



"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the
Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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

Issue # 36

Part I

Late Spring - Early Summer 2015

FROM THE EDITOR: Thank you all for the interesting photos and submissions for this issue.



Not an alpine, but crazy:

Allium vineale 'Hair'

From Florissa sourced bulbs, planted last fall. At this stage it looks like a juicy big berry with green hair. The original species is native to Europe, NW Africa and the Middle East and is known as Wild Garlic, Grow Garlic or Stag's Garlic.

NEW next deadline: August 15th for a Summer issue. Your contributions are gratefully received at Melanson.valerie@gmail.com.

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Mimulus lewisii, grown from wild collected seed
obtained from Goteborg Botaniska Tradgard

UPCOMING AGCVI SPECIAL EVENTS



present

**Krista Kaptein, of the
Strathcona Wilderness Institute**

to speak on

"Beyond Paradise"

Monday, June 29th, 2015,

1-3 p.m. (doors open 12:30),

East Hall, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre,

747 Jones, Q.B.

\$5 at door includes coffee/tea, prize draw

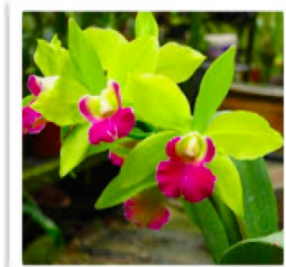
Paradise Meadows in Strathcona Provincial Park is a unique area of subalpine fens & meadows with rare & unusual flora. The presentation will go beyond Paradise Meadows, through the forests, to the lakes, meadows & vistas of the broader Forbidden Plateau area. Krista will also mention a bit of Strathcona Park history and some background on Strathcona Wilderness Institute Society, who operate the two visitor centres in Strathcona Park and organize nature walks & hikes in the Park.



Krista has coordinated the Programs & Volunteers at the Strathcona Park Wilderness Centre, operated by Strathcona Wilderness Institute Society (SWI) at Paradise Meadows, since 2010. She took on the expanded Coordinator role of Fundraising & Outreach for SWI in 2013. An active member of the Comox District Mountaineering Club and Comox Valley Nature, she has been hiking and photographing in Strathcona Park for more than 20 years.

More info? Valerie at 250-594-4423, melanson.valerie@gmail.com

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST



Exotic Orchids

You Can Grow

Chuck Morin, Paramount Orchids

July 22nd, 7:00 pm. QB.Civic Centre
Hosted by Eaglecrest Garden Club

Paramount Orchids, now located in Parksville, have over 35,000 orchid plants, for intermediate and warm growing conditions.

Chuck will discuss common issues, different orchid varieties and their culture with a short power point presentation.
A selection of orchids will be for sale.



All welcome.
Non-members: \$2.



ESWYN'S ALPINE & ROCK GARDEN OPEN HOUSE

Report & Photos by Karen Unruh

Three plants which caught our visitors' eye at our 5 Year Anniversary Open House at Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden.

Amid the tiny alpine saxifrages and polygalas which our visitors of over 175 people at the 5 Year Anniversary Open House at Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden found fascinating, these three plants created the most discussion.

We have a few deciduous shrubs in the garden and their dappled shade provides a cooler spot for plants that may need this protection. The lilac that is planted in the lower front part of the garden is one of these. The name of this species lilac is ***Syringa microphylla superba***. June Strandberg, one of our alpine mentors, bought it at Fraser's Thimble Farm in 2003. It did not flower right away and so June bought another one in 2005. Then she had two, both flowering, and so donated one to the garden. Planted against the garden rocks that separate the lower and upper portions of the garden, it makes a strong architectural statement. We have pruned this shrub to eliminate the bottom branches and provide space for a shade-loving plant. We also have removed any branches crossing across the centre so that the lilac has an open vase shape. After the fragrant blooms fade we will remove the faded blooms to encourage bloom for the following year. We will also prune out the lower leaves and any branches growing across the centre to keep our attractive vase shape.



Syringa microphylla superba

An ornamental **alpine strawberry**, *Fragaria 'Pink Panda'*, was commented upon by many of our visitors. It is growing in the 'valley' part of the Crevice Garden. The peaks and valleys just as in the mountains, give a range of planting conditions. The bright, deep pink flowers of this strawberry last from spring to fall. It will send out a few runners, not many, to establish new plants, but the main plants continue to grow. We were able to pot a few of the baby plants up last fall and have them available in our small plant sale. Barbara Kulla, one of the Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island, donated this plant to the garden.



Fragaria 'Pink Panda'

The third plant that captured our visitors' interest was an orange-red blossoming specimen in the crevice garden. *Anthyllis vulneraria* var. *coccinea*, commonly known as **Red Lady Fingers** was donated last year to the garden by one of our caretakers, Elaine Bohm. Elaine says that her plant re-seeds readily with the main plant dying off each year. The new plants can then be placed in choice locations. The low mound of downy silver-green leaves combines with the claw-shaped clusters of orange-red pea like flowers. It likes the full sun provided in the crevice area, and provides a blossom that draws interest all summer.

