American Primrose Society

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QUARTERLY

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All material for the QUARTERLY should be sent direct to the Editor’s Office,
7213 South 15th, Tacoma, Washington 98465

Membership (including fourQuarterlies): $5.00 per year, $14.00 for three years paid in advance. Ten old copies of the QUARTERLY are available for $3.65, and Pictorial Dictionaries at $3.00 each, postage included, at the Treasurer’s Office—Treasurer, Mrs. John Genheimer, 7100 S.W. 209th, Beaverton, Oregon 97005. (Free cultural chart and Seed Exchange privileges with new memberships.)

Cover photo: The "Dusty Double" — A modern day auricula as hybridized by Cyrus Happy. For the story on it refer back to the 1973 Spring Quarterly.
President's Message

Winter came early this year. But so far it hasn’t stayed. How has it been in your area? November snows in the area that I live in are quite rare. Had two November snow storms this year. Had another in December, close to Christmas time. At present all snow is gone and we are being saturated with rain. Temperatures range highs of 50 and lows in the upper 30s. This is normal for us. Ideal primrose weather. Now we have to look out for late, January and early February. We get our worst weather at these times.

All plants will be super saturated with water. Comes a cold snap, with no snow cover and anything can happen. Plants freeze and heave out of the ground. The wind increases and the chill factor puts the cold to 30 degrees below zero. I wonder why any of these plants survive.

They survive because they are tough and they are protected by fences, boughs and straw.

In our country the cold doesn’t last very long. Then the rain and warm weather comes back. If you were to leave the cover on these plants they would rot. So all cover must be removed.

Sometimes you no more than remove one cover, than you have to put on another. The old one is no good as it was all wet. And wet cover is too heavy. So break out another dozen bales of dry straw.

From now on it is anybody’s guess. The weather could be good. An early show. (is that what we wanted?) Weather cold. (a late show, not too many plants). At this time no one can tell. But one way or another we get together enough plants to make an excellent show. Hope to see you there.

Your President
Dick Charlton

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DOWN THE PRIMROSE PATH
WITH THE EDITOR

How quickly the year flies by! It doesn’t seem possible that seed planting time is here already. This is probably true for me especially because thus far our weather has been wet but not too cold. The polyanthus have been in bloom all fall and early winter. They received their covering of evergreen boughs several weeks ago and I’m hoping for good plants in the spring.

Have you been dreaming of new plants? This time of year I make out vast lists of things I want to find, seed I want to buy and crosses I want to make. If only there were enough hours to do it all! Some of the seedlings from last winter’s sowing are still crowded in their seed pans begging to be transplanted.

The Editor has received many recent requests to reprint articles from some of the older Quarterlies. You will find a few in this issue. Back issues of the Quarterly are available thru the Treasurer, Mrs. John Genheimer. Please contact her for these.

The Editor has also received several pieces of correspondence recently which contained the phrase . . . “you experts.” Please do not feel that novice growers have nothing to say. We all need to know about new methods, new crosses, new finds. The more experienced a gardener becomes, the less he finds he knows and the more he finds he wants to learn. At least that is the way it should be. Anytime you have a bit of information to share, sent it in!

The National Show this year will be held in April 10, 11, in Beaverton, Oregon. If you have a nomination for new officers, send it along to the Secretary, Mrs. Dines. All A.P.S. members are eligible to cast a vote or make a nomination by mail. Make sure you do it so it is received before the Annual Meeting, April 10.

Thanks to those of you who sent in articles for this issue. The Editor was most pleased to receive the article from long time member John Zanini.

The American Primrose Society celebrates its 35th birthday this Bicentennial year. What will Your contribution be this birthday year?

Deadline For Spring Issue: March, 1976
Standard Rules and Minimum Requirements
for a national American Primrose Society show by an affiliated society approved by A.P.S. Board 1961.

1. The local club sponsoring the show must be affiliated with the APS.
2. The show must be designated as a national show by the APS board of directors.
3. A national show must be open to the public for two days to include a week end and close no later than 6 P.M. on final day.
4. Entries must be accepted in clay and plastic pots. Other types of pots may be accepted to encourage entries by air express from far away members.
5. Entries from members living more than 100 miles from the show must be accepted on the morning the show opens.
6. Entries in the arrangement classes should be accepted up until one hour before judging is scheduled to start.
7. The show will include, besides the individual plants for benching, a decorative section for arrangements, an educational display, and at least one planted display to show the use of the type for garden flowers by residents of the area in which the show is held.
8. In a national show the novice, amateur, and professional entries will be judged separately.
9. Admission, except required tax, will be free to members of the APS upon display of their paid upon membership card.
10. Trophies must be engraved to include the name of the APS judge, except show auricula, alpine auricula, and gold laced polyanthus must be judged as show plants by accredited floraculture judges.
11. All primula plants in competition are credited APS judges, except show auricula, alpine auricula, and gold laced polyanthus must be judged as show plants by accredited floraculture judges.
12. Decorative displays and arrangements may be judged by the standards of the area in which the show is held.
13. Any time there are three or more entries of one type or color of primula not included on the schedule a separate class will be created for them. A separate class may be set up for any entry not on the schedule if the show committee so desires. (This is useful when a new color break, new form, or new hybrid is first exhibited.)
14. Points for figuring sweepstakes winners are: Blue ribbons—5 points; division champion—5 points; other special awards not division champions—5 points. Best plant of 2 or more divisions—10 points, best plant in show—15 points. Only when a tie exists will red ribbons (2nd place) be counted; then, they will be 2 points each.

