

# "THE CREVICE"

In memory of Eswyn

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

Issue # 14

January 2013

**FROM THE EDITOR:** We start a new alpine year with many interesting submissions that will encourage you to look forward to Spring. Thank you to our correspondents for supporting "The Crevice" - in no particular order - **Zdenek Zvolanek, John Mitchell, Todd Boland, Brent Hine, Paul Cumbleton, John Husbands, Shirley Finstad, June Strandberg, Karen Unruh, Chris Chadwell.** Also **CLIFF BOOKER**, a well-known alpine photographer, author (with David Charlton) of Mountain Flowers: The Dolomites, submitter to Alpine-L, and a NARGS Travelling Speaker in 2010, has sent me a number of his lovely photos to adorn "The Crevice" each month. These were taken in the Wengen area of Switzerland and here are the first:



*A mountain idyll*



*Primula auricula in front of the Eiger*

*Thank you, Cliff !!*

Cliff also writes for the online International Rock Gardener. Please see # 35, November 2012, issue for an

article called "Mother Nature, Master Gardener", <http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/index.php?log=international>

**Formatwise:** from now on there will be an Table of Contents right under the editorial, followed by the Alpine SIG group calendar and Other Events. Thereafter will follow the write-ups on trips, genres, species, etc. Other housekeeping will see the November made into a November-December issue and coming out at the end of November rather than the 15<sup>th</sup>. This will allow your editor to finish off the season's craft fairs and also to report on the AGM and Christmas lunch. Now on with the important stuff ...

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## **UPCOMING ALPINE SIG EVENTS**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>** - REGULAR SIG MEETING - **PROGRAMME: SEED STARTING**, LOCATION: PARKSVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE - a slide show, seed starting demos and then attendees are invited to start some seeds in their own pots to take home. Please watch for an e-mail from June Strandberg with full details.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25<sup>TH</sup>** - REGULAR SIG MEETING - PROGRAMME: FOLLOW UP ON SEED STARTING & VIEWING OF BERNIE GUYADER'S PHOTOS FROM PARADISE MEADOWS AND FORBIDDEN PLATEAU, LOCATION: TBA - more information to follow.

**MONDAY, MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup>** - REGULAR SIG MEETING - PROGRAMME: POTTING UP SEEDLINGS AND CUTTINGS, LOCATION: JUNE STRANDBERG'S - more information to follow.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup>** ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS SPRING SHOW & PLANT SALE

**MONDAY, APRIL 29<sup>TH</sup>** - REGULAR SIG MEETING

**SATURDAY, MAY 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2013** - OUR PLANT SALE @ MARS SPRING FLING - details to follow

**MONDAY, MAY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2013** - **CHRIS CHADWELL, PLANT HUNTER, SEED COLLECTOR, AND SECRETARY OF THE HIMALAYAN PLANT ASSOCIATION**, will be visiting us for garden visits and a seminar. He will speak on PLANT HUNTING FOR ALPINES IN THE BORDERLANDS OF WESTERN TIBET - Chris with 27 expeditions under his belt, will share his fine images of recent explorations for rock garden plants in the NW Himalaya and Little Tibet.

SOME MORE OF CHRIS CHADWELL'S PHOTOS



*Ranunculus species*



*Swertia petiolata*



*Meconopsis aculeata*

Please check out the updated info and pictures on Chris' website: [www.chadwellseeds.co.uk](http://www.chadwellseeds.co.uk)

**FURTHER ALPINE SIG PLANS FOR 2013:**

**TUESDAY, MAY 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 - ROAD TRIP TO VIRAGS - CHRIS CHADWELL, PLANT HUNTER,**

on "Paradise on Earth".

**TBC WEDNESDAY, MAY 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013** - We are invited to attend a seminar with Chris Chadwell at Alba Plants Nursery, Cowichan Bay, on "Starting Himalayan Seeds". \*\*DATE AND TOPIC TBC. Reservations will be a must.

## **OTHER EVENTS OF NOTE**

### **Nanoose Naturalists**

present

**Andy MacKinnon**

co-author of

**Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast**

**TOPIC:** Alpine Plants of British Columbia

**MEETING:** February 14, 2013 at 7pm

**PLACE:** Nanoose Library Centre  
(Corner of NW Bay Road & Nanoose Road)

***Andy will talk about his latest book due out in March -***

***Alpine Plants of BC***

**ADMISSION:** by donation

For more information, please contact Margot Moser, Nanoose Naturalists Publicity Co-ordinator, at [mmoser@shaw.ca](mailto:mmoser@shaw.ca).

