



February 2016 Newsletter

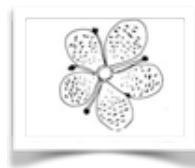
Hello fellow gardeners,

Welcome to the February Newsletter. Hope that you have been outside enjoying the nice spring like sunshine.

In this current newsletter we have the following:-

- Agenda for Monday Feb. 29th meeting at 12.30pm Shelley Road Centre Parksville
- List of things to bring for the meeting 'Seed Sowing Workshop'
- Current 2016 Event Programme
- Eaglecrest March Meeting
- Membership renewal Form
- Seed Starting Handout from Valerie Melanson

See you at the end of a trowel!



MEMBERSHIP MEETING: FEBRUARY 29TH, 2016

12:30 PM, SHELLY ROAD CENTRE, PARKSVILLE

Attendance [sign-in]

Call to Order 1:00 pm

Additions to Agenda

Minutes: N/A [January 25, 2016 Annual General Meeting to be approved at
2017 Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island Annual General Meeting]

Reports:

Treasurer

Plant Sales

Programme

Membership

Newsletter/Crevice

Library

Other Reports

New Business

Refreshments

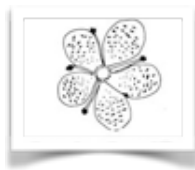
Introduction of presenters for Hands-on Seed Sowing Demonstrations; Mike Miller, June Strandberg, and Valerie Melanson

Up-coming Events (see later in this newsletter)

Refreshment sign up

Plant Sale Draws

Adjournment



ROUND ROBIN SEED SOWING WORKSHOP FEBRUARY 29th 2016

We will have on hand: Seed Starter mix, mix for bulbs, grit, extra peat, pots of soil, empty pots and seeds

TO BRING:

Labels and marker

Your seed sowing register or new note book and pen

Plastic container or box for carrying seed pots home

Sieve

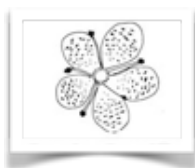
OPTIONAL:

Seeds you would like to sow

Pots

Your own recipe soil mix

Don't forget **SHOW AND TELL** if you have something interesting to bring. We've attached Valerie's full Seed Starting Handout at the end of the newsletter; lot's of great info!



AGCVI Events Programme for 2016

(All events are on Monday, unless otherwise stated.)

Feb 29 - Hands-On Seed Sowing done as round robin with 3 stations covering different seed types & techniques, Shelly Road Centre, Parksville, 12:30 pm

March 21 (note date change) – Guest Speaker: Judy Farrow on Flora of Baffin Island. Shelly Road Centre, Parksville, 12:30 pm

April 25 – Guest Speaker: Malcolm McGregor from UK on A World Full of Saxifrages. East Hall, QB Civic Centre, 12:30 pm

Saturday, May 7 – PLANT SALE @ Louise Cotterill's

May 30 – Guest Speaker: David Sellars on Pyrenees Flora in Perspective: From Andorra to Gavarie & Photographing Alpine Plants: A Landscape Point of View.” At QB Civic Centre East Hall, **12:30 pm**. Also Members' Plant Sale with 20% contribution to Speaker's Fund

June 27 – Mini Garden Tour – details TBA

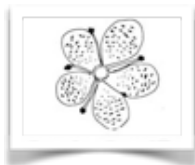
July 25 – Seminar on Filling and Planting Troughs. – details TBA

August 29 – Guest Speaker: Frank Hovenden, on Alpines & Bonsai- venue TBA

Sept 12 - Guest Speaker: Mike Kintgen, Denver Botanic Garden on Great Rock Gardens of Europe. QB Civic Centre East Hall, 12:30 pm . Also Members' Plant Sale with 20% contribution to Speaker's Fund

Oct 31 – Round Robin of 3 or 4 stations. – venue TBA

Nov 28 – Christmas Lunch



Our friends and fellow gardeners want to let us know about their next meeting -

The Eaglecrest Garden Club meets:

Wednesday March 16, 2016,

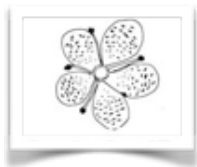
7:00 pm,

Qualicum Beach Civic Centre.

All welcome.

Non members :\$3.

Topic: Efficient Watering - a joint presentation by: Lauren Fegan of Water Smart (RDN) speaking to the need and the benefits of efficient watering and Kevin Luterbach of Iritex speaking to the options available with the nuts and bolts of irrigation



Reminder About Membership

March 31st 2016 is the deadline for renewal of Membership – all 2015 memberships will expire and be removed from our list.