Definitions
NOVICE
One who has never won a blue ribbon award on a primula plant in a show.
AMATEUR
One who does not have nurseryman's license to grow or sell plants.
PROFESSIONAL
One who has a nurseryman's license to grow or sell plants. (The requirements vary from state to state and may be different than the requirements for a sales tax permit.)
JUNIOR
Age limits determined by the local society and published in schedules.
PRIMROSE (For show purposes)
Any species or hybrid of the genus primula.
SEEDLING
A plant grown by the exhibitor from seed and displaying its first season's bloom, must be a single crown plant; except in the show auricula, alpine auricula, and gold laced polyanthus class, a seedling is a plant that has not been named—and it does not have to be raised from seed by the exhibitor.
BORDER ALPINE
Auriculas are grown as garden plants that are predominately alpine in character but having minor flaws such as pin eye, notched or pointed petals that prevent its being bench as an alpine auricula.
GARDEN AURICULA
Any auricula grown as a garden plant that cannot be placed in any other established section or class.
SHOW AURICULA, ALPINE AURICULA AND GOLD LACED POLYANTHUS
Plants that conform to the APS accepted minimum standards of the type for benching in a show.

Growing Primroses From Seed
By Mrs. Lee Campbell

There are so many different methods that have been handed down by various growers and members of the Clubs, that to write an article on them would take at least a small book. What might be the best method for one person may not be right at all for someone else. Most of our methods have come from trial and error and even the experts have their failures. Spring planting is best February through April.

Nature's way might be considered first but even Nature's way has its failures! How many times have you discovered in the spring, tiny little plants nestled under the edges of some of your plants and marveled at how they managed to come thru the wet and cold winter? Such tiny plants with such tiny leaves in miniature duplicate of the parent plant. To recognize a small primrose plant it has not gotten at least one leaf. So many times we miss them and it is a marvel that the pesky slug also missed them! We never would have seen them even as they first come up on a very short stem, hardly more than a quarter inch or less tall. If left unattended they would soon dry up on a very short stem, hardly more than a quarter inch or less tall. If left unattended they would soon dry up and shrivel away the first warm sunny day. These can be transplanted into a flat and grown to maturity. You won't know for sure what you have until they have bloomed but they will be a primrose. That is one way to grow primroses. This is a somewhat haphazard way of going about it but you can get some primroses.

Another method is to cross two plants and gather your seed or buy some. There are various mediums to plant your seed in. Some use a sterile medium such as sphagnum, or peat mixed, or vermiculite in combination to plant their seed in. Obviously there is no food value in these mixtures so after the seed has germinated we will have to do something about feeding them if we choose this method. Fertilizing must be exercised with great care! The plants are very tender at this stage and will burn very easily. They will grow for a while without anything and are best left this way for a while. They will eventually begin to look unthrifty and get pale in color. You can overcome this by adding a little oven baked or steamed loaf to your mix before planting. Never add organic fertilizer such as cow manure to tender seedling mix, it only presents problems such as damping off, or burning of the foliage or they will just die. A good combination to use is, one part sterilized loam, one part sand and one part either vermiculite, peat or sphagnum with a fine sifting of sphagnum on the top. This insures constant moisture for the plant as you must not over water in the early stages and sphagnum will stay damp for some time. Covering your seed pan also conserves the water. When the seedlings begin to come up, open a small crack for ventilation. Beware of damp-off and bread mold, a fungus that may appear in tiny white patches just before germination begins. Some advise using Natriphene soil (or some fungicide) such as Captan, check directions, in proportions of one half tablet dissolved in several quarts of water and sprinkle seeds with a fine rose sprinkler by hand, being careful not to over water or wash the seed out of the ground.
When using a little sterilized loam in your mixture you give the tiny seedlings a little bit of something to grow in to nourish them. As they get a little bigger a very dilute mixture of some fertilizer such as Liquinox Grow or Rapid grow. Check your direction label for seedlings, too little is better than too much! When using sterilized soil sometimes you destroy your natural bacteria and you have more trouble with problems.

Another way of preparing your seed for planting is to use the hot water method! In doing this immediately water your seed on planting with water that won’t burn your hand in the range of from 110 deg. to 120 deg. Use a fine rose sprinkler to prevent washing out seed. Repeat once a day for several more days.

