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# Quarterly of the American Primrose Society

VOLUME XXVI

WINTER 1968

NUMBER 1



Primula obconica  
fl.pl. ROSY-RED

# American Primrose Society

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## Quarterly

## of the

# American Primrose Society

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THE PICTURE ON THE COVER: *Primula obconica fl. pl. Rosy-Red*. Photo by Elmer Baldwin. See page 18.

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AMERICAN PRIMROSE SOCIETY

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# A Message from Your President

GREETINGS FOR A SPARKLING NEW YEAR! May it be a happy and successful one for you personally, and in your gardening efforts. Excepting those of our members of the Southern hemisphere—we of the Northern will be obliged to do much of our gardening by the fireside, perusing seed lists, studying and reading the accumulation from the busy season. With the holidays behind—and spring still months away—this could be an opportune time for us to start a new notebook or add to an old, notes from various books that could be helpful in the coming years growing season. Most of us have, through the years, acquired book "friends" that we continually consult. One of the first, and to me indispensable, ones—is Mansfield's "Alpines in Colour." The many pictures are of excellent quality and include quite a number of primulus. Now that you all have the new Dictionary—this gives a starting point or nucleus to begin your own small library. Delving into primula books written by experts, can be rewarding in developing a fuller understanding of the plants with their variable habits and idiosyncrasies.

*The Cultivated Species of Primulas* by Blasdale gives extensive coverage and is most informative. One of my favorites, *Primulas in the Garden*, by K. C. Corsar, is a lovely little book, well written by an experienced primula grower who loves his plants. *Primulas of Europe*, McWatt, gives special attention, fully to the Europeans. *Primroses and Polyanthus*, Roy Genders and H. C. Taylor, covers many worthwhile suggestions in handling this most widely grown group. *The Auricula*, well written by Roland Biffen, is authoritative in handling the show forms. One of the latest books out, Doretta Klaber's *Primroses and Spring*, is on order and looked forward to with anticipation. If it compares with her former books, written with keen perception and illustrated with her beautiful etchings, we just know it will give any reader delight in following it through. If you can find any of the above-mentioned volumes in your local libraries or bookshops, I feel sure you will not regret the scrutiny of any of them.

The time spent in studying your Dictionary and any of the above will most certainly assist you in choosing seed from your sources of supply. Try not to be over ambitious and acquire too many at first. Germination can often be terrific (though often not, if seed is not fresh) and too many plants would be more than could be looked after. Far better is, to try only a few of the ones you know how to handle, to start with, gradually adding a few new ones each year. For myself, I try to grow something new from seed each year. There is delight in

watching the development of a new "child" in the garden, as it proceeds to expand and grow into its predestined form, from a tiny seed.

We are continually acquiring new, inexperienced members in the society. These new folks may have similar problems and queries to many that you have. You would be doing your society a real favour, as well as the satisfaction derived, by actively assisting in writing of your experiences and difficulties. We have asked our Editor to set up such a section in our Quarterly—just for your comments. Please don't be timid. Our membership list tells us that we have near to 800 members—but so few that we hear from! We know that participation of more of you will make our society a more useful, active group.

Our first Quarterly, under Mrs. Orrin Hale's editorship, is a fine start of another step in our history. Essentially it carries much good cultural information, from different parts of the country, to assist those who may have problems. So many of the very busy members have found that little extra time, to give of themselves, good articles for the benefit of all.

It seems obvious that all members are members because they are interested in primulas and enjoy growing them. Many varieties have been grown in my garden for some 25 years. I would not feel that Spring was here were it not for their charming, fragrant blossoms,



Mrs. Grace M. Conboy in a portion of her beautiful garden, which she titled as "THE NEW OUTCROPPING SHELFED AREA."

peeping from many nooks about the garden. Primulas give so much pleasure to all who grow them, I am sure that most of you share plants with others. This is surely an excellent way to promote membership in 1968, for once having plants, is it not necessary to be receiving information on how to grow them to perfection? I am not suggesting one should have ulterior motives in giving, only hinting that the recipient might enjoy participation in our society! Of course increase in membership brings in new members with new ideas. And back we go to the beginning of the circle—nice fat *Quarterlys* we all like, packed with information from all over. These, however, just don't happen by themselves! Only contributions of discerning material together with good glossy black and white pictures and a larger membership, will bring this about.

Sincerely,  
Grace M. Conboy

### A Japanese Native

## Primula Sieboldii

by Carl Starker

*Primula Sieboldii*, a native of Japan, is a much neglected and almost forgotten species. Fifty years ago it was a much sought after plant. The gardener will find it a delight, as well as an easy plant to grow. Why it is not more popular is a puzzle, for its wants are small and the show it puts forth at blooming time is truly delightful. In hot weather the foliage disappears, but may return with the fall rains. The leaves are erect, hairy and irregularly dentated. The flower scape may reach a foot, but is usually somewhat shorter and will produce from three or four to eight or ten blooms. The corolla tube is narrow and the limb divides into five segments, each of which again divides into two lobes which forms a five-pointed star somewhat like the corolla of an alpine phlox.

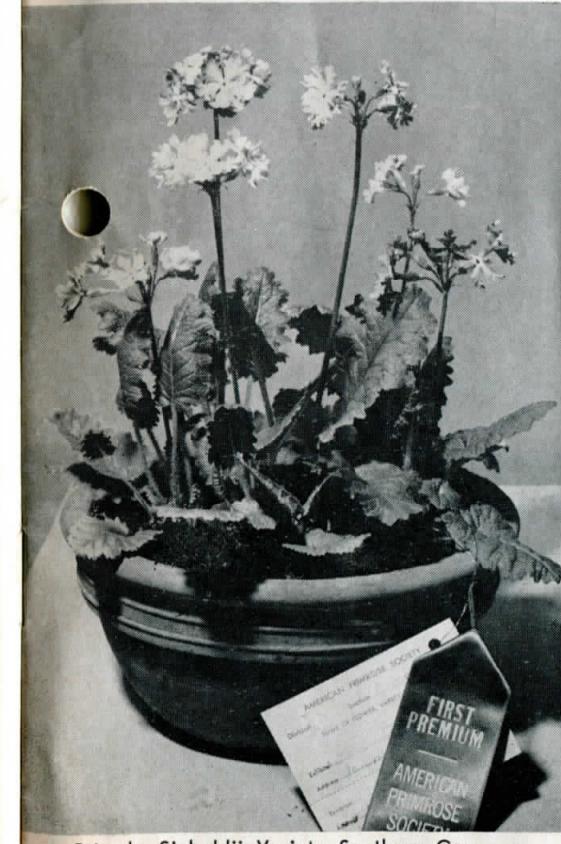
This lovely species was first in-

troduced into England in 1865 and has produced a wide variety of forms and colors. The named varieties are many and differ in features of corolla, frilling of petal margins and color shades which range from pure white through pink, rose and lavender. It is perfectly hardy in New England where it has been grown with much success. Growth usually ceases early and by the middle of July the plant is dormant. In the Northwest it starts growth in March and is in good bloom by late April.

