Native Alaska primulas

No other state has as many primulas as Alaska. In this issue we will feature these species.

Color photographs are from the collection of Aline Strutz of Anchorage. Use of color in the quarterly is possible through special assistance of Tacoma News Tribune, Tacoma, Wash.

Material on page 7-14 is reprinted from "Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories" by Eric Hulten, with the permission of the publishers, Stanford University Press. © 1968 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior Varsity.
Field view of P. tschuktschorum

P. tschuktschorum in the garden

P. borealis and P. siberica in the wild

P. cuneifolia ssp. saxifragifolia
Alaska grower shares experiences with species

by Aline Strutz

I have had all the Alaska species identified by Hulten growing in my garden. I still have some of them.

P. tschuktschorum is the most difficult for me—maybe because I don’t provide them with enough water. I have collected this species in Nome, on St. Paul Island in the Pribilof Islands and at Platinum in the Goodnews Bay area. It grows where there is a good deal of moisture—at least in Platinum.

Mountain plants

P. cuneifolia is commonly found on most of the mountains near Anchorage and at other places as shown on Hulten’s maps. I have collected it at Platinum and on Attu and Adak Islands in the Aleutian chain.

The botanists sometimes don’t agree as to whether to call the very low one ssp. or var. saxifragifolia and the tall one ssp. or var. cuneifolia. It is very easily grown and doesn’t seem to be too particular about soil either, but at present I do not have either of them growing in my garden. I hope to get started again with them from seed.

I am not an expert grower or an expert botanist. I just plant things in quite ordinary good garden soil mixed with peat and sand—if I think it is needed.

Aline Strutz, 916 P St., Anchorage. Alaska 99501, is an 80-year-old widow. She raises a large vegetable garden, numerous cultivated plants and flowers and more than 200 species of wild native plants. She has help only for mowing the lawn when she doesn’t have time to do it herself. She says, “Our growing season is rather short so everything comes at once in the spring—and does continue through summer and fall, when it gets a little more hectic when I have to harvest, make jam, jelly, pickles, freeze vegetables, etc. It’s a good thing I’m in good health and used to hard work.”

Flora of Alaska

by Eric Hulten

Corolla limbs entire or slightly emarginate .......................... 1–2. P. tschuktschorum
Corolla limbs deeply emarginate or obcordate:
Bracts oblong or narrowly obovate, obtuse, with saccate-auriculate base; leaves ovate to suborbicular ........................................ 3. P. sibirica
Bracts more or less acute, more or less saccate at base;
Leaves entire or slightly undulate, dentate, efarinose; flowers small ....

9. P. egaliksensis
Leaves dentate or crenate, farinose or efarinose; flowers 5–40 mm in diameter;
Leaves crenate-obovate, with 5–9 large teeth in apex; flowers large, 15 mm in diameter or larger; limbs of corolla deeply obcordate:
Plant tall; flowers very large .................. 4. P. cuneifolia subsp. cuneifolia
Plant about 5 cm tall; flowers smaller .................. 5. P. cuneifolia subsp. saxifragifolia
Leaves entire or minutely denticulate; flowers smaller; limbs of corolla less deeply cleft:
Plant rarely exceeding 10 cm in height, usually smaller:
Leaves sessile or nearly so .................. 10. P. borealis
Leaves distinctly petiolated .................. 6. P. mistassinica
Plant normally exceeding 10 cm in height:
Leaves mostly green beneath (sometimes somewhat farinose); involu- cral bracts mostly subulate; flowers of one kind .................. 7. P. stricta
Leaves strongly farinose beneath; involucral bracts lanceolate to linear-oblong, flat; flowers with long or short style ........... 8. P. incana

1. Primula tschuktschorum Kjellm.
var. tschuktschorum
Primula tschuktschorum subsp. tschuktschorum var. beringensis Pors.

Leaves oblong-lanceolate to lanceolate, entire or irregularly dentate-cuneate, more or less broadly petiolate; flowers few to several; bracts lanceolate, acute or somewhat acute; pedicels more or less farinose; calyx cleft to two-thirds of length or more; lobes lanceolate, acute; corolla purple with white eye; tube as long as or considerably longer than calyx, lobes obtuse or emarginate.

