family and is the Honorary President of the Saxifrage Society. His lectures on the family and genus are renowned and constantly evolving. The current Chair of the Saxifrage Society said, "I've heard Malcolm talk about saxifrages over a dozen times and I learn new things every time." Malcolm's beautifully illustrated book Saxifrages (2008, Timber Press) is the first fully comprehensive account of saxifrages since Engler & Irmscher published their masterpiece in 1916 & 1919. It has

become established as a classic among single-genre works being botanically rigorous as well as completely accessible to the non-specialist, infused as it is with his enthusiasm:

"I have been interested in wild flowers since I was a boy. Perhaps it was the sheer magic they represented when we moved from a basement flat in Fulham in bomb-damaged London, where we had no garden, to the outer fringes of London, and I was suddenly, at the age of nine, free to tramp the Kentish woods, finding flowers, watching woodpeckers, catching fish, and over the next few years exploring further on my bike, finding orchids in the chalk meadows, crayfish in the chalk streams. I can still feel the same joy in my searches edging along a rocky ledge - even if today caution occasionally takes over. "

From Saxifrages, 2008, Timber Press



L: *Saxifraga oppositifolia* in Yorkshire, R: Malcolm at Ankogel, Austria, examining *Saxifraga oppositifolia*

On May 30th - David Sellars will give two talks - Pyrenees Flora in Perspective: From Andorra to Gavarie & Photographing Alpine Plants: A Landscape Point of View. \$10 at door includes coffee/tea & goodies, and Plant Prize Draw ticket. There will also be a **Plant sale by members**, so raid your piggy banks and come check for choice alpine, woodlanders & native plants.



David Sellars hunting Lewisias

Pyrenees Flora in Perspective: From Andorra to Gavarnie. The Pyrenees form the border between France and Spain and have a great variety of alpine flowers. David and Wendy Sellars have made three trips to the Pyrenees and this presentation will showcase some of the endemic alpine flora in spectacular mountain settings.



Gentiana verna in Andorra (photo: D. Sellars)

Photographing Alpine Plants: A Landscape Point of View. Over the past 10 years David Sellars has won numerous alpine plant photography awards and many of his photos have been published in books on alpine flora. In this lecture he will share insights into his approach to plant photography including camera selection, camera setup and composition.

David Sellars is Past President of the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia and together with his wife, Wendy, he is developing an extensive alpine and woodland garden in coastal British Columbia. He is an avid mountain hiker and maintains the website: http://www.mountainflora.ca/Site/Mountainflora_Home.html

His particular interests are rock garden design and construction, alpine plant photography and using video to illustrate mountain landscapes and alpine plant habitats. His video page is here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/MountainFlora>

David has written illustrated articles for the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly, the Alpine Garden Club of BC Bulletin, the International Rock Gardener, and the Saxifrage Magazine. A selection of his alpine plant photographs were published in the recent book Alpine Plants of British Columbia, Alberta and Northwest North America.

OTHER EVENTS TO NOTE

VIRAGS ANNUAL SPRING SHOW AND SALE - APRIL 8 AND 9



The Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society's 2016 annual Spring Show and sale will be held at:

Cadboro Bay United Church
2625 Arbutus Road
Victoria BC

Friday, April 8
from 1 pm to 8 pm

Saturday, April 9
from 9 am to 3 pm

Plant sale by members
11:00 am Saturday

This is a well-established juried show, featuring wonderful rock and alpine garden plants. As well as show entries, there will be commercial and member plant sales, seed sales, displays, door prizes, and refreshments. Admission is by donation.

15th Annual Spring Plant Sale at VIU's Milner Gardens

Vancouver Island University's Milner Gardens Spring Plant Sale will be held from 10am to 4pm on April 23rd and 24th at Milner Gardens & Woodland, 2179 West Island Highway, Qualicum Beach, BC.

Great discounts on heritage trees, shrubs and perennials propagated on site by Milner volunteers. Master gardeners will help answer your plant questions or choose the right plant. Come early for best selection! Enjoy walking through the Rhododendron collection as it begins the spring bloom.

Winter rates admission for this weekend: Adults \$5.25, Youth \$3.25, children 12 and under accompanied by an adult, Milner Gardens members, and current VIU students with card enter free. Tea Room open 11:30am to 4pm, gardens close at 5pm with last entry 4:30pm.

The gardens open daily commencing April 21st. For more information please email milnergardens@shaw.ca, phone [250-752-6153](tel:250-752-6153) or visit <https://www2.viu.ca/milnergardens>

DON'T FORGET THE EAGLECREST GARDEN CLUB PLANT SALE

Saturday, 23RD April at 531 Yambury Road

Plant sale is from 8 till noon (approx.)

THEY ALWAYS HAVE MASSES OF CHOICE PLANTS.

NARGS CONFERENCE AT STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

The Rocky Mountain Chapter of NARGS is looking forward to welcoming everyone in Colorado in June. We thank everyone for their interest in the conference. It has been wonderful to see the very positive response from across the globe. We are capping registration at 250 people to insure that we stay within occupancy at the venues and insure that we can transport everyone to the trail heads for the hikes.

Please send in your registration as we have only about 50 spots left. We will make an announcement as we near 250 and when we are filled. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kintgen (kintgenM@botanicgardens.org) or the Conference registrar Lori Giesecke (geesakey8@gmail.com).

Information for registering on line or by mail is available at: www.nargs.org Click on "Steamboat Springs On-Line AGM Registration."

Thank you for making this one of the largest NARGS conferences in the past few years.