## **ESWYN'S ALPINE & ROCK GARDEN - JANUARY NEWS**

submitted by Karen Unruh with photo from the garden by June Strandberg

### ***Hamamelis x intermedia 'Diane'***

Late last fall, we decided that we needed a point of interest at the far end of the alpine garden just above the crevice garden. This point of interest would draw your eye across the whole garden as you stood at the rock with the bronze dedication, would add some variation in height, and yet not too much too quickly, and would provide some dappled shade for some of our plants. And so this was an artistic decision to choose this small tree which will aid the growing conditions for plants that we would like to move to sit in the dappled shade of the tree in our hotter summer months.

We chose a small *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane', a witch hazel. It has an open vase shape and will grow



very slowly into a small tree, giving dappled shade to plants below from late spring to fall. And the seasonal interest will be delightful. The fall orange red leaves of autumn have fallen from the branches and small hints of the delightful fragrant russet flowers are now noticeable on the branches. These flowers will soon be out in lovely winter-spring glory--fragrant spider-shaped, dark red flowers about 2-3 cm. across, with 4 petals in dense axillary clusters. The leaves will come out as green alternate, broadly ovate to obovate leaves for summer and turn to the wonderful orange colour in the fall. The fruit will appear as a horned capsule containing two shiny black seeds.

*Hamamelis* is the Greek name for a plant with a pear-shaped fruit, possibly originally the medlar. The twigs are a favourite choice of water-diviners. The bark and twigs of *H. virginiana* supply the pharmaceutical witch hazel.

*Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane' is a hybrid of garden origin and is a cross between *H. japonica* and *H. mollis*. The name *intermedia* means intermediate in colour, form or habit.

It grows in moderately fertile, moist but well-drained, acid to neutral soil, in full sun or partial shade in a site that is open but not exposed. Pruning requirements are minimal: remove any crossing shoots in late winter or early spring to maintain a permanent, healthy framework.

The RHS Floral B Committee awarded *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane' an Award of Garden Merit and described it as:

"Broad-crowned large deciduous shrub of open habit. Leaves broadly oval, turning red and yellow in autumn. Flowers deep orange-red."

Some of the above information is taken from the Royal Horticultural Society web-site, as well as this photo of the blossoms.



from the RHS website



from the German website [garten-de.com](http://garten-de.com)



Fall foliage, photo by June Strandberg

## **2012 TRIP TO THE U.K.**

### **LOST GARDENS OF HELIGAN**

#### **Report and photos by Shirley Finstad**

Our U.K. garden tour, end of May 2012, included a visit to the Lost Gardens of Heligan. With over 200 acres it was impossible to 'see it all', so I concentrated on the jungle walk, gingerly walking down steep hills to reach the hot/humid jungle area. This exotic space made me feel like I was in 'Jurassic Park'!. Huge gunneras, tall palms with many odd looking plants throughout the swampy low areas, many trails, bridges to stop and catch my breath while viewing all the sights. Then it was time to retrace my steps back up the steep hills, mopping my brow frequently! Now time for a leisurely pace, viewing the Italian garden, veggie areas with cold frames with pineapples, peach trees protected within greenhouse. Meandering through part of the woodland gardens I came across some wonderful woodland sculptures.

The following is the History and Restoration of this magnificent estate, from guide literature, along with some of my photos.

If you ever find yourself in the Cornwall area of England I would definitely recommend a visit to The Lost Gardens of Heligan.









### **"JUNGLE:**

Take an adventure along our raised boardwalk, snaking across four ponds, past giant rhubarb, banana plantations and avenues of palms. Lose yourself in tunnels of towering bamboo and feast your eyes upon a flourishing plant collection.

The Jungle sits in a steep-sided valley, creating a microclimate at least five degrees warmer than the Northern Gardens. Here the exotic palette of plants brought back from across the world, both by the intrepid Victorian Plant Hunters and more recent collectors, flourish before your eyes."

