Quarterly of the American Primrose Society

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Members are asked to please note Mr. Baldwin's request for early delivery or word of seed, by October 31. Contributors have first choice, so, if you want seed, and have quality seed to send, a prompt response will be better for everyone.

When proofreading *Late Primroses* I was reminded of the pleasure gained in the continuous process of noting good form, texture, and color combinations. Notes and pictures help solidify ideas. Members can help beginners realize the vast variety available in blooming season, leaf growth, size, and site.

In many of the areas reached by the Quarterly, Malacoides is a greenhouse plant, but it can be depended upon for lovely winter bloom from February to May along the southern Oregon coast and the San Francisco area. I think it would thrive in Mexico City, but did not find any there. Our slide chairman could use some pictures of it.

The treasurer has a supply of previous issues of the Quarterly for sale, 10 for $3.50 or 50¢ each. It is a good idea for Christmas giving.

In her introduction the author states that the very few books on Gentians are European and of little help to gardeners on this continent where growing conditions and cultivation methods are different.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Klaber for *Gentians For Your Garden* — it is the first American book on this subject, it is well illustrated with beautiful line drawings and color plates by the author, and it provides interesting and instructive reading for the gardener, who finds a mass of information not found in garden books, magazines or encyclopedias, and should have a place on the shelves of every garden library.

Gentians For Your Garden was written to familiarize the average gardeners with these beautiful, delicately blue colored, little known flowers in the American gardens, and to show that many of them are as easy to grow as any other flowers.

The author shares with the amateur gardeners as well as with the experts the knowledge and experience gained in growing these charming flowers commercially for many years in her nursery. She tells how to start them from seed, cuttings, layering, the soil to use and location needed for many of them. Not only are the best varieties and species listed, but each one has its own description and often special requirements.

Gentians have a place in every garden and owing to the large number of varieties it is possible to have flowers from early spring to late fall. Dwarf varieties are especially suitable for Rock Gardens, the tall ones for the border. There is nothing more beautiful than spring gentians planted among dwarf primulas; when in flower they make a lovely combination.

Mrs. Klaber's book, *Rock Garden Plants, New Ways To Use Them Around Your Home*, edited only a few years ago, has been so much in demand that it is now out of print and there is no doubt that *Gentians In Your Garden* will have the same success.

— F. H. Michaud

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**Book Review**

"Gentians for your Garden" by Doretta Klaber

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425 Park Ave. South, New York
Primula Nutans, Discovered by Delavay, in pine woods of Yunnan at about 11,000 feet. It is a plant of great beauty and fragrance.

Primula Nutans

by ROBERT C. PUTNAM, Kirkland, Washington

P. nutans has long been recognized as one of the most beautiful members of the entire genus. Once you have experienced it, you will agree that most descriptions are inadequate. It has a rather soft, hairy, upright leaf, beautifully farinated scape, and a short spike packed with frosted-blue cups. Just one whiff in May or June of the subtle scent of heliotrope and spice has stirred many a hard soul.

It is no means difficult to grow in the Pacific Northwest. Keeping the same plant in the garden year after year is another matter.

The seed of Primula nutans germinates easily. We usually hold the flat over another winter before setting plants outside and find that this reduces the chance of winter loss later on. We have succeeded in keeping plants three or four years this way and other growers have managed them even longer.

We have found a mixture of one-half grit or coarse sand and one-half leaf mold an excellent mixture for growing P. nutans. It likes half-shade and plenty of water in the growing season. The dormant bud dislikes winter wet; and therefore, it is important that good drainage be provided. A collar of grit or stone chips around the crown and setting the plant on a slight hummock will be greatly appreciated.

So what if you don't completely capture this Himalayan beauty—can't its elusiveness be part of its charm? Try it—not because it is our favorite; but because as long as it remains with you, it will possess you.
true English Primrose and the Levantine Primrose are but a few. Crosses were made between Primula Juliae and each of the above mentioned Primroses over a period of years, and countless varieties with a color range from white, yellow, blue, pink, lavender, rose through innumerable shades of purple and red resulted.

The hybrids of Primula Juliae are for the most part intermediate between their parents in form and habit of growth. Many, like Juliae, are herbaceous, and like her too, have creeping rhizomes, although they may be Cowslip or Acaulis in appearance of foliage and bloom.