Another way to use is to freeze your seed, either in the envelope to which a few drops of water has been added or in a small container of water and froze in a block. Using a drop on the envelope alleviates thawing out the whole ice block. As this wants to be repeated several time envelopes simplifies this operation. The outer shell of the seed or the seedcoat hardens very shortly after maturity and this process of freezing and thawing helps to break that coating. This procedure is especially important in older seed and greatly improves germination in even other wise fresh seed. I have seen experts fail with fresh seed and find it does enhance germination from my own experience, and well worth the little time and trouble it takes. No matter which method you use, after you have germination there are two things to remember, too much watering can destroy a whole crop of seedlings as easily as forgetting to water on a hot day and having the plants dry up completely. It pays to cover your seed pans to conserve your moisture in preference to overwatering and over evaporation on a hot day.

I always freeze my seed before planting as a matter of routine. It always speeds up germination.

Another method you can use but only if you have a green house that you do not keep too hot but do not let freeze, is to plant the seed soon after harvesting, as they are at their highest virility at that time as to germination. It does make quite a problem to carry them over the winter, however, mid summer sowing will generally produce plants ready to set out by Sept. in warmer areas and could be carried over in a cold frame in colder areas. If planted outside and plants are a reasonably good size with a good root system to anchor them down, outdoor treatment is all right but a covering of loose layered boughs is beneficial. Too small a plant with short root systems will heave out on top of the ground and need to be pushed back in at every opportunity.

Another method used is the brick method. Sterilize a brick by boiling vigorously for several hours. Cool thoroughly!! Place in a clean container to which cooled sterilized water has been added, about ½ inch or so. Cover the top of the brick with sifted soil mix, preferably sterilized and allow to dampen as the brick soaks up the water. When wet, sow seed and lightly cover with a sifting of sand. When seed starts to germinate move to a lighter place, do not cover as the brick will not dry out as long as there is water in the lower container.

As soon as the third leaf shows, transplant to flats with your seed soil mixture which you selected. This method is relatively carefree in that your seed will not dry out as readily as there is a constant supply of moisture coming from the brick.

Don’t be afraid to raise primroses from seed!! There is a feeling that they are truly your own plants when you raise them yourself and manifests quite an accomplishment! It is easy to go and buy a plant but it is a challenge to raise your own.

I must add one more item of interest. I had some very old primrose seed, 4 or 5 years old that I didn’t know what to do with and instead of burning them up I decided to take my chances with them and go it Nature’s Way!! So I simply took a flat of soil mix, unsterilized with proper drainage in the bottom of the flat and some sand in the mix for drainage, and planted the old seed in this, sifting a little soil on the top and set it in a cold frame. Here it froze and thawed as I planted the seed in the fall and the soil was wet. Never gave it another thought until the following spring. I then moved it into the greenhouse and I think every seed must have germinated as we got at least 17 to 20 flats of transplants with at least 35 to 40 in each planting flat. We transplanted a lot of seedlings in the spring of 1975! This spring of 1976 I will see them bloom!

1976 A.P.S. Seed List will be sent under separate mailing instead of with Quarterly as previously announced.

Watch For It!

GROWING YOUR OWN PRIMROSES

By Mrs. Lee Campbell
Rt. 2, Box 728, Buckley, Wash.

Has it ever occurred to you that you can hybridize and grow your own primroses and come up with some interesting plants? There are many areas to work in such as crossing one of the Juliae hybrids, of which there are many named ones to choose from now. Some of the more common ones are Dorothy, Springtime, Kay, Buttercup, Jay-Jay, Royal Velvet and Maidens Blush, and of course the old favorite Wanda. One drawback in using Wanda as a parent plant is its color. Being a dark reddish maroon it gives it a predominant character meaning that color character will be the predominant color in the seedlings, not just for one generation but for several generations to follow. If you can obtain one of the lighter shades, such as Dorothy, Maidens Blush or Springtime you stand a better chance of getting the lighter shades in your seedlings.