Wet meadows, along streams, in McKinley Park to 2,000 meters.

Highly variable.
2. **Primula tschuktschûrum** Kjellm.

*Primula arctica* (Koidz.) Fern.


Similar to var. *tschuktschûrum*, but plant often coarser; leaves broader, oblong-obovate.

3. **Primula sibirica** Jacq.

*Primula nutans* Georgi?

Leaves glabrous, elliptic, oblong-elliptic to nearly orbicular, entire or obscurely dentate, long-petiolated; bracts oblong, obtuse, saccate; corolla rose-colored; tube twice as long as calyx; lobes obcordate; capsule cylindric.

Wet meadows. Described from eastern Siberia.

Broken line on circumpolar map indicates range of other subspecies. Subsp. *finnmârícâ* (Jacq.) Hult. (*P. finnmârícâ* Jacq.) occurs in Europe.

4. **Primula cuneïfoliâ** Ledeb.

subsp. *cuneïfoliâ*

Leaves thick, glabrous, efarinose; obovate-cuneiform, dentate in apex; scape about 10 cm tall or taller, few-flowered; bracts glandular-puberulent, linear-lanceolate, acute; calyx shorter than corolla tube, with obtuse lobes; corolla pink to violet, with cuneate, deeply bifid lobes; capsule oval.

Wet meadows. Described from Siberia east of Baikal.
5. Primula cuneifolia Ledeb.
subsp. saxifragifolia (Lehm.) Sm. & Forrest

Primula saxifragifolia Lehm. subsp. saxifragifolia (Lehm.) Hult.

Most American specimens of P. cuneifolia belong to a weakly differentiated race with short scapes (usually about 5 cm long) and smaller flowers.

Wet meadows.

6. Primula mistassina Michx.

Bird’s-Eye Primrose

Slender, efarinose; leaves oblanceolate to cuneate-ovate, dentate, sessile or nearly so; involucral bracts not saccate; calyx with oblong-lanceolate lobes; corolla pink to bluish-purple, with yellow eye, rarely white, with broad, cuneate-obcordate lobes; capsule cylindric or nearly so.

Meadows, along streams.

7. Primula stricta Hornem.

Scape mostly shorter than 20 cm; leaves obovate to obovate-lanceolate, short-petiolated, entire or indistinctly dentate, not farinose or weakly farinose beneath; bracts saccate, lanceolate or more or less subulate in apex; calyx often somewhat farinose, cleft to about one-half with somewhat acute teeth; corolla lilac, the tube longer than the calyx, with emarginate lobes.

Moist places; prefers saline soil.

8. Primula incana M. E. Jones

Scape about 20 cm long; leaves obovate to obovate-lanceolate, remotely dentate, farinose beneath; bracts saccate, linear-lanceolate, farinose; flowers few to several; calyx farinose, cleft to about one-fourth, with lanceolate, acute lobes; pedicels of very uneven length; corolla lilac, the tube somewhat longer than the calyx, with obcordate lobes.

Wet meadows.

Slender; leaves efarinose, oblong to obovate or spatulate, entire, slender-petiolated; involucral bracts gibbous-saccate at base; calyx cleft to one-third to one-quarter; lobes glandular-ciliate; corolla white to lilac, lobes short, cuneate, deeply cleft; capsule cylindric.

Wet meadows, along streams.

10. Prímulaté boreáltis Duby

Primulaparífoliatá Duby; P. tenuis Small; P. Chamísonis E. Busch.

Leaves sometimes very small, sometimes larger, cuneate-obovate, mostly long-petiolated, remotely toothed to nearly entire, efarinose or slightly efarinose beneath; scars short in flowering specimens, elongating in fruit; bracts linear, acute, more or less saccate at base; pedicels somewhat longer than bracts; calyx cleft; capsule cylindric.

Greenland Primrose

The following list represents only a few of the house plants that require continuously moist soil. The Plant Waterer is perfect for these plants as well as many other types too.

