

"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

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

Issue # 10

August 2012

From the Editor: First, my apologies for page 3 of part 2 of last month's "Crevice". My first experiment with making columns worked okay in MacBook Word but didn't translate properly to the Adobe .pdf version, hence the duplication of some letters on the column next to ZZ's photo of the Beauty Slope. I hope to learn how to avoid this for future.

Also, corrections: the bird on page 5 in Part 1, is a Western Tanager, not a Scarlet Tanager. And Margaret Mosher, as mentioned in the Rhododendron Lake outing is more correctly Margot Moser, a very knowledgeable member of the Native Plant SIG, who also came along on the Paradise Meadow Hike and pointed out and identified additional wildflowers. Thank you, Margot!

DON'T FORGET TO COLLECT & DRY SEEDS FOR THE FALL SEED EXCHANGES.



TRIP TO THE U.K.

RBG KEW DAVIES ALPINE HOUSE

By June Strandberg

The last time I visited Kew was in 1984 on May 1st and the alpine house was closed for spraying!! It was not this one, of course, but it was one I had never seen and I couldn't even get close enough to look in the windows. It was a great disappointment - I had to be content with a good look round the rock garden and the palm house!!

This time we went on May 23rd. Louise and I decided that the half day allotted to Kew on our garden tour would not be long enough - and it turned out to be very true as our bus left Windsor and got stuck in a traffic jam around Wembley Stadium so we arrived late at Kew.

We decided to brave the underground (most of this one was above ground!) and things went very well until we got to Chiswick Park and all had to get off the train due to a fire at the next station! We played 'Follow the Leader' to the bus stop - quite a distance, several blocks at least. The bus was fairly full when it arrived but we piled in until there was just room for the door to close - even then some were left behind.

We were finally at Kew and headed for the alpine house but passed the plant sales so had to detour to that - it was full of mouth watering plants, (that we couldn't buy as we are not allowed to bring them home) including two nice sized Wollemi pines. We came in through the rock garden and, at first, could see no sign of an alpine house, then, there it was - with its sails up, this being a very nice day. This was our second warm day and they lasted all through the tour, right up until the day we left for home - which was the day before the Queen sailed down the river. We were so very lucky!

In the alpine house there is much to see, a kind of a hybrid with everything rolled into one!: A tufa wall, alpines in pots, little crevice gardens, gravelly places and very large rocks. Lots and lots of plants and all are labeled with plenty of information. The potted alpines are many - *Corydalis*, *Calochortus*, *Sorbus*, *Dianthus*, *Campanula*, *Geranium* etc and quite a few rare plants - these can be moved in and out as they flower but most of the other plantings are permanent, some quite large, some very tiny and all sizes in between.

The tufa walls are interesting - lots of cushions - *Saxifraga*, *Dionysia*, *Asperula*, *Androsace*, *Dianthus*, *Draba*, *Primula*, *Lychnis*, *Daphne*, *Campanula*, *Ranunculus*, *Physoplexis*, even *Cyclamen* and many more, some tiny and some quite big. It shows the different plants you can grow on your tufa rocks.

At first glance it seems there is a lot of space not utilized that should have good things growing in it! But, on second thoughts, a narrower aisle would spoil the whole perspective and landscapes could not be viewed properly. Not to mention a congestion of viewers!

The alpine house sits amidst an interesting new rock garden kind of semi-terraced but more about the rock garden later. I'm so glad they were not spraying on May 23rd 2012!

We had a good time there that day - we looked at specimen trees, sat around and looked at a Canada goose, or rather he came up and looked at us - I wondered if he was home sick! We went in the palm house but it was too hot for us so we went up the tree top walk instead - and we had cake, everywhere we went we had cake!!

The rail line was open again when we left so, after a little difficulty with the language, we arrived safely back at our hotel.



Crevice Bed



Large Rock section



Plants in gravel bed



Plants in gravel bed



Tufa Wall



Weldenia candida



Leucocoryne pauciflora, an Alliaceae from Chile



Penstemon scouleri

NB: Title photo of Davies Alpine House at Kew is by David Watson, from a Kew postcard sent by June Strandberg on May 23rd to the Alpine SIG, c/o Valerie Melanson.