The Juliae hybrids have one good outstanding feature and that is hardiness. By using it in your crossings as one parent, for several generations, you incorporate more hardiness in your strain at each crossing. Hardiness in primroses in one of the things we seem to be losing sight of more and more. It would be a desirable feature to work toward. Much could be learned by beginners by joining one of the primrose clubs. There are several local Clubs. By belonging to the American Primrose Society you have access to the seed exchange plus four Quartlies per year. At the local club level, meetings are held each month thru out the year. Our programs consist of information on such items as planting seed, transplanting and...
There is no great mystery in crossing primroses. The procedure is simply getting the pollen onto the stigma, doing this preferably with a feather or a fine artist's paint brush, being sure you wash the feather absolutely clean before another new cross. Pollen grains are very minute and it doesn't take very much to do the job. You must do it very gently, brushing the pollen onto the stigma without breaking the style, which is a very frail tube which conveys the paternal gene pattern down to the placenta. There it unites with the maternal gene pattern in the placenta, where the seed will be formed. The variety and colors of the seedlings will amaze you, some will have the smaller flowers characteristic of the Juliae and some will have the larger flower of the conventional hybrid. Some of your plants will have the smaller and somewhat shorter leaf of the Juliae and some will have the larger and longer leaf of the other plant. The original Juliae is the species, prim but all the named Juliae plants are also hybrids. If it carries the typical Juliae growth pattern it will have the smaller flowers, shorter and smaller leaves and the rhizomous character of the stems of the plant. These have a woody quality and seem smaller leaves and the rhizomous typical Juliae growth pattern it will be, although all the named Juliae plants have the smaller flowers, shorter and smaller leaves and the rhizomous character of the stems of the plant.

Dividing plants, hybridization, preparing your plants for winter, grooming plants for the shows which are held each year and much more.

Placing the seed in the spring makes healthy young plants to set out as soon as possible in the summer. Watering is a must and shading from the sun if we have hot weather. We would like to see more and new members join the clubs and "do their own thing" in the field of hybridizing.

**1976 PAST DUES ARE NOW DUE!**

SEND TO TREASURER

Mrs. Thelma Genheimer
7100 S.W. 209th
Beaverton, Oregon 97005

**SPRING HILL FARM**

P. O. Box 42
GIG HARBOR, WASH. 98335

Fresh Seed of
Polyanthus, Acaulis, Juliae

**$1.00**

Double Verna, $3.00 for 50 seed

Transplants after August

RUTH BARTLETT HUSTON

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**Primula Malacoides**

By John Zanini

Primula Malacoides was discovered in Chinese Yunnan by French Missionary, Father Delavay, shortly before 1900. Seeds were sent to the French Seed House, Vilmorin. Within a few years P. Malacoides was taken in hand by the British seed firms of Sutton & Sons and Carters. While the original species Malacoides was valued for its light panicles of lilac and pale mauve bloom, the British set about to increase the color range. It was this light and graceful flowering habit that gained Malacoides its garden names of Fairy primrose and Baby primrose. This species had a great use as a winter bedding plant in the milder areas of California. Today, I no longer know a source of species Malacoides seed.

In the 1920's German and Swiss seed houses and Park Departments were hybridizing Malacoides on a large scale. The work of the plant breeder is nowhere more evident than in Primula Malacoides. Today their work has given us single and double flowers in a pure white, scarlet red, coral rose and salmon, with shades between these colors. The Riverside strain developed by Bricson of Chicago is outstanding. New advances continue, for the commercial pot plant grower finds in Malacoides a plant that reaches sale size rapidly and requires less heat than most other plants brought to flower in the winter. Another great plus is that Malacoides is non-irritating to the skin.

The most important consideration in growing Malacoides is that it must be grown cool and hardy at all times, from germination of the seed to the flowering stage, and that at no time will this plant tolerate high heat or forceful growing conditions. As a germination medium we have had very good results with a mix of one third each of finely screened leaf mould, sharp sand and good compost. Rapid drainage of the mix is of prime importance. A Ph range from 6 to 6.5 is about ideal. If the soil is too acid chlorosis will result. Make certain that seed pans are well crocked with rubbing and if sown in wood flats, that the flats will drain. By the time we are ready to sow our seed medium should have been well turned several times and stored under cover and not be in too dry a state. We want to bear in mind when we want our plants to bloom and sow accordingly.

Seed put down in late May or June will yield bloom in December and later and September sowings should bloom in March and April. Sowing after the first of October is to be avoided as mostly this will result in non-flowering growth.

Sow the seed thinly and do not cover. Water with great care trying for the ideal that the seed container is moist but not wet. Keep the seed containers well shaded and cool. When the seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant into other flats or two and one half inch pots, using the same mix as for seedlings. Keep the plants growing well under cool and shaded conditions.

When the young plants start to crowd or if pot bound shift into five inch pots for flowering. Here again the pots must be well crocked to insure rapid drainage. For the final potting the same mix as for the seed will do.
but have it of a rather coarser nature. Replace about ten percent of the sand with well aged cow manure. Plants resulting from late sowing will not make as large a plant as the early sown seed so these may be planted two to a five inch pot or three to a six or seven inch pot. Pot the plants firmly but not so deeply as to cover the crown. The plants must be firm or they may topple over. Again, seek the ideal of keeping the plants moist but not wet. In watering try not to get water on the crown of the plant, and once again keep plants cool.

As colder weather comes move plants into a cool greenhouse where the night temperature can be held at 40 to 45 degrees F. When your plants come into flower be sure to remove the central bloom stalk, this will give the side stalks encouragement and present a well rounded pot of bloom. Malacoides has a long period of bloom covering under our conditions, about two and a half months.

