



# "THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the  
Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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

Issue # 34

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**FROM THE EDITOR:** Dear Readers: Once again life trumps my alpine hobby, so I am now aiming (& will succeed) in publishing "Crevice" quarterly. Your contributions are gratefully received at [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com). Next deadline: February 28<sup>th</sup> for a Spring issue.

Though there is still only a smidge of sun in my rock garden, when the clouds clear, the witch hazels are doing their best to brighten things up:



L: *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Pallida', R: *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Jelena'

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### **GREETINGS FROM CLIFF & SUE BOOKER**

(photo by Kirsten Juergensen from July 28<sup>th</sup> talk to AGCVI)

Cliff emailed their best wishes and news:

"We had the most wonderful time in Canada (and on Vancouver Island in particular) and would love to repeat the trip in a couple of years time. The north of Norway (well above the Arctic Circle) will be our destination in 2015, we have booked for Tromsø and the gorgeous Lofoten Islands in August ... and we will visit Lake Maggiore in late May for ten days plus our normal two weeks in the Dolomites in July and a family holiday in Turkey in November. It's a hard life. Would you please pass on our love and very best wishes to all our new found friends over there and thank them once again for their wonderful hospitality."

### **GREETINGS FROM KENTON SETH**

Kenton has just returned from a long holiday in Europe and Turkey, which included seed hunting in Cappadocia. He sends along his greetings. He has also sent along an article originally published in NARGS' Denver chapter's newsletter, **Saximontana**.

#### **Messy Roommates are finally useful in the rock garden**

**By Kenton Seth**

This may be more of a problem for the few of us with unwatered or very dry rock gardens. Ants. They will excavate material to build their mounds, which can bury plants if

they don't just elect to outright chop them up and carry them off. They will also tunnel around the stones to provide an ideal warm incubation area for their larvae. This undercuts plants which will die in varying ways but which ultimately result from having their soil taken away from them. This is in a sandy-loam soil, which sticks together and holds up like shoring. I am curious if any of my clients who have a coarse-sand medium will have ants in future, since coarse sand may not be as tunnel-able. I'd like to hear from anyone who has seen ants reside successfully within coarse builder's sand.

I realised that their tunnelling happens mostly where I got over-artsy and went diagonal with the strata of my dry crevice garden. One inch and less soil-spaces in-between the slabs are attractive real estate for those enterprising armies. When they do tunnel, they leave the soil surface and often the tops of plants intact, so that you may not know they've done their busywork until a nice monsoon rain, which we, too, have seen in Grand Junction, Colorado, USA last summer, collapses that thin shell of soil-surface to reveal a gaping hole, seeing as how the ants have Steve McQueened the soil secretly away elsewhere.

I don't like poisoning things, because poisoned things get eaten by other things, which are poisoned in turn. I've caused it, seen it, and felt guilty. And I like honey and bees, which so often suffer. Some poisons are toxic to plants as well. Until the final solution came to pass, my working solution was keeping a spray bottle of well-diluted Soap of Castille (about a tablespoon or two of "Dr. Bronner's" to a quart of water) in a spray bottle near my front door, which, when checking the mail, I'd fire at the agave-eating ants to result in a tiny deadly bubble bath. Oddly, daily death-bubbles discouraged their work after a month or two. But I don't visit my other dry rock garden daily: only weekly. When a crevice with a prized Manzanita collapsed, and their tunnelling interrupted drainage to rot my favourite cactus- *Mammillaria wrightii*, I was desperate.

This is the rare time where having a roommate who doesn't always clean up actually comes in handy. (He is a great fellow, I must provide, though) A drinking-buddy of his had left her mason-jar of god-knows-what on the porch next to all my cactus, which, for a change, I refused to clean up. Or maybe I was out of town. This forgotten mixed drink, which turned out to be a Vodka-Sprite, became the best ant trap, collecting thousands of their little bodies for over a month. Each time I passed by, I saw slower-than-usual ants walking around the lip of the jar, over a pool of fluid that was evaporating slower than the increase of the pile of submerged dead ants within.

So I copied it, making my own mixed drink (I truly didn't try it myself) of cheap-vodka / rootbeer. Active ingredients: alcohol and sugar. It worked. But this time, I buried it at ground level at my parent's house near the old rock garden, and it accumulated a cockroach,

earwigs, and wasps as well. Thank goodness a solution to ants, one of the more upsetting problems in the rock garden. Now, to find a solution for the irresponsible gardener!