After flowering, the buried rhizomes make active growth and the increase is considerable. Little seed is produced, but rhizome division is an easy means of propagation. Hand crossing is not difficult and lovely color forms can be produced.

My first Sieboldii came from K. Christianson, bulb specialist and grower in Victoria, B.C. From these plants purchased about 1930 I later produced many hybrids and at one Primrose Show in Portland won a silver cup for a pan of eight different colored fringed petaled sorts. They were delightful.

Amos Perry in England listed quite a few named sorts around 1928-1935. I got from him the lavender Southern Cross and another called Little Rosebud, which from the catalogue description sounded most alluring; however, it was no better than some of my seedlings. It has a heavy texture and round-



Primula Sieboldii Variety Southern Cross, a first prize winner, won by Carl Starker in a Portland Primrose show. Photo by Al Moiner

ed petals, attractive buds and blooms in a deep rose tone. It is a prolific bloomer and a good propagator. I think my favorite is the delicate white and lavender fringed petaled Southern Cross.

Dora was an exquisite lavender blue with rounded petals of real charm, and Dorette was a seedling of Dora but deeper toned.

They cross beautifully and there is never an ugly one. They will be rosy to lavender blues and whites, either plain or fringed, petaled in a wide variety of forms. One should be sure to mark the spot where planted as they die down in summer.

One very good thing, at least in my garden, is that strawberry weevil doesn't seem to bother them. Do try them. I am sure you will enjoy them.

Editor's Note: The Carl Starker Shop and Garden is located at Jennings Lodge, Oregon.

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society will hold its annual New England Spring Garden & Flower Show at Suffolk Downs, East Boston, Mass., on March 16 through March 24, 1968.

The members of the board of the American Primrose Society wish to extend their deep appreciation to Mrs. James Watson for her great contribution to the Society in preparing the material for the recently published Pictorial Dictionary of the Cultivated Species of the Genus Primula.

Alice Hills Baylor  
Corresponding Secretary

# HAND POLLINATING OF PRIMULUS

By Herbert H. Dickinson, Vice-Pres.,  
American Primrose Society

HAND POLLINATING is very simple. You merely take pollen from the male part (usually called anther or stamen) of a flower and place the pollen on the female part (usually called stigma or pistil) of a flower where the pollen grains will grow and fertilize the egg cells, which then grow into seeds.

There are a few things you should do to insure harvesting a crop of seed and that the seed are the result of your hand pollinating.

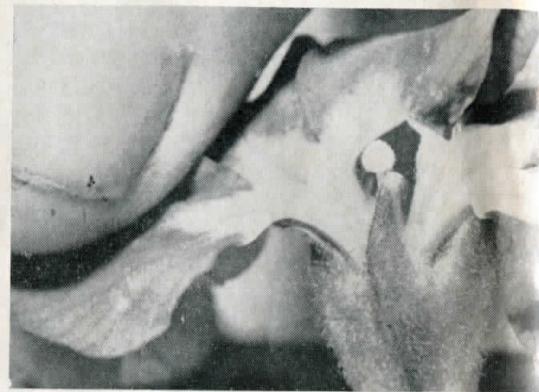
FIRST: Select your parent plants both for seed and pollen. Pot these up in extra large pots or plant them in a raised bench that will hold dirt six to eight inches deep. The reason for this is to get your plants up to a level where you can see and easily work with them. CAUTION! If planting in a bench leave 12 inches or more between plants. Provide protection from the rain, some shade and good ventilation.

SECOND: Mark your parent plants to identify them for future reference.

THIRD: Mark each plant to show what cross you make on it. If you number your crosses, record complete information in a notebook.

FOURTH: Strip each seed parent plant of all spent or old flowers that have ripe pollen. You are now ready to start your hand pollinating.

You must prepare each flower for pollinating. If the flower is a pin eye (pistil extending through the tube beyond the anthers) take hold of both sides of the flower between the thumb and forefinger of each hand. Pull out and back toward the base of the flower (see



In the process of stripping a flower



Applying pollen to the pistil by contact with an anther.

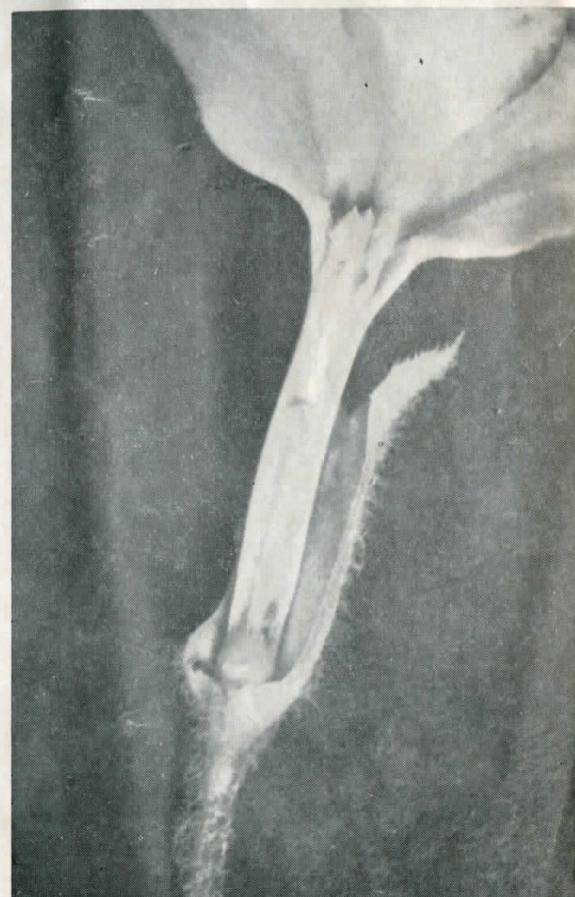
illustration). The tube will split and detach at the base. Since the anthers are attached to the tube, they will be removed with the flower. If this is done the same day the flower opens, the pollen is usually not developed; so there is little or no chance of self pollinating the flower. Bees are not attracted to this pistil after the tube and anthers are removed.

If the flower is a thrum eye (pistil in the tube below the anthers) take the petals and upper part of the tube between the thumb and forefinger of one hand and the calyx at the base of the flower with the other hand and pull. With a little practice the entire tube can be detached without harm to the rest of the flower. If the calyx is long, it may have to be split in two or more pieces and pulled down or cut off to expose the pistil for pollinating.

With your seed parent flowers ready for pollen, strip flowers from the pollen parent plant in the same way you removed the pin eyed flowers. This gives you a pollen flower in two or more pieces. Fold the base of one of these pieces back against the underside of the petals and hold between the thumb and finger of one hand so that the anthers with the ripe pollen protrude. Hold the flower to be pollinated with the other hand. Brush the anthers across the tip of the pistil. Some of the pollen will stay on the pistil. A small amount is enough and several flowers can be pollinated with the pollen from one flower.



A pin eyed auricula with the petals and tube removed.