The Juliae clan is not capricious or moody, does not need to be pampered as some of the others which are not so easily grown. They, as most other Primulas, appreciate a situation with morning sunshine, the filtered sunlight of trees, or a border which protects them from the heat of the afternoon sun. If planted in deep shade, however, the tendency is toward more foliage and scant bloom. Loose, deeply dug loam, and sufficient water through the hot, dry summer to provide a cool, moist root run are essential. Primroses loathe dank, soggy, undrained soil, and will rot if this condition is forced upon them. Here it would be well to warn against allowing Primroses to dry out in summer. More Primulas succumb to excessive summer drought than to severe winter weather. There still prevails the erroneous idea that it is natural for Primulas to go entirely dormant in summer, whereas actually, this is the season for making new root growth and storing vitality with which to provide next season's leaf and bloom. This growth is impossible to achieve in a dry, parched earth. Thus it requires little imagination to understand what happens to a plant when the severe frosts of winter occur with alternate freezing and thawing so common in many sections of the country. The helpless Primrose, with little or no root system to anchor it firmly in the soil, must give up.

Most growers of Juliaes, noting the tendency of the rhizomes to creep to the surface, protect them from heat and frost by applying a mulch of sandy leaf mold or loam each spring and fall. Being supplied these simple essentials, Juliae Primroses will thrive happily and increase tenfold yearly, needing little attention other than the routine weeding, cultivating and dividing when they become too crowded.

Since the appealing charm of these Primulas is their miniature form, it would be well to apply fertilizers of any sort with a light hand — if at all, otherwise they may lose their characteristic Juliae daintiness and assume the stature of their other parents.

Whether the garden is large or small, there are unlimited possibilities for the use of Primulas. The Juliaes are eye-taking in drifts along the border, making delightful color harmony with yellow Polyanthus and Forget-me-nots. They are indispensable for bright spots, trailing over and between stones in an otherwise drab rockery not yet ablloom with the summer flowers; and make congenial companions when tucked in with Snowdrops, Scillas, Squills, Hepaticas, Crocus and tiny Daffodils. Some varieties of new colors are priced too high for average mass plantings; however, their increase is rapid if well grown. They may be divided each spring and fall, thus a surprisingly large stock can be accumulated in two or three years.

The urge to collect Juliae hybrids is upon those who are familiar with their easy-going habits and exquisite colorings. With the demand great and the supply limited, new varieties could quite easily be brought into
existence in private gardens by planting Juliea hybrids, or hybrids and species, in close proximity so that natural pollination by bees would be encouraged, with the possible result of fine hybrids occurring from the seed obtained. Unless purple or magenta shades are desired, the grouping should include only the pearly-colored Juliea hybrids among which could be planted an occasional Cowslip, Oxlip, or light colored Acaulis. If planted with large flowered Polyanthus, however, the outcome could more easily be inferior Polyanthus or gross Juliae, rather than good Polyanthus with the tiny, insignificant eye.

You will find that some Juliae cross more readily than others. This is due primarily to two reasons — some hybrids have become all but sterile in their high degree of hybridization, while in some the flower tube is extremely slender and tight with the sexual organs more or less enclosed below the surface of the flower, thereby making it almost impossible for bees or other pollinating agents to reach them. If your interest is keen enough, you may wish to undertake some simple hybridizing through hand pollination, and to that end a short outline as to tendencies might be of value. When using two Julies hybrids as parents, no conclusion as to the outcome could possibly be drawn in advance since it would be impossible to thread one's way back through the ancestry and number of crosses made to produce the particular hybrids being worked with. But it is interesting to know that in the beginning species whose blood is pure — in so far as they are plants native to certain localities which have not crossed with any other plant or plants.

It has been found in certain English experiments that P. juliae, when crossed with the true English Primrose, P. vulgaris, will produce seedlings in the first generation that favor the magenta coloring of Julies, but the form of the Primrose — the exact reverse of the hybridist's aim. When these first-generation seedlings were crossed, the next, or second generation, produced six instead of two shades of purple, in addition to yellow and white, and with more modified foliage. With the breaking up of the color and the diminishing form of growth, new, light colored hybrids could be expected to follow within the next few generations. The additional crosses are needed to breed out the large characteristics of the Primrose, to attain and fix the diminutive, preferably creeping form of the juliea, at the same time pushing the dominating color of the Julies into the background with the aid of the yellow Primrose.

As the crosses go on into third and fourth generations, the hybrids are very apt to become less and less fertile, so that fewer and fewer seeds are obtained, which explains the reason for the infrequent offering in the trade of any other than what must be first generation seeds, judging from the seedlings. Germination, by the way, is slow and uneven. When a hybrid is considered worthy of propagating by its originator, it is named and increased by dividing and re-dividing the original plant over a period of years.

In crosses between Julies and the Cowslip, the color of Julies dominates as in the Julia-Primrose cross; but in some crosses between Julies and the true Oxlip (Bardfield Oxlip) the first generation usually results in a good proportion of yellow flowered hybrids caused by what is called an inhibitor, not contained by either the Primrose or the Cowslip and which acts as a check on the dominant color of the Julies. The form of flowering and foliage in both instances was that of the Cowslip and the Oxlip.