## **UPCOMING AGCVI SPECIAL MEETING**

**Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015** - Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, QB - Guest Speaker: **David Sellars** on "Where to find alpine jewels in the Olympic Mountains" & "Picos de Europa: The Alpine Garden of the Cantabrian Mountains". More details to follow.

Meantime you can check out David's report on a hike of the Cresta de le Sele during his Dolomites tour in the International Rock Gardener at

<http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/logdir/2014Sep251411672305IRG57.pdf>

A report on David's his Picos de Europa visit with The Saxifrage Society can be found in the AGCBC Bulletin v. 57:3, pp 67-70 and 57:4, pp 84-87. Also in The Saxifrage Magazine # 22, Autumn 2014, pp 21-27.



*Crocus pulchellus*, blooming Oct 29, 2014 in editor's garden, from a Hans Roemer bulb planted 2014

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

# Seedy Saturday 'SOW THE SEEDS!'

**Qualicum Beach Civic Centre**

Admission by Donation [www.qbseedysaturday.com](http://www.qbseedysaturday.com)



**Bring your seeds  
for the seed swap**

in the Lions' Room

**QBSS 2015**

**Saturday February 7, 2015**

10:00 - 3:30

Vendors

Seed Swap

QB Farmers' Market

Shoots With Roots

Master Gardeners

Seedy Café

10:30 Diane Sharp

GROWING YOUR GROCERIES

12:00 Kate Green

SEEDS GROW MORE THAN FOOD

1:30 **GARDENING PANEL:**

Kathy Claxton

Candace Coghill

Kim Hammond

## MOUNT ARROWSMITH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY MEETINGS:

Wednesday, February 11th - Expert Panel answering questions - Terry Richmond, John Deniseger and Art Lightburn - always popular program - at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, Jones Street in QB at 7:30 pm



Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society  
Presents

# Douglas Justice

*UBC Botanical Garden  
speaking on*

## *Biodiversity in the Garden*



Date: **Wednesday, March 11**  
Time: **7:30 pm**  
Place: **Qualicum Beach Civic Centre**

***Everyone Welcome!***

Refreshments will be served  
Door Prizes and Raffle  
Non-members of MARS \$5

**Douglas Justice** is the head of horticulture and collections at UBC Botanical Garden. He teaches horticulture and plant identification and writes and speaks on a variety of plant-related subjects. He is an advocate for trees and the conservation of historic landscapes and natural ecosystems. Douglas's most recent project is an App entitled *Vancouver Trees: Identification and Ecology*

**Don't miss this informative talk  
about the importance of  
biodiversity to the success of  
our gardens.**

*Alpine enthusiasts are invited to*

***Eswyn Lyster's Alpine Garden, Nanoose, 5th Anniversary Open  
House Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> ~ 10 - 2***

Held in conjunction with Nanoose Art Group's Annual Show and Sale

Hosted by Eswyn's Alpine Garden Caretakers

\*To celebrate the successful development of a public alpine garden over the past 5 years

\*To honor Eswyn's original alpine collection, the basis of the garden

\*To create public interest in alpine gardening in general and in Eswyn's Alpine Garden in particular

\*To fundraise for the garden with a small selection of plants for purchase.

**FOLLOW UP ON PREVIOUS EDITIONS of "The Crevice"**

***Iris cycloglossa: An Addendum***

By Ian E. Efford

Since my article on *Iris cycloglossa* was published in *Crevice* (issue # 30, pp 14-18), I have been lucky enough to receive four bulbs of this rare species and, with luck, these will allow the eventual establishment of one or two collections on Vancouver Island. As far as I know, these are the only plants in Canada at the moment since the plants have died in the other two locations where this species was in cultivation. In one case the loss was because it was too wet and in the other because it was too cold.

I also was sent a very interesting reference that relates to my question on the closest relatives of *I. cycloglossa*. In the article, I mentioned that this species looks more like other irises and less like a juno and, for this reason, might be better classified elsewhere. In fact, I am wrong. A detailed genetic and morphological analysis of the junos has been published by eight authors [see reference below] which shows that the species is a juno although in a somewhat isolated group. Its closest relative is the small, recently discovered, blue *I. stocksii*. This too was found in a remote area of Afghanistan and in very low numbers.

The only other close relative of these two species is *I. aitchisonii*. This much taller species is fairly well known in cultivation and is the most easterly known juno. It is found in Afghanistan and Pakistan and comes in two colour forms, yellow and violet as well as bicoloured. Only the yellow one is in cultivation.

I would like to thank Peter Taggart for his help.

Ian E. Efford

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Nursel, I. et.al. Molecular phylogenetics of the juno irises, *Iris* subgenus *Scorpiris* (*Iridaceae*), based on six pastid markers . *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society*, 2011, 167, 281-300.

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## **REPORT ON SOME MORE AGCVI ACTIVITIES IN 2014**

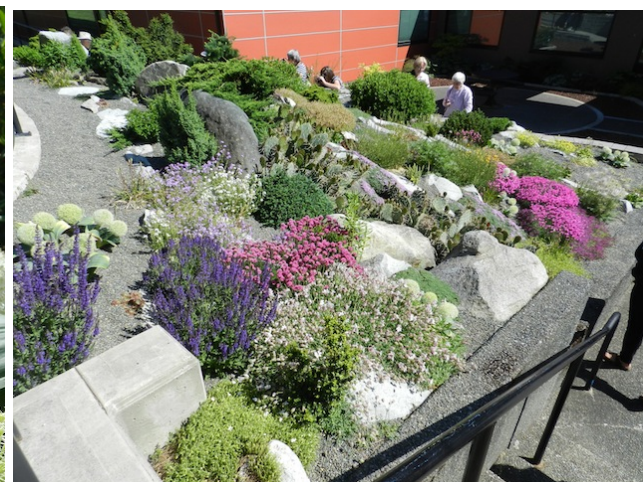
### **VISITS TO COMOX COMMUNITY CENTRE'S ROCK GARDEN DESIGNED AND BUILT BY DANY FORTIN**

Photos by Kirsten Juergensen, June Strandberg, Barbara Kulla & Valerie Melanson

Several members visited on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014. To give you a taste, here are some photos by Kirsten Juergensen:







L: These alliums were at their peak, R: stunning view from the stairs

**June Strandberg** sent along photos too. And reported: "Dany goes in for allium and cactus! He makes 'rivers' of the plants like the thyme and *Raoulia australis* - except that got a lot of winter kill and is just coming back to life. There is also a gravel 'river' - probably for weeding access too as well as a path along the back. It is all, or nearly all, granite. The plants he has used are mostly very hardy, tough and showy - a really good selection."





Kirsten Juergensen made a return visit on June 6<sup>th</sup> and met Dany there:



By June 13<sup>th</sup>, when **Barbara Kulla** visited, there were many changes to note:



Many cacti were flowering





L: a Daphne & R: a Silene, in full flower

By July 29<sup>th</sup> when the AGCVI visited, while touring with Cliff & Sue Booker, the heat wave had moved the season along. The cacti were finished but the editor noted there were two lovely Daphne in flower as well as a Scutellaria:





***Gentiana sceptrum***  
**syn. *Gentiana menziesii***  
**"The King Gentian"**

**Notes compiled with photos, by Valerie Melanson**

This lovely gentian normally blooms late at Paradise Meadows in Strathcona Provincial Park. But in 2014, due to our hot summer and a lower than normal snow pack the previous winter, it was coming into full bloom on July 29<sup>th</sup>, when members of the AGCVI were there for a hike with Cliff & Sue Booker.



Clusters of buds and flower unfurling

This species is native to the western side of North America and can be found all the way from California to British Columbia, as far north as the Skeena River. It thrives in moist sites - sphagnum moss bogs, fens, wet meadows, lake margins, and swamps in wooded areas. So Paradise Meadows is spot on.



Gentian expert Fritz Kohlein describes it as having flower stems that can be up to 3 feet in height. The stems leaves are paired and lanceolate to linear-lanceolate, up to 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches long. The flowers are grouped in twos and threes. The corolla is tubular-bell shaped, dark blue, often with greenish spots. Pojar & Mackinnon add that it can have green streaks on the corolla and there are 5 flaring, oval lobes.

Kohlein describes this species as not difficult in cultivation with moist lime-free soil, though it will not achieve the wild height.



#### **References:**

**Gentians**, by Fritz Kohlein, edited by Jim Jermyn (London: Christopher Helm, A & C Black, 1991) pp 108-109.

**Plants of Coastal British Columbia**, including Washington, Oregon & Alaska, compiled by Jim Pojar & Andy MacKinnon (Vancouver: Lone Pine, 1994), p. 228.