A thrum eyed polyanthus split to show the pistil below the anthers.



Upper—A pin eyed polyanthus flower split to show the pistil above the anthers.

Lower—A polyanthus flower with the petals, tube and part of the calyx removed to show the ovary and pistil.



This is a daily procedure until all the flowers on the seed parent have opened and been pollinated.

You could use a magnifying glass and be sure each pistil is receptive before you pollinate it; but I find it easier to pollinate every pistil every day until it is withered or I can plainly see pollen on the pistil from the previous days work.

This is the procedure when your seed and pollen parent plants are both in bloom at the same time. By varying the amount of light and heat the blooming time of some plants can be changed. You may store pollen from early bloomers to use on late bloomers. Collect ripe pollen from the anthers (do not take the anther) into a small container and store this in a smaller container unsealed in a larger sealed jar that contains a desiccant. Keep the large jar in the refrigerator but DO NOT FREEZE. With care in this process, pollen can be stored and kept viable from one season to the next.

After all the flowers are pollinated, some people prefer to return the plants to the growing bed or plunge the pots in a shady place. I prefer to leave mine on the bench until the seed is harvested. The important thing is to provide good growing conditions so the plant never wants for water but avoid excessive dampness, this encourages disease and fungus, which cause the stem to rot or wilt and you lose your seed crop. GOOD AIR CIRULATION WITHOUT CROWDING OF PLANTS IS A MUST.

Seeds ripen in the same succession as the flowers opened. The seed must be collected daily as the seed pod starts to split. During this period have a container for each cross and label it with the correct identifying information. This seems

an unnecessary reminder, but more crosses are mixed up during this seed picking time than any other time.

The method I have described of hand pollinating is not acceptable for accurate scientific experiments. Scientific experiments require positive protection against chance pollination from other sources. You can be as meticulous and scientific as you wish depending on the degree of accuracy you require in your results. My method is good enough for all practical purposes and about 99% accurate.

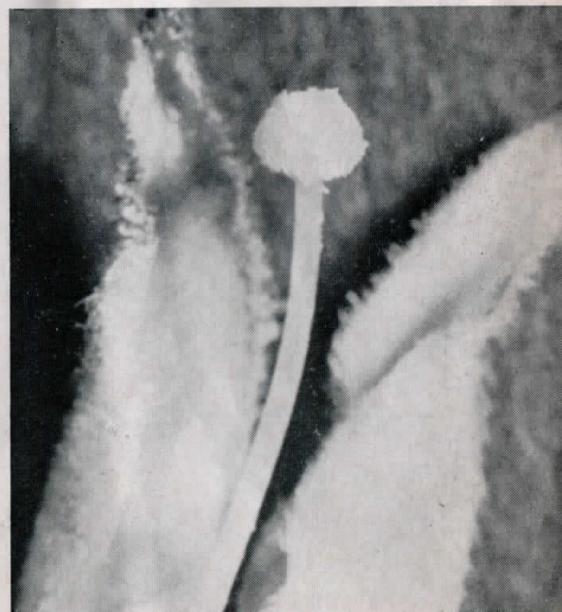
In hand pollinating when you put the pollen back on the same flower it came from or on another flower on the same plant, it is called SELFING. When you put the pollen on a flower of a different plant within the same species it is called CROSSING. When you put the pollen from one species on a flower of a different species it is called HYBRIDIZING. When you cross pollinate closely related plants with the same color or characteristics to intensify and perpetuate these characteristics it is called LINE BREEDING.

Since hybridizing and cross pollinating have become popular with the amateur, the term hybridizing has been loosely used so that now it is used to mean any cross pollinating.

Why do we go to all this bother when *primulas* usually set plenty of seed if we just leave them alone? There are many good reasons. The most important one is that it gives us control over the parentage of the plants we grow instead of depending upon the random chance of nature. This control allows us to develop plants to better suit our tastes and desires.



Flower tube folded back ready to put pollen on the pistil.

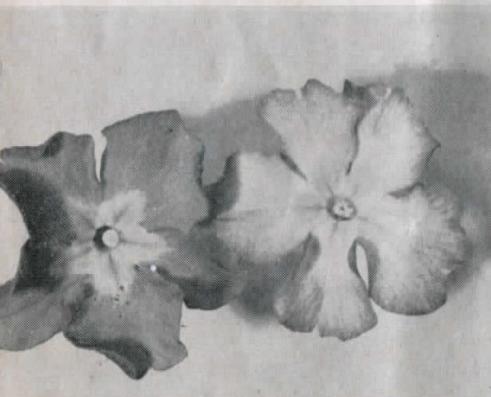


Pistil with pollen on it.

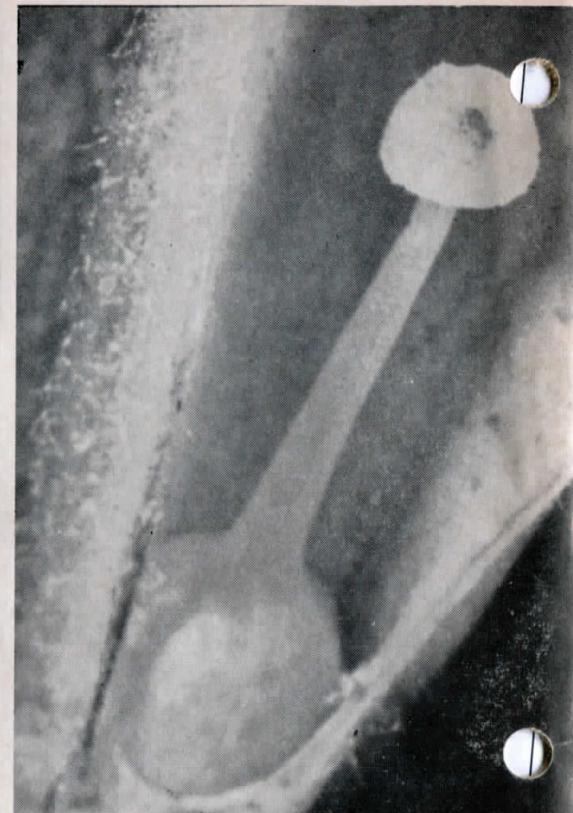
It has been a relative few years that the knowledge of how plant characteristics are inherited been known to man and fewer yet that this knowledge has been available to the ordinary layman. Because of their greater economic value Governments have sponsored scientific experiments that have tailored our food crops to meet regional climatic conditions and farming methods, as well as, a greatly increased yield. In this same period the amateur, hobbyist and backyard gardener have greatly changed our ornamental plants. We have produced new colors, larger flowers, longer blooming season and original plant habits from miniature to enormous size.

Some people call these changes improvements. It is a matter of opinion that I will leave to the future to decide.

Growing plants from your own hand pollinated seed helps satisfy your natural curiosity and your creative instinct. When compared with growing plants from purchased seed it is the same difference as putting up with the neighbors terrible offspring or caring for your own sweet children. Anyway it is a lot of fun and I wish you success in your pollinating.



A pin eye and a thrum eye.



The first stages of a take in pollinating.



A head of flowers in various stages of pollinating work, one flower is unopened.

# SEASONAL NOTES

By Mrs. Grace H. Conboy, President  
American Primrose Society

As notes for the January *Quarterly* must be in by November, one cannot discuss seasonal subjects too objectively. Here in the Northwest the leaves have almost all been whisked away following a more grandiose display of colour than I can ever remember. Several light frosts and cooler weather have prepared the garden for winter, by ripening woody growth and warning plants to semi-retire into dormancy (evergreens).

This summer, with four months of sunshine and perhaps six days of showers, has been a difficult time for Primroses and Polyanthus. Beds of plants, set out last June, show many vacant areas, despite mulching and watering. The plants seem to have completely disintegrated and only a few tufts of green remain. *P. rosea* plantings have suffered similarly. My belief is that decay worked rapidly with warm conditions and overhead watering.

**VETTERLE & REINELT**  
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Pacific strain of  
*Polyanthus Primroses*.  
Fresh seed available now.

Some form of fungicide should have been used. Some choice *Inshriach Hybrids* came through perfectly, are still lush with red mid-ribbed leaves and show fat buds that promise a bright display by the Japanese pool next Spring. I like to fold the leaves over the crown buds of *candelabras* and *denticulata* and mulch between the plants with sharp sand. *P. aurantiaca*, with bright stems, has been exceptionally beautiful this year, displaying its candelabra spikes of deep orange in June and a further burst in September. Normally not too long lived, a sandy mulch would benefit this variety too. Of course we all delight in the frivolous stray blossoms of the *Juliae hybrids* throughout the Winter months, despite what the weather is doing. Primrose and Polyanthus give their cheerful extra bonus also. We can, so often, arrange a truly Spring bouquet for the Christmas season, of these, with a foil of *Erica carnea*, *Helleborus Niger* and *Jasminum nudiflorum*. My small collection of Auriculas and hybrids are tucked away in frames, to protect them from winter moisture. Compact and plump, they shyly conceal their secrets of spring to come. The glistening farina of some of their foliage is always a joy to behold.

A new section of rock outcropping, in the form of closely layered sandstone slabs, was a challenging planting experience. North facing, on the edge of a large patio, it simulates a rugged mountainous area, in miniature, and has incorporated into its construction the outflow of

a spring which flows down to the tufa pool. When the slabs were placed, pockets of soil with added bonemeal, were worked in between each piece, between concrete spots which hold them firm. When the heat of summer had passed I proceeded to plant each shelf with sturdy plants of a large clump of *P. marginata*. In my experience, this primula delights in a cooler position and to date, it looks very happy.

I have been trying to devise a location suitable for the lovely *Lewisias*, and possibly this was the reason for building this semi-perpendicular shelved area. Sturdy seedling plants of *L. cotyledon hybrids* and *L. Tweedyi* were next planted, in a position where moisture would not settle in their crowns. Tucked between the above, along the shelves, are minute plants of a frosty Saxifrage, *Bellis minutum*, *Androsace sempervivina* and small cobweb *Sempervivums*. At the base, in pockets between the slab runs, dainty plants of the bright green *Mentha* were settled. In a ten inch bed, between the rock work and the patio, were planted *Gentiana Acaulis*. (which already seems to be forming buds!) Bulbs of *Erythronium Europeum* were clump planted beneath the Gentian. Near where the spring escapes from the rock work, *Adiantum* (English form) a dainty maidenhair fern, has established comfortably, gently protecting some compact little plants of *Rhododendron radicans*, one of the smallest of rhododendrons. Moss that was worked into the crevices is now a lush green. To the south of this high point, in a large pocket, where it can grow over, well rooted layers of the snowy *Daphne Cneorum alba* were planted. Always difficult to re-establish, its grey-green foliage looks fresh and healthy. On the

small alpine meadow, top side, are several naturally dwarfed and knarled Alpine firs collected last June up Mount Whistler. These, with their companion wildlings of mosses and ferny *Spiarea pectinata* (I believe) seem to be growing away satisfactorily. At one end, on a high point, I am attempting to train upright, a prostrate form of Juniper, collected in Saskatchewan four years ago. In this exposed position it has taken on a beautiful bronze tone and is beginning to develop an interesting weeping habit.

As most Primulas enjoy some shade, one must consider provision for them, if trees are not already a part of your landscape. This could be one reason that primula growers must learn something of many horticultural subjects, trees, shrubs and plant forms for the most attractive and satisfying associations. In deciding upon trees or shrubs, for their dappled shade, the preference is for deeper rooted subjects, which would not resent the disturbance necessary in a primula plantings. Rhododendrons are most beautiful, interplanted with primulas, but they are shallow rooted and would resent the root disturbance. Primulas should be planted beyond the circumference of their leaf or branch span. Fruit trees provide a satisfactory choice and are beautiful in any landscaping, besides providing for the larder. There are innumerable combinations and associations that can be used to gain a desired effect.

This is an inexhaustable subject and one which should promote a further section in our *Quarterly*. "Companion and Associate Plants to enhance most effectively primula plantings." All of us are keenly interested to know of combinations other members use to create "pictures" in their gardens.

## Hardy Types of CYCLAMEN

By Mrs. Mary Palmer

Hardy species of outdoor growing cyclamen are miniature versions of the florist's luxuriant indoor cyclamen.

Hardy cyclamen are members of the primrose family.

The storage portion of the plant appears to be a corm, but is a tuber that grows larger each season and may reach dinner-plate size.

The tubers never divide. They merely sit tight, growing broader and fatter with the years and carpeting the ground with sparkling, tiny flowers.

Because of their expansion, it is recommended that the tubers be

spaced far apart, 10 to 12 inches, in groups. Plant them in the late summer, when they are ready from growers.

Hardy cyclamen also may be grown from seed, started in the early spring. When started from seed they do not bloom until the second year.

PLANTING SITES should have protection from cutting, cold winter winds and early-morning sun. Exposure to reflected or direct sun is to be avoided. The plants will do well among ferns or under a canopy of conifers.

A well-drained, gritty soil will



Hardy-cyclamen flowers reached up brightly from low-growing plants. The larger leaves above them were on an overhanging camellia plant. Times staff photo by Roy Scully.

prevent the crowns from becoming water-logged in winter.

The chief problem with growing cyclamen is water. The plant needs ample moisture while in growth, but must be kept as dry as possible while semi-dormant in summer.

Gritty or sandy soil around the crowns with a humus-type earth below is an ideal soil situation. A slightly raised planting is suggested.

Cyclamen tubers are planted shallow, not more than an inch. An exception is *C. repandum vernum*, which is set into the ground 2½ inches.

A light mulch over the tubers after the ground freezes will give them protection.

A touch of ground limestone in the soil is needed. If ground oyster or clam shells are available, they are excellent worked into the topsoil.

**CYCLAMEN** tubers resent disturbance, so leave them in the same place year after year.

An application of ground bone meal or dried manure is recommended in late summer.

Beginners should start with the dependable *Cyclamen neapolitanum*. It is extremely hardy and simple to grow.

Butterfly-formed rosy-pink and white flowers reach up on four- to six-inch stems in early fall on the

dwarf plant. Ivy-shaped leaves are marbled with silver and dark green. The leaves are variable and emerge at the same time as the flowers.

Color persists on the plant until December. The tuber is a flattened disk, slightly hollow on top and rounded on the bottom.

The white form, with round heart-shaped leaves is less hardy.

*C. cilicicum* is a fall-flowering hardy cyclamen. Pink flowers with crimson markings are crowded on top of the plants. Attractive leaves mottled with silver appear after blossoming begins and remain through the winter.

*CYCLAMEN COUM* blooms from January through March. Tiny flower buds lie with crimson cheek against the cold ground. As they open they show light rose, deep rose or purple white, with vivid purple centers.

Rounded dark-green leaves have no markings. The underside of the leaf is a dull rose in color.

*Cyclamen ibericum*, with winter flowers from white to purplish red, will push up through the snow.

The latest to flower in the spring is *C. repandum vernum*. In April and May bright-crimson flowers straighten up between the leaves. Its foliage is marbled with silver. Reprinted courtesy of *The Seattle Times* and the author.

## Rare Dwarf Slow Growing Conifers

Flowering shrubs and unusual rock plants suitable for Bonsai culture are listed in our catalogue, **Alpenglow Gardens**.

**ALPENGLOW GARDENS**

13328 King George Hwy.

North Surrey, B.C., Canada

## Notes from the Treasurer

### Remarks on the Pictorial Dictionary.

"The pictorial Dictionary is a stupendous work. My compliments and congratulations to Mrs. Watson and The American Primrose Society." Mrs. Arthur F. A. Witte.

"It fills a great gap in the Primula literature." Mrs. J. B. Hinerfield.

"I am very happy with the Dictionary and want another copy." Mrs. Alice Fletcher.

"I appreciate the Dictionary." Mrs. T. Meyer.

"Mrs. Watson has done a wonderful job. congratulations. (Send two more copies.)" Mrs. A. C. U. Berry.

"The Dictionary has been received, it is a real treasure, is on loan to two nationally known hybridizers. Is it possible to buy extra copies?" Mrs. E. C. Wilson.

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"This book is such a wonderful publication and will be so useful in identifying plants. The pictures and descriptions are marvelous, would like more. Send five copies." The Henry Francis duPont Winterhur Museum, Mr. Tyrrell.

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### Donations for Dictionary—1967

Mrs. Ellen Page Haydon	\$50.00
Mrs. Wm. Lyons	10.00
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Some members have written in asking for the 1967 Spring Issue of the Quarterly. We have mailed out every single copy that we had on hand. It would be appreciated by the Society if anyone receiving more than one copy would return the extra copy. Due to a mix-up in the mail, many members wrote in asking for another issue. This has caused the shortage.

We would like to call attention to the fact that the Dictionary took the place of the 1967 Summer issue. Our treasury was not large enough to print a Summer Issue and the Dictionary, so the Summer Issue was not printed.

If you are moving, please notify the Treasurer or Editor of your new address immediately. Otherwise, it is an extra expense when *Quarterlys* are returned. The Post Office will not forward Second Class Mail.

## TREASURER'S REPORT—1967

Balance Dec. 31, 1966	\$2,255.48
Receipts	
Membership	\$2,306.94
Sales	77.35
Donations	61.50
Comm. Adv.	202.00
	2,647.79
	\$4,903.63
Expenses	
Quarterly	\$2,630.97
Dictionary	1,401.88
Postage, etc.	117.90
Society Exp.	159.48
	\$4,310.23

Balance, January 15, 1968 \$ 593.40  
Mrs. Lawrence G. Tait, Treasurer

The National Auricula and Primula Society, Northern Section, has a new Booklet out called HOW TO GROW AND JUDGE AURICULAS.

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Primula obconica fl. pl. SNOWFLAKE  
Photo by Elmer Baldwin

The majority of the primula species are hardy garden plants. There are species native to areas of rather mild climates in the far east. These are primarily cultivated as house plants. All kinds are showy and respond readily when forced into bloom.

There are three species of primula which are grown commercially and forced into bloom: *Primula malacoides*, *Primula obconica*, and *Primula sinensis*. *Primula malacoides* blossoms are rather smaller than the others but there are more of them. Modern selection is tending to narrow the size gap. The airy effect of the clouds of blossoms has gained for *Primula malacoides* its common names of baby primrose or fairy primrose. The branching plants grow to 16 inches in height. An overwhelming mass of flowers are produced in pink,

## POT PERFECT

by Rex D. Pearce

rose, lilac, and crimson hues. June is usually considered seed-sowing month for *Primula malacoides* to produce plants that will be well in bloom by Christmas. Care is needed to bring the seedlings through summer heat—actually a September sowing is likely to produce better, but later-blooming plants. However, sowings made after the middle of October are likely to produce plants that will come blind, or only bloom scantly.

In potting *Primula malacoides*, whether in small sizes or as larger specimens, care should be given to see that the crown is just at the surface of the soil. Crowns are likely to rot if set too deep and at the same time it is necessary not to set the plants too shallowly. Shallow planted primulas grow slowly and usually in an undesirable inclined position. Best growing temperatures for primulas varies from 50 to 70 degrees. Possibly the most popular primula which is grown indoors is *Primula obconica*. Culture of it is very similar to that given for *Primula malacoides*, ex-

cept the time of sowing of the seeds. If the seeds are planted during the month of March, they will be in flower during the Christmas season. *Primula obconica* may cause a skin irritation in highly sensitive people, therefore, care should be taken when handling plants of this species.

Of all the primulas which are grown indoors, *Primula sinensis*, the Chinese primrose, is perhaps the showiest. This species has the brightest colored and largest blossoms. One disadvantage of this species is the tendency for the plants to drop their flowers earlier than the other species.

There remains one desirable pot plant primula, a hybrid, that fits into none of the three classes already described. It is a natural cross between *Primula floribunda* and *Primula verticillata*, discovered at Kew Gardens in London. This hybrid is known as *Primula kewensis*. It is a well shaped plant and a free bloomer in winter and early spring. This is the only winter-blooming primula which has yellow flowers. Cultural directions are identical with those given for *Primula obconica*.

Seedlings of primulas are often-times attacked by fungi which cause damping-off and rotting. Pano-Drench is the recommended fungicide to check these diseases.

Primulas are attacking by various forms of sucking insects. These pests are controlled by spraying the plants with Isotox or Malathion once every 10 days in the spring.

