



"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Journal of the
Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

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Part 1

Spring 2018

From the Editor: For me the rest of 2017 was taken over with family concerns. As a result, "The Crevice" was put aside, and for that I do apologize. I aim to get back on track with some spring reports and photos, now that summer has well and truly arrived! Thank you to all faithful correspondents, who continued to send interesting material in spite of my lengthy silence. I will be including submissions from late 2017 over the next few issues, by way of catch up, and as space permits.

Please note that Kirsten Juergensen's photo reports on club meetings will now be in the Member Newsletter as it comes out monthly. The exception will be special road trips, where the editor takes some photos.



In the Editor's Garden: L: *Ramonda myconi*, R: *Arisarum proboscideum*

This issue will be in 2 parts, so here goes with Part 1, Part 2 to follow very soon, so watch your mailboxes please. The Table of Contents for both parts will be in Part 2.

But before getting into the meat of this issue, could I ask for your help with identifying a surprise arrival in my rock garden:



I have tentatively identified it as a *Linaria*, possibly *L. repens*? It is very petite. The flower stocks are only 4 to 6 inches high. Any help would be much appreciated. I have no record of buying this beauty or starting seed, it just showed up!! Perhaps in a pot with another plant from a sale or ... Any information gratefully received at Melanson.valerie@gmail.com

A GIFT OF SAXIFRAGE FOR ESWYN'S GARDEN

by Karen Unruh

I was fortunate to be visiting the VIRAGS Show and Sale and heard about the plant sale at the home of Rex Murfitt. Rex had moved into a care facility and his son and grandson had seen to it that Rex's large Saxifrage troughs had been donated to the Public Gardens at Government House. Other potted plants, mostly saxifrage, were for sale. After a

discussion about the precious, great plants people have collected in their lives, and my sharing of being a volunteer caretaker at Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden at Nanoose Place, Rex's grandson graciously offered three plants for the garden. They are *Saxifraga hostii* ssp. *rhaetica*, *S. paniculata* ssp. *laestadii*, and *S. incurva*.



Photo of the three gifted plants - Top Left - *S. paniculata* ssp. *laestadii*, Top Right - *S. incurva*, Below - *S. hostii* ssp. *rhaetica*.

I researched each and this is what I discovered. *S. hostii* is pictured in Rex Murfitt's book, **Creating and Planting Alpine Gardens**, and is described as a meadow species. I also found a reference in Eswyn's garden notes that she had purchased a *S. hostii* with white bloom at the VIRAGS plant sale in 2007 - it is nice to think of this species returning to her memorial garden. *S. paniculata* ssp. *laestadii*, one of the Silver Saxifrages, with leaves lined with dots of silver, is originally from Iceland or Norway and likes to grow on rocky ledges or crevices. Its blooms are white to creamy pink with purple spots on the petals. *S. incurva* has spikes of white flowers emerging from the characteristic plant tufts with silver edged leaves. As the gifted plants are not blooming, I include the picture of bloom of *S. hostii* from Rex

Murfitt's book and one of *S. paniculata* sbsp. *laestadii* found online (www.arildpalmer.net/429/2009/11/251/)



Photo Left of *S. hostii* & Right: *S. paniculata* ssp. *laestadii*

I knew that I had to find out more about Eswyn's connection to Rex and so I asked June Strandberg to provide that information. As well she gave to the Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden, two books written by Rex Murfitt. A picture of Eswyn in these earlier years seemed appropriate, so this one is of Eswyn and her granddaughter, Suzy, in Eswyn's home garden.



Enjoy this writing by June ... just as she wrote it, as she recalled earlier days.

REX MURFITT

I know Eswyn had met Rex Murfitt at some of the NARGS and VIRAGS Conferences she attended before I met her but I don't know anything about that. She also met him at some of the VIRAGS Show and Sales we went to. We went to the Western Study Weekend in Sidney, put on by VIRAGS in February 2006. Rex was there and Eswyn had some chats with him. His garden was on the conference tour but after an extremely gratifying weekend Eswyn was too tired for garden visits. (This is the Conference where Eswyn met Paul Spriggs and asked him about making her a crevice garden.) Linda Rehlinger was also at the conference and while there booked Rex to give a presentation at QBGC for June 2006, when he spoke about troughs.

He visited Eswyn's garden at that time and was very impressed. He especially liked all her old varieties and was quite taken by her *Silene maritima* 'Swan Lake' which she grew in an old chimney flue. She already had both his books which she produced for him to sign. He wrote in her trough book "To Eswyn, with very best wishes. It is nice to see so many old plant varieties again, keep up the good work. Rex Murfitt - June 2006".

The next year 2007 on 31st March we, as a Special Interest Group of QBGC, visited Rex's garden after the VIRAGS Show and Sale. He had so many beautiful troughs and an alpine house full of saxifrage and so many other interesting rock plants, bulbs, woodlander.s etc. I remember one lovely group of *Trillium rivale*.