In the milder areas of Coastal California Malacoides for late winter and spring bloom should be set out by mid October. Plants are available at most nurseries if you do not wish to grow from seed. Plant in well drained soil to which ample humus in the form of leaf mould or compost has been well worked in. Be sure to water in dry winter periods. In periods of heavy frost the plants may be washed with a gentle spray of water doing this before the sun reaches the plants.

Keen gardeners are not discouraged with ease. It is our own efforts that give us knowledge we can gain in no other way. Perhaps I may be forgiven this nostalgic closure.

Many years ago my first efforts with Malacoides seed showed none of the expected results and the all too few plants resulting were planted among shrubs bordering a brick walk. The following autumn after cooling rains arrived Malacoides were germinating in small cracks in the brick walk and in our hay field where I had cast the parent plants after they were up rooted following flowering.

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Many years ago my first efforts with Malacoides seed showed none of the expected results and the all too few plants resulting were planted among shrubs bordering a brick walk. The following autumn after cooling rains arrived Malacoides were germinating in small cracks in the brick walk and in our hay field where I had cast the parent plants after they were up rooted following flowering.

As colder weather comes move plants into a cool greenhouse where the night temperature can be held at 40 to 45 degrees F. When your plants come into flower be sure to remove the central bloom stalk, this will give the side stalks encouragement and present a well rounded pot of bloom. Malacoides has a long period of bloom covering under our conditions, about two and a half months.

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I should like to say a few words on the Alpine Auricula as a garden flower. I believe it is generally accepted that the edged and self Auriculas, with their farina-covered leaves and flowers, have been evolved from the alpine species Primula Auricula. The Alpine Auricula, devoid as it is of even a suspicion of farina on foliage or flower, conveys an appealing sense of distinction or difference. I have sometimes wondered if this distinct and beautiful garden variety really owed its origin to P. pubescens, and not to P. Auricula as generally supposed.

As a garden flower the Alpine Auricula has a special value, for it will grow exceedingly well if planted in a border facing either east or south-east—in fact, it will flourish in any position where partial shade can be obtained. It is a really hardy garden plant, and thrives in a medium clay loam with a moist subsoil in summer.

No other garden plant has that peculiar distinct tint of crimson maroon and blood red shaded maroon, the lovely lilac and purple-maroon tinted colours.

Although the Alpine Auricula fully appreciates shade or semi-shade, it can adapt itself to a sunny position in the garden for I have seen it growing to perfection on a rockwork in full sun, when watered morning and evening with a spray.

When preparing a border or a rock pocket for Auriculas, it is a good plan to work in some leaf soil, for this is greatly appreciated by all types of the florist’s Auricula. And a little soot placed round each plant will discourage the attentions of slugs.

There is nothing in floriculture more fascinating than the production of something new. The Auricula provides endless fields of experiment and pleasure for the interested amateur who desires to raise new varieties, from seed, carefully hybridized and saved from his own plants.

The act of hybridizing is a simple operation. What varieties to hybridize, time and experience alone can disclose: knowledge will surely come to those who exercise patience and are prepared to take failures and success together, for the two are inseparable.

The best time to look for the necessary pollen is usually at mid-day. Having decided to use the pollen of a certain variety, select the variety that you wish to hybridize: remove the stamens from the inside of the tube with a pair of surgical tweezers—this should be done before they burst and emit their pollen, otherwise your flower will become self-fertilized if it falls down the tube on to the pistil: take a small quantity of pollen on a camel-hair, and place it on the pistil of the flower from which you have taken away the stamens: if the pistil is properly developed and has a clean, glutinous appearance, the plant will be hybridized and in due course bear seed.

Auricula seed can be sown at any time of the year. Perhaps the best time is in the month of February, especially if it can be germinated in a warm house, pricked out at once and placed in a cold greenhouse or even a “cold frame.” If sown in a cold greenhouse or frame the seed will germinate quite well, but much more slowly. Auricula seed is small and easily buried for ever, if care is not taken to cover it very lightly with fine sandy soil. The following method of sowing is both safe and efficient:

Fill a seed pan with sandy loam, level it carefully before sowing the seed. The most important thing to be observed is the covering of the seed lightly and evenly with soil: this is best effected by sifting it through a fine sieve until the seed is just covered. Germination is often slow and intermittent: the first seeds may appear in ten days and the last in eighteen months. I usually keep my seed pans for two years before desparing of late arrivals. This tardy germination is, I believe, characteristic of many of the Primula family. I find it a great aid to germination if a piece of glass is placed over the seed pan for the first three weeks.

The seed pans do not need shading from the sun until April. For, contrary to the general belief, young seedling Auriculas can stand more sun than adult plants—indeed, I always think that a certain amount of sunshine assists germination considerably, up to the end of March, and as long as the seed or the young seedlings be kept moderately moist I am certain that sunshine is most beneficial.

