

"THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Newsletter of the

Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island

(formerly The Alpine & Rock Garden Special Interest Group
of the Qualicum Beach Garden Club)

Issue # 23

October 2013



FROM THE EDITOR:

Marking what would have been Eswyn Lyster's 90th birthday & celebrating the alpine garden created in her name at Nanoose Place, the group enjoyed some birthday cake at our September 30th meeting. Blue was Eswyn's favourite colour. June keeps an eye on the treat in a photo by Kirsten Juergensen.

Items for the "Crevice" can be sent anytime to Melanson.valerie@gmail.com. The next issue will be #24, Nov/Dec, and the deadline for submissions Nov 30th. After January 1st, upcoming AGCVI group news will arrive in your inbox as a "Newsletter" and the "Crevice" will become a journal.

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NEWS FROM THE BOTANIC GARDENS

Photos of New Crevice Bed at RBG Edinburgh taken by John Mitchell & James Salomons



The new crevice bed curves along to the new alpine house, below the new alpine meadow.

UPCOMING AGCVI GROUP EVENTS

Monday, October 28th - Regular Group Meeting - Shelly Road Center, 186 Shelly Rd. PV, doors open 12:30, meeting at 1 p.m. - Vote on Constitution & Rules, news on plans for Christmas Lunch, Group Logo, Power point presentation on Seed Starting. Also Member Seed exchange to allow for outdoor treatment seed starting. You will have received an email from

Mike Miller. Please send in your selections so Mike can bring your packets to the meeting. Leftover seeds will be available.

Saturday, November 2nd - Paul Spriggs of Victoria to give two talks on Saturday, November 2nd, 2013, 11 am - 3 pm. (doors @ 10:30 am)

at Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 747 Jones Street, QB

1. **Island Alpine:** the mountain flora in our backyard &
2. **The Art of the Crevice Garden & Report from the Czech International Rock Gardening Conference.**

Bring Bag lunch. Coffee/tea provided. **Door fee, \$5**, includes prize draw. Paul will have alpine plants for sale.

Paul Spriggs has a passion for mountains and their flora. He has been the owner of Spriggs Gardens Landscaping Company for the last 24 years.

Paul is a rock garden builder with a specialty in the crevice style, having learned from innovators of the style such as Zdenek Zvolanek and Vojtech Holubec of the Czech Republic. He designed, demoed and built the crevice beds at the Eswyn Alpine & Rock Garden, Nanoose Place, Northwest Bay Rd., Nanoose. He is also a keen propagator of alpine plants.



Paul hiking Marble Meadows in Strathcona



Paul at Work

Monday, November 25th - Group Christmas Lunch - More details to follow.

FOLLOW UP ON AGCVI GROUP EVENTS

Slate of Directors for 2014 as elected at September 30th meeting:

President - June Strandberg
Vice-President - Barbara Kulla
Treasurer - Mike Miller
Secretary - Jan Phillips
Newsletter - Jo Graham
Journal/Publicity - Valerie Melanson
Website Administrator - Sue Beatty
Librarian - Barb Lemoine, Assistant - Sue Beatty
Refreshment Co-ordinator - Barbara Kulla
Plant Sale Co-ordinator - Louise Cotterill
Photographer - Kirsten Juergensen
Archivist - June Strandberg
Membership Co-ordinator - Marion Summerer

2013 WHISTLER TRIP

**Report by Margaret Mann,
photos by Richard Mann, Barb Lemoine & Barbara Kulla**

Monday 19th August.

The annual trip to Whistler set off with an early start at Departure Bay to catch the 7:45 ferry. We five intrepid participants met for breakfast on the ferry and enjoyed a gentle cruise to Horseshoe Bay where we disembarked and took the scenic drive to Whistler. On arrival we collected our lift passes and made plans for the strenuous days ahead of us.



Our cruise ship!

(photo courtesy http://www.bcferrries.com/about/media_room)

Tuesday 20th August.

We met for breakfast and made our leisurely way along the Whistler Stroll to the ski lifts, which don't start up until 10 am and took the Blackcomb lift to Rendezvous Lodge. This whisked us up over 1,000 metres in a very short time, which we spent trying to identify the plants growing 20 feet below us as we glided past them. From the Lodge we took the easy alpine trail to Blackcomb Lake, a round trip of about 4 kilometres through the alpine meadows. Blackcomb Lake sits at the base of a large scree area under the north face of Blackcomb Mountain, a transition area between meadow and alpine.

Our hike was a rather stop/go arrangement with stops to view and identify plants including *Anemone occidentalis* and large areas of *Luetkea pectinata*. Unfortunately the third week in August was just too late in the season to see many plants in bloom, in fact many had already set seed.

Back to Rendezvous Lodge and then a 10-minute ride on the Peak 2 Peak Gondola from Blackcomb Mountain to Whistler Mountain with it's splendid views. From there we rode in style back to Whistler on the Village Gondola.



Alpine meadow hiking trail near Blackcomb Lake



Typical alpine meadow



Blackcomb Lake, 1,918 metres

Wednesday 21st August.

We took the Whistler Gondola to Roundhouse Lodge and the short walk to the Whistler Peak Express, a chair lift not for the faint of heart. We sat amongst *Saxifraga bronchialis* and *Silene acaulis* and ate our lunch with fantastic views of whole mountain ranges disappearing into the distant haze. Descending from Whistler peak we staggered gamely up the one steep slope we encountered on foot and rode the Peak 2 Peak again and back down the mountain on the Blackcomb chair lifts. We had a great time, saw lots of alpine plants, which was really

the whole idea and did it in quite comfortable style, the hiking was very gentle with only a few rough and steep places.