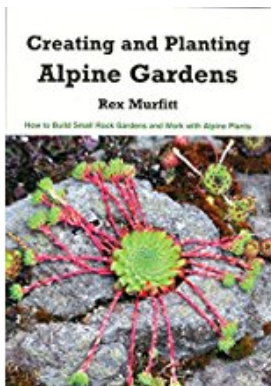
Eswyn and Rex had their heads together discussing all kinds of things- she was in her glory with an expert at hand! She asked him how she could tell the true Saxifraga 'Whitehill'? Rex said he could do better than tell her - he would give her one! I have a cutting of this plant - I don't know if it's still in her garden in Nanoose.

We had planned to have Rex speak at our club - I had spoken to him about it. He told me how much he had enjoyed the fresh strawberries and cream that Linda Rehlinger had fed him on his 2006 visit and well remembered Eswyn's garden (her own - I don't think he ever saw her garden in Nanoose) . But we left it too late. The last time I heard him was on 12th March 2014 at AGCBC speaking about Waterperry Gardens - very interesting.

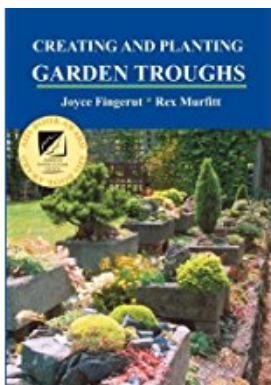
Photo of Qualicum Beach Garden Club Alpine SIG visit to Rex's greenhouse, March 31, 2007 - photo taken by Janet Sawatsky



References:



2009, B.B. Mackey Books



with Joyce Fingerut, 2011, B.B. Mackey Books

WILD ORCHIDS AND OTHER WILD FLOWERS OF SOUTHERN ITALY 2018

by Marion Summerer



My son lives in Southern Italy and, although I usually visit him in the fall, out of the hot summer season, he recently suggested I come in the Spring to see the spring flowers and wild orchids. He is a very keen hiker and mountaineer and although I wasn't able to climb some of the mountains where he does to see the flowers, there is a very interesting high plateau area on his doorstep. The Murgia plateau of Southern Italy covers an area of about 4000 kms of distinct white limestone and tufa. In many areas the tufa has been mined and in other areas you find ancient rock churches in caves carved into the rock. The highest elevation goes up to 2000 ft and the climate can be cold in winter to 1-6 C and hot in summer. Rain is abundant and can fall as snow in winter.

My primary interest was the wild orchids with their interesting features. The genus *Ophrys* is widespread across of much of central and Southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. They are terrestrial orchids meaning they grow on the ground. They bloom in Spring but are then dormant in summer. Orchids of the genus *Ophrys* use sexual deception to attract pollinators. As can be seen here in the Bee Orchid, *Ophrys apifera*, the lower lip (labellum) of the flower resembles a female bee which fools the male bee



Above: *Bee orchid - Ophrys apifera*

into trying to mate with it thereby transferring the pollen from anther to stigma. I have seen them in many different colours, white, yellow and purple. Another bee orchid is *Ophrys bertolonii*, or Bertonolii's Bee Orchid. If you look closely you can see a tiny bird looking at his reflection in the mirrored surface of the lower petal or labellum. These orchids are cited as an endangered species and are banned from being picked or dug up, as are all wild orchids.



Above: *Ophrys bertolonii*

Another wild orchid genus I found was that of *Orchis*. These are characterized by a single flower spike with many purple, pink or white flowers. The flowers often resemble human figures such as *Orchis italica*, the naked man orchid or in Italy known as the | Italian Man orchid. It is possible to see his eyes, legs, arms and other man parts. Sometimes the figure is wearing a hat or hood such as *Orchis anthropophora*, which I was told is sometimes called the Ballerina, or the parachutist.



Above: *Orchis italica* - Italian man orchid



Above: *Orchis anthropophora*

Then there was *Orchis materana*, again the human form with a tiny hood and face.



Above: *Orchis materana*

Apart from the wild orchids there were many other wild flowers of which *Ferula communis* or Giant Fennel stood out. It could shoot up to over 3 feet high in a week and many plants grew together almost like a tiny forest. It is related to the common fennel and was very common but only lasts a few weeks and is then gone for the summer. Lastly I had the pleasure of eating the bulb *Lampascioni*, the Tassel Hyacinth. The flower is purple and fairly common and the bulb from which it grows is a traditional food of the area. The bulb is soaked in water, then cut in a grid pattern which when fried opened up and looked like a very delicate flower. It was delicious and tasted like a mild onion.



Left: *Ferula communis*, Right: *Lampascioni* - Tassel Hyacinth

VISIT TO VEL & DAN'S GARDEN, June 4, 2018

Photos by Valerie Melanson

A very few of the plants and scenes that caught the photographer's eye:



A thriving patch of *Linnaea borealis*



A small snapshot from the swathes of *Dodecatheon*



And swarms of sky blue *Meconopsis* (one candelabra primrose too)



More primroses.

