

"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the

Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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

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FROM THE EDITOR: Every day now, I make a patrol through the garden, ostensibly to feed the birds, but in reality to look for signs of spring. Are those some buds I see on the *Thlaspi stylosum*, on the *Primula auricula*? Happily there are buds on those *Saxifraga* in the hypertufa trough and many bulbs are spearing through the pebbles. My rock garden may be on the south side of the building but it slopes sharply to the north and is backed by trees, so from November to February it gets precious little sunlight, totally aside from the effect of all the clouds and fog. So any signs of life are gratefully acknowledged.

This is the last time the Upcoming 2014 AGCVI Events will appear in "The Crevice". Commencing this month, Paid Up Members will receive a monthly Newsletter covering member doings, edited by Jo Graham. So watch your mailboxes in future and, if you haven't joined for 2014, the membership form is attached with this "Crevice". A bargain at \$5.

Items for the "Crevice" can be sent anytime to Melanson.valerie@gmail.com.

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UPCOMING 2014 AGCVI EVENTS - THE PLAN SO FAR

Monday, January 27th, REGULAR AGCVI MEETING - Shelly Road Centre, 186 Shelly Road (go past Cultivate about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ blocks, the centre is on the right hand side), Parksville, doors open 12:30, meeting starts at 1 p.m. Rest of AGM items, postponed from October 28th and Valerie Melanson to show powerpoint: Seed Starting Part 2: Pricking Out & Potting Up & Cuttings, and also a repeat of Part 1 if enough new members are present and/or time permits.

Saturday, February 1st: AGCVI table at Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday.

Monday, February 24th, REGULAR AGCVI MEETING with Guest Speaker DR. HANS ROEMER of Victoria on GROWING BULBS ON THE DRY SIDE OF VANCOUVER ISLAND: Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, Lions Room, 747 Jones Street, QB, doors open 12:30, talk at 1:00 p.m. \$5 at door for everyone includes entry in prize draw and coffee/tea.

Monday, March 31st: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING: Powerpoint on All About Seeds: different plant strategies for making seed, assessing viability, saving, storing - getting ready for the new season!

Monday, April 28th: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING: Cutting and Potting Up Session outdoors

Saturday, May 3rd: ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS SPRING SHOW & SALE in Victoria

Saturday, May 24th: AGCVI Plant Sale at QB Farmers' Market

Monday, May 26th: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING with Guest Speaker KENTON SETH from Colorado: More details forthcoming.

Monday, June 30th: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING: topic TBA - possibly Hypertufa or Garden Tour

Monday, July 28th, REGULAR AGCVI MEETING with Guest Speaker CLIFF BOOKER from UK: More details to come.

Monday, August 11 to Thursday, August 14 - EXPEDITION TO WHISTLER

Monday, August 25th: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:

Monday, September 29th: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:

Monday, October 27th: REGULAR AGCVI MEETING:

Monday, November 24th - CHRISTMAS LUNCH

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

12TH ANNUAL QUALICUM BEACH SEEDY SATURDAY

Everybody says "Organic is healthier" but Kathleen Millar in "The Elephant on your Dinner Table; why organic doesn't always mean nutritious" will explain how you can make this true in

your garden. She will show you how you can conduct a simple test to see how nutritious your produce is and then explain how you can build your soil to increase the nutritional value of the fruit and vegetables that you grow.

You don't have to attend university to take "GMOs 101" with Arzeena Hamir. She will explain what they are, where they're found, why you should avoid them, and how you can avoid them. Arzeena was the staff agrologist for West Coast Seeds and as a food activist has been involved with many organizations supporting community gardens, farm educational programs, the Richmond Food Security Society and the B.C. Food Systems Network. She has worked overseas with farmers in Jamaica, Bangladesh, India, and Thailand and in 2012 was named a Female Food Hero by Oxfam Canada.

A successful tomato crop is the gold standard of gardeners everywhere. Kathy Claxton, a well known member of the Oceanside Gardening Community and familiar face and helping hand at Arrowsmith Greenhouses, will take the mystery out of growing tomatoes in "The Life and Times of the Tomato; from seed to seed saving". Kathy is an enthusiastic gardener and especially enjoys bringing neglected gardens back to life. She is a popular speaker at garden clubs and special interest groups as her presentations are always entertaining, humorous, and educational.

