

# "THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

Newsletter of  
The Alpine & Rock Garden Special Interest Group of the  
Qualicum Beach Garden Club

Issue # 19

Part 1

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**FROM THE EDITOR:** Thank you for the great submissions this month - lots of lovely photos & the scoop on CHRIS CHADWELL'S VISIT - A VERY BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE involved in making this visit a success. And there is a special report from Edinburgh. Please keep "The Crevice" in mind for July. Items can be sent anytime to [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com).

Thanks too to **CLIFF BOOKER**, who shares further photos of the Wengen Area of Switzerland. Cliff plans to come visit us end July 2014. Please watch this newsletter for further details. In the meantime, Cliff and Sue are back from a tour to the Peloponnese. We will hope for a report on their finds.



*Viola*



*Anemone narcissiflora*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

Page 1: Editor & Table of Contents

Page 2: Upcoming SIG Events

Pages 2 - 6: RBG Edinburgh New Alpine House by John Mitchell

Pages 7 - 12: Chris Chadwell Visit

Pages 13 - 16: Himalaya Seed Starting Seminar at Alba Plants

## **UPCOMING ALPINE SIG EVENTS**

**Please Note:** *Everyone must have paid their QBGC dues in order to participate in our SIG activities.* A matter of insurance coverage, etc.

**Please Note Alpine SIG Members:** It is a great help to know yes or no if you are coming to an Alpine SIG event. When June sends out an email with event details and asks for an indication, please send her a quick email, so she has an accurate number for planning. Thank you.

**MONDAY, JUNE 24<sup>TH</sup> - EXCURSION TO OWL & STUMP RARE PLANT NURSERY** at Yellowpoint, just south of Nanaimo. Gathering there will start at 1:30 p.m. Watch your email for a message from June with further details, etc.

**MONDAY, JULY 29<sup>TH</sup> - MEETING AT QUALICUM BEACH CIVIC CENTRE, 1:00 P.M.**  
- Discussion on INDEPENDENCE OR NOT?, PRIZE DRAW, REFRESHMENTS, etc. Watch your email for further details. There will be homework to do!!

### **LOOKING AHEAD TO 2014:**

**MONDAY, JULY 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2014:** Cliff Booker, well known alpine photographer and speaker will be in B.C. and coming to visit us.

## **NEWS FROM THE BOTANIC GARDENS**

### **THE NEW ALPINE HOUSE AT RBGE**

by John Mitchell,  
Garden Supervisor, Alpine Section, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



I am pleased to say that the new alpine house at RBGE is now open to the public. After 7 months from when the building went up, the new Tufa house is almost nearly planted. We have drilled 300 holes in the vertical tufa wall and roughly the same outside which gives us a great opportunity to grow a diverse range of species.



Drilling one of the 600 holes

We have started off with a *Gesernacea* area, growing species like *Corallodiscus lanuginosus*, *Jankaea heldreichii*, and *Ramonda myconi*. We have also tried growing some of the *Corallodiscus* outside, so fingers crossed.

On the rest of the wall we have planted the rare cushion plants lower down. These include the *Dionysia zagrica* from Iran, *D. tapetodes* as well as some of the cultivars like *D. 'Marika'*, *Daphne petraea* species and cultivars, *Primula allionii*, *Saxifraga ilonakhensis*, and near the top of the wall where some rain gets in we are growing *Campanula dzaaku* from Georgia, *Physoplexis comosa* and *Paraquilegia anemonoides*.





All these plants have been planted in a 1-inch hole so the plants are put through quite a stressful time as all the soil is washed off the roots. We then put our compost in the hole. The compost is made up of John Innes based compost with added grit and tufa dust. This is rammed into the hole so no air pockets are left, then we water the compost so it is nice and moist. After this is done we insert a small rod to make a hole in the compost and now the tricky part - you have to get all the roots into the hole carefully so as not to break them and add soil and gently press this around the roots, again add water, then we use a piece of clay to cap the soil and the plant tight in the hole. This is a very time- consuming job meaning only planting about 30 a day.



Ramming home the compost mix

Moving onto the other side of the house we have planted bigger plants into a sand mix with clay granules and tufa dust to make the house look a bit more established but also drilled holes to add smaller plants and we have planted lots of saxifrage as this side is open to the elements.



The other side with larger plants in sand-clay-tufa mix

The outside tufa planting is part finished. By the pond we have planted *Sarracenia* and *Darlingtonia* and *Cypripediums*.



The Pond area

By the side, under the wing that provides shelter from the wet, we have tried *Daphne petraea* outside and *Wigstromea*. There is also *Iris*, *Tulbaghia pulchella* and bread and butter plants like *Saxifraga longifolia*, which will give the area a very lovely spectacle when in flower.