In Julies hybridizing little difference has been noticed in the amount of seeds resulting from legitimate or illegitimate crossing — that is, cross-pollination of the plant that holds the secret of its hardiness.

Several new varieties from the 1964 list were tried this year and are reported on:

**EROS** was chosen as the most outstanding. Stem 6"; florets 15, 2/16", height. uniform crimson with fringed edge; center: chartreuse 10-12 pointed star, 1/16". As the flower developed, the petal color became markedly darker and extended over (covering) the points of the star center and to the raised or "rose" center from which point the tube color was a uniform lime-green. Foliage is upright and crisp.

**FAVORITE** (465) : stem 4"; florets 12, 2/16", flat, circular, narrowly notched, velvety-crimson. Central color: chartreuse 5-10 pointed star, lime-green at base, 3/8". The color deepens as the flower matures, the body color gradually encroaches on and reduces the star to a circle of about 3/16", which becomes yellow. The effect is that of a very richly colored flower.

**GARDENER'S PRIDE** (465) : stem 3"; florets 12, 1 1/16", lively crimson; star center 5/8", yellow with green base. A very sharp color, and well named. The plant is stocky yet compact, with heavy, crinkled foliage.

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Late Primroses

by ALICE HILLS BAYLOR

The color parade of Primroses is now, on Memorial Day, in its second stage as the Sieboldii flank the auriculas and polyanthus and are clamoring for applause. Great fluffy heads of white Sieboldii are waving above the intense blue auriculas. The curled foliage which seems so light next to the dark green of the auriculas is beautiful in itself. Contrast in the garden is one of our aims and foliage blends of light and dark green create light and shadow.

The fringed-edged pale pink Sieboldii are on the steep auricula terrace. With a Canadian Yew for backdrop and the lavender auriculas which have opal coloring at its feet. Campanula garganica will be in bloom on the rocks before the Sieboldii are out of bloom.

The bright pink Sieboldii have a bed of their own and are backed by Rhododendrons. I sprinkle a few lavender poppy seeds among the plants to take over when the Sieboldii foliage goes under ground after blooming.

The lavender backed petals of the variety Southern Cross are blooming on another ledge with a Hemlock as background. Pink auriculas bloom below it, and ivy threads itself among the plants and drops over the retaining wall. Campanula muralis are in the crevices of the rocks for later bloom.

The Sieboldii are of easy culture, asking only for good rich Primrose soil and good drainage. They come readily from seed. The only difficult period is transplanting the tiny seedlings. My good friend, Mr. Kartack from Baraboo, Wisconsin, broad-casts his Sieboldii seed with great success. I prepared a space with plenty of pulverized leaf mold on top and did the same thing. Now it is a mass of pale pink, fringed-edged flowers.

Mr. Putnam, in the spring issue describes the charm and beauty of P. chinonanha. Read it now as I can do no more to add to his enthusiasm. Last evening when frost threatened my window boxes and I was out covering, I walked around the house to where the Chionantha and Sieboldii hold forth. The aurora borealis was playing in the Northern sky, and the Sieboldii and Chionantas caught the lights. I was entranced. The only thing missing was a Luna moth, but I shall see that beauty when the P. alpicola "Lunas" are in bloom. 

... ***** ...
Members are reminded that the time has arrived, and is passing, when their seed contributions should be sent to the A. P. S. Seed Exchange so that they may not arrive later than October 31st. A list of seeds not ready by that time (which are to be sent when ready) should be sent to the Seed Exchange Director before November first, so that they may be included in the listing, which must be in the hands of the printer before December first. Your usual, prompt cooperation will be greatly appreciated. E. C. B.

Used to be that when a plant died, it was put down to constitutional inadequacy and gardening was a pure and satisfying pleasure. Then somebody discovered virus, red spider and uncounted numbers of weevils, and gardening became part pleasure and part worry. Nowadays it's a wise gardener who knows what's ailing his favorite plants.

**P. Kleinii** ALICE HILLS BAYLOR

One of the most interesting miniature Primroses in my garden is *P. kleinii*, which is two inches high and is most florescence.

It is the result of work by the late Peter Klein who crossed *P. rosea* and *P. clarkii* to produce it. It has the dark green foliage of *P. rosea*, in miniature, and the flowers are a good clear pink and large for the size of the plant. Peter Klein did some of the finest early work in hybridizing and produced some of the finest doubles in this country. His untimely death was a loss to us all.

*P. Kleinii* is extremely hardy and multiplies rapidly. In the five years I have had it I have not lost a plant. It does well as an edging for an auricula planting as it enjoys the same type of soil (lime content) and sharp drainage. It is also a delightful companion plant for *P. glaucencens*.

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