When the youngsters develop from two to four leaves, prick them off into 5-inch pots, twenty in each pot, still using the sandy compost advocated for the seed pans.

Propagation of established varieties is by offsets, removed from the parent plant usually when potting takes place in June and July. Although unrooted offsets can be taken off and established, it is far better to wait until a few roots make their appearance: the rooting can easily be ascertained by digging round the neck of the plant with the knife intended to perform the operation.

Remove the selected offset by a clean cut, afterwards applying to the raw surfaces finely powdered charcoal. I have found this a most efficient antiseptic, and use it on every necessary occasion.

The offsets can be planted round the edge of a 3-inch pot, four or five to each pot, using a compost of one part loam, one part fine leaf soil, and one part coarse sand.

Editor Note:
The above lecture was presented some number of years ago by Mr. James Douglas. The Editor has taken the liberty of deleting some of the references to his former nursery and to composts used there, as well as several personal observations. The lecture was given of course in England, and the suggestion has been made that the article be read with the idea of adapting some of the practices to modern day care of the auricula in the United States and its various climates.

NATIONAL AURICULA AND PRIMULA SOCIETY—Midland Section
Invites all Auricula and Primula Lovers to join this Old Society
Hon. Sec., Mr. P. Green
Primrose Hill, Bell's Bank, Buckley, Worcs., England

AMERICAN PRIMROSE SOCIETY
The Primrose In History

(A Reprint)

Whenever we think of Spring flowers the first that comes to mind is the Primrose. Both for its beauty and for its early arrival it seems to find a place in our hearts and tells us that Spring is near.

This plant is equally dear to children and it is usually the first flower, except perhaps the Daisy, of which they learn the familiar name. In medieval times the Primrose was called the Daisie-eie (Day's Eye) because it was thought to open its eye at sunrise; the same tradition is of course attributed to the Daisy.

It is however strange that the flower which we now admire so much appears to have been overlooked by the early Anglo-Saxon herbalists when they were compiling their manuscripts, although the ancient Hippocrates does mention the Primula in his list of Simples, but we do not know whether this was the Primula vulgaris.

Perhaps the reason the early herbalists did not mention it is because it was not used very much in their mixtures except when they wanted to make up a soporific dose—in the same way they used the violet because of its scent. Parkinson, 1569-1650, in his Paradisi in Sole, Paradisus Terrestris mentions the Primrose as does Philip Miller, 1692-1771, Gardener to the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries, when writing in his Dictionary of Gardening first published in 1733.

Henry Lyte must not be forgotten for in his Historie of Plantes published in 1577, which he dedicated to the Soveraigne Ladie Elizabeth Queene of England, he calls the Primrose Pretie Mulleyn, and says "as a pot herbe it is good for the head." Another English writer, Francis Bacon, who loved flowers, refers to the Prim-Roses in his Essay on Gardens, 1596.

Edmund Spenser, 1552-92, mentions the Primrose in his Shepherd's Calendar, but it would appear that it may not be the common Primrose. Yet it was not long before Shakespeare's day that the word as we now know it came into use.

William Shakespeare speaks of the Primrose many times and to mention a few instances we find a reference in Henry VI Merry Wives of Windsor, Venus and Adonis, Cymbeline, Midsummer Night's Dream, Winter's Tale, Hamlet, Macbeth, etc.

John Gerard in his Historie of Plantes, published in 1597, devotes a whole chapter and a page of illustrations which shows the double white Primrose, Hose-in-Hose and the Common Primrose. He also describes the Green Primrose—single and double—also the Jack-in-the-Green.

According to Gerard it had many medicinal virtues and cured many ills and he commended it "against pain of joints called gout."

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Ever since those days the Primrose has been a favourite flower in England and the old weavers of Lancashire and Cheshire, living in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, have done much to produce many coloured hybrids.

One cannot forget Milton's line "bring the rath primrose that forsaken dies;" nor Forbes Watson's beautiful description in which he says "In the Primrose, as a whole, we cannot help being struck by an exceeding softness and delicacy: there is nothing sharp, strong or incisive." In her Sunny Memories Mrs. Stowe writes of the flower as having "the faintest and most ethereal perfume."

Deadline for Spring 1976 Quarterly

March 1, 1976!
1976 SHOW DATES

April 3, 4—Tacoma — Pacific National Bank of Wash. — Villa Plaza
April 10, 11—Valley Hi — NATIONAL SHOW — Bernard Mall. Judge’s Luncheon, Genheimer’s; Banquet, Beaverton Elks Club
April 23, 24 — V.I. Rock & Alpine Garden Show — Memorial Hall, 951 Rockland Avenue, Victoria, B.C.