### **History & Restoration**

Heligan, seat of the Tremayne family for more than 400 years, is one of the most mysterious estates in England.



At the end of the nineteenth century its thousand acres were at their zenith, but only a few years later bramble and ivy were already drawing a green veil over this "Sleeping Beauty". After decades of neglect, the devastating hurricane of 1990 should have consigned the Lost Gardens of Heligan to a footnote in history.



Instead, events conspired to bring us here and the romance of their decay took a hold on our imaginations. Our discovery of a tiny room, in 1990, buried under fallen masonry in the corner of one of the walled gardens, was to unlock the secret of their demise. A motto etched into the limestone walls in barely legible pencil still reads "Don't come here to sleep or slumber" with the names of those who worked there signed under the date - August 1914. We were fired by a magnificent obsession to bring these once glorious gardens back to life in every sense and to tell, for the first time, not tales of lords and ladies but of those "ordinary" people who had made these gardens great, before departing for the Great War. Garden restoration began in 1990-2000. In 2000-20009 it garnered Best Outdoor attraction - 5 star award winner, and with continued changes to gardens, voted by BBC Gardeners' World as "The Nations Favorite Garden".

#### Timeline:

First built in 1200s, purchased by Sampson Tremayne in 1569.

1761-1914 - Development of Gardens

Between 1916 to 1945 house was used by Officers as Convalescence Hospital, American troops as base and then tenanted out and finally converted to flats and sold off between 1973 - 1974.

"We have now established a large working team with its own vision for our third decade. The award-winning garden restoration is already internationally acclaimed; but our lease now extends into well over 300 acres of the Wider Estate, leaving the project far from complete. We intend Heligan to remain a living and working example of the best of past practice, offering public access into the heart of what we do.

Our contemporary focus is to work with nature, accepting and respecting it and protecting and enhancing the variety of habitats with which our project is endowed.



There are more than 70 veteran camellias and 350 ancient rhododendrons included in the collection, which are found throughout Heligan. The earliest plantings date from around 1850.

During the period of decline in the gardens and estate, many plants both wild and cultivated, flourished unrestrained. The specimens of Heligan's National Collection were given both time and the protection of surrounding overgrowth to mature into the magnificent specimens, which can be marvelled at today."

## TROUGHS IN THE E.H. LOHBRUNNER ALPINE GARDEN AT UBC

Report and photos by June Strandberg

On November 14<sup>th</sup> Barbara Kulla and I went to the AGCBC meeting to hear Chris Czajkowski talk on her newest book *Gintie's Ghost*. At the end she threw in some photographs of the Alpine Flora of the Remote Coast Mountains of BC. She showed us some very interesting flowers and beautiful scenery.

We caught the 10.30am ferry and first went to VanDusen, checked out the meeting room, had lunch and looked round the garden. More about that later.

We were wondering what to do next when Barbara said "Let's go to UBC Gardens - and hope they've not closed yet!" We found out they stay open until 7pm, it was so nice not to be rushed off out!! We headed for the alpine garden of course and looked at the troughs first, so many to look at and all set out perfectly - it was hard to know where to start. So we began at the beginning and went on to the end - every single trough was interesting.



There was S. America with *Azorella*, *Sisyrinchium* and *Junellia*, North America with *Penstemon*, *Talinum* and *Erigeron* and others. There are at least two *Lewisia* troughs and a shrubby one containing *Cotoneaster*, *Genista* and *Chamaecyparis*. Mixed up ones like *Eriogonum* and *Arenaria*, a little fern *Polystichum imbricans* ssp *imbricans*,





*Polystichum imbricans ssp imbricans*

we really liked that and the eriogonums. Then there was *Dianthus* 'Gordie Bentham' - huge plants! We have a tiny plant in Eswyn's garden that Paul gave us and I have one I got from him. I have taken 2 wee cuttings off mine as Barbara would like one of those but I think it is going to be a long time before she gets one that big!



*Dianthus* 'Gordie Bentham'

We were also taken with the *Acantholimon* from the Caucasus and the *Sedum* and the *Sempervivum* troughs. We should all be able to plant up something like those two.



*Acantholimon capitatum*



*Sempervivum* trough

All the troughs were wonderful and this was November!! So what will they look like in the spring? We can hardly wait to find out! Louise and I are planning a trip to Vancouver and I think this garden will be the high-light of the tour.