Our speakers will show you how to produce healthy and healthful produce that will please your palate so all you have to do is "grow it!". If you have more questions, master gardeners are on hand to answer them for you. When you're ready there are thousands of seeds to choose from. Bring some of your own and you can swap for more or, if you don't have any yet, buy some of our donated home grown seed at the Seed Swap. In addition, there are seeds and plants to buy in the main hall from some of our many vendors, several of whom specialize in heirloom varieties and are always happy to give you tips. Seedy Saturday encourages the continuation of open-pollinated and heirloom varieties of seed. At the Farmer's Market you can buy meat and produce from local organic farmers as well as other food items from vendors on the main floor. If this is making you hungry, try some of the delicious dishes at the Seedy Cafe catered by The Galloping Gourmet. Bring your kids so that they can have fun at the Milner Garden's "Shoots With Roots" program.

Don't forget to buy a raffle ticket for only \$2 for a chance to win a Ted Jolda Art Glass Vase (\$200), \$200 Gift Certificate from Qualicum Foods, Wheelbarrow from Dolly's Home Hardware (\$89.99) or Hand Tools Set and Kneeler from Lee Valley Tools (\$71.00).

Buy your ticket early. They're on sale outside Qualicum Foods, Saturday, January 25th, 9:30am-1:30pm.

Banish all chemicals from your garden and drop off any herbicides and pesticides at the Town of Qualicum Beach truck in the parking lot.

Join us on Saturday, February 1st at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 747 Jones St., 10am. To 3:30 p.m. Admission is by donation and you might be lucky and win one of the many door prizes.

www.seedysaturday.com

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society
Presents

Ciscoe Morris



Creating a Wildlife-Friendly Garden

Date: Wednesday, February 12, 2014

Time: 7:30 pm

Place: Qualicum Beach Civic Centre

Bonus: **Cultivate Garden Centre** and **Arrowsmith Greenhouses**
will have wildlife-friendly plants for sale!

Doors Open: 6:45 pm

Everyone is welcome!

Non-members: \$5 includes door prize, tea/coffee

Ciscoe Morris is a well-known Pacific North-West gardening expert and television personality in Seattle. His book, Ask Ciscoe, was among the top selling garden books nationwide.

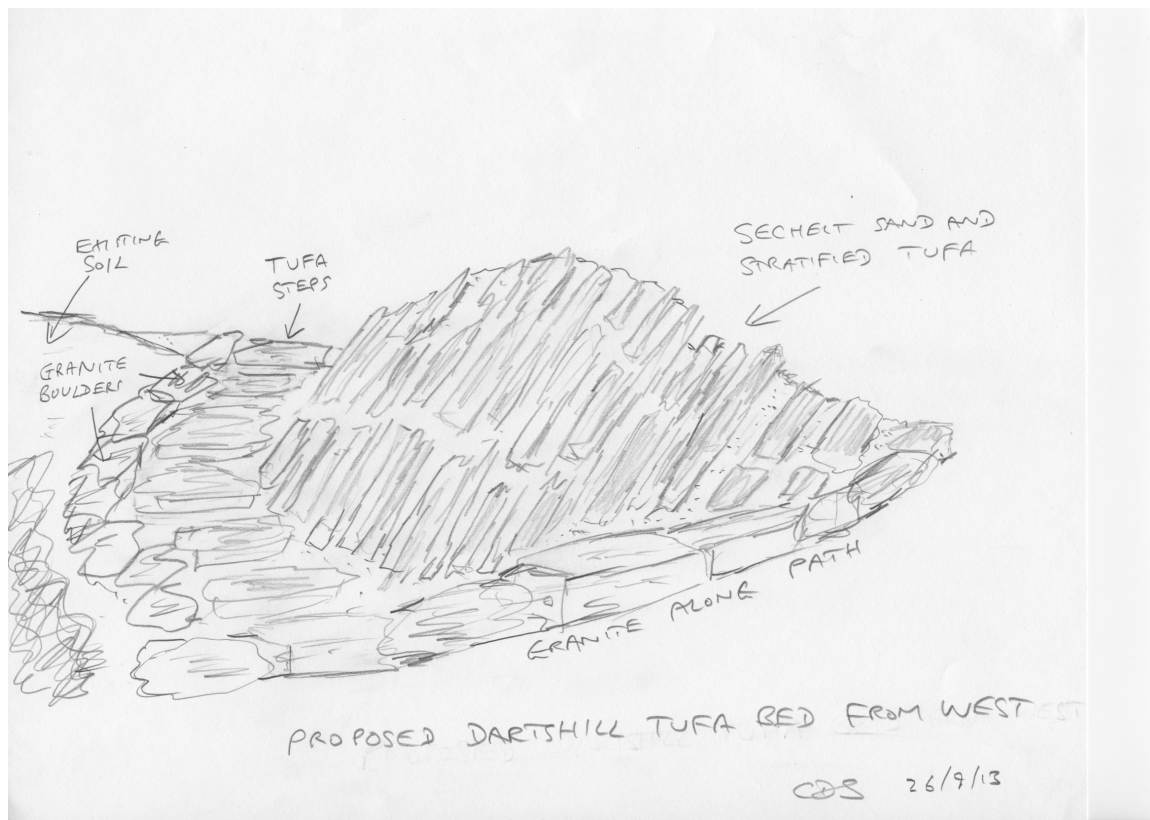
Ciscoe has co-authored books on roses and perennials, and writes a weekly garden column in the Thursday edition of the Seattle Times. Ciscoe leads garden tours all over the world, and is a much sought-after speaker.

