

# "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:**

Please check out the **International Rock Gardener, issue # 50**, for February, .pdf at <http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/logdir/2014Feb271393533473IRG50February.pdf>

It has several articles from Vancouver Island contributors:

*Dracocephalum* by Grahame Ware; A report on Paul Spriggs' Crevice Garden Demonstration for VIRAGS by June Strandberg, with photos from June and Barb Lemoine,; *Phlox diffusa* in the wild by Dr Hans Roemer". Bravo, Vancouver Islanders!

FYI: Grahame has sent us dates for the spring opening, grand opening and workshops at Owl and Stump Rare Plants. Please see below under 'Other Events'.

This time we have a report on Hans Roemer's talk. Next time a report on a small group trip to the March AGCBC Meeting, and UBC Alpine Gardens.

Items for the "Crevice" can be sent anytime to [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com).

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## AGCVI COMING EVENTS

### **The Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island**

present

**Kenton Seth of Colorado**

to speak on

#### **Hunting Wildflowers of the Wild West:**

A talk about the places and plants in the recent work of  
bringing the Wild West home to the garden.



**Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 1-3 p.m.**  
(doors open 12:30),

**QUALICUM BEACH CIVIC CENTRE,  
747 JONES, Q.B.**

**\$5 at door includes entry in prize draw &  
coffee/tea**

"Well, it's still there. The "Wild" West, that is. So much of the great basin and dry American intermountains is still there- uninhabited, dry, dusty, and lousy with wildflowers. They definitely miss that part in old John Wayne flicks. The Great basin, lest we forget, has a secret chilly side - the mountains and alpine! These alpine environments are often encircled by vast deserts, creating ecological "islands", promoting the unique endemism and only-that-mountain-range specialty of plants. But the desert and alpine don't always get an obvious distinction from each other, especially in Wyoming where the desert and alpine ecologies actually share species and blur together, and the windy steppes becomes a Patagonia-esque cold yet dry landscape, stretching for hundreds of kilometres with a smorgasbord of unique species. This talk will offer a view into the colourful realities of hunting for native Western American plants which lead from one thing to another: from dry technical botany manuals to seed envelopes, GPS devices, topographic maps, surprise plants, new plants, and getting vehicles stuck in odd places."

Kenton J. Seth is a landscaper/gardener/wild-plant-fiend in Colorado, USA, who specializes in desert natives and builds crevice gardens professionally. He has contributed articles to the NARGS Quarterly and the AGCVI "Crevice".

Info? Valerie: 250-594-4423 or [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com)



## OTHER EVENTS



### **Grahame Ware, Curator of Owl & Stump,**

Proudly Announces The Owl & Stump Calendar for 2014

***April is Grand Opening Month!*** -Opening Friday, April 11th.

Open weekly thereafter Fri-Mon 10- 4 until Thanksgiving

Owl & Stump is located at 3395 McGuire Way, Ladysmith, BC (Yellow Point just 5 minutes south of the Crow & Gate English Country Pub and 20 minutes north of Ladysmith). 250 722-2148 owlstump@shaw.ca

### **Owl & Stump Events**

#### **Workshops**

My workshops are fun and relatively inexpensive and cover a variety of topics that anyone interested in Mediterranean, alpine or woodland gardening should attend. Payment in full is due at time of registration. Most dates are on Saturday when the nursery will be closed. Email me owlstump@shaw.ca or 250 722-2148. I don't do Twitter or text.

***Bulbscaping 101***- An introduction to the intelligent use of bulbs as a low- maintenance and low-to-no water component in your landscape. A wide panorama of easy, low-nutrient needs bulbs and their care and maintenance is covered. Complementary plant groups and landscaping methods will be discussed in detail as well. No stoned unturned as it were. Some hands on stuff, so come here with those ugly work clothes that were all so fond of!

Held on **Saturday, May 10th and/or May 17th, 11 AM - 2 PM**. Choose your day.

Restricted to 10 students/per session. \$30 includes hand-outs. Repair to the **Crow & Gate** for lunch afterwards and some good conversation if were lucky.