We went through the Dry House



Dry House



*Sempervivum* bed

and walked round a small part of the rock garden but time ran out. It started to get dark and we had to go find some supper and then back to VanDusen for the show. We had a wonderful day and perfect weather.



Thanks to Barbara's son Greg and his wife Anne and their sons Vic and Martin for the sleep over that enabled us to stay for the end of the meeting.

EH Lohbrunner had an alpine nursery in Victoria and Eswyn knew him quite well. She bought many plants from him and I think some still survive.

*The Editor asked Brent Hine if he wouldn't mind sending along some history on the troughs, and here is his write-up. Thank you, Brent!*

## **HISTORY AND DETAIL OF THE E.H. LOHBRUNNER ALPINE GARDEN TROUGHS**

**By Brent Hine**

**Curator, E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden, UBC Botanical Garden**

While the E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden at UBC Botanical Garden was officially opened in April 1978, the troughs themselves were constructed two years earlier. In 1976, an international rock garden plant conference titled 'Alpines of the Americas' was organized jointly by the American Rock Garden Society (now NARGS) and the Alpine Garden Club of BC. As there were many local rock gardening enthusiasts ready and willing, a masterful display was organized on the UBC grounds.

A quick overview of those amazing original troughs demonstrates the skill and knowledge the group applied to their task. Groups of two or three persons were in charge of each creating a unique trough of some representative plants of various mountain ranges and ecoregions of the two Americas. From "Alaska and Yukon" they ran with their ideas all the way to the Andes! Here is an example of a plant list of one of them, named

### "Nevada - Utah"

*Aquilegia scopulorum* forma *perplexans*

*Claytonia megarhiza*

*Ephedra viridis* - aka "Mormon Tea"

*Eriogonum sphaerocephalum* var. *brevifolium*

*Heuchera rubescens* 'Troy Boy' - for sale with Wrightman Alpines!

<http://www.wrightmanalpines.com/plant/heuchera-rubescens-troy-boy>

*Holodiscus discolor* (dwarf form)! ...sadly no longer alive

*Hymenoxys acaule*

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Heart Butte' - still growing in the alpine garden!

*Lewisia congdonii*, and *L. maguirei* - huge challenges to grow well in any circumstance

*Penstemon humilis*

*Lepidium nanum* - a Brassicaceae

*Prunus andersonii* - "Desert Peach"

*Synthyris pinnatifida* - "Featherleaf Kittentails"

*Viola nephrophylla* ... + a half dozen more!

Another trough held many treasures of the former "Queen Charlotte Islands", including two endemic taxa. The first was *Isopyrum savillei* ( of Ranunculaceae), and the second, *Saxifraga taylori*. This taxon was named for its discoverer, Roy Taylor, who was this botanical garden's first director. The scope and diversity of that original project was incredible, and even more so that it came together in such a professional display. This was how the troughs at UBC Botanical Garden came into being.

After the conference the troughs migrated to their home in the alpine garden. In the intervening 35 years they have morphed into a collection of worldwide temperate alpine and rock plants. They represent both regions of interest, rock type and plant genera themes. Among these is a "Patagonia" trough. It contains such treasures as *Azorella madreporica* and *Petunia patagonica*. This tiny shrubby species is a marvel to see when it displays its diminutive golden trumpet blooms in early summer. Another trough contains a collection of *Lewisia* hybrids and species. They show off in June with hundreds of pink and white flowers. Another trough contains chunks lime rich, new white tufa, which various kinds of Turkish plants thrive upon.

In spite of best efforts, our wet winter climate eventually takes its toll on troughs and they must be replaced. Hypertufa tends to last about 25 years. During its lifetime, repeated frosts will force cracks in corners, and edges will become brittle. Although made primarily of cement, hypertufa also contains peat moss. As this organic matter decays it creates many tiny cavities which admit moisture and weaken the structure. When constructed, a good hypertufa trough is usually reinforced with galvanized wire mesh. It can't last forever though and once it is exposed to water, it will eventually break down and begin to rust. In the last ten years I have also experimented by purchasing some carved stone troughs. One large one is granite, which is very hard rock; it will certainly have a longer tenure in the garden than me. Another, of a type of sedimentary rock, has already begun to breakdown. It is flaking off in small layers and looks as if it has another five years of usefulness.