Mike Kintgen

Denver Botanic Gardens

(March 7, 2016)

ESWYN ALPINE & ROCK GARDEN REPORT

words by Karen Unruh, photos by Karen & Elaine Bohm

This morning, March 15th, I went by Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden and found to my delight



that the *Iris tuberosa* is in bloom.

This is a very subtle bloom with striking maroon/black falls and lime green standards, just a delight in one of our first spring sunny days. The alum-like leaves emerge first in the late fall, and the bloom is in early spring. After blooming, the plant will die back and become dormant until the sign of leaves in late fall.



This was a plant that came to the garden in the fall of 2009. Plants from a renowned alpine gardener, Eswyn Lyster, were willed to a public garden and her family were pleased that they could be moved to a new rock garden at Nanoose Place, the Community Centre of Nanoose Bay. We moved some lovely *Primula* 'Sue Jervis' to the garden without realizing that we had moved the dormant *Iris tuberosa*. As the plant can be slow to recover when moved, we did not see any sign of the iris in the spring after the move. However, we have been delightfully surprised every spring since then.



Primula 'Sue Jervis'

(Note from Editor: *Iris tuberosa* was given a write-up in the Feb/March 2016 issue of The English Garden in an article called "Spring with a Twist: This autumn, in addition to tulips and daffodils, why not plant some more unusual bulbs?", by John Hoyland. He writes that "In February, when little else is flowering, *Iris tuberosa* (often now sold as *Hermodactylus tuberosus*) is a treasure. Commonly called the widow iris, its translucent jade-green flowers have black edges. It needs a well-drained situation and revels in chalky soils, where it will creep around to establish large colonies. It grows to about 20cm tall and will continue flowering into April. The flowers have a strong scent which is barely discernible outside on cold days, but bring a few stems indoors and their perfume will be released."

**PLANT PORTRAIT - *Morisia monanthos*
by Ger van den Beuken, the Netherlands**



A member of the Cruciferae, *Morisia monanthos* is a species endemic in Corsica and Sardinia, where it is grows from sea level to as high in the mountains as 1200 metres. This species

prefers sandy conditions in the most sunny places. It grows with a stout rootstock and forms a tuft of rosettes made up of pinnate, lanceolate evergreen leaves. The 1.5 to 2cm wide flowers are four-petalled and a beautiful bright yellow on very short stems. There is a form in cultivation named 'Fred Hemingway' with finer, larger, yellow flowers.

Cultivation:

It's a ideal species for trough, crevice, scree or rockgarden on a bright sunny spot. Usually it's a hardy plant, but to avoid any risk give it a nice sheltered place. Sandy conditions are ideal and watering in the summer is only necessary during a long hot dry spell. The first flowers appear in April and sometimes you may expect a second flowering during summer. Unfortunately we do not have a flower show in the Netherlands, but I have seen the most spectacular plants in the UK on the show bench.

Propagation:

As far as I know it's possible to propagate the plants from seed, however I have not seen any seeds on my plants in the garden. Another way of propagation is taking some rosettes and treat them as cuttings. This is a good method if you need just a few plants. If you want to propagate many plants for sale, you can make a try from root cuttings - not difficult at all. Take the largest part of the roots and cut them in pieces of about 5 cm length and insert them in a pot with pure sand. Keep the sand slightly moist and you may expect new growth after some weeks. Another way of propagation that I have seen at a wholesale nursery with a huge number of plants was as follows: all the plants were grown in the open field in big pots. They had been growing for one year and during the spring, when the plants were in growth, the pots were taken out of the soil and all the roots left behind in the soil sprouted and produced wonderful new plants during summer.

KABSCHIA SAXIFRAGES

by David Sellars



L: *Saxifraga* 'Winton', R: *Saxifraga* 'R.V. Pritchard'

Most of the Kabschia Saxifrages come into flower in March, though this year many in our garden were flowering in February. They are an excellent plant for the rock garden, as the foliage looks good year-round, they make tight buns and they are resistant to slugs and other pests.

They do have special needs however and, in addition to the usual requirement for good drainage like all rock garden plants, they need to be cool in the summer. This can be achieved in the garden by planting them in east or north facing aspects but with plenty of light as they will not tolerate too much overhead shade. If you plant them in pots they can be moved to the north side of a building in hot summer periods. Keeping the roots cool and moist is also important.

With the right growing conditions, Kabschia Saxifrages are very long-lived in the rock garden which is more than can be said for many alpines.



L: *Saxifraga* 'Winifred'

The early flowers can be damaged by heavy rain in February and March so it is useful to provide some overhead protection. An overhanging rock is ideal but polycarbonate sheets can also be used as a temporary measure though they are not as aesthetically pleasing.

In the garden I grow Kabschia Saxifrages in tufa rock or Sechelt Sand which contains about 15% crusher fines providing mineral nutrients. For planting in pots I have been experimenting with reducing organic matter and now use a mixture of Sechelt Sand, pumice and limestone chips without any peat.



L: *Saxifraga* 'Bohunka', R: *Saxifraga* 'Sissi'



L: *Saxifraga* 'Valerie Finnis', R: *Saxifraga* 'G.M. Hopkins'



L: *Saxifraga* 'Mary Golds', R: *Saxifraga* 'Seisara'



L: *Saxifraga* 'Your Smile', R: *Saxifraga* 'Your Success'

Allendale selections:



L: *Saxifraga* 'Allendale Beau', R: *Saxifraga* 'Allendale Ghost'



Saxifraga 'Allendale Charm'

The Silver Saxifrages are less fussy and flower much later in May. For an early Spring flower display in the rock garden, Kabschia Saxifrages are exceptional.

-----PLEASE SEE PART 2 FOR MORE ARTICLES-----