The only other parts we need to complete is the crevice garden which we are planning to build in the next couple of months and this is to show the public different ways of growing alpine plants if you have a small garden or slope as this is a great way of utilising the space. Also on the top area we are having an alpine meadow with species *Narcissus*, *Tulipa* and *Crocus* then moving to more steppe vegetation like *Panzeria* and *Echinops humilus*.



Bulb area

So there is still a bit of work to get finished around the new alpine house but we are very pleased by the comments made by the public and they are looking forward to seeing it change over the next decade and more.



# FOLLOW UP ON ALPINE SIG EVENTS

## VISIT OF CHRIS CHADWELL

### 1. TOURS OF ESWYN & PADDY MARK GARDENS - Sunday, May 26th Report by Valerie Melanson, photos by Valerie, Elaine Bohm & June Strandberg

After a visit at Owl & Stump Rare Plants Nursery, Grahame Ware drove Chris up to meet us at Nanoose.

First on the agenda was a tour of the Eswyn Alpine & Rock Garden. Elaine Bohm explained the history of the rockery and Chris had a close look at some of the choice plants.



Above, L: LtoR: June Strandberg, Chris Chadwell, Valerie Melanson  
R: LtoR: June, Elaine Bohm, Chris, Grahame Ware



Above, L: *Delosperma cooperi*, R: *Androsace villosa*

Then we drove on to visit Paddy Mark & Mark Nixon's fascinating cliff garden & collection of rhododendrons:





LtoR: Paddy Mark, Mark Nixon, Grahame Ware, Chris Chadwell, June Strandberg



A river of *Primula x bulleesiana* and other choice plants along Paddy's rill at the base of the cliff





Above, LtoR: *Primula x bulleesiana*, *Primula*, a clump of *Soldanella* on the cliff



Above, Top Left: *Sisyrinchium californicum* growing in runoff on the cliff  
The other photos are of two fine *Iris* and a *Lilium*



We all enjoyed a tour and Chris enjoyed a good chat with Mark about his species Rhododendrons and various rhodo hybrids that he has developed.

## **2. POTLUCK SUPPER AT JAN AND TOAD PHILLIPS - May 26th**

Report by Barb Lemoine, photos by Kirsten Juergensen



The lovely venue

On Sunday May 26th, approximately 20 members of the Qualicum Beach Garden Club Alpine SIG got together for a social Pot Luck, graciously hosted by Jan & Toad Phillips at their home in Parksville. We all had a great visit and enjoyed a good variety of dishes, including some delicious vegetarian fare. Chris Chadwell joined us as a Special guest. He is on a speaking engagement tour from England and is well known for his many expeditions to the Himalayan regions researching Alpine plants. He has another expedition planned for September this year. Barbara & Ken Kulla hosted Chris over-night as Chris was our planned speaker for the monthly Alpine meeting the next day. Many of us were able to hear another talk from him on the Wednesday the 29th in Cowichan Bay.



Jan Phillips on the left



Barb Lemoine, Barbara & Ken Kulla with the guest of honour



### **3. TALK TO THE ALPINE SIG & PUBLIC ON MONDAY, MAY 27<sup>TH</sup>**

**Report by Mike Miller, photos by Kirsten Juergensen & June Strandberg**

"Plant Hunting for Alpines in the Borderlands of Western Tibet" with Chris Chadwell was a very entertaining adventure. His program on finding plants and collecting seeds on Monday afternoon was easy on the ears and eyes. He is a very entertaining speaker and interjected points of interest and some humor to keep the presentation moving along easily. The 76 audience members were all right with this as he showed typical plants, some of them really stunning and some of the people that inhabit the area. The habitat shots should help us with some of difficult plant knowing if they come from the south or north slopes and typical terrain. We were both entertained and instructed is what plants of the area look like and need culturally. The program seemed really short until you noted the time. We were all right with him.

The plant draw at the end held about 50 plants some of which had been grown from seed from his trips and others were Himalayan species and then some general alpines. Nearly everyone who wanted a plant got something.

In all, it was a very successful program.



Getting the visuals ready to go



Some of the prize draw plants



Dorothy Astridge & Bernie Guyader, Alpine SIG



Barbara Kulla & Linda Derkach on refreshments; Mike Miller & Lori Pross on the door



The enthralled crowd



Chris nearing the end of his presentation



The prize draw commences



Asking Chris' advice on caring for plants grown from his seed



#### 4. WORKSHOP ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 29<sup>TH</sup> -

### **A PERFECT RAINY DAY IN COWICHAN WITH CHRIS CHADWELL**

**by Linda Derkach,  
with photos by Linda, Valerie Melanson, Elaine Bohm & June Strandberg**

It was perfect weather for a jaunt to a nursery... too rainy and cold to work in our gardens, but not too bad that we couldn't enjoy poking around an interesting greenhouse and listening to horticultural gems from one of the alpine plant world's most knowledgeable plant hunters and growers. I thoroughly enjoy any day that includes hanging out with other passionate gardeners, and that's exactly what we got at Gordon Mackay's Alba Plants with Chris Chadwell of Slough, England.



Chris Chadwell



Sonia modelling her Kashmiri shawl



The participants

Our day began with coffee and cookies courtesy of Sonia Ottosen, Gordon Mackay's partner, then on to a humorous and very informative power point presentation of a recent trek to the Himalaya by Chris. (And according to Chris - that's Himalaya and not Himalayas!) Chris' brand of self-effacing, British dry humour had us warming up (from the cold weather) and practically rolling in the aisles. What a great way to soak up knowledge!

Some things we learned....

- Sow seed in February and March or when received but not later than June
- Most seeds do not need chilling
- Store seeds dry at room temperature
- Sow carefully and cover with grit

- Always label your pots of seeds
- Place pots in a container of clean water allowing them to gently take up sufficient moisture
- Sow seeds in square plastic pots in ericaceous soil and grit
- Place seed pots, after they wick up the moisture they require, in polyethelene bags, place in a shaded area outside and do not give them more water. This was good for most seed.
- Most things are not fussy
- Germination will be in one to two months, but be patient as some seeds may take up to two years
- If seeding after June, it may take a year for germination.

### **Clumping - A New Way with Seedlings**

Here's the best piece of advice that made the whole day absolutely more than worthwhile:

It is not necessary, nor advisable, to prick out your little seedlings - leave them in a clump and pot up or plant out as a clump. Let them grow on to the bursting point and plant out as a clump, leaving them in place for at least a year. You can leave your little plants in clumps for years, or dig them up and separate when they are larger and more likely to be able to survive division. The root systems are stronger by the second or third year. And after all, this is how plants seed themselves and grow in the wild.

Upon hearing this gem, I felt a huge burden lift from my shoulders - that of the dreaded task of pricking out and potting up my wee campanulas and lettuce seedlings - knowing that many would not survive this particular brand of torture. We don't have to do it anymore - yippee!



Flat of Chadwell seed pots beginning to germinate in Gordon's Alpine House



### **Gordon's Seed Starting Method**

Growing mediums vary - one such recipe from Gordon:

- One part steer manure, one part No. 2 grit, one part fine bark.

Place four-inch pots in plastic trays. Firm the medium down before seeding.

Drainage of course is very important - our little alpine plants need open soil at the roots to access oxygen.

After seeding, Gordon sets the flats of little pots outside. Later he feeds with a foliar spray of seaweed.

Gordon recommends Rubicon Marinis Seaweed Liquid

(<http://www.rubiconorganic.com/products.html#all>) and worm castings.



LtoR: Gordon Mackay, Karen Unruh, Chris Chadwell - Gordon & Chris giving the benefit of their growing advice in Gordon's Alpine House

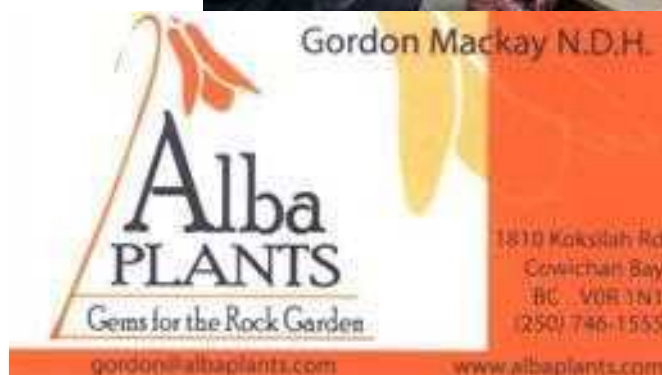
### **The Next Expedition**

Chris is planning a plant hunting expedition to the Himalaya in the fall, and avid and interested alpine enthusiasts can acquire a share in his expedition - sort of the next best thing to going with him...which after the photos of the food one must eat...and the toilet facilities - is probably the more judicious choice. Chris can be contacted through his website. If you would like a copy of his prospectus, you can request via email.

<http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk/prospectus>

This was a great day, full of laughter and learning. And although the drive home included splashing through gigantic puddles on the highway, thoughts of a Himalayan trek or a visit

to Chris' plot in Slough, England (near Windsor Castle but not quite so grand) sustained our little alpine plant-loving hearts!



Gordon's Alba Plants nursery & happy shoppers