Finally, the troughs continue to provide interest to me as miniature garden creator, and the visiting public. Themes and ideas are endless and the seventeen or so that are currently planted provide both an inspiration and a refreshing counterpoint to the larger scale of the rest of the alpine garden.

The UBC Botanical Garden is located at 6804 SW Marine Drive | Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4  
[botanicalgarden.ubc.ca](http://botanicalgarden.ubc.ca)

## **THE NEW ALPINE HOUSE** **AT THE** **ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH**

**Report and photos by John Mitchell, Garden Supervisor, Alpine Section, RBGE**

In July ground works for the new Alpine house got under way, after waiting for more than 9 years for this to materialise it was a great to see the project starting to take shape. 48 trailers of soil was removed



from the site to get levels right. 26 cube of concrete was used to make six reinforced concrete pads, which would hold the six steel beams in place.

In September the Deforche construction team travelled with the prefabricated steel frame all the way from their base in Belgium to Edinburgh to start work on the New Alpine house. The main construction was erected and glazed in three weeks.

In October, Monteiths, a local building company, came back on site and started erecting the brick walls around the steel frame. The back wall where the tufa wall was to be built had a plastic damp proof course pinned to the wall and stainless steel ties were randomly placed along the wall so we could tie in the tufa blocks. Worked progressed well and by the end of October the site was handed over to RBGE so we could start the main tufa build inside the house. Having seen lots of Tufa displays in Europe I had a rough idea of how I would like the wall to look like, but as we all know what we like is sometimes harder than we think. A telehandler was hired into move the large blocks of tufa from the Nursery to the site and then used to position the blocks on the wall. Work progressed fairly well. Some days the tufa would just fit in perfectly and we would have 4 stones in place, other days we would struggle to get one in. A diamond tipped chainsaw was used to cut some of the tufa blocks in half. All the blocks were tied in with stainless steel banding and screws so they will never rust. Once the layers of wall were built a mix of sand, seramis, perlite and handfuls of Osmocote (a slow release fertiliser) were filled in the back of the tufa, and we did a heavy watering to compress the sand and this was repeated every layer. A drip irrigation system has been installed on the back wall and this has been made into 4 zones so we can control the amount of water for each section. Once the tufa had been placed a hypertufa mix of 1 part sand, 1 part cement, and 1 part peat was used to make the blocks look like they were all one and then a light cover of Tufa dust was used to cover the grey colour of the mix. All this took 3 staff 5 week to complete.

This is where we are just now. We hope to commence the next part of the work in February, which is the outside tufa area with stream and pond and a crevice garden. Progress on the next part will follow shortly.

NB: the Tufa came from Bavaria in Germany



Steel & Glass goes up in September



The back of the wall in place in November



The tufa wall in place in December 2012

## **PORTRAIT OF A GENUS**

### **Dryas- a quintessential alpine**

**by Todd Boland,  
Curator, Alpine Collection,  
Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden**

One of the keynote species of the north temperate alpine regions are mountain avens or *Dryas*. Anyone hiking in the high mountains of North American Rockies, European Alps or Caucasus, Russian Urals and even the slopes of Siberia and Alaska, are likely to encounter this plant. They are the dominant plant of the unique Irish Burrens as well as the limestone barrens of northern Newfoundland. Mountain avens also extend well north of the Arctic Circle, and, in fact, grow as far north as there is land! The genus gets its name from the Greek oak-nymph called 'Dryas'. The genus name refers to the similarity of the leaves of mountain avens to those of oaks. Mountain avens belong to the rose family. Plants are woody and prostrate forming extensive mats that often root at intervals, lending this plant the effective ability to stabilize mountain slopes and river gravels. In mountainous regions, mountain avens typically grow on limestone substrates but in the high Arctic they are not so restricted.

Their leaves are indeed shaped like miniature oak-leaves. They are mostly evergreen or at least semi-evergreen, which enables them to start growth as soon as the winter snows melt. Plants bloom within weeks of the melting snow, producing masses of solitary 1-2" diameter white, cream or yellow flowers. Their flowers often turn on their stems to follow the sun across the sky. Their flowers are saucer shaped and heat above the ambient air temperature when exposed to the sun. This makes them attractive to insects who like to 'hang-out' inside the warm blossoms. From the plant's perspective, this increases the chances of being pollinated. Developing seeds are plumed (feather-like) and lend the attractive seedheads the appearance of a miniature pasque-flower.