All pot-plant primulas are easily grown from seeds. Seeds should be planted in Sure-Fire Mix. Cover

the seeds about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " with the planting medium. Water the contents of the flat thoroughly, cover it with a piece of dark paper to eliminate light and place it in a plastic bag. Then place the flat in a sunny window or greenhouse. A temperature of 70 degrees is necessary for germination. After germination, remove the dark paper and give the seedlings air. When 2 to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches high, transplant into  $2\frac{1}{4}$ " Jiffy Pots which have been filled with Sure-Fire Mix. When the root-systems become crowded in the Jiffy-Pots transfer them to 3" pots filled with the same medium. When the plants are about three months old, transplant them to 6" pots filled with Sure-Fire Mix.

Fluorescent setups for plants are highly recommended to use for growing primulas indoors.

\* \* \*

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Primula obconica EROS  
Photo by Elmer Baldwin

# Some Polyanthus Forms of Primula *Juliae*

By C. S. Marsh

Unlike the ordinary polyanthus forms one grows from seed, the *Juliae* hybrids are neat and tidy plants. They rarely exceed six or seven inches in height, and because of the mat-forming habits of their main parent the leaves too are inconspicuous. They are



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excellent in pockets in a rock garden, and make good cover for bulbs. They are not at all choosy about soil, except that like most other subjects they like reasonable drainage, after all who would like sitting with their feet in water? They do not seem to mind about acidity, and are just as happy in peat as in lime. Altogether a most accommodating family.

The most important group of the *Juliae* polyanthus forms is the *Garryarde* Family. They appeared in Ireland in the 1920's. All of them have rich bronze leaves and strong main stems. They are free flowering and most of them very hardy. I have covered a bed that had held *Garryarde Guinevere* with black polyethylene. This was to kill couch grass without having to dig up the rare bulbs that were planted underneath. When the polyethylene was taken up four months later, the weeds were all dead, but there were about 50 small plants of *G. Guinevere* that had been missed when the main ones were taken out—still alive. They were blanched like endives—but still alive and were soon back in form again. This family all come into bloom rather later than the other single polyanthus and carry on the flowering season until May.

The first one I ever saw was called Apple blossom. It was just like a bunch of pink and white appleblossoms over the deep bronze foliage. It was a most lovely plant, but unfortunately it seems to have gone. The next to appear was *G. Guinevere* which is truly magnificent, with large clusters of pink flowers held stiffly above the bronze leaves. It increases very rapidly and almost any ground seems to suit it. *G. Canterbury* is a

newer variety with rich cream flowers that are shaded or flushed with apricot pink. *G. Enchantress* is another newcomer that blooms a little earlier than the others. This too is cream veined and edged with rose pink. *G. Sir Galahad* is supposed to be pure white after the pure of heart, but any that I have seen have been slightly flushed with pale pink. *G. Crimson*—also known as Hillhouse red—has darker bronze leaves than the others with deep crimson flowers and a yellow eye. *G. Grail* is rare and a red colour of Elizabethan bricks, with a large yellow eye. *G. Victory* is another this time eyeless and in deep paeony-purple, it too is rare. A new *Garryarde* to appear is *G. Edith*, with huge mahagony coloured flowers. This has only just come onto the market, and is very well thought of.

Among the other good polyanthus crossed *Juliae* or *altaica* comes Beamish Foam which is a splendid pink polyanthus whose petals are tipped with yellow. Charles Bloom—again a rarity—a rich velvety crimson-purple with a deep orange eye. It is a good doer when it can be found with a strong constitution. Hunter's Moon is probably the most beautiful there is. It comes in very early, and has as strong a perfume as any well scented rose. It is a good grower of a lovely apricot shade with a deep yellow centre. Kinlough Beauty is one of the oldest. It is neat and small and covered with blooms that are warm salmon-pink with a creamy stripe down the middle of each petal. It was a chance seedling found in Mrs. Johnson's garden in Kinlough in Co. Leitrim. Lady Greer came from this garden too. It is almost a miniature with long stems. The foliage is bottle green and the tiny flowers are creamy-yellow in colour. This variety has proved excellent as a seed parent in experimental breeding. Pink Foam is another dwarf polyanthus with star

shaped pink flowers. Pawny Port is perhaps one of the best of these forms. It was bred by Miss Wynne at Tigroney Co. Wicklow. The dainty polyanthus flowers are quite the darkest of all kinds—a really dusty portwine colour—the leaves are smallish too and almost maroon. It stays in bloom for months. As a contrast to this comes The Bride in pure white. She holds her star shaped flowers on fours-inch stems over pale green leaves.

Among the missing, in this section is *Appleblossom* that I mentioned already and *G. Buckland* variety. This

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is—or was—a beauty in rich thick cream color. There was a splendid Navy blue polyanthus called, I think, Anita and it is gone. Beltany Red was a tangerine with a green center and a fine lace of gold round each petal. Fair Maid is orange too. The flowers are small but numerous carried on a tall stem. It has a double center of gold. Prince Albert carried his blooms in clusters rather than in trusses. It had a bluish stripe down each plum colored petal. It was never as strong a grower as the others, and personally I did not think it was a *Juliae* hybrid at all. Raspberries and Cream was of raspberry red with a cream edge to the petal, and the Bishop was a large flower in deep royal purple.

There are some other good Polyanthus forms and primroses that remain true to type and constant that are older than the *Juliae*s but still might come in with this group. Most of them are chance forms of the common prim-

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rose. Barrowby Gem is the first polyanthus to come into bloom, it often flowers in February. It has very large blooms held erect on stiff stems. In color it is rich primrose shaded green, and it has a most pronounced scent—almost like almonds. Its great trouble is that red spiders love it. Bartimaeus is a very old polyanthus that is crimson black. It has no eye in the usual sense, but instead there is a zone of red. The blooms are not very large, but the whole plant is most attractive. Belvedere is an old single primrose and it carries huge flowers of pure lilac color. Harbinger is another old sort that bears both primrose and polyanthus flowers over primrose leaves. In color it is pure white with a yellow eye. It is one of the first to bloom and is now rare. Miss Massey too is very rare. It is a small plant with deep green leaves. The flowers are dark crimson, and it is often described as the single Madame Pompadour. Sir Bedivere is a lovely old primrose with eyeless star-shaped flowers of a kind of chocolate red. Although these plants are all old named polyanthuses or primroses and most of them date from the nearly nineteenth century they associate well with any collection of the *Juliae*s. Unlike modern primroses they remain true to type and do not decrease in vigor if left to grow on year after year, or—as so many moderns do—if they are propagated by offshoots.

Most of these polyanthuses can be used to edge borders or beds and are particularly effective when planted in quantity in a ribbon formation of one kind. They do extremely well in pockets in rockwork, and settle down most comfortably as cover plants for bulbs of all kinds. Species crocus do very well with them because the earlier kinds are over before the primroses bloom. They can be interplanted with each other in patches that can form most interesting patterns. If the poly-

(Continued on page 30)

## ***Two Methods of Starting Seeds***

*This is a repeat of an article published when Nancy Ford was editor. I am wondering if any of our members tried either of these methods and with what success. Please let me hear from you. Since this is seed planting time, I thought our new members would especially be interested.—Emma Hale*

### **Rotted Alder for Starting Primula Seeds**

**By J. E. Mason**

Several years ago I cut down a good many alder trees on some property that I own in the country, intending to haul the wood into town to be burned in the fireplace. The wood, however, was never hauled to town and just stayed where it was piled and rotted.