L to R: Barb Lemoine, Mike Miller, Margaret Mann, Richard Mann, Barbara Kulla

Interestingly we encountered many bikers who were preparing for an Extreme Mountain Bike event the following week. Watching them launch themselves down impossibly steep trails we came to the conclusion they had to have a death wish to even think about it. We did see a few who had not quite made it to the bottom of the mountain totally in one piece. We, on the other hand, were very grateful for the fairly comfortable chair lifts up and down mountains which none of us would have conquered without them.



Looking down on Whistler
with Alta Lake on Left & Green Lake on right



Oxyria digyna



Epilobium latifolium



Saxifraga tolmei with ??



Silene acaulis
With lots of seed heads



Silene parryi TBC



Silene douglasii v. *douglasii* TBC



Anemone occidentalis



Castilleja sp.



Epilobium latifolium
from on high



Saxifraga bronchialis

BULBOLOGY 101 SEMINAR at OWL & STUMP RARE PLANTS

By Amanda Carruthers

Despite road swamps and bucketing rain, I made it to the Bulbology 101 seminar, held September 28, 2013 at Owl and Stump Rare Plants in Ladysmith. Facilitator Grahame Ware had hot tea and coffee ready on arrival; we did introductions and Grahame told us about the long interesting history that culminated in the popularity enjoyed by bulbs today and recommended a few of his favourite bulb books. We headed out through torrents of rain to Grahame's beautiful new greenhouse, made nice and cozy with a heater, to learn about the selection, planting and care of bulbs.

Grahame provided good logistical information on preparing bulbs for planting. The following list outlines just a mere few of the important tips he shared with us:

- Optimum potting mix: 'one to one peat and sand plus 1/2 measure medium grade perlite'.
- Cover drainage holes in pots with plastic wire mesh (cut up an onion bag or some such material) rather than stones because unwanted creepy crawlies can easily navigate the spaces between stones and work to jeopardize the health and longevity of the bulb(s).
- Plant in pots that have an inverted ridge between the holes to optimize good drainage, and double up when using plastic pots so as to avoid root burn in hot weather.
- Cut up venetian blinds make the best plant labels.

We ventured outside and Grahame lifted a few of his bulbs so we could see that the new shoot like roots had started to grow in preparation for Spring blooms. Fortunately there was a lull in the downpour so we could have a quick dash about the garden and then a few of us went to the Crow and Gate Pub for something to eat. This weekend I selected and scrubbed up some plastic pots, mixed up the no fail potting mix and planted some bulbs, sprinkling the top of the pots with pea gravel size schist I had on hand. It's a wonderful thing to confidently prepare a bulb pot in fall so as to have something to look forward to in Spring.



Fall crocus blooming in Haultain Street garden in October

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - LORI PROSS

Lori reports that Nick has built a cover for the Crevice Garden - and she put her tufa pots in there too. The cover is open at both ends and raised along the sides to allow for good airflow.





Several plants are happily flowering away under this extra protection.



Scabiosa japonica v. alpina



Polemonium brandegeei - Jacob's Ladder



Sisyrinchium californicum - Yellow-Eyed Grass

WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Valerie Melanson



L: *Crocus sativus* - Saffron Crocus, showing signs of life after being planted a month ago
 R: Final flower for the season on *Campanula makaschvilii*, started years ago from RHS seed and beloved of the local deer



L: a reliable late summer, fall flower - *Veronica spicata* 'Blauteppich', purchased at Dinter's several years ago

R: a new addition to my collection of Campanulaceae - *Adenophora takedae* v. *howozana*, a Japanese high mountain plant, purchased from Wrightman's. Valuable for being a fall bloomer.

PLANT PORTRAIT - *Aquilegia scopulorum*

By Valerie Melanson

This dwarf columbine is a native from central Utah to central and southern Nevada, found on limestone at high elevations (*scopulorum* means "of rocks"). Robert Nold¹ describes it as "ravishing" and I heartily concur. I just wish my photos could do the bloom justice.

¹ Columbines: *Aquilegia*, *Paraquilegia* and *Semiaquilegia*, by Robert Nold (Portland: Timber Press, 2003), pp 115-116.



In full bloom, May 6, 2013

As you can see it has a disproportionately (if you go by human standards) large bloom for the tiny tuft of 'glabrous' leaves. Yet the flowers themselves are very small - blades about 10-12 mm and spurs 25-35 mm. Nold notes that usually they are blue, pale blue, white or white tinged with yellow. However, he mentions that a form from the Charleston Mountains in southern Nevada has red-tinged sepals and blades, so that may account for this specimen.

He further notes that the cultivation requirements are "similar to those of other subalpine and alpine species: a deep scree, full sun or partial shade, plenty of moisture in spring, and nutrients provided in late winter."

I have my wee beauty in a terracotta pot filled with gritty, rocky mix, sunk in a raised, rocky bed, that seldom gets water in summer, and as much sun as my rock garden can achieve. My big regret is that it really should be on a wall or bank at greater height where it would be much more visible. I started it from AGS 2010 seed # 1514, sown on Dec 28, 2010. It flowered for the first time in 2012.