Tufa Crevice Garden under construction at Darts Hill Garden, Surrey, BC

by David Sellars
President, Alpine Garden Club of BC

Darts Hill Garden <http://www.dartshill.ca/> started as a fruit orchard and it was a display by the Alpine Garden Club that prompted Francisca and Ed Darts to develop an interest in growing other plants. In October 2011 the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society approached the Alpine Garden Club of BC to see if there was interest in restoring some of the rock garden areas at Darts Hill Garden. A new alpine bed was constructed (<http://www.agc-bc.ca/darts-hill-garden>) and planted in the spring of 2012 and has been much appreciated by public visitors to the garden. A second phase of the project is underway with construction of a tufa crevice garden.

The tufa was sourced from Rocky Mountain Tufa in Brisco, BC and trucked to the garden. The City of Surrey covered the cost of purchasing and delivering the tufa. Construction began in the spring of 2013 with excavation of clay subsoil from the site. Design sketches were prepared and placement of the tufa commenced in October 2013.



About 12 yards of Sechelt Sand were used as fill material under the tufa. Sechelt Sand is a product of Lehigh Northwest Materials and is mostly coarse sand with about 15% crusher fines. The crusher fines add larger angular particles and also rock dust, which will provide mineral nutrients.



Construction in progress



Placing the tufa rock

The bed is currently settling under the winter rains and planting will start in late February/early March 2014.



The Completed Bed



Close-up

PLANT PORTRAITS



SIMPLE *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Amy'

By Zdeněk Zvolánek

A stemless, very deep shade tolerant perennial, 10 cm tall, is a true harbinger of spring. It is a spring ephemeral (fleeting but delightful) that dies back in mid or late summer. The solitary leaf, usually one per plant, is rounded-cordate and irregularly palmately lobed or parted into seven broad, often overlapping lobes with scalloped edges and a bold network of veins, to 15cm or more wide, pale bluey-grey when mature, long-stalked.

Borne on a leafless stalk, the solitary glistening white flower has two sepals that enclose the flower bud and fall soon after the flowers open. The 8-12 petals are an inch long and they, too, are soon shed. The rhizome, the flower stalk and the leaves contains a reddish juice (orange-red sap) that was used by Native Americans for body paint and as a red dye. The rhizomes are purported to be poisonous if eaten. Blooming time in mixed deciduous forests is in March-April. Plants are growing in mountainous areas from Florida (Texas) to Quebec and Manitoba in Canada. Some localities are in moist and drier woods, also in the open by streams and on rocky slopes. It belongs to Papaveraceae family.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) contains alkaloids, principally sanguinarine, that can be extra carefully used in the alternative medicines (there are some antibacterial and antifungal properties) but the safety profile of bloodroot is suspect.

This species in cultivation is clump to colony-forming, spreading by fleshy, branched rhizomes, that can be propagated by careful division in March. Care should be taken not to break the thick fleshy horizontal roots at other periods, for the break will exude a red sap and this will weaken the plant. It is a relatively easy woodland plant that needs plenty of water during the growing season, pleasing us with colonies of shimmering sparkling whites.

This selection of a nice light pink form is called 'Amy'. Another with pink-backed flowers is called 'Peter Harrison'. Cultivar 'Amy' is offered in the BULB LIST of Kirsten Andersen and Lars Hansen, Denmark (for 75 Danish kroner).



Sanguinaria canadensis in Curtis's Botanical Magazine

SWEET DAPHNE FROM BOHEMIA

By Zdeněk Zvolánek

Once upon a time, a lone rock gardener ran a one man nursery close to river Labe (Elbe). He distributed unusual rock garden plants including one decently variegated *Daphne cneorum*. The man's name was Zückerstein and his distinct clone was unnamed.

This clone has now been growing in the rock garden of the author for 7 years in full sun in an artificial crevice with mineral dolerite (diabase) soil. The growth of the plant is compact, about 12 cm high and 40 cm across. The leaves are 15mm x 2 mm and their edge has narrow creamy colour margins. Flowers arranged in heads (12-14 per a head) have red buds and pleasant rose-pink colour.

My garden is 220 m above sea level in stony steppe (southern slope) in the Czech Karst near Prague with annual precipitation of a maximum 400 mm. The rule of this garden is no artificial watering of established plants. So this small shrub had to survive two months in summer (2009) with no rain and no watering. During tropical days (temperatures above 30°C) the dark rocks are hot enough to cook eggs on them but inside the deep crevice the temperature is low enough with balanced moisture. Some leaves were lost that summer but 75% of them were not burned and showed a decorative reddish tint in the late autumn.

There are two clones with variegated leaves in cultivation: *Daphne cneorum* 'Argentea' with a cream edge to the leaf, but flowers sparse in number, and *D. cneorum* 'Variegata' with a yellow leaf edge and pale pink flowers. Both clones can be 25-30 cm high by 60-90 cm wide. Robin White, a Daphne specialist, does not rate them highly.

Because our variegated clone is good for cultivation and distinct from above mentioned clones we decided to name it in honour of the late nurserymen *Daphne cneorum* 'Sweet Rock' (a poetic English translation of Zückerstein). We have sent some material to Chris Brickell and he agrees with naming this clone. We asked Dr. Cyril Lafong for his opinion and he wrote: "*Daphne cneorum* 'Sweet Rock' is a very good plant with small leaves. To me it looks distinct and I think it should be named. I am not aware that there is another similar-looking plant but I have not grown that many different varieties."



Daphne cneorum 'Sweet Rock'

The named clone was propagated and distributed by Czech Daphne enthusiast Jiri Papousek from Roztoky u Prahy. Robin White wrote me in December and praised this clone because it is very slowly growing when grafted.

Daphne cneorum grows in Bohemia (the western part of Czech Republic) only in two small localities. One of them, in Czech Karst (about 50 plants only) is on a northern slope exposed to the light all day, 10 kilometres from my garden. The soil has plenty of yellow clay (slightly alkaline or neutral in reaction) and the habitat is dense populated with grasses, mosses, Thymus and Helianthemum. *Daphne cneorum* run through this carpet of plants with some kind of social pleasure, but it must be protected when cutting the grass. Robin White observed this Czech form and called it very compact and prostrate, without a tendency for legginess (opening in the middle).



Daphne cneorum 'Czech Karst'

The author strongly recommends for all varieties of *Daphne cneorum* to NOT use peat or leafmould in the substrate. A crevice with loam, fine sand and grit always fits. Be aware that too hot and too dry a condition and watering with alkaline water is the right way to kill these beauties.

***Saxifraga ferruginea* syn. *Micranthes ferruginea*
"Rusty or Alaska Saxifrage"**

by Valerie Melanson

I first met this species on our Alpine Gardeners' group outing to Mt. Cokely, here on Vancouver Island, in 2011. Given the long dry period we had been through, by August 20th the patches I saw in detritus on exposed rock shelves were mostly ripening their seed capsules and taking on 'fall colours'.



On Mt. Cokely, with seed capsules forming, August 20, 2011

But a few seeds and bulblets/bulbils were to be had. I was happy to be able to start some at home and have a flowering-and-bulblet producing plant for 2012. The bulblets were a success to root.



Bulblets picked off plant, started to root in potting compost on Aug 18, 2012. They were well rooted by Dec 22, 2012

I saw this species again, this time in an open wooded situation above Paradise Meadows in Strathcona Provincial Park, July 19th, 2013 -



Photo of plant on trail leading from Paradise Meadows to Lake Helen Mackenzie, Strathcona, showing flowers and some bulblets.



Close-up showing flowers going to seed and a few bulblets

Pojar & MacKinnon in their two handbooks, **Plants of Coastal British Columbia**, and **Alpine Plants of British Columbia** ... give the following details: The species is perennial. From its short, erect, unbranched stembase, there are 1 or more leafless stems, from 10 to 40 cm tall. The leaves, 2-10 cm long are wedged to spoon-shaped with teeth. The flowers, 10-20 in open clusters, are white, the petals having distinct stalks and the upper three are usually larger and have 2 yellow spots. The *ferruginea* refers to its rusty sepals. Bulblets often replace lower flowers - this is most common in the southern part of their range.

For habitat they note: "Moist, mossy outcrops, stream-banks, wet rocks, frequent throughout our region in open habitats, from sea level to alpine." And that it is "... a widespread and very variable species; it can form large, showy colonies on exposed, rocky headlands and sea-bird islands, where it tends to be a robust plant with thick, fleshy, densely hairy leaves."



Close-up of Flower taken by Walter Siegmund,
(with permission from Wikicommons.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Saxifraga_ferruginea_1307.JPG)

In my garden, I have a plant in a pot, sunk amongst the rocks where it gets as much sun as possible and a modicum of moisture. So far, so good. I make sure some bulblets make contact with the soil each fall so they can root.

References:

Plants of Coastal British Columbia, including Washington, Oregon & Alaska, compiled and edited by Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon, B.C Forest Service, Research Program (Vancouver: Lone Pine Publishing, 1994), ISBN 978-1-55105-042-3, page 163.

Alpine Plants of British Columbia, Alberta & Northwest North America, by Jim Pojar & Andy MacKinnon with Rosamund Pojar, Curtis Bjork and Hans Roemer (Edmonton: Lone Pine Publishing, 2013), ISBN 978-1-55105-886-3, page 148.

An Unexpected Pest

By Mike Miller

It is always interesting to see what Mother Nature will throw at us out to the blue. I have had very few pests bother my alpine until this past December. My Crevice Garden in a pot created at Gordon Mackay's workshop last spring has had a great year with the *Soldanella alpina* blooming better, the *Saxifraga* 'Allendale Charm' blooming very nicely and the *Draba cuspidata* throwing tall spires of yellow flowers. The *Daphne dominii* grew well as did



BEFORE
And
AFTER

the *Asperula gussonei*.

The *Draba* was its crowning glory until my regular check on December 27th. The tops of most of the 2 cm wide growths were

missing and I had just whitish starbursts to look at and a few droppings of *Rattus rattus* that lovely small European Rat decorating some of the plants nearby.

I put a wire cage over the plant but it was pushed out of the way the next night and my nocturnal visitor leveled the whole plant from 8 cm to 1 cm in height. That was when I noted the Daphne had been harvested to the ground, but all parts seemed to still be present just scattered where the plant had stood.

On examining my complete collection it was noted four other *Draba* were just spiky leaves scattered around their pots.

On the third night the rat started digging into the crevice media maybe looking for fat roots so I dug up the remnants of the plant and potted it and put layers of chicken wire around and over it and placed it amongst my bonsai collection across the yard.

I now hope for some regrowth in the spring as this particular clone is twice as big as my other plants of this species.

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN – Kirsten Juergensen

Alpine pots put to bed for the winter:



First Signs of Spring?:



Viburnum



Witch Hazel - *Hamamelis*