April 24, 25—Milwaukie — Location to be announced
April 24, 25—Washington State — Location to be announced
Mt. Angel—Dates & Location to be announced
Eastern Chapter—Dates & Location to be announced

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General Cultural Directions

FOR THE MORE WIDELY GROWN SECTIONS OF PRIMULA

(A Reprint)

(2) AURICULA e.g. auricula, rubra, glaucescens.
Many species of the Auricula are happy in the Rock Garden or in a scree. The differences in cultural information from the expert growers indicate that for the most part they will tolerate a variety of conditions if they are given a rich gritty compost, which will provide perfect drainage, and a half inch collar of fine gravel to keep their crowns dry.
A safe rule to follow with all Primulas is to keep their crowns free of every minute particle, and their quarters free of fallen leaves which have a tendency to mold.

(3) BULLATAE e.g. Forrestii
Crevic and cliff growing plants — long lived and hardy. Roots are scanty and penetrate deeply making it impossible to divide large plants. Old leaves linger on plant several seasons and should not be removed.
Two distinct types; the erect growing species typified by P. Forrestii which form robust long scapes topped by many flowered umbels of yellow flowers, and the cushion forming type such as P. Dubernardiana bearing short few flowered scapes of white, yellow or lilac flowers.
Leaves are unlobed, wrinkled and evergreen; flowers long-tubed.
Culture: Well-drained gritty soil. Will stand more sun than most. Good for vertical crevice in rock garden protected by overhanging rock from winter wet.

(4) CANDELABRA e.g. japonica, pulverulenta (see p. 43).
Requires moist, spongy soil in cool half-shaded situation.

(5) CAPITATAE e.g. capitata
Deep purple pendant flowers in round heads borne on strong 12” scapes. Leaves resemble common primrose but are powdered on both sides with white farina. The flowers also are powdered with farina. Particularly valuable for its late blooming season — August or September.
Culture: Well-drained soil in shade. May be propagated by division, but plants are short-lived and should be started from seed each year to be sure of keeping them.

(7) CORTUSOIDES e.g. Sieboldii
Long slender scapes of 1 to 3 gracefully borne whorls of white, magenta, pink, purplish or rarely yellowish flowers. Leaves pinnately or palmately lobed on long petioles, often covered with hairs. The broad leaf blades are entirely free of farina.
Culture: Most of this Section are woodland plants and need a moist well-drained leaf-mould mixture. Leaves disappear after flowering.
(9) **DENTICULATA** e.g. *denticulata*

Tight round heads of small erectly held florets on stout 12" scapes. Flowers lavender, pink and white. Leaves narrow and crinkled in rosettes. In some types leaves and stem are covered with farina.

**Culture:** Rich, fairly moist soil with light to moderate shade. Increase by division or seed which is freely produced. Do not plant seed too early in season as malformation may result if flower buds develop in late Fall. Easy to grow and will stand dryness, but prefers rich moist soil. In winter should be protected from standing moisture. Best in large clumps.

(11) **FARINOSAE** e.g. *farinosa, frondosa.*

Most numerous of all the Sections and widely distributed over the North Temperate zone and South America. Dainty open flowers in umbels, usually pink, lavender or rosy purple shades. Underside or crinkled leaves often covered with farina.

**Culture:** Plant in well-drained loam and leaf mold and give constant moisture. They prefer light shade but it is not a necessity if moist conditions are present. Some of smaller species will rot at crown if given overhead watering in winter. Roots are very fine and must be carefully handled. Propagation by division is possible but there should be more than one crown to a division. Seed should be sowed thinly so plants can remain in seed bed until they have developed appreciably; thereafter prick out singly into thumb pots in which they can grow till large enough to plant out. In transferring from pot be careful not to break root-ball. Best planted in masses. Variation in the rarer Farinosa will be given in the Dictionary.

(14) **MALACOIDES**

Greenhouse species with dainty pink, lavender, white and carmine flowers borne in tiers. Leaves rounded and somewhat hairy with dentate edges. Artificial heat is required of 45 to 50 degrees during flowering season. For winter bloom sow seed in July and cover pots with glass and paper until germination. As soon as possible prick out into 3" pots and later into 5" pots in which they are flowered. The final potting should be either the John Innes Compost, or on the West Coast, a mixture of 7 parts medium loamy soil 3 parts Blue Whale Sphagnum Moss, and 2 parts coarse sand. To achieve maximum bloom, a comparatively cool temperature with adequate ventilation and careful watering is necessary.

(17) **MUSCARIOIDES** e.g. *Vialis.*

Flowers in close heads or spikes, pedicals almost entirely absent. Flower scapes long and slender. Quite hardy and survive any kind of winter until they have flowered after which they seem to be susceptible to dampness in winter and few survive. Because of this trait they should be raised each year from seed. Flowers are usually lavender, purple or blue.

**Culture:** Rich porous soil in half shade with plenty of moisture during growing season and as little as possible during winter. Seed germinates well and there is usually enough to keep a supply of fresh stock on hand in spite of the fact that the flowers in this Section often have little seed. If two or more crowns are made the second year before flowering, as sometimes occurs the non-flowering crown may be divided from the flowering one and re-planted.