There are only three species of *Dryas* along with two natural hybrids. The most wide-ranging species is the white mountain avens, *Dryas octopetala*, ranging from Greenland/Iceland, across Eurasia and into Alaska and south to Colorado. It is probably the showiest species and most amenable to cultivation. The flowers are the largest of the mountain avens with white to cream-tinted flowers. Each flower typically has 8 petals (hence 'octopetala'), a feature unusual in the rose family where 5 petals is the norm. Normally forms of this plant from Eurasia are larger in stature than their North American counterparts. *Dryas octopetala* is the National Flower of Iceland.



Both photos - *Dryas octopetala*, July 2011

This former species is absent from the central and eastern Canadian Arctic where it is replaced by a smaller species called the entire-leaf mountain avens, *D. integrifolia*. This species has smaller leaves and is semi-evergreen while *D. octopetala* is evergreen. Their flowers are more distinctly cream-coloured. Otherwise, from a distance, the two species look quite similar. This species is the dominant species of the Newfoundland limestone barrens and is the Territorial Flower of Canada's Northwest Territory. In the east it extends as far south as the White Mountain in New Hampshire. Although not as common in the west as *D. octopetala*, it does occur from Alaska, south to northern Montana.



Both photos - *Dryas integrifolia* - seed heads in August 2011

The yellow mountain avens, *D. drummondii* is only found in North America. This species is most common along the gravelly margins of large mountain and/or Arctic rivers of northwestern North America, from Alaska and the Yukon, south to Montana, Idaho and Oregon. This species also occurs, in very limited numbers, upon limestone outcrops of Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland. Presumably this species occurred across North America before the last glaciation but populations in the east were mostly wiped out by the glaciers, surviving on the highest mountain-tops of eastern Canada. The flowers are distinct, being yellow and nodding. The flower buds are covered in black hairs, which allow them to warm above the ambient air temperature and thus bloom shortly after the snows melt.



Flower bud & meadow full of seed heads, both *Dryas drummondii*, Waterton Lakes

There are also two naturally occurring *Dryas* hybrids. In Alberta exists *D. X sundermannii*, a hybrid between *D. octopetala* and *D. drummondii*, while in Quebec exists *D. X wyssiana*, the hybrid between *D. integrifolia* and *D. drummondii*. Both have the growth habit of *D. drummondii* with semi-nodding cream flowers reminiscent of the other parent.



*Dryas x sundermannii*



Despite being a plant of cold regions, mountain avens can be cultivated in lowland regions where they make wonderful additions to rock garden settings. They require full sun and a well-drained site with alkaline soil. They are even reasonably drought-tolerant once established. The easiest to cultivate are *D. octopetala* and *D. X sundermannii* while the other two and *D. X wyssiana* are more challenging.

So the next time you are hiking in high mountain areas or if you should get the opportunity to visit the Arctic, look for these distinctive and important members of the local flora.

## **PLANT PORTRAITS**

### ***Fritillaria striata* at RHS Wisley, UK**

**by Paul Cumbleton,**

**Team Leader, Alpine section, RHS Garden Wisley**

Commonly known as the striped adobe lily, *Fritillaria striata*, from southern California is, for me, one of the gems of the genus. It even has a sweet scent, unlike most of its fellow species. In the wild it usually starts into growth about November, developing its leaves through winter and flowering from about mid-February to early April. With us, however, it starts growth earlier - usually in October - and it is also in flower earlier - from late December (often at Christmas). It seems most odd to have a *Fritillaria* in flower at Christmas when most other species are still below ground, but it has done this regularly for us for several years now. I used to try and delay its growth by withholding water but it would emerge anyway despite being completely dry! So now I go with the flow and water it from October onwards.

I grow the bulbs in pots of pure Seramis, an expanded clay aggregate, feeding with a high potash liquid fertiliser at every watering. The pots are kept in a sand plunge in an unheated poly-tunnel. Once in growth, I move them to a just frost-free glasshouse whenever frosts arrive. While they will survive a few degrees of frost, our winters of late have been unusually severe so I don't want to risk losing them. Frost can also damage the flowers even if the bulbs are not scathed, another reason to protect them as we want to be able to display the plants to our visitors.