ALPINE GARDENERS OF CENTRAL VANCOUVER ISLAND
2016 MEMBERSHIP FORM

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE NEWSLETTER & 'CREVICE' WILL BE SENT BY EMAIL ONLY

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

SURNAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____

POSTCODE: _____

TELEPHONE #: _____

E-MAIL: _____

PROFILE OF YOUR GARDEN OR GROWING AREA: **Do you have a rockery, troughs, raised beds, an alpine house? Please give a mini profile.**

TOPICS YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HEARING ABOUT AT MEETINGS: **Examples: Plant families, genera, garden design, alpine areas**

IDEAS FOR OUR NEWSLETTER & "THE CREVICE":

MEMBERSHIP BY MAIL:

Please send form & \$5 cash or cheque payable to "Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island" to:

Membership / Secretary, AGCVI, 860 Wildgreen Way, Parksville, B.C. V9P 0A5

DATE OF APPLICATION: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

I agree to my e-mail address & phone # being put on the membership list and circulated to AGofCVI members.



SEED STARTING

Some suggestions based on my experience so far,

By Valerie Melanson

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

1. Keep a Seed Wish List all year long.
2. Save Seeds & Send in to the AGCBC, AGS and SRGC Seed Exchanges
3. Order Seed (keeping in mind your wish list) from the Seed Exchanges, Commercial Sources (see suggested sources below), etc.
4. Research the germination requirements on the internet and in books. Really good internet source (thanks to June Strandberg) is the Ontario Rock Garden Society SeedEx: <http://www.onrockgarden.com/germination-guide/plants>
Also for the seeds AlPlains carries, their website/catalogue is a goldmine: <http://www.alplains.com>
Also another good source (thanks to Sue Beatty): <http://tomclothier.hort.net/page02.html>
And a famous source:
Norman C. Deno's book: The Second Edition of Seed Germination Theory and Practice, is available as a downloadable PDF file at: <http://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/41278/PDF>

GET SOWING:

5. Using seed starter pots, fill with starter mix – MY BASIC MIX is about 1/2 Dutch Treat / Islands Finest Starter Mix & 1/2 #2 granite or limestone grit. This can be fine tuned for special seed needs

Some usual methods of sowing:

- a. Seed scattered on surface of damp mix, lightly mist. This is SL = Surface sow, needs Light. To avoid moss growth, I suggest sowing seed onto thin layer of grit and then washing it in, using fine rose. Seems to work fine too, especially useful on seeds that take longer to germinate and where moss growth can be a problem. For really quick germinating seeds, then direct on starter mix is just fine.
 - b. Fine seed needing some cover – sow on surface of damp mix that is topped with #1 (very fine seed) or #2 grit (slightly bigger seed), water seed in with mist. This is JC = Just Cover. If the seed is bigger, use # 3 grit.
 - c. Bigger seed needing dark to germinate – Some seeds need soaking first. Then dampen mix, dig holes twice width of diameter of seed and cover with mix. Top with some grit to discourage moss buildup. Mist.
6. Park seed trays as per requirements determined by research:
 - a. Set up trays with vented domes for Outdoor Treatment seeds. This is OT. Put a rock on top or use bulldog clips to hold top on (thanks to David Sellars re: clips).
 - b. Set up trays covered with vented domes under grow lights on seed starting heat mats inside or in greenhouse. This is 20C
 - c. Put seed pots needing cold stratification in small trays inside plastic bags in lower part of fridge. Mark with date and how many weeks of stratification are needed. Mark calendar when due out. Take out at proper time and proceed to next part of requirements, e.g. 20C or OT.

d. Seeds needing gibberellic acid, GA₃, treatment to soften their seed coat. I have tried *Aquilegia discolor*, using a 1 to 3 of vinegar and water for 20 hours and succeeded. This also works for some *Gentiana* that need GA₃. I am just now having success with *G. verna*.

e. Some seeds need scarification – they tend to be big and have tough outer coats – you can rub on fine sandpaper or put them in a baggie with grit and give them a good rub. I did the latter with success on *Astragalus patagonicus* and followed up with a warm soak for 48 hours, a success.

f. Soaking – use warm water and keep warm by putting the dish on a hot mat or over a light bulb. Some seeds benefit from a drop of detergent added, e.g. cyclamen, as it breaks surface tension so the seeds fall to the bottom and absorb water better.

g. Smoke – some seeds that germinate only after being in a wildfire (pyrophiles), like those from the South African Veldt and Australian Outback. You can give liquid smoke a try. James L. Jones in NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly vol. 66:3, Summer 2008, p. 213, tried 1:25 of Liquid Smoke to Water for 2 hours. He found it worked in half his test cases, whereas straight water did not. Diana Chapman of Telos Rare Bulbs used alfalfa straw smoke successfully on Australian seeds. See AGCBC Bulletin 56:3, Summer 2013, pp. 60-61.

NB: Every pot should have a TAG showing Latin Name, treatment abbreviations and date sown. Set up a Propagation Logbook too to record the name, treatment needed, how many seeds and pots sown, date sown, when germination noted, how many seedlings, when potted up, potting up details (e.g. acid or lime, size of grit, leaf mould), references to photos or write-ups drawn from your wishlist. This will help you to create plant tags for sales and botanical tags for your garden. Also a great reference for future years' seed starting.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SEED STARTING OF PARTICULAR GENUSES:

GENTIANA: Some species (like *G. acaulis* & *G. verna*) need help to break dormancy – Gibberellic acid, GA₃. A bit of vinegar in a warm water soak for 24 hrs can do the job. Seeds are very small so need to be either sown on top of mix, SL, or on fine grit and misted in. 20°C can work.

SAXIFRAGA: They need light to germinate -

For *Kabschia* group, use small seed pots with mix of perlite and sand, settle the mix and put layer of sand on top, then light sprinkle of # 1 or # 2 grit on top. Water pot from bottom. Sprinkle seed on the grit and mist in. After that, either on hot mat under dome under light or OT under dome. Both have worked for me with OT having the edge.

STARTING BULBS

GENERAL:

IAN YOUNG'S BULB SEED STARTER MIX

USED BY MIKE MILLER AND JUNE STRANDBERG:

June writes: "These seeds/bulbs stay in the pot for 2 years or more, seed starter mix does not hold up long enough.

The mix to use is:

2 parts grit, 2 parts loam, 1 part leaf mold or peat - do not use coir unless very thoroughly washed (re throwing coconuts into the sea to soften up and the fibre getting salty)

I always add 1 part sand as it is hard to get here the sandy loam they get in Scotland."

(Ian Young pens a "Bulblog" on the SRGC website: <http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/index.php?log=bulb>)

KNOW YOUR PLANT GROUP FOR BULB SEED SOWING:

Jack Brownless of the SRGC noted that “Monocots seem to like company and germinate well when sown close together.” (SRGC The Rock Garden # 92, p. 331)

Monocots have one seed leaf inside the seed which may or may not come out on germination: families in the

MONOCOTS:

Amaryllidaceae = Galanthus, Narcissus, Pancratium, Sternbergia

Araceae = Arisarum, Arum, Biarum, Dracunculus

Iridaceae = Crocus, Gladiolus, Iris, Romulea

Liliaceae which has many subfamilies and includes these genera – Allium, Anacamptis, Anthericum, Asphodeline, Asphodelus, Androcymbium, Bellevalia, Cephalanthera, Chionodoxa, Colchicum, Convallaria, Dactylorhiza, Drimia, Epipactis, Epipogium, Erythronium, Fritillaria, Gagea, Gennaria, Gymnadenia, Himantoglossum, Hyacinthella, Lilium, Limodorum, Listera, Melanthium, Merendera, Muscari, Neotia, Nigritella, Ophrys, Orchis, Ornithogalum, Paris, Platanthera, Polygonatum, Scilla, Serapias, Spiranthes, Trillium, Tulipa, Veratrum, Zigadenus

Dicots have two seeds leaves that may come out on germination: family groups in the DICOTS:

Aristolochiaceae = Aristolochia

Berberidaceae = Bongardia, Gymnospermium, Leontice

Fumariaceae = Corydalis

Geraniaceae = Geranium

Oxalidaceae = Oxalis

Primulaceae = Cyclamen Ranunculaceae = Anemone, Ranunculus

(above information on Monocot and Dicot groups for bulbs derived from:

A Field Guide to the Bulbs of Greece, by Christopher Grey-Wilson, AGS, 2010, ISBN 0-900048-80-8)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GENERA:

CYCLAMEN - THERE ARE MANY SYSTEMS BUT THIS ONE SEEMS TO WORK: --
FRESH SEED: sow immediately

--DRIED SEED: soak in dish of water on hot mat for 24 – 48 hours, with/without drop of detergent and rinse well, discard floaters.