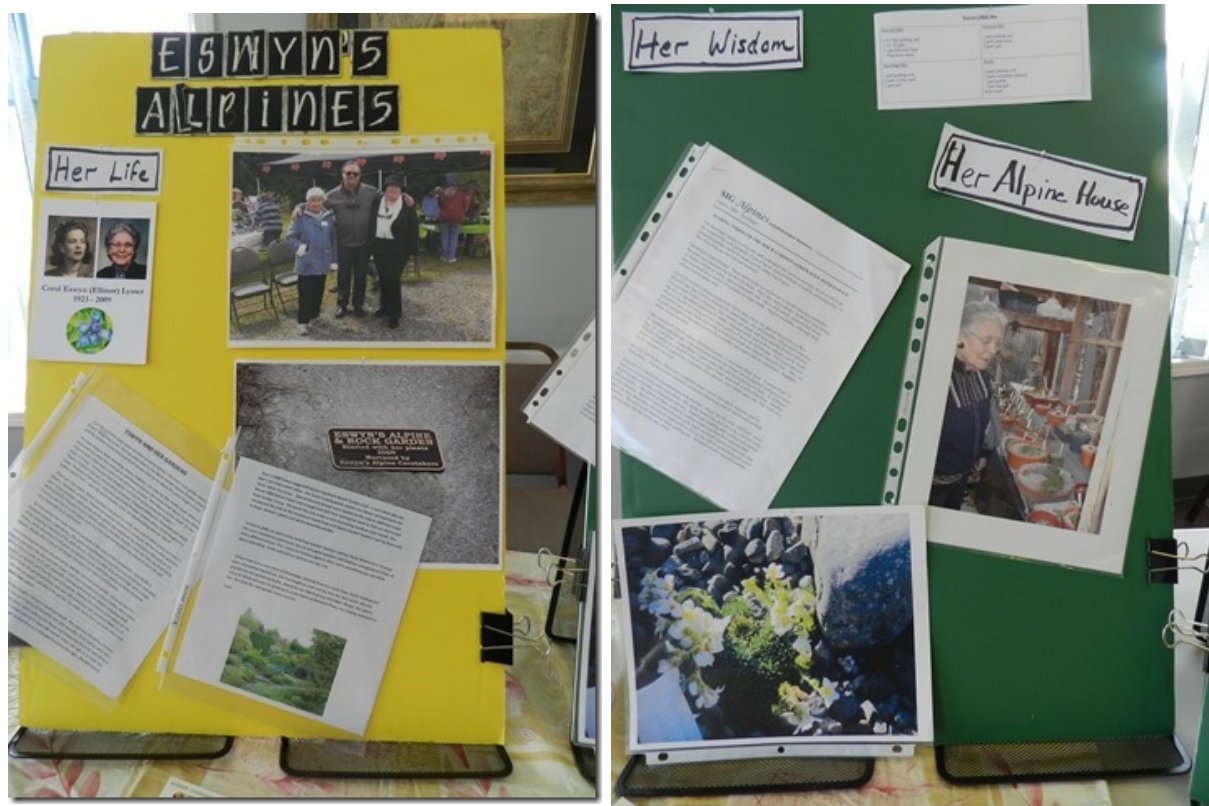


Anthyllis vulneraria var. *coccinea*

During the day, we were pleased to share our plant identification project. With the advice of several 'The Crevice' readers, we have begun the process of inserting a numbered small tag at each plant under the plant rock mulch. We are recording all information of each plant for our records and eventually we will have a numbered landscape drawing with a corresponding list of plant names for the public.

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE ESWYN GARDEN CELEBRATION

By Kirsten Juergensen





DWARF FERNS

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

At some point many gardeners have to deal with shade issues. Shade need not be a detriment as many lovely ornamental plants are ideally suited to shade; hosta, astilbe, pulmonaria and primroses are just a few examples. If you have a small shaded area, a shaded planter or a shaded rockery, you now have a host of miniature hosta to choose from. But what can you plant with them for some contrast? Ferns would seem a logical choice, but many of the popular cultivars are relatively large. As it happens, there are several ferns that mature under 30 cm and some that rarely exceed a few centimeters. This article will introduce you to some of these exquisite and, often, underutilized or unknown dwarf ferns. While there are plenty of tropical and subtropical dwarf ferns, this article will deal with the hardier ones, suitable for zone 6 or colder.