(18) **NIVALES** e.g. *chionantha.*

Some of the finest of Primulas, but tantalizing to grow. Flower trusses large and rather loose—the leaves rather thick, fleshy and approximately the same width throughout and more or less covered with meal.

**Culture:** Rich heavy soil which should be heavily enriched. They like moderate shade. They must have moisture during growing season and an almost complete lack of it during the resting period. A bay in half-shade at the foot of a rock garden or a well-drained stream bank is a good location. Increase mainly by seed and raise each year to maintain stock.

(19) **OBCONICA**

This Section can very well give a bad name to the whole genus Primula, due to glandular hairs found on the undersides of the leaves which cause an irritating and dangerous rash to many people. They are barred from many hospitals because of this and there is one case in Portland, Oregon, due to the handling of obconica subsp. Werringtonensis, which has lasted for months and has not responded to treatment prescribed by leading skin specialists.

**Culture:** Members of this Section are best grown in cold greenhouses. They are not seriously injured by several degrees of frost. They make most pleasing plants if grown at fifty to sixty-five degrees. They have brilliantly colored open flowers of shades of rose, carmine, lavender and white. It is best to grow fresh plants each year. In mild climates such as California, they are used as porch decorations. They are florists' plants and are extremely beautiful.

(20) **PARRYI** e.g. *Parril, angustifolia, Cusickiana, Ellisiae.*

North American Primulas with different requirements for the different species, but all require a rich, gritty, well-drained soil whether grown in shade or sun. *P. angustifolia* needs a half shaded spot and is found in damp, rocky places amongst short herbage in alpine zones. *Cusickiana* should dry out completely in summer. In its native state it is completely saturated with water when the snows melt, and yet is parched and baked by sun all summer. These plants may be increased by division or from seed. *Ellisiae* grows in open places amongst short herbage. Culture is still in an experimental stage.

(21) **PETIOLARES** e.g. *scopiger, sonchifolia, Edgeworthii.*

Attractive open flowers of rose to violet shades, leaves in rosettes large and crinkled and dentate. Covered with white meal. Short scapes. These plants form a winter bud at end of season and this must be protected from winter dampness. The seed of this Section germinates only in an apparently unripe condition so one must watch carefully for seed and sow immediately.

**Culture:** Cool, moist open leaf soil, well-drained position in spot protected from direct sun and wind, hard rain, heavy frost, and snow, and especially winter drip. Give plenty of light and good circulation of air. The plants must be kept moist but never waterlogged and a top dressing of peat and sand should be applied with a final surfacing of coarse sand or chicken gravel to protect basal leaves from rot. Pull off all leaves and flowers and watch closely for pests or mold, especially in damp weather. May be reproduced from seed or cuttings. Seed should be planted as soon as gathered and may not germinate till following April or May. Some types produce offsets in leaf axils and these may be planted in ½ sand and ½ peat and kept shaded and slightly moist till rooted.
SIKKIMENSI S. e.g. sikkimensis, alpicola, Florindae.
Graceful drooping flowers in loose umbels, clusters of long toothed leaves. Flowers on fairly long pedicels in colors ranging from violet to yellow and white. Usually flowers are covered with meal. Very effective grown in masses. Plants are usually large and grow easily from seed. These handsome species may also be increased by division. One of best Sections for the garden.
Culture: Moist partially shaded situation with plenty of leaf mould in the soil. Keep well-drained in winter. Most species in this Section like a rich soil and can stand plenty of water and half-shade or high shade.

P. Florindae

SOLDANELLOIDES e.g. nutans.
These Primulas are similar to those of Section Muscarioides, but the flowers are much larger and cup-shaped. There are fewer flowers to a head. They are borne on strong 12" scapes and usually both flowers and scape have some meal. Leaves are long and oval and hairy, and the flowers are lavender-blue, blue or creamy white. The Primulas of this Section are generally rather short-lived but are among some of the most beautiful of the genus. These plants like shade, and light woodland soil, with plenty of good gritty sand mixed in, and a top dressing of fine gravel. These plants are very susceptible to crown rot in the winter time and it is suggested that a handful of sharp sand over the crown in winter will be beneficial. However, if they are planted in a heavy soil even this precaution will fail. These plants should be raised from seed each year.

P. nutans

VERNALES e.g. Polyanthus, vulgaris, Juliae.
This Section contains two general types, the Polyanthus with scapes which clear the leaves and carry an umbel of flowers, and the vulgaris which has short scapes bearing single flowers forming a cushion. The leaves are similar in both types, are wrinkled and arranged in tufts. The flowers are open and flat and have a wide color range particularly in the Polyanthus type, ranging from white to shades of orange, red, pink and a true blue.
Culture: Good well-drained loam in half-shade. Keep moist in summer. May be divided after flowering.

P. vulgaris

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