In the spring of the year 1960 I brought some of the rotten alder to town and it was not used until September. On the 12th of September I sifted some of the rotted alder through a fly screen and using the brick method of germinating seed, I placed the screened alder one-half inch deep on a brick and placed the brick in water so that the water was one-half inch deep with the brick in it.

I left the brick in the water several days in order to see how damp the rotted alder would get. As it appeared to maintain the proper amount of moisture I then scattered polyanthus primrose seed, which I had gathered in the garden in July, on the alder seed base.

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I then placed a little of the screened alder in a pepper shaker (the holes are too big in a salt shaker) and barely covered the seed with the alder mix. I placed a sheet of glass an inch above the seed and placed a paper on the glass. The brick was then placed in a temperature of 60 degrees.

Three days after planting the seeds began to show white spots and six days from the planting date I had the best seed germination I have ever had.

On the 24th of October the seedlings are ready to be transplanted. They are wonderfully healthy and I am stuck with what to do with them during the coming winter months.

### **Successful Seeding Method**

*This writer gets 100% germination with sterilizing her seed mix.*

**Beth Tait, Bothell, Washington**

I am fortunate in having large quantities of leafmold in my woods and have found that it makes an excellent base for the following seeding medium:

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3 gallons leafmold  
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1 gallon loam  
1 small handful chunk charcoal  
1 tablespoon aldrin

The aldrin was added to the mix after a sad experience of small black worms in the leafmold eating some of my most valuable seedlings. By digging down there feet I can get leafmold that does not need sifting. My loam is of such texture that it is not necessary to sift it either.

I do not sterilize this mix. I prefer planting in a flat rather than on bricks so that I can leave the seedlings undisturbed until they have four or five leaves.

My seeds are frozen for one week and taken out to thaw for eight hours. For the next three days I alternate freezing at night and thawing during the day. The seeds are planted on top of the seeding mix and covered first with a wet paper towel and over that a pane of glass. When the seedlings begin to appear the paper and glass are removed and coarse rabbit wire placed over the flat to prevent damage from birds, etc.

I raise all my seedlings in a cold greenhouse. The only heat provided, and it is sufficient to keep them from freezing, is a 250 watt G.E. reflector infrared heat bulb (such as used to keep baby calves and lambs warm). This is kept on night and day three to four feet above the seedlings. It is

never turned off because doing so in very cold weather may break the bulb. I have used the same bulb for three years without replacement. I have never had trouble with either damp-off or mold.

*Editor's note: It is the general practice to sterilize soil before planting primula seed. The above articles are published because both writers report 100% germination, no dampoff or mold. Some valuable elements necessary to the control of disease may be lost by sterilization.*

#### CORRECTION—PLEASE NOTE

It has been called to the attention of the editor by Mrs. Olga Ducha-cova, that *Primula abchasica* is the correct spelling, not *abschasicia*. She also states that the name derives from Abchasia, which is an autonomous small country in the Soviet Union.

*Editor's note: I am very pleased that members are sending in corrections; please feel free to do so. Would appreciate any interesting information or articles concerning primroses. I haven't had any response to the appeal for Garden questions. Mrs. Alice Hills Baylor has so kindly offered to answer them. Maybe other members in your area have the same problems you do. Please write Mrs. Alice Hills Baylor, Skyhook Farm, Johnson, Vt. 05656 or the editor.*

### Seeds of Alpines & Unusual Plants

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#### His Favourite Flower

# The Primrose

by Dale Warren

When that gifted and highly original British statesman, Benjamin Disraeli, first Earl of Beaconsfield, died in 1881, his sovereign, friend and ardent admirer, Queen Victoria, placed with her own hand on his grave a wreath of primroses, on which was inscribed a legend consisting of three telling words—His Favourite Flower.

Some years later his biographer observed that "his political opponents, such as Gladstone, were scornful of the notion that such an orchidaceous personality should have loved a simple English plant", yet in England primroses have ever since been associated with his name.

During his lifetime Victoria, who was often at Osborne on the Isle of Wight, where Spring came earlier than to his blustery Hughenden, frequently sent him hampers of the first primroses, with her affectionate greetings. When the hampers were returned they were packed now with partridge, now with grouse, for the delectation of the royal guests and their thoughtful hostess. "We have evidence," continues Disraeli's biographer, "that the woodsmen at Hughenden had special orders to protect primroses, large numbers of which were cultivated all over the estate."

This suggests the ruggedness, the hardiness, the ubiquitousness of the primrose, or primula, which once established manifests not only a strong capacity for survival but an agreeable tendency to spread and increase. It is not noted whether or not the Victorians were content with the common English varieties but it is safe to assume—English gardeners being renowned for experimentation—that their tastes also included some of the more exotic but equally amenable Alpines and Asiatics.

Although not as resplendent as some of its rivals, the common English primrose, *primula vulgaris*, is peculiarly suited to naturalizing, whether in grassy meadows or in woodlands beneath the sturdy oaks or throughout a copse of slender young birches. Huguenot refugees, we

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learn from Sackville-West, popularized the primrose in England, and an ancient herbal conveys the information that in parts of Italy it was once used for ear-ache and that "simple people made of it a lotion for a beautiful and splendid skin." Primrose lore, preserved in travelers' tales, is rich and far flung. Various species can be traced to the mountains of Central Europe, down through the Balkans and the Caucasus to China and Japan, to Persia and the wilds of Tibet. The mingling and marrying of the bounties of the Alps and Himalayas has for centuries intrigued the hybridizers, and the results are healthy, happy, hardy progeny. The American Northwest has more recently made contributions of its own and in this country, primrose culture increases year by year.

The Alpines require less moisture than many of the Asiatics, which like wet feet and marshy, even boggy, locations, and they are dependent on adequate drainage. In sloping, sheltered rock-garden crevices, suggestive of their natural habitat, or on steep banks, they not only take hold and flourish but are singularly appropriate. Clumps set at the edges of perennial beds and borders readily multiply. The soil should be light and sandy, with a good supply of humus, and well worked. Semi-shade is desirable as the genus does not take kindly to hot dry summers, and an occasional but thorough watering is definitely in order. Primroses respond to mulchings of compost or peat, although winter protection is seldom necessary. They like what is known as cool root-run.

The pale green basal leaves, formed like a rosette, are attractive when they first appear in the Spring but have a tendency to dry, wither, or possibly disappear completely as the season advances. If mold or leaf-spot are in evidence, applications of bordeaux are recommended. The most effective way of combatting the parasite described as root knot is to remove and burn the affected plants. Primroses bear their bloom in clusters on leafless stems or stalks, some short, some long, varying with the different types. Of infinite variety in form, habit, tecture and coloring, they run the gamut from the modest single to the showy double, from the dwarf to the grandiflora. The central eyes as well as the surrounding color blends are strikingly diversified.