- African Violet
- Azalea
- Bamboo Plant
- Boston Fern
- Begonia
- Caladium
- Corn Plant
- Crepe Myrtle
- Dragon Tree
- English Ivy
- Fuchsia
- Fig
- Gardenia
- Grape Ivy
- Green Dracaena
- Impatiens
- Jack Plant
- Lady Palm
- Nandina
- Norfolk Island Palm
- Peper Palm
- Phoenix
- Pineapple Plant
- Rubber Plant
- Schefflera
- Schefflera
- Snake Plant
- Spider Plant
- Ti Plant
- Zebra Plant

PLANTS REQUIRING MOIST SOIL

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- Pineapple Plant
- Rubber Plant
- Schefflera
- Schefflera
- Snake Plant
- Spider Plant
- Ti Plant
- Zebra Plant

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AUTOMATIC FEEDING

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CONSTANT WATERING

A constant watering method provides a continuous supply of water to the soil. No more dried out periods followed by a drenching of the soil. No more discovery of wilted plants and hope that you can revive them in time. As long as water is present, the Plant Waterer can be assured that your plants will always have all of the water that they require for healthy, strong growth. You will be able to see the difference in lush plant growth within a few short weeks.

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Some plants require more water than others. Because of the dryness of the air surrounding the plant and the type of plants that require more water, you could be watering some of your house plants every other day. This means spending time watering your plants and less time enjoying them. The Plant Waterer can reduce the number of times you will be required to get out the watering can as well as measuring and mixing your fertilizer. The Plant Waterer can stretch your watering schedule by as much as ten days.

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Reduces plant loss up to 50%
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I became interested and started to grow primroses in 1930. My garden is in the town of Siauliai, the northern part of Lithuania.

The winter temperatures there occasionally drop to -30°C (-22°F). Annual rainfall is about 600 mm (24 in.). Winter snow cover is usually adequate to protect plants from freezing. The warmest month is July with an average temperature of 17°C (62°F) and the coldest is January with an average temperature of -5°C (23°F).

Primroses grow well in Lithuania

by M. Zilevicius
P/d 43
235000 Siauliai
Lithuanian SSR

Unusual winter

Some winters are usually cold like the one of 1978/79. After a very wet autumn the ground froze early before the snows came. The temperature in December and January dropped down to -30°C (-22°F).

The sudden freeze of the wet ground without snow caused havoc in our orchards and gardens. Primroses suffered badly. Primula japonica A. Gray, P. x Bullesiana hort., blue flowered P. vulgaris Huds., P. elatior (L) J. Hill, Light violet P. dentiflora Sm. are also infrequent.

In my own garden, besides the varieties mentioned above, I also have P. vulgaris Huds., P. officinalis (L) J. Hill, P. Juliae Kuzn. in several colors, blue P. vulgaris Huds., pink and white P. cortusoides hort., P. Sieboldii E. Morr., P. Auricula L., white violet P. dentiflora Sm., red, pink and white P. japonica A. Gray, yellow and orange P. Florindae F. K. Ward. In 1969 I started from seed P. Bulleyana hort. and P. Beesiana Forr.

Rosea likes wet summers

Since 1977 I also have P. rosea Royle which grows particularly well in wet summers. This primrose I grow in a specially prepared site in the shade with peat moss added to the soil and I water it regularly during the growing season.

I fertilize all my primroses in the spring with regular garden fertilizer and 3-4 times in the summer with liquid (1:15) poultry manure. I propagate primroses from seed I collect and sow them in wooden flats outside in the fall. P. vulgaris Huds. I usually sow in the spring, about the beginning of April. Later the seedlings are transplanted into a nursery area until they are ready to be moved to a permanent location.

Propagation hints

Vegetative propagation by division is particularly easy with P. Juliae Kuzn., P. Auricula L., P. Sieboldii E. Morr. and P. vulgaris Huds. I usually propagate by division in the fall; early September is the best. If it is done much later, there is not enough time for the divisions to take hold before the freeze and the new plants perish in the winter. This happened to me in 1977 and 1978 when I was too late in dividing my blue flowered primroses! No pests seem to bother my primroses, except during some late and moist autumns when the slugs converge to devour the leaves.