The wonderful striped markings on the flowers that give the plant its common name can actually vary a lot - they can be very pronounced to the extent of almost making the flower look totally pink, through to virtually lacking as in this lovely white form currently in flower here at Wisley:



**Arenaria montana**  
***in the***  
**CREVICES at RHS WISLEY**  
**by Zdeněk Zvolánek. Karlík, Czech Republic**  
**Photo by Paul Cumbleton, RHS Wisley**

My baby crevice rock garden in the botanic garden in sunny Surrey is in the fine mother-like hands of Paul Cumbleton. He helped to construct this sandstone outcrop and his team of professional gardeners planted it with me. Many plants suffered due to a strange water expelling sand during their first dry season, but they recovered and established themselves during the next season with an army of friendly English rains. Paul kindly sent me ten good photographs, which will be the skeleton in my article in an upcoming edition of the Scottish monthly electronic journal, The International Rock Gardener. Here is one of the plants that will be profiled.



Paul's picture shows a happy perennial Sandwort - ***Arenaria montana*** - cascading in a steep vertical side-wall facing direct southern sunshine. Note that this baking sun position is not suitable for a steppe condition in the continental lowland: this species must have adequate moisture everywhere!

The mat (about 5 cm tall) is formed from trailing gray-green stems with small narrowly oval leaves. The whole mat is shrouded in early summer with clouds of large rounded white flowers. An especially fine form was marketed as *Arenaria montana* 'Grandiflora'.



It is good classic rock garden plant from the cool European Alps. *Arenaria montana* bravely travelled up to Southern Moravia, where it is happy in some northern aspects at the limestone summit of Pavlovské Vrchy (hills).

*Editor's Note: Further to ZZ's report on his trip to the Apuan Alps in The Crevice #12, October 2012, see a fuller report in IRG # 35, November 2012, issue.*

**Vitaliana primuliflora subsp. praetutiana**  
**by John Husbands, Alpine SIG member and Webmaster of**  
**<http://portraitsofalpineplants.com/>**

Over the years, botanists have thrown all sorts of generic names at this plant, and in older publications and catalogues you will find it posing under Androsace, Douglasia, Gregoria and Primula. It comes from the mountains of Spain and Central Europe and is a choice subject for scree, trough or raised bed, forming a close mat of slightly hairy grey-green foliage, bespangles with deep butter-yellow stem-less flowers; that appear in April-May, and last for many weeks! Cuttings taken before the flower buds appear will be well rooted by mid-summer, when they can be planted out in various locations in a sunny position. It has formed an oval dome of about 5 centimetres high and has a spread of 33 centimetres at its widest point. In its native haunts it is a crevice dweller, and the plant shown here is wedged tightly between two rocks. I would estimate that only about 1/10th of the underside of the plant is in contact with the compost, the majority of it has spread out over the two flat rocks.



## WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - JUNE STRANDBERG

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, the mild weather was spurring Saxifrages to come into bloom:



*Saxifraga 'F. L. Vek'*



*Saxifraga 'Radka'*

AND NOW IN JANUARY, with this cold spell:



June reports: This is the best of the saxifrages blooming now. It is S.'Radka' and I got it from Harvey Wrightman in 2007 - it is growing in a little tufa block and is outside in a trough. It does usually have a few more flowers than this.



# WHAT'S NEW IN MY GARDEN - VALERIE MELANSON

## SIGNS OF SPRING ON THE 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF WINTER



*Primula x pubescens* 'Boothman's Variety', a cross of *Primula auricular* & *Primula hirsute*, grown from AGS seed sown January 2011, just covered under a dome and grow light on a hot mat. It is flowering for the 1<sup>st</sup> time.



*Primula marginata* 'Allen Jones', offset received from Maedythe Martin of the American Primrose Society in summer 2012, flowered for first time mid Sept 2012, now setting new buds

Both of the above live in sand plunges on an old dresser at the head of my carport where they receive some sun, some shade, some blown rain. The photo on right of the Sand Plunge is from Sept 14, 2012. That is *P. marginata* 'Allen Jones' on the right.

***If you have a submission for "The Crevice", please contact Valerie Melanson at [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com)***