Among the Asiatics, the tall *japonica*, blooming rather late, is probably the most cherished. The low, compact *Alpine clusiana* and the *spectabilis* have many adherents, and the lush, white-eyed *auricula* deserves top listing. There are many standard varieties and an increasing number of hybrids and cross-breeds, hundreds of which may be examined in catalogue or nursery. Origins are often obscure, and classifications confusing, as the terms primrose *primula*, *polyanthus*, *auricula*, even cowslip and oxslip, have become somehow intermingled. Of a different family altogether is *oenothera*, the so-called evening primrose, yellow of flower and rampant of root. This popular hardy perennial is a product of our midwestern states.

Most primroses are easily and satisfactorily propagated by division of offsets in September and October. Merely tuck them in here and there and await the results. Vigor and size of bloom are small matters if the flowers appear in some unexpected spot or brighten a corner which is

otherwise dull and drab. The cut blossoms, which can be supplemented with almost any delicate greenery, are excellent for indoor bouquets, and small clumps can easily be transferred to pots for a sunny window or sheltered terrace. Florists feature several of the more tender species.

Primrose fanciers are well advised to study with care both catalogues and specialized nursery stock to make doubly certain what species they are getting, and then to provide the location, soil conditions and general culture that their particular selections require. The trial-and-error method, however, often brings exciting rewards, and seeds will generally germinate even if scattered at random. My own choice runs not so much to the cultivated specimens carefully placed and tended, as to the lavish woodland strips and swathes, to the naturalized groups and masses which catch and hold the roving eye in Springtime.

Late-blooming varieties may have their appeal, but the early primrose coming into flower as daffodils and narcissus recede is one of the most eagerly anticipated heralds of the new season. It is not "just another bulb", but a sturdy, rooted plant which competes successfully with cold nights and wet days. Squat, compact, wind-proof, it yields long and abundant bloom. It has that cool, fresh, cheery look, the recollection of which lifts the spirit during the periods of inevitable summer drought and humidity. Its range of color is phenomenal, and particularly dramatic are the many vari-colored combinations. For a mere song you can have all the different shades offered by the entire spectrum—pale yellow, deep yellow, orange, red-gold, pink, maroon, crimson, mauve, magenta, lilac, purple, azure blue. Certainly the color-conscious gardener can ask no more.

According to the Dictionary—which is often more imaginative than most of us realize—"primrose" is also an adjective, connoting "flowery, gay; hence devoted to sensual pleasures—esp. in primrose path."

It is conceivable that Disraeli may have trod it gingerly. But certainly not Victoria.

#### MRS. FRANCES FORD

It is with regret that we note the passing of one of our members, Mrs. Frances Ford of Meadow-Bank. Bristol Rd. Whitchurch. Bristol England. August 1967.

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## Overhead on the Party Line

"Hello, Jennie, this is Mary—how are you? Haven't heard from you for a while—Well, there sure has been lot of flu the last few weeks. What's new? —No! not really! How did she talk you into that?—Well, I suppose that isn't too bad. Could have been worse. The first thing you want to decide is what you are trying to accomplish, and I guess that would be to teach the public. You have to choose a general theme so you can get things coordinated. Before you can make too many plans I think you have to find a place to have it. Be sure it is large enough.—The Brown Power Building? Yes, I believe that would be fine. Get your word in early. The one big job is staging because that includes plans, properties, and general layout. Do you have all your chairmen already? You don't? Well, some of them you have to get as early as possible. Publicity has to get started soon, so you can get notices in the National magazines. They want 6 months notice. Then that chairman has lot of planning and contacting to do, you know, for pictures, radio T.V. and such.—I think so, too. Betty would be good. Do you have someone in mind for schedules? That is quite important, too, as your schedule is practically the "boss" of the show. It has to cover all possibilities and yet see to it that the thing doesn't get out of hand. Your rules of entry times, what can be entered, judging rules, etc. are in your schedule, so you can refer to it and say, "this is what the schedule says" and save yourself lot of decisions and hurt feelings.—Yes, you have to be pretty strict on entries. After all dirty pots, poorly groomed plants, and things of that sort really look bad, and the public gets a poor example. Be sure to have a good classification chairman that knows what she is doing. The judges really get ticked off when things are not properly classified, but then your placing chairman is important too, be-

## Primrose Show News

Information to time of going to press, about 1968. Primrose Shows—some do not have the place located as of this date.

### OREGON PRIMROSE SOCIETY SHOW

Spring Show of the Oregon Primrose Society will be held on April 13 and 14, 1968, in the Milwaukie Community Club, 42nd and Jackson Streets, Milwaukie, Ore. 97222.

Show hours are Saturday, April 13 from 2 to 8 p.m., and Sunday, April 14, from 1 to 6 p.m.

Anyone may enter Primulas. Entries will be received Friday, April 12, from 2 to 9 p.m., and Saturday, April 13, from 8 to 10 a.m. deadline.

Admission is free. Plant sale during show hours.

Anyone desiring a schedule of the Show may write Mrs. Orval Agee, 11112 S.E. Wood Avenue, Milwaukie, Ore. 97222.

### NATIONAL PRIMROSE SHOW

National Primrose Show will be hosted by the Eastside Garden Club in Kirkland, April 19, 20 and 21.

### AURICULA AND PRIMROSE SHOW

Washington State Primrose Society will sponsor an Auricula and Primrose Show May 4 and 5.

### ALPINE GARDEN CLUB OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The show will be held at the Vancouver Horticultural Society & Farmers Institute at 1260 E. 20th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. The dates are April 20 from 2 to 9 p.m. and April 21 from 1 to 5 p.m. There will be a plant sale and refreshments will be available. We will have a special display. Last year it was a native wildflower display.

cause the judges are in the same mood when things are not where they belong when they are ready to judge.. Yes, your placing chairman and helpers can mean a lot. You do have to consider the size of plants, too, so that your public can see them properly. After all, you do want people to tell their friends, and come back again. Here's when staging is important again, so people can really get around and see everything without too much crowding. You need good aisle space.—Yes, there are lot of angles to a thing like this. You have to consider education, too, and a sales room. You can get people all enthused and then not have plants or seeds to sell and will be disappointed. — Yes, by all means, if possible have a nice corner set aside for refreshments. People always enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a cookie or two. Seems to be a fitting thing after you have wandered around a while. Sort of "mellows" you. — Good judges are important, and see to it that congenial ones are teamed up together.—Well, not too strict so you don't have any blue ribbons, but on the other hand if you have too many, they don't count for much either.—Yes, trophies are nice, and practical, usable ones are especially nice. People like to see what was won, so they should be displayed, if possible.—Oh, don't forget to have some in charge of cleanup afterward. You do have to leave the place clean, or your name is "mud" for the next time your club needs a building.—I believe that's about all there is to it. The first and most important things is to get chairmen for all your committees, and then turn it over to them.

### The ALPINE GARDEN Society

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