***So You Think You Can Landscape?!*** This workshop challenges the participants to get a better handle on basic systems and materials to create what they want. It is basically a hardscape/plantscape convergence. How you hardscape determines what your plantscape is. This, in turn, determines the tone and ambience of your garden(s). Use of found materials as well as time-honoured systems will be explored. Each student will explain what they want and I will endeavour to show a direction that is achievable. Lotsa do's and don'ts in this hands-on

workshop. Think of as a dynamic, on-the-fly consultation for your gardens. \$50. Bring a lunch. 10AM-12PM, then a lunch break and then 1-3PM. **May 24th only.**

**More workshops to come as I gauge the demand. Bulbology 101 will return next October. Dates have yet to be determined.**

*Please see attached .pdf for the full press release from Owl & Stump, including information on some fine dwarf conifers now available.*

## **REPORT ON AGCVI ACTIVITIES**



**HANS ROEMER:**

### **GROWING BULBS ON THE DRY SIDE OF VANCOUVER ISLAND**

**Report by June Strandberg, photos by Kirsten Juergensen  
With additional plant photos by June and Sue Beatty**

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> - the day before Hans Roemer was due to talk to us - it snowed all day! Thankfully it mostly melted on landing and we only had a skiff. Monday, however, was a different story, it snowed all day but this time it settled and by mid-day we had a good few inches. Jo was snowed in at Nanoose and could not make the presentation. Margaret and Richard on Gabriola had over a foot of snow, no power from Monday morning till Tuesday evening and did not even get out of their driveway until Tuesday!

We were worried that Hans would have trouble on the Malahat but he was the one who arrived first! - Mike was second so they had a good chat!



Hans opened by showing maps of all the areas in the northern hemisphere that have the same climate as we have on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Wet winters and dry summers - or the 'Mediterranean Climate'.

He had some very interesting diagrams made by his son, showing Victoria's and Courtenay's summer and winter conditions as compared to parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. We should be able to grow some of these bulbs in our rock gardens and raised beds - some need keeping under cover for part of the year and some are pretty tricky!

He showed us photos of his own collection of bulbs. These are planted in large plastic pots plunged in a raised sand bed in his bulb 'house'. This has a removable roof but is open at the sides and is fenced against rabbits. The roof is just to keep off excess rain and is removed in April. Some hand watering is done before this where needed.

The bulbs grow in a grit/loamy sand/leaf mold mixture, about 2/1/1 parts but varied depending on special demands of certain bulbs.

Some are growing outside on his rock garden, others are planted around his property. A few have even found their own favorite spot!



L: Hans takes questions, R: Mike Miller runs the prize draw while participants enjoy coffee

The presentation was fabulous! Hans had a leaflet listing all his photographs, the origin of each plant and where we can try to grow it - open garden, pot or bulb frame. This leaflet was very useful for making notes about each species and will come in handy for future reference.

The photos were wonderful, nine species of dwarf *Narcissus* from Spain, Portugal, France and Morocco including the tiniest one I have ever seen:

*N. hedraeanthus*. I bought bulblets of this at VIRAGS Members' Sale in September 2013, they flowered early February and are going over now (Mid March) - I hope for seeds! Sue

and I also have *N. zaianicus* just coming in to flower. *N. bulbocodium* var. *tenuifolius* and *N. triandrus* look as though we should be able to grow them in our rock gardens or raised beds.



L: *Narcissus albidus* v. *zaianicus*, R: *Narcissus hedraeanthus*, both June Strandberg

There were 18 *Crocus* from SE France to Turkey and Iran, from Italy and Crete to Crimea and Ukraine, spring and autumn flowering. Some beautiful and delicate species and several that we should be able to grow. *Crocus sieberi* looks like one. *C. sieberi* ssp. *sublimis* var. *tricolor* looks beautiful but not so easy. *C. tommasinianus* x *heuffelianus* looked very interesting with its markings.

Sue Beatty had 3 species of Hans' autumn crocus bloom in October:





L: *Crocus cambessedesii*, R: *Crocus asumanie*, both in fall 2013 at Sue Beatty's



L: *Sternbergia lutea*, Fall 2013, R: *Crocus biflorus weldenii* 'Fairy', this spring, both at Sue Beatty's

*Fritillaria* from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan to the Tien Shan and one from BC too!! - It grows in the Okanagan and various other parts of the interior of the Pacific NW - tiny yellow *F. pudica*. It's a tricky one in cultivation - I would love to be able to grow it.