I find the growing of primroses most exciting. Our climate seems to be suitable for many more varieties than we are now growing. In time I hope we will have more primrose lovers and more seed available of different varieties.

Translated from Lithuanian by V. O. Virkau, APS member from Downers Grove, Ill. Latin nomenclature has in most cases been consolidated with Hortus III. Mr. Zilevicius would undoubtedly be pleased if members would share a little choice seed with him.
Abstracts list primula articles

by James D. Menzies

What have the botanists and other scientists of the world been doing with primula? To find out, I spent some hours in the Science Library of Tacoma's University of Puget Sound. They subscribe to Biological Abstracts, a massive periodical that contains short reports (in English) on thousands of technical articles that are published each month anywhere in the world. In many cases the original appeared in some obscure journal in a foreign language and is either unavailable or unreadable to me.

Primula references
I went through the indices back to 1960 and picked up about 40 references to work on primula. I have these in a card file. If any reader wishes more information on any of the articles, I can supply the reference.

First, I found no listing of any work on primula from China or Southeast Asia — where most of the primula species occur. These "closed" countries do not share their science with the West very well. I hope that in a few years we can make contact with native botanists, plant explorers and other scientists from these countries and re-establish scientific exchange.

Names, classification
In the area of species names and classification most activity was in Russia and eastern Europe. A 1974 Russian paper, for example, lists 67 species of primula growing in the USSR. Probably many of these are newly described since our APS dictionary was published. A paper from Yugoslavia listed kitaibeliana, wulfeniana and auricula among the rare and endangered species of that country.

An example from the era of naming all sorts of varieties was a report made in 1962 (Czechoslovakian) describing and evaluating no less than 67 varieties of malacoides available commercially in Europe. Today we are lucky to find even one "variety" of this beautiful annual listed in the seed catalogs.

I came across Noel Holmgren's original papers describing nevadensis and capillaris in western USA. The only other report on new species in North America was a Quebec article describing a natural hybrid between egaliksensis and stncta.

European taxonomic papers
Most of the taxonomic papers from Europe concerned sorting out natural hybrids, or local variations and forms, in an attempt to reduce the number of species previously described. Several authors have been redoing chromosome counts to establish degree of relatedness among species.

Bio-chemists, especially Japanese and German, have been doing a lot of work on strange (and perhaps useful) organic compounds naturally occurring in genus primula. There is interest in the saponins found in sieboldii and elatior as potential antibiotics. One Japanese paper reported the chemical identification of the principal saponin in sieboldii — the name took almost three lines of type! European chemists have reported on rare types of sugars and alcohols in different primula species as an aid in classification.

Chemical substances
Physiologists have been looking at chemical substances that can account for the way pollen germinates or why cross incompatibility between species occurs. A neat paper by Eisikowitch and Woodell, from the botany school at Oxford, explains why primrose pollen doesn't germinate in the anthers when the upright flowers get wet from rain. It turns out that there are inhibitors in the anther that keep them dormant. The pendant flowers of elatior stay dry inside. They don't need this inhibitor, and they don't produce it!

To end on an ecological note, I found a Russian paper that describes how some primulas have adapted to alpine conditions. The species pamirica, eligida and moorkroftiana have evolved as long-lived, slow-growing perennials (25 to 50 years life-span), with flower buds that take two years to develop, and with an extremely short seasonal growth cycle. This is certainly a necessary evolution to thrive in alpine meadows.

If any of us has some puzzling behavior in our primroses, we should try to interest the nearest university biology department. They could probably get a grant to research it for us.

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President's message

The APS primrose show each spring is the highlight of the year for many of our members. Even those of us who do not enjoy preparing, exhibiting or judging plants share with the public a renewed delight and wonder at the profusion of spring primroses.

A successful show does not happen without a great deal of planning and effort by the sponsoring club. Nor does it happen without rules, guidelines and traditions worked out over past years.

Our editor, Cy Happy, is wise in years of growing, exhibiting and judging primulas. He has raised his editorial eyebrows, in a recent issue of the quarterly, over some benching and judging deficiencies in recent shows. I plead guilty to having participated in some of these slips — like awarding the "best acaulis" trophy to a lovely plant that turned out to be polyanthus next morning!

It is difficult to get members together for training sessions in judging. But we have to work at it. I hope we can have a good workshop for judges before next year's show. It is not difficult to be on a judging panel once one knows the ropes. Beginning judges are always grouped with experienced ones. I urge all members to take part in any judging workshop in their area. You have a good time, learn a lot about primroses, have no obligation to judge if you don't want to.

Over the years a set of procedures and rules have been worked out governing the staging of a show, the proper classifying and benching of plants and details for selecting trophy winners. Perhaps, as Cy points out, we have been slipping away from these and need to re-emphasize them. Perhaps some need to be clarified or amended. There may be new rules needed.

I have asked Dorothy Dickson, Chehalis, to be chairman of a committee to look into these questions. The committee includes Cy Happy, Helen Clarke, Ross Willingham, Rosetta Jones, Thelma Genheimer and Orval Agee. All are experienced in exhibiting and judging. They have already met once but will do most of their work by correspondence. I have asked them to prepare their recommendations for action by the APS board of directors (if needed) before next spring's show.

Any members who would like to comment on any of these questions is encouraged to write or talk to me, to Dorothy or to any member of the committee. Opinions from non-exhibitors as well as exhibitors will be welcome and helpful.

James Menzies
We are just completing a new solar house five miles north of LaGrande on the slope of Mt. Emily. Just now we are very pressed for time. However, we have obtained a detailed map of the Wallowa area showing Target Springs and Little Sheep Creek Road. We hope to find time while roads are still in fair condition to drive to the Target Springs area.

Eastern Oregon State College is located here in LaGrande and some of the staff may be able to provide additional information about the location of Primula cusickiana. We have a four-wheel drive Chevy pickup.

I have never been a member of a plant search group but I cannot think of any good reason why we should not make a search for Primula cusickiana next spring.

Mrs. G. C. Tewinkel
Rt. 1, Box 1491
LaGrande, Oregon 97850

Congratulations on the cover photograph of the Quarterly, although that is as far as I can go. Just as well to let some time go by before writing to you. First of all, why belabour "Editor's Award." Once is enough, isn't it. Why not your favourite plant or something like that? The judges certainly made some mistakes but not in the case of Margaret Obersinner's beautiful P. chionantha.

The mistake in the index is most embarrassing, especially as your caption under the small photograph and next to my name incorrectly states that Primula tosaensis grows in Hokkaido. According to Ohwi it grows on Kyushu, Shikoku and Honshu in the Kinki District (Osada). Other authorities say limestone crags.

Also, your article seemed to imply by the word import and visiting nurseries that I bought the plants; everyone of them was given to me during my visit by wonderfully kind and generous people. Primulas reinii and tosaensis were given to me by someone who has made a careful study of the reinii section, grows them and has written about them, and is indeed taking a degree in botanical taxonomy. How shall I explain all this to him? The other members of the section I have, but so far have not managed to flower them. Reuben Hatch and Floyd McMullen have flowered P. takedana, Floyd's being especially beautiful and in the open ground. Mine are also in the open. No one as yet has seen P. hidakana in flower. Perhaps you should wait a little before expressing your own doubts so publicly.

I would be very glad if you could make some corrections in the next Quarterly.

Margaret Mason
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Here are two slides of Primula suffrutescens as they grow in my "alpine house." We were disappointed in not being able to get better photographs. They bloomed over a period of several weeks, but only one or two trusses at a time. As one stem faded, another opened its buds. Most annoying. However, this will show that they do bloom, however scattered the flowers, and will hope for a better show next year.

Reba Wingert
1715 Llandoff Pl.
Victoria, B.C. V8N 4V2

We haven't a lot coming on that is new really, just plodding along. It is a hobby that has escaped into a business that is full time now with seeds of all kinds, plants etc. Our gold lace seem to be pretty good. The origins of these were Mr. Haysom, and also some of our auriculas have come from him way back. We don't get time really to do serious plant breeding, but my wife Beverly loves doing the pollinating so that is something. She does the auriculas, gold lace, double polys, julianas, jack-in-green and hose-in-hose and others. My brother Tony does all the Regal strain of polyanthus.

Mrs. Agee sent us five seeds of pink cowichan several years ago and some nice pink polys from them as well. We were very sorry to hear of Mrs. Agee's passing; it was indeed a great loss.

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Gig Harbor, Wash. 98335
Diary of a Primroser

by Cy Happy

Fall is the time primroses come to life again. The plants have produced crisp new leaves. Hose-in-hose hybrids are blooming nicely. So is a Guinevere hybrid. Auriculas are headed for winter quarters—either greenhouse or porch. Careful planning now will bring good flowers at show time.

A watering with a little 0-10-10 fertilizer is a good practice once or twice during fall and winter. I favor Liquinox “Bloom.” Must have been using it for more than 20 years. The spray program using Cygon 2E has wiped out the pesky root aphids.

Guess who helped

P. pubescens “Janet” was suffering with brussel sprout disease—many tight clusters of leaf rosettes. I was waiting for a normal offset so I could throw the rest away. Then a friendly slug ate away all the diseased portion.

The Thompson & Morgan julianas sown in the spring produced sturdy little plants now established in the cold frame. If, as I hope, the seed originated with Sakata in Japan, the colors will be intense. These dwarfs come in all the best colors and nicely complement the giant polyanthus and acaulis available at garden stores and supermarkets. Connoisseurs of julianas might consider them a bit leafy, but careful selection and feeding could minimize that problem.

Primula expert

I am looking forward to meeting Alfred Evans of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, at the study weekend in Victoria, B.C., the end of February. He is an expert on primulas, including many species grown at the garden. To attend, contact Sybil McCulloch, 5021 Prospect Lake Rd., Victoria, B.C., Canada V8X 3X3.

Ross Willingham, seed exchange chairman, 2248 S. 134th, Seattle, Wash., 98168, is urging members to get seeds to him promptly. Has anyone saved specific colors of polyanthus besides Jim Menzies? Jim grows a “shocking” pink!

Watch for report

We expect a report for next issue from Jim and Marion Menzies, who have just returned from New Zealand, Australia and Tasmania, where they were scheduled to meet Allen Goodwin.

Our fall weather continues mild with only one day of light frost. Very hard to sit at a desk while the autumn sun shines. Photographed the fall color at the Wagners’ garden. Flame colored leaves, dark trunks, hazy sun low in the sky—a great opportunity for making pictures.

Go ahead and disagree

Editing this publication is fun because of the nice people we get to know and the fascinating plants we study. There is a tradition of primrosers disagreeing and saying so. Hence when I could not fit Margaret Mason’s P. tosaensis to the description by Kitemura and Murata or Ohwi, I questioned the name and said it seemed closer to P. hidakana and called for comments. First came Margaret’s reply, and then Margaret’s friend in Japan sent her plants of P. hidakana, which she shared with me. What could be nicer than that?

We must strive for botanical accuracy in the quarterly. New, rare or unfamiliar plants require special attention. If we make a mistake, it could be repeated over and over through the years. Please correct the last issue where it states P. tosaensis is a native of Hokkaido. This plant is from Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. P. hidakana is from alpine Hokkaido.

Addresses and dates

The address for Sakata Seed Co. as published recently was not quite complete. It is: C.P.O. Box Yokohama #11, Yokohama, Japan 220-91. Sakata is the producer of the new vivid juliana strain and a wide range of polyanthus.

The national show will be at Meeker Street Shopping Mall, Kent, Wash., on April 19 and 20, 1980. Contact Ross Willingham for the schedule.

This is your last chance!
Send your primula seeds today.

ROSS WILLINGHAM
Seed Exchange Chairman
2248 S. 134th
Seattle, Wash. 98168

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P. parryi in Wyoming

P. parryi, recently featured in the quarterly, was photographed on Hunt Mountain, Wyoming, by Edith Dusek of Graham, Wash. Mrs. Dusek's photo series shows the lovely American native primula growing in clefts in a rock plateau.