For simplicity, I'll describe these ferns alphabetically, starting with *Asplenium*, the spleenwort ferns. This genus is quite large and occurs worldwide from the tropics to the Arctic. For gardeners, the easiest to grow is the beautiful native maidenhair spleenwort, *A. trichomanes*.



Asplenium trichomanes

This species occurs throughout the northern hemisphere, often growing in shaded cracks in limestone. They form small, tufted plants with narrow fronds 8-20 cm long. The pinnae are quite rounded and arranged as a double-row on either side of a contrasting black stipe. They remain green all year. Ideally suited to a shady rockery, rock wall or alpine trough, this tough little fern will survive as cold as zone 3. Looking very similar, but slightly more challenging to cultivate, is the green spleenwort, *A. viride* and the ebony spleenwort, *A. platyneuron*. The former is rated for zone 3 while the latter, zone 5.



L: *Asplenium viride*, R: *Asplenium platyneuron*

In Europe, there are several *Asplenium* that are commonly encountered growing naturally among stone walls. These are almost lithophytic in nature but will grow in cracks and crevices among the rockery. *Asplenium ruta-muraria* is the smallest of these, rarely exceeding 15 cm. It is evergreen, tufted and hardy to zone 4. A little larger with finely divided fronds is *A. adiantum-nigrum*, which is also evergreen, reaching to 20 cm.



Asplenium adiantum-nigrum

It is not particularly hardy overall, rated for zone 7, but would be fine for coastal BC.

One of my favourites is *A. ceterach* (aka *Ceterach officinalis*).



Asplenium ceterach

This evergreen fern that reaches to 15 cm, is also tufted with relatively narrow, coarse fronds. The undersides are covered in rusty hairs. This is among the most drought-tolerant of the dwarf ferns. Fronds will shrivel when dry only to expand again once moisture returns. It is rated for zone 5. All of these European *Asplenium* are lime-lovers.

From Chile and Argentina comes the Antarctic hard-fern, *Blechnum penna-marina*.



Blechnum penna-marina

This evergreen fern has stiff, leathery fronds and grows as a groundcover to 20 cm. The new fronds have a bronzy-tint but later turn deep green and shiny. It tolerates part shade to full sun, listed hardy to zone 5.

Fragile fern, *Cystopteris fragilis*, is a tough little native fern hardy to zone 2. They have very finely divided lance-shaped fronds to 30 cm. It is among the earliest fern to show in the garden. Provide shade to semi-shade as too much sun will burn the foliage of this deciduous species. Mackay's brittle fern, *C. tenuis*, is similar in appearance, reaching to 40 cm, but with narrow, fine fronds. The new fronds are tinted red and the stipe remains red well into the growing season, contrasting with the bright green fronds.

There is only one wood fern that is small enough to be included among the miniature ferns and that is the fragrant wood fern, *Dryopteris fragrans*. This very hardy fern (zone 3) is quite tufted in habit, with narrow, lance-shaped fronds reaching about 15 cm. The foliage is fragrant when rubbed. It is rather rare and might be difficult to locate a source, but well worth it if you can track it down.



The native beech fern, *Phlegopteris connectilis*

sits on the fence in regards to size. Some populations stay consistently small with triangular fronds 15-20 cm. Others are larger with fronds reaching to 45cm. Plants produce a creeping rhizome. Perhaps a little too robust for a rockery, it does make an ideal smaller fern for growing on banks located in shade to semi-shade. They prefer moist, acidic soil and are super hardy, to zone 2. This species is deciduous.

While there are many rock polypody or *Polypodium* ferns, the two smallest ones are *P. vulgare* and *P. virginianum*. These two species look very similar but the former hails from Eurasia while the latter from North America. Both are rated for zone 3. These evergreen ferns have leathery, lance-shaped fronds and in the wild, often grow atop moss-covered rocks. They will tolerate full sun to shade but need a moist yet well-drained, acidic site. They send up individual fronds from a creeping rhizome but overall, the plants are relatively tufted in appearance.

Among the evergreen holly ferns, the two smallest are *Polystichum lonchitis* (zone 3) and *P. scopulinum* (zone 5).



Polystichum lonchitis

These evergreen ferns have stiff, leathery fronds that are narrow and lance-shaped with overlapping pinnae. They are among the most beautiful of ferns. Part-shade with moist yet well-drained limey soil seems to suit them best. They dislike hot summers thus are most at home along coastal regions of the Pacific Northwest or Atlantic Canada.

Finally we come to the genus *Woodsia*, deciduous ferns with a tufted habit. Superficially, they look like fragile ferns, *Cystopteris*. They prefer semi-shade to full sun but need a moist site. They are not fussy about soil pH.



Woodsia obtusa

The easiest to grow is *W. obtusa* (zone 3) but others worth trying include *W. alpina* (zone 2), *W. glabella* (zone 4), *W. ilvensis* (zone 3), *W. scopulina* (zone 3) and *W. polystichoides* (zone 5).



L: *Woodsia alpina*, R: *Woodsia ilvensis*

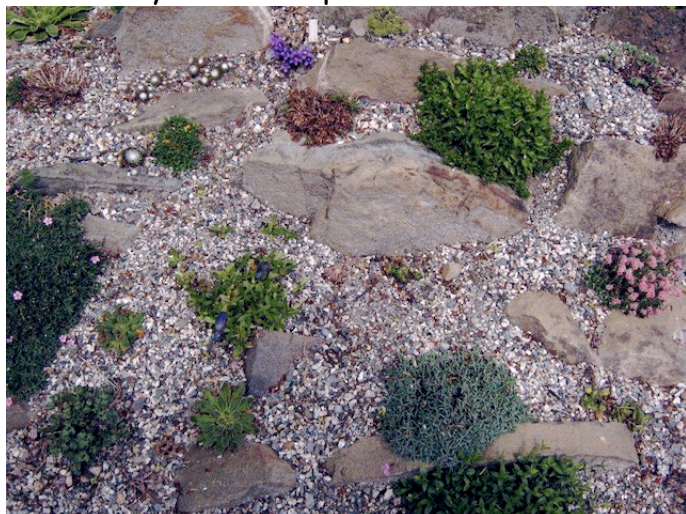
These are but a few of the many miniature ferns that the 'limited-space' gardener can cultivate. Whether in a rockery, an alpine trough, planted in a rock wall or grown as a groundcover, these small-sized ferns are a wonderful addition to our gardens.

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WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Bernie Guyader

On April 28th, Bernie wrote:

"These are pics of the new crevice garden. The Tweedyi, or apparently now *Lewisiopsis tweedyi*, of which I am especially pleased - this is grown from the seed from last year's seed exchange. I sowed the seed in February and this is what I have today. Rather special for lewisias."



WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Lori Pross

Lori took these photos on April 30th:



L: *Lewisia*, R: *Primula auricula*



Saxifraga x arendsii "Pixie"

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Kirsten Juergensen

On a sunny day in April, Kirsten photographed these lovely blooms:



WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - June Strandberg

In late May, June photographed these beauties:



Edraianthus pumilio



Rhododendron 'Kermison Rose'

REPORTS ON AGCVI ACTIVITIES

TALKS BY DAVID SELLARS

March 30, 2015

Photos by Kirsten Juergensen

Before the meeting, David and Wendy visited the Eswyn Alpine & Rock Garden where they were shown around by some of the caretakers.

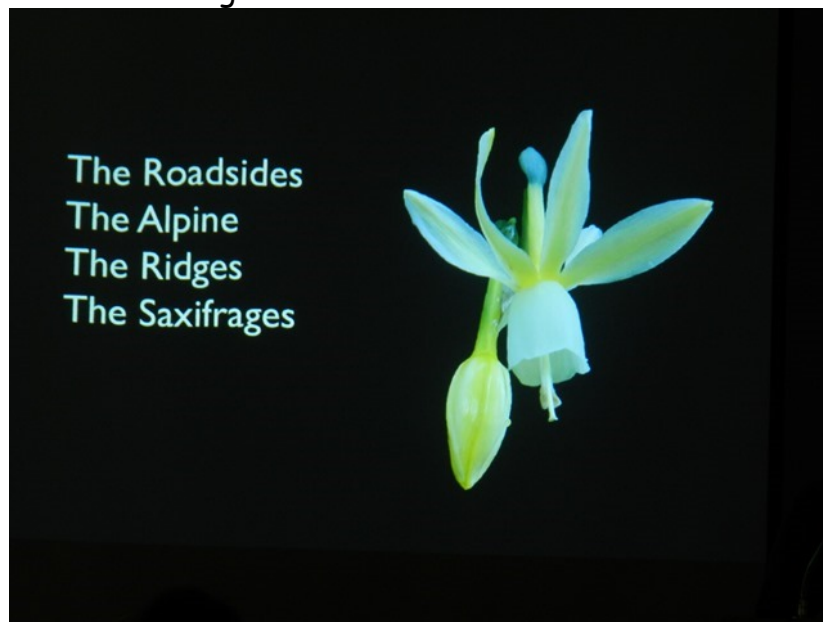


(photo by Karen Unruh)

A large number of members and the public turned out to view David's presentations.



This visit he told us about his & Wendy's 2014 trip to the Picos de Europa - an expedition with members of The Saxifrage Society from the UK. His photos were stunning and organized into several sections:



After a coffee break, David gave a presentation on the best places to look for alpine in the Olympic Mountains. He also had many treasures of his propagation efforts,



for sale to attendees.

The afternoon ended with our prize draw of choice plants donated by our members.