(NOTE: On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March we saw it in flower in two separate places - one in the dry house at UBC Alpine Garden growing in a bed and then a second time at the AGCBC meeting grown in a pot - I think it was David Sellars'.)



*Fritillaria pudica* at UBC (June Strandberg)

There were *Tulipa* from Crete and Turkey to Iran, Kashmir and the Tien Shan. Some lovely photographs of flowers in red, pinks, yellows, orange, white and even blue! Some just right for trying in the rock garden - they seem to grow very well.

To end, Hans showed some *Iris*, *Romulea*, *Tecophilaea* (Hans says it is not hard to grow!) and *Asphodelus* - all of them are beautiful.

*Iris* 'Katherine Hodgkin' (*histrioides* x *danfordiae*) is interesting. It is pale blue with markings and is very vigorous. How anything with *I. danfordiae* in its parentage can be vigorous is a mystery to me!!

Then he showed a last one, *Calochortus tolmiei*, the second plant from N America - it grows in Coastal Oregon to California and is very pretty. It is marked with just one x on Hans' list, so not easy in the garden.

Note of interest: Hans has in flower now (Mid March) - still various dwarf *Narcissus* (for instance the white *N. cantabricus* and the yellow *N. assoanus*), plus some early *Fritillaria*, early *Tulipa*, the later *Crocus*, and *Corydalis*, *Ornithogalum* and *Asphodelus acaulis*.

Hans has offered us bulbils in September at \$1 per packet and I have had a good response. Don't forget to get your list in to me.



A big vote of thanks to Hans for a very interesting presentation and a special big THANK YOU for coming up through all that bad weather.

(IF YOU RECEIVED SOME BULB SEED FROM MIKE MILLER AT HANS' PRESENTATION, HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON GETTING THEM STARTED. THESE NOTES ARE TAKEN FROM A PLANT PROPAGATION HANDOUT PREVIOUSLY USED AT THE QBGC ALPINE SIG. Editor)

## **STARTING BULBS FROM SEED**

June Strandberg notes: "it is really very easy to grow bulbs from seed and it is the only way to get lots of things. Mike and I both have Cyclamen flowering now just 3 years from sowing. If you sow a couple of pots every year - after 3 years you will probably get something new blooming each year."

### **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 notes 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 genuses - *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 SOME GENUSES:**

**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  $\frac{1}{2}$  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. Most subsequently returned in 2013 and a couple even flowered (Valerie).

## **FURTHER 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:**

--**Cyclamen Society** - [www.cyclamen.org](http://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.

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



*Cyclamen cilicium* - first flower from seed (Valerie Melanson)



## **PLANT PORTRAIT - *Fritillaria eduardii* Regel**

**Text by the late Joyce Carruthers,  
previously published in the International Rock Gardener  
(issue # 4, April 2010),**

**submitted with further notes & photos by Zdeněk Zvolánek**

(March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014 - ZZ notes that *Fritillaria eduardii* is already flowering at The Beauty Slope in Karlik, Czech Republic, earlier than reported in the 2010 article.)

Once while visiting Mr. Polívka, a well known Czech bulb and Peony aficionado, who was a leader of plant expeditions to Central Asia and to Caucasus, I saw a group of mature yellow *F. eduardii* in flower. He only had yellows ones in his garden and I instantly fell in love. Later he gave me seed, which did not germinate, and after his death his son gave me more, which failed to germinate. Now I realise that seed collected in the winter or late autumn usually fails to germinate. A few years later another friend, Mrs. Korobková, gave us a few small bulbs of *F. eduardii* because Zdenek had converted her retaining wall of horizontal limestone rocks in her garden, in which she could grow nothing, into a vertically placed crevice garden in which she could grow something. (Ed. Mrs. Korobková had passed away by the date of this article.)

I read somewhere that these bulbs like *F. raddeana* and *F. imperialis* should be planted in a deep (2-3 feet) in prepared soil, including some humus and fertiliser mixed into the bottom. I dug a deep trench not far from our south facing dolerite cliff. Since our planting medium is mineral soil from broken down dolerite with good clay content, I decided that we did not need humus because clay is nutrient rich, water retentive and provides good surfaces for bacterial activity around the roots of plants. I only added a small amount of onion fertiliser mixed to the bottom of the trench and arranged the bulbs. The trench style was inspired by a photograph by Dieter Zschummel of *F. imperialis* in Iran growing by the "millions" near a cliff with Dionysias.

A few days ago (end of March) Vojtěch Holubec admired and photographed our blooming plants and said he did not have it in his garden. Our *F. eduardii* flowered for the first time last year after about three years from planting and this year the flowers were better. After flowering I water them well and scratch and water in a small amount of onion fertiliser hoping to increase the size of the bulbs and eventually trigger bulb splitting. Without knowing it I was following the advice of Leonid Bondarenko for bulb splitting (into two). His story about this species in the wild is captivating (see the article in *Fritillaria Group journal of the AGS*).



L: the growing plant, R: The tallest *Fritillaria eduardii* is now growing over a share of the ashes of the late Joyce Carruthers (kindly provided by Amanda Carruthers). It is ideal grave for a plantswoman. It is only about 45 cm high, this spring, due to the dry conditions no doubt.



Close-up with pollinator

As you see our *F. eduardii* is yellow-orange and begins to flower in the middle of March (even in this hard year) at the same time as *Crocus tomassinianus*. The cliff has stored heat at root level in winter and is cool in summer.

Botanist and gardener at the St. Petersburg Botanic Garden, Eduard Regel named this beautiful plant after himself and described it in 1883. As you see, our plants are correctly named and they do not have a garlicky smell. When starting to flower our plants are between 40 to 50 cm tall and 60 cm when the first flowers fade.



They did produce some seed last year

We decided to consult Mrs. Korobková before sending in this story. What a surprise- she told us that she obtained her seed from Eduard Hanslík, a member of the Prague club. He was in Tadjikistan east of Dushanbe at a place called Romit on an expedition many years ago. He was rather ill so did not go with the main party, but went off on his own outside Romit and entered a gorge/valley where there were large wild rhubarb plants and rich humusy soil. There he encountered a population of *F. eduardii* at the sloping base of this gorge. The plants were mostly 120 cm tall and the prevailing colour was yellow/orange ranging into almost yellow, but there were also those which were Bordeaux wine-red colour! He collected five bulbs and now has eight. They have not flowered for the last two years, probably, he said because of bad summers. Eduard does have a rhododendron and conifer woodland environment and grows his *F. eduardii* outdoors.





Gothenburg Botanical Garden c. 2009. It is more reddish form.

ZZ took this picture at



ZZ adds that on the rock face above the *F. eduardii* is a lovely *Jasminum nudiflorum* and nearby flowers a lovely Iris, smuggled from Victoria to Bohemia, - *Iris histrioides* x *I. reticulata* 'George', which is now a favourite, loved iris of his.



## WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - Lori Pross

Lori's alpine crevice bed is now uncovered from winter protection:



Lori writes: "Looks like most of my little treasures survived! All of the *Lewisia*, which is WAY better than last Spring!"





7 plants are either on the definitely did not - or probably did not make it list! There are several with "potential shoots". I didn't want to dig down too much. A pretty good average. Not sure if they will need the cover next winter. All of my sedum troughs that were under the cover look lovely! "

Some of the happy alpiners:



L: left to right - *Draba sphaeroides*, *D. hispanica* v. *atlantica*, *D. kotschyi*, R: *Gentiana*



L: *Saxifraga* 'F.L. Vek', R: *Saxifraga* 'Pixie'





L: *Androsace* - a pink variety, R: *Primula scotica*



L: *Polygala chamaebuxus* v. *grandiflora* R: left to right - *Rhododendron impeditum* & *Azalea* 'Pink Pancake'

Elsewhere in Lori's garden:



A lovely *Hepatica nobilis* - Liverleaf, that doesn't mind the rain at all and is happy in a shady & wet spot