Deep pots (the seedlings will stay in these for at least 18 months up to 3 years, so need to be large and deep enough). Fill bottom of pot with extra rich mix, then rest of pot to within 1/2 inch of top with mix of starting mix, leaf mould, grit and perlite. Tamp down to make even surface. and put on thin layer of sand. Arrange seeds about 2 inches apart. Cover with about 5mm of #1 grit (they need dark to germinate) and water with fine spray. Then can put on hot mat under dome and move outside when weather improves. Keep damp but not soaked. I started seed mid February and had sprouts in 4 months. Protect from slugs, snails and wood bugs. Use copper mesh against the slugs and snails and moats of cornmeal against the woodbugs.

FRITILLARIA:

Ian Young in his bulb log recommends planting Frits in a clump and relatively deep in a deep pot – Frits like to be cozy and spend a lot of their early life mining deep in their pots – I had success sowing in July 2011 under a hearty layer of #3 grit in deep pots and keeping OT in a part shaded location. They sprouted & made leaves starting March 2012. Now to see if they come back in 2013.

BULB SEED ADVICE

By June Strandberg

Good sized pots are the ones Roger Barlow uses to grow his rock garden plants, e.g. 'Proven Winners' pots. I put a square of window screen in the bottom of the pot to keep out woodbugs. Fill with soil to 1/4" of top and tap to firm.

Narcissus: Make a hole in the soil with your finger about 1" deep and sow all seeds - cover with soil and top with #2 or #3 grit. The seeds like company and the resulting small bulbs will sort out themselves and should be left undisturbed for at least 2 years, (If you do have a larger number of seeds you scatter over the whole surface of pot and cover with about 1" soil, press in well and top with grit)

Western Erythronium: Soak seeds overnight and sow fairly thick, just cover with soil and top with #2 grit.

Lilies, fritillaries and other flat seeds: Sow shallowly and fairly thick. If you don't have a lot of seeds to deal with you can turn them edge-wise. Cover with soil, top with #2 grit and press in well.

SEED SOURCES

CLUB with EXCHANGES:

--AGCBC - Alpine Garden Club of BC -- join and get free picks from the seed exchange -

<http://www.agc-bc.ca>

--AGS - Alpine Garden Society (U.K.) -- join and get free picks from their exchange. Send in seed and get extra picks. No charge for postage.

<http://www.alpinegardensociety.net/>

-SRGC -- Scottish Rock Garden Club -- join and get free picks from exchange, send in seed and get more picks. <http://www.srgc.org.uk/>

--NARGS -- North American Rock Garden Society -- join and participate in exchange, small cost. <http://www.nargs.org/>

SPECIALTY GROUPS: They all publish journals and have seed exchanges, some even have forums.

--Cyclamen Society -- www.cyclamen.org:

Mike Miller reports: "I was a member in 2004-5 and it was great. Best source of seed and you get lots in each package.

I still have a few plants from the seedlist ... Seed germination was about 80%. If I remember as a member you got so many free packages and could buy more." --Fritillaria Group, Alpine Garden Society -- <http://www.fritillaria.org.uk/> --American Primrose Society -- www.americanprimrosesociety.com

--Saxifrage Society, <http://www.saxifraga.org>

SEED SOURCES (COMMERCIAL):

AlPlains - <http://www.alplains.com/>

Beaver Creek Greenhouses - <http://www.rockgardenplants.com/>

Chiltern Seeds, Cumbria, UK -- <http://www.chilternseeds.co.uk/>

Vojtech Holubec -- email him to get on his mailing list

Vojtech Holubec Bazantni 1217, CZ-165 00 Praha 6, Czech Republic phone: +420 731 587 826 e-mail: holubec@vurv.cz

--Cyclamen Society – www.cyclamen.org:

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--Fritillaria Group, Alpine Garden Society – <http://www.fritillaria.org.uk/>

--American Primrose Society – www.americanprimrosesociety.com

--Saxifrage Society, <http://www.saxifraga.org>

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Vojtech Holubec – email him to get on his mailing list

Vojtech Holubec Bazantni 1217, CZ-165 00 Praha 6, Czech Republic phone: +420 731 587 826 e-mail: holubec@vurv.cz

Plant World Seeds – good sowing advice for seed they carry: http://www.plant-world-seeds.com/store/view_seed_item

(updated to Dec 16th, 2013)