REPORTS ON ALPINE SIG OUTINGS & EVENTS

TRIP TO PARADISE MEADOWS

by Mike Miller



Paradise Creek



Mt. Washington & Paradise Meadows



Cloud creeping in on old Boardwalk

Paradise Meadows 2012: Our annual trip to Paradise Meadows at Mt. Washington took place on Monday, July 23rd.

Compared to other years we might have been a week early for the peak of bloom with a lot of the Pink Mountain Heather (*Phyllodoce empetrifomis*) open, but many more buds were still to come. The Shooting Stars (*Dodecatheon jeffreyi*) were wonderful but seemed a little less of a solid swath of color so I think more would follow very soon. But then some species were almost over, that's why if you can, you should visit a few times through the season. One day cannot catch them all at their best.

The ten members of the SIG walked the boardwalk botanizing as we went. Some strangers must have really wondered about the gang of non-teenagers with heads close to the earth looking at some tiny flower and talking excitedly. With the sheet of plants seen in previous years we were quicker in our identifications and sounded a little more sure of the names and how to pronounce them than previously. The weather was great and the mosquitoes kept away most of the time.

The Bird's Beak Lousewort (*Pedicularis ornithorhyncha*) caused a group to debate and analyze the plant and books for a while and a new orchid, the Northwestern Twayblade (*Listera caurrina*), was seen with some *Goodyera oblongata* in the woodsy part of the trail. The flowers of the Twayblade were just opening so identification was made easy.

The west half of the first loop of the trail contains most of the species if you only have a short time, but maybe later there are new and different things on the south loop.

We were befriended as usual at lunch by a group of Gray Jays with a couple of Stellar Jays holding back a bit. They got a fair share of some lunches as is normal.

A great day with wonderful people and plants.



Listera aka Twayblade
(photos in this report by Valerie Melanson)



Goodyera aka Rattlesnake Plantain

PLEASE NOTE: Margot Moser, from the Native Plant SIG and now joining our Alpine SIG, is putting together a booklet to the plants of Paradise Meadows. Most of the photos have been taken on Paradise Meadows by members of our group. So far, contributors are: June Strandberg, Linda Derkach, Elaine Bohm, Barbara Kulla, Valerie Melanson and Margot. Margot hopes to have the finished version ready for distribution with the October "Crevice". Meanwhile please see a sample page from the Trees section, attached.

OTHER NEWS:

Winner of the lovely Erythronium oregonum Edith Wilk print donated by Bernie Guyader, was our own Alpine group member, Kirsten Juergensen. Congratulations, Kirsten!

UPCOMING ALPINE SIG EVENTS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER - TRIP UP MT. COKELEY - CANCELLED

AUGUST 27TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING - NO MEETING THIS MONTH, replaced by Sept 8th Trough workshop.

SEPTEMBER 8th -

WORKSHOP ON BUILDING A CREVICE GARDEN IN A TROUGH with Gordon Mackay.

Time: 10:30 am start and finishes about 2:30 pm

Location: Janet Phillips' home, 2632 Peterson Rd, Nanoose. Access by going up Kaye Road, which runs behind the weigh scales just south of Parksville.

Agenda:

10:30 - 12:15 - Demonstration and instruction by Gordon Mackay,

He will demonstrate and explain some of the techniques: crevice, container, soil choices, plants.

12:15-1:00: Lunch & Prize draw for trough plants. Gordon will have suitable plants to sell as well.

1:00 - 2:30: Trough/Planter assembly - you can just watch and do at home if you prefer.

Gordon will be there to help. He will also explain further some of the plants recommended and also discuss some of the aftercare, potential problems.

What To Bring:

--Bag Lunch - Coffee and Tea will be provided and

--Trough/planter, of a size that you can carry when full of mix, rock and plants. Also bring

--Crevice rocks - slate or thin pieces of granite are good bets, and you can make up a mix. To keep the weight down - instead of granite chippings try pumice or perlite. Gordon will also have some mix available to buy.

--Plants you already have that you wish to use in your trough.

--Warm sweater or jacket and footwear, depending on the weather. The workshop will be in a covered, but unheated, shelter.

Book Your Seat: If you intend to participate, please email June Strandberg, normjune@shaw.ca, so she knows how many to set up chairs for. Also please indicate if you intend to do a trough/dish garden, so she can organize enough table space.

SEPTEMBER 24TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING - 1:30 p.m., June Strandberg's, 1980 Island Highway (by Village Way) - Business Meeting & Cutting and Division session. Bring your own plants/cuttings to work on, or help work on June's.

SEPTEMBER 25TH - ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS IN VICTORIA - KRISTL WALEK of Gardens North, Seeds for the World, expert on seed germination speaking on wildflowers of Eastern Canada, for which she has written a new book. Members of VIRAGS will also have plants for sale. Please watch for an email from June with more details, or contact June now if you are interested in carpooling to this. The group usually makes more of a day of it, stopping at a couple of nurseries or garden supplies on the way.

OCTOBER 29th - REGULAR SIG MEETING - Topic & Venue TBA

NOVEMBER 26TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING - Christmas Lunch - Date TBC & Venue TBA

CALENDAR FOR 2013

JANUARY 28TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING

FEBRUARY 25TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING

MARCH 25TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING

MID APRIL - ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS SPRING SHOW & PLANT SALE

APRIL 29TH - REGULAR SIG MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 27th, 2013 - CHRIS CHADWELL, PLANT HUNTER, SEED COLLECTOR, AND SECRETARY OF THE HIMALAYAN PLANT ASSOCIATION, will be visiting us for garden visits and a seminar. Topic & Venue TBA

TUESDAY, MAY 28th, 2013 - ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS - CHRIS CHADWELL, PLANT HUNTER, on "Paradise on Earth".

TBC WEDNESDAY, MAY 29th, 2013 - We are invited to attend a seminar with Chris Chadwell at Alba Plants Nursery, Cowichan Bay, on "Starting Himalayan Seeds". **DATE AND TOPIC TBC. Reservations will be a must.

OTHER EVENTS OF NOTE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2012 at about 2:30 p.m. The British Columbia Master Gardener Association is following their provincial conference "Best of the West" in Nanaimo on the Saturday, Oct. 20/12 with tours of garden interest on the Sunday. A tour is arranged starting at Milner Gardens at 10 a.m., Pacific Shores at 1:30 p.m. and at Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden shortly after 2:30 p.m. I (Karen Unruh) have arranged that we can have the meeting room next to the garden and I will set up a display of Eswyn's pictures, notebooks, notes etc. and

have information on the construction of the crevice garden by Paul Spriggs. I invite any Alpine Special Interest Group members to join me in welcoming the BC Master Gardeners and especially to share their friendship with Eswyn. I would appreciate help with a discussion of the plants in the garden and helping to answer questions. As we get closer to Oct. 21/12 I will ask that you let me know if you can help. Thanks. Karen Unruh

OCTOBER 23RD - VIRAGS - Paul Spriggs speaking on " A Great Scot: David Douglas, the Man, the Legend and his Plants.

May 2nd to 5th, 2013 - Czech International Rock Garden Conference. The conference website is operational now: <http://www.czrgs.cz/conference.html> with registration form, pricing, preliminary programme, etc. Please have a look.

JULY NEWS FROM ESWYN'S ALPINE & ROCK GARDEN, NANOOSE

Report by Elaine Bohm

In mid July we were delighted to discover an Angel's fishing rod, *Dierama pulcherrimum*, flowering in the middle of Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden. It came with a clump of plants taken from Eswyn's garden in the summer of 2009 but appeared to be an iris that had not yet flowered. Luckily it was planted in a spot to its liking; full sun and well drained, light soil in the middle of the alpine garden. After 3 years in its new home it finally decided to grace us with flowers. Such a treasure!

Dierama is the genus in the [Iridaceae](#) and various species of it are loosely known by names such as **Fairy's Fishing Rods, Fairy's Wands, Fairy Bells, Wedding Bells, Hairbells** or **Harebells**. The bell shaped flowers appeared on a 5-6' rod or stem making quite a statement. Although cultivars produce flowers ranging from white to dark red the species in Eswyn's garden is a rich, magenta pink.



Common Name: **Angel's fishing rod**
Exposure: **Full sun**
Soil type: **Well-drained/light, Clay/heavy**
Time to divide plants: **March to May**

Genus: *Dierama* Species: *pulcherrimum*
Hardiness: **Hardy**
Height: **150cm** Spread: **60cm**
Flowering period: **July to August**

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - DAVID SELLARS



The *Oenothera caespitosa* (Evening Primrose), above, was grown from NARGS seed that germinated in February of this year. It has been blooming for about a month. The plant is native to western North America and flowers at night. However the flowers stay open the next day on cool cloudy days. It needs a well-drained location in the garden but seems easy to grow and is very vigorous.



Penstemon richardsonii, above, grows on dry rocky sites in western North America. It blooms

in late summer so provides some colour for the rock garden after most of the spring flowering is over. I have it planted in a dry, well-drained sunny spot.

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - VALERIE MELANSON



Androsace armeniaca var. *macrantha*
From AGCBC seed started Jan 2012



Viola altaica
SRGC seed started Jan 2012



Symphyandra hofmannii
SRGC seed sown Jan 2011

Re: the *Androsace*: John Mitchell, Alpine House supervisor, RBGE, advises that pests or lack of water would account for lack of flower stock - In this case lack of water



Aethionema saxatile
From AGCBC seed started Feb 2012



Campanula tridens in Limestone Dwellers Turkish Trough
Sept 2011 purchase from Beaver Creek

USEFUL LINKS

NEW WEBSITE FOR SRGC:

<http://www.srgc.net/site/>

LISTINGS OF BOTANIC GARDENS AROUND THE WORLD & LINKS TO THEIR WEBSITES:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_botanical_gardens

(thank you to James Salomons, Development & Membership Administrator, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, for this useful link)

WEBSITE OF IMAGES FOR SOUTHERN & SOUTH AFRICAN BULBS & PLANTS & THEIR HYBRIDS, BY DAVID FENWICK:

<http://www.theafricangarden.com/index.html>

WILD GINGER FARM: Sue Beatty writes: "This is one of my favourite sites as it has a great teaching section. I think this is a good one for a trough crevice garden - within it has links to appropriate plants and conifers/trees. The planting in tufa is a pretty good one too."

<http://www.wildgingerfarm.com/slate-crevice-trough.htm>

SCREE GARDENS GONE MAINSTREAM:

The latest Lee Valley Gardening Newsletter has an article on how to build your own scree garden:

<http://www.leevalley.com/en/newsletters/Gardening/7/5/article3.htm>

SWEDISH ROCK GARDEN: Margot Moser writes: "I just stumbled over a very good website for photos of alpine plants. You may very well already know about it but in case you don't, this may be one other members of the Alpine SIG would enjoy too. The man who compiled the website lives in the equivalent of USDA Zone 7."

<http://swedishrockgarden.com/>

UBC BOTANICAL GARDEN, Plant of the Day:

A rare plant of Western Crete, *Androcymbium rechingeri*:

<http://www.botanicalgarden.ubc.ca/potd/2012/08/androcymbium-rechingeri.php>

VANCOUVER ISLAND WILDFLOWERS: Picasa Web Photo Albums:

Go to: picasaweb.google.com/ & search for Wildflowers Vancouver Island.

Look for John Brears - there are 4 volumes of photos

(Tip from Margot Moser)

ADVERTISEMENTS / REQUESTS

REAL CORK WINE CORKS NEEDED: Mike Miller is working on a green roof project at Milner Gardens, to be assembled next April. He needs real cork wine corks, no need for them to be clean, just dry. Please contact him at: stelmike@telus.net, or bring them to the next QBGC or Alpine SIG meeting. Thank you.

The Crevice Garden and its Plants, by Zdenek Zvolanek, stock left from seminars, available at cost - \$12.56 CDN each. (I have previously listed at both \$12.56 and \$10.56. The actual price is \$12.56, so if you bought one at \$10.56, you got a deal !! Forgetting numbers an early sign of dementia?) Please contact Valerie at Melanson.valerie@gmail.com

FOR SALE: June Strandberg is selling, with proceeds to the Alpines SIG:

1 bag mortar mix and 2 bags concrete mix - you just have to add water. Bags are 25kgs each and a steal at \$5 each. June will be away from Monday, August 20th to Thursday 30th, so get in touch with her before or after those dates at normjune@shaw.ca

PLANT PORTRAIT

Primula scotica by Valerie Melanson

Gordon Mackay introduced me to this wee Scottish beauty via a lovely photo at the end of his last talk to the QBGC. I was lucky to receive some seed via the Alpine Garden Society Seed Exchange in January 2011 and I got them started right away:

From my Propagation Journal, I see I started two pots:

- Jan 11, 2011 small seed pot, scatter of seed, exposed to light, inside to start, 1 sprout by Jan 30, 2011, April 2, 2011 - potted up 14 x 1 plant, 7 x 2 plants, 2 x 3 plants
- Jan 11, 2011 small seed pot, scatter of seed, light cover of grit, inside to start, a few sprouts Feb 4, 2011, April 10, 2011 - potted up 10 plants

Prolific little beauties. They grew steadily, though diminutively, and some had first flowers in summer 2011.



First flowers, August 2011
Sun scorch damage on
blooms?

I encouraged as many group members as possible to take them and try them in their gardens. I also planted some out in two locations - two clumps between two pavers in some duffy, stony soil and three other clumps in the top of the pot devoted to *Fritillaria uva-vulpis*. They have shone in both locations, with one of the paver pair flowering April 30th this year - what a treat to suddenly notice them when tidying. One of the fritillary pot clumps moved house to a dish garden I put together and has settled in happily, producing some nice seed to start the cycle again. And today I notice new flower buds are colouring up, hooray!



Between pavers, April 30, 2012



In dish garden, June 22nd, 2012

Wondering if they are "true" *Primula scotica* or a garden cultivar, I mentioned them to James Salomans and he kindly forwarded some photos to John Mitchell, the Alpine House Supervisor at RBGE, who sent the following information:

"Primula scotica has two flowering periods: one in the early spring and one in summer. In some texts the Spring flowering is the main one but in others they say that summer flowers are better. In the past I have seen it in flower in August and assumed that July/August was the time for the summer flowering but this year there was a very full flowering of Primula scotica seen at both the Durness, Faraid Head and Orkney sites in late June or early July.

It loves the North coast so much that it isn't found much further south than Wick. You will only find it in numbers on the north coast or on Orkney where colonies on Westray and Rousay also exist.

Cultivation

Plants do better in the ground than in pots. The plants images that you sent look very good and healthy. In the wild the plants grow in dwarf turf so the soil is slightly acid we use a John Innes mix with added grit and this works well. P scotica also with us sets viable seeds which is always good.

The question about whether your plants are a cultivar or not I do not know of any cultivars of P. scotica. Your plant seems quite small compared to other plants which are usually about 8 -10 cm tall, your plants might have had cultural conditions which have made it smaller, maybe on the dry side, it is hard to say.

By looking at your images it looks like you are doing a sterling job keeping the plants growing and hopefully it will set seed for you and I would suggest keeping some seed back just in case in future years the plants die and then you can re sow and continue enjoying one of our best native plants."

(Email, July 16, 2012 from James Salomons, RBGE)

John is correct about these lovelies not necessarily being so happy in pots. To try and follow a suggestion by Davie Sharp in the SRGC The Rock Garden, to grow them in turf, I potted one clump up in a shallow pot with Scotch Moss to mimic the turf. The primula has had a bit of a struggle - I kept it TOO dry at first - and it only had one flower and the stalk did not develop. I now keep it moister and it is happily putting out more leaves and expanding the rosette, though holding off on flowering until next year, I would guess. Before then I plan to repot to a deeper pan. Meanwhile the clump in the dish garden has successfully set and ripened seeds and the fritillary clumps are close behind. Now to seed if the seed is viable.



Struggling with the Scotch Moss
too shallow a pan

Successful seed set
in the dish garden

Bottom Line? I would really recommend growing these little beauties !!
But put them somewhere where you will really notice and appreciate them
- in a bed at the top of a wall or ...

References:

Article by Davie Sharp, "Primula scotica: a Weel-faured Scots Floorie", **SRGC
The Rock Garden** # 128, January 2012, pp 30-35.

See also photo of pan of Primula scotica in same journal on p. 94 and of a
single plant on p. 82