Vel & Dan's woodland garden is the perfect home for all these beauties



The rootplate of a blowdown is a perfect trellis for *Clematis*.



A violet version of *Dactylorhiza foliosa*

My Trip to Iran

By Judy Millicheap

(Editor's Note: Judy gave a riveting presentation to the AGCVI in January 2018 about her trip to Iran and kindly wrote up some of her impressions for the "Crevice" as well.)

The week before I left to go on a botanizing trip to Iran I had never before been treated to so many lunches and dinners. I think my friends were sure they would never see me again since "Iran is such a dangerous country"! But, as I discovered, Iran is a beautiful country with very friendly and welcoming people. The trip, April 16 - May 4, 2017, was organized by alpine plant enthusiast Harry Jans who lives in the Netherlands. jansalpines.com

I was the only North American in the group which included people from the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, and the UK. There was 25 of us including the driver and two guides. We travelled in a full sized bus which I did not mind since I always had a window seat to enjoy the spectacular scenery. The weather was spring like with some warm days.

Iran is a large country. We did most of our botanizing in the Zagros Mountains, doing day trips from Tehran and also areas around the Caspian Sea.



Masouleh

Harry was well prepared prepared, even having GPS co-ordinates for special plants such as the *Dionysia*. We did see many dionysias, including both pink and yellow, and also some different species of this plant. They grow in rocky habitats in the subalpine zone. This prized plant is endemic to Iran.



Dionysia

One of my highlights was seeing thousands of *Fritillaria imperialis* in the



Chelgerd valley. Breath taking.

We found the only species peony that grows in Iran.



Paeonia wittmanniana:

It was fun to see red tulips in their natural environment dotting the rocky hillsides.



The yellows we saw were usually in meadows. We stopped to take pictures of fields of blue *Muscari neglectum*



and also fields of *Geranium tubererosum*. High in the open mountains by patches of snow were the *Scilla*, *Puschkinia*, yellow *Primula veris*, and blue

anemones. Other plants were the *Eremurus persicus* which looked so pretty



in the sunlight.

We were all excited when someone pointed out yellow



Pulsatilla growing on a rocky hillside.

Leontice armeniaca is an interesting plant and I was thrilled when I stumbled upon my first *Bellevallia*:



In the high mountains north of Tehran there were *Gypsophila aretioides*:



I thought these low green patches growing on the rocks would be soft but they were very hard. These are just some of the plants we enjoyed.

Not all the time was spent botanizing. We spent a couple of days in Isfahan which is considered one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It has one of the world's largest squares and it is famous for its Persian Islamic architecture. The mosques are considered the most beautiful in the world,



I think what I enjoyed most about Iran, was meeting the Iranian people. The best thing I did before going was learning a little of the language (Farsi). People, including a shepherd tending his sheep, were just thrilled when I would say "Hello, how are you?" Iranians love picnics. Everywhere you go, even on the sides of the road, families are having picnics. Food was fairly predictable. For dinner you were served rice with a little saffron and lamb and chicken kabobs. Their ice cream is delicious. Rosewater, saffron pistachio. Yum!

As for going back to Iran? I would love to return to see more of the ancient cities and of course meet more of the lovely Iranian people!

PLANT PORTRAIT - *Verbascum acaule*

By Ger van den Beuken



This is a rosette forming perennial from southern Greece, where it grows at high altitude between shaded limestone rocks. It is one of the most dwarf and rarely available species of the genus and therefore especially suitable for the rockgarden. The best place, if available, is a vertical crevice or on a dry wall. Otherwise in the alpine house to be sure it will survive during winter.

It is a real stunning plant with yellow flowers, red in bud, more than 2 cm across on maximum 5 cm long stems. The ovate leaves are very coarsely toothed on stalks of 2 to to 5cm long.

The soil I use is a sharply drained mix of coarse sand, grit, a very small part of soil and, because, it loves a higher pH, an additional part of lime. I grow my plants always in the alpine house in deep clay pots plunged in a sand bed. I never could see any seeds on my plants therefore do propagation by cuttings from non flowering shoots in late summer. It also should be possible to try with root cuttings but with this I have no experience.

SPRING WHAT'S IN MY GARDEN - Paddy Mark

In January & February, Paddy caught these early blooming Saxifrages:



A trough of Saxifrages constructed by Paul Spriggs that Paddy won on a Silent Auction at VIRAGS



S oppositifolia from David Sellars

In early May, Paddy spotted these blooms in her troughs:



and May 26th she found an unexpected *Podophyllum* in her woodland garden:



SPRING WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Lori Pross





SPRING WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Linda Derkach

On May 8th, Linda caught the exciting first blooming of *Iris taurica* in her trough. It's only about 4 inches high:

