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THE ORIGIN OF THE ALPINE AURICULA

Walter C. Blasdale, Berkeley, Calif.

One searches in vain through the many articles on the history of the Auricula, which have appeared during the last fifty years, for specific information as to one of its most popular strains, namely, that which we now know as the “Alpine Auricula.” Named varieties of the edged strains began to appear at least as early as 1757 and their number increased rapidly thereafter, but neither named nor unnamed forms of the Alpine strain appear in the work of Emmerton (1817) or Thomas Hogg (1832).

I have recently examined such horticultural books and periodicals, published since 1800, as were accessible at the Library of the University of California, in the hope of bringing to light some information on this subject.

The earliest record in which the Alpine Auricula is mentioned was found in vol. 18 (1871) of the Journal of Horticulture of London. On page 393 of that volume there is reprinted from vol. 3 of Florist and Pomologist a report on an exhibit of Auriculas, which reads:

“Seedling Auriculas have been one of the specialties which, during the last three or four years, Mr. Charles Turner of Slough has been in the habit of exhibiting at spring shows at South Kensington; and rich and varied in colouring as they are, it is no matter of wonder that they should generally have acted on the admiring crowd as one of the principal centers of attraction. Certainly, few groups of flowers could have been more truly beautiful, while in their beauty few could have more thoroughly combined the elements of simplicity and gayety; and when to this is added the fact that improvement is manifestly going on amongst them, form and color proportions being moulded to the Florist’s standard, who can wonder that the Alpine Auricula (which the selfs perhaps precluded) should, on account of their more decided and richer hues, prove more popular, at least in general public assemblies, than the grotesque brethren, the greens, the whites, and the grays?—though even these we are glad to meet with more attention and admiration than they did a few years ago, and might properly again become popular, if growers could be induced to cultivate them and exhibit them more freely.”

The writer then describes three of these varieties and concludes with the statement that “on account of their more vigorous constitution and freer habits of growth these Alpine Auriculas are likely to rise in popular favor.” From subsequent volumes of the same Journal we learn that the Mr. Turner here referred to was a florist of Slough, near London, who maintained a remarkably fine collection of edged Auriculas, developed several fine named varieties of both edged and Alpine Auriculas and regularly made outstanding exhibits at Auricula shows for many years.
Apparently he left no record of any kind concerning his work, nor have I been able to discover why the term "Alpine" came to be associated with the strain which he is supposed to have originated.

Although the older enthusiasts acknowledged the beauties of that strain they expressed a decided aversion to accepting it as a worthy competitor of the edged varieties. Nevertheless, prizes continued to be offered at shows for an ever-lengthening list of named Auriculas of the Alpine class, which continued to replace the edged sorts in popular favor, even up to present, although it must be admitted that this was due quite largely to the greater ease of procuring and growing them.

I have already suggested (1) that the Alpine Auriculas may also have originated in France, because of certain statements in a book on the Auricula by M. Guonin, published in 1788. He there describes a strain of "Pures", that is, varieties with only one ground color, which he considers worthy of a special name, stating: "I call Shaded Auriculas, those plants of the Pure class which are shaded and pleasingly velvety, with a black or brownish shade in the middle of each petal, by which it becomes set off at the edge. They are the most beautiful flowers in the world: such as for example is le Feu Ombre, le Feu Tingresse, le Pancebroeck or Reine Elizabeth and many others: but it appears that nature made an effort to produce them because they are not large". Additional information given concerning them is that the ground color is much darker near the eye (that is the latter is without paste) and that there are no green, gray, or white edgings. These statements agree closely with those used at present to define the Alpine Auriculas.

Light was also thrown upon this subject in a paper found in a Belgian Horticultural Magazine (2), printed in 1855, and written by its editor, M. Charles Morren, who was a citizen of Liege and one of the distinguished horticulturists of his time. His comprehensive article is entitled (translated) "Note on the Liege Auricula". In it he states that the original Auricula was brought into the principality of Liege, presumably from Germany, at a very early date, became the adopted child of the country, and was so greatly improved by its florists that it made the name of that city known everywhere. He deplores the lack of interest in it by the citizens of Liege in later years and states that they transferred their affections to other flowers derived from no one knows where, made a great festival in honor of novelties from China, Japan, the Americas and India, which required a crystal palace for their display and that, when a stranger came to admire and procure some Liege Auriculas, he could not find any but was confronted with a horrible creature, the Oreille d'Ours, which one found everywhere. These disheartening statements are somewhat mitigated by the fact that a later citizen of Liege and a successful florist, M. Jacob Weyhe, after retiring from business devoted himself to improving the Liege Auricula still further and was the possessor of a hundred named varieties of surpassing beauty. A colored plate accompanying this article (reproduced in black and white in Fig. 1) portrays single flowers of twelve of these varieties, which display excellent craftsmanship and appear to be true to nature. The eyes are either white or shades of yellow; the ground colors include red, crimson, purple, blue, and brown; some show changes from darker to lighter shades in passing from the eye to the uniformly colored rim at the periphery of the petals; others show changes in the primary color, such as from red to yellow, yielding flowers with two ground colors. M. Morren states more precisely the features which characterize a Liege Auricula as follows: "The ground color ought to be very dark at the middle of the base of each division of the limb and, passing from the central point, the degree of darkness should decrease insensibly for a certain distance toward the edge, where a white or pale color should prevail. Since every plant shows such a color scheme the result is a crown of rich and somber color surrounding the eye and is set off by the lighter ring." Additional statements are that the Liege Auricula is not delicate, preserves the natural rusticity of the parent species, suffers from humidity rather than cold, and can be grown in the open as well as in pots, but requires some protection against midday sun.

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(2) La Belgique Horticole, Liége. Vol. 5, Pages 523-531.
Although M. Morren refers to the ancient three-fold classification of Auriculas into Pures, Striped, and Bizarre, he states that horticulturists of his time recognize only two classes, namely, English Auriculas for which he has little liking, and Liège Auriculas which he puts ahead of all others. He believes however that two other classes should be added: (a) single colored Auriculas whose only additional color is that of the eye and (b) double Auriculas, the most popular of which are the reds and the browns.

It seems clear that the Liège Auricula described by M. Morren is essentially the same as the Alpine Auricula of Turner, although described sixteen years earlier. None of the names associated with the Liège varieties of Morren or the shaded varieties of Guénin corresponds to those of the English varieties of which I have record. There is no evidence that Mr. Turner derived his strain from Belgian or French sources although he might have done so.

M. Morren assumes that the Liège strain was derived from P. Auricula but makes no attempt to explain the source of the red, purple, and blue colors found in its flowers. In England, at least, the theory advanced by Kerner (3) to explain the origin of the cultivated Auricula is widely accepted. This theory assumes that they were derived from natural hybrids between P. Auricula and P. hirsuta. It is based in part on records dating from near the end of the sixteenth century and in part on specimens of natural hybrids between these species, collected and studied by Kerner, for which the name P. x pubescens is used. This theory makes it possible to explain the wide diversity in the ground colors of the Alpine Auriculas as the result of changes in the coloring matter found in the flowers of P. hirsuta, to which the name hirsutin has been given. This substance, in dilute solution, passes through a series of color changes, from red to purple and blue, when very slight changes are made in the acidity of the solution. Such changes might easily arise in the cell sap of the petals of the Auricula flowers containing hirsutin and in time become permanent features of different varieties of such Auriculas. To explain these shadings in different parts of the same petal would necessitate the assumption of changes in total concentration of hirsutin; this is not an unreasonable assumption.

Further than this, according to Biffin (4) plants of P. hirsuta produce flowers which deepen toward their centers and fade out toward their margins. This peculiarity might be intensified by a series of selections and in time become a permanent feature of a race of hybrids in which P. hirsuta was a parent species. Biffin is convinced that the Alpine strain was derived from P x pubescens. There is no reason for thinking that the Liège strain was not derived from it, other than the questionable statement of M. Morren that the Auricula introduced into Liège at an early date was derived from P. Auricula.

I find no objection to assuming that the Alpine and the Liège Auriculas, though practically identical, were originated independently. It seems probable that plants with their peculiar shadings and brilliant colorings appeared in collections of seedling Auriculas at different times and places. Appreciation of the beauties of plants possessing these peculiarities would naturally lead to continued selection from them for the perpetuation and intensification of these features.

The publication of the first account of Turner's Alpine Auricula was followed by occasional reports in the same journal, extending over many years. Improvement and continued interest in this strain was indicated.

On the contrary, at least twenty-eight of the volumes of Belgique Horticole, which followed the one in which M. Morren's paper was published, are strangely lacking in any reference to the Liège or any other type of Auricula. Neither Morren's eulogy on its attractions nor his diatribe against his fellow citizens seems to have aroused interest. Nevertheless there is evidence that the Liège Auricula has been preserved and grown in continental Europe fairly recently. I find that Hegi, in his Flora of Central Europe (5) published in 1927, classifies the Auriculas grown as; (a) Ordinary, single colored, white-eyed Auriculas; (b) Lutticher or Liège

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Fig. 2. Named varieties of Alpine Auriculas. Reproduced from Garden Magazine for 1914.

Photo: Walter C. Blackdale

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(5) Hegi, Gustave, Flora von Mittel europa, Munchen, Band, 5; 2, page 1770.
Auriculas, whose flowers have a yellow or olive eye, two main colors or a single color which is darker nearer the eye and lighter towards the edge, produces no farina and is the most widely cultivated; (c) English Auriculas, often three-colored and always farinate; (d) double Auriculas, which are reproduced vegetatively only. Also Filetto, in a book on out-of-door Primulas (6), gives the same classification and reproduces a photograph which is clearly that of an Alpine Auricula. Finally, Mottet, in a book on Primulas (7), published in 1912, reports that the Auricula is cultivated in northern France, Belgium, and Flanders, but has attained its highest degree of perfection in England. He outlines the four-fold classification just given and states that the Liege race is most generally cultivated as a garden plant because of the great diversity of its colors.

In so far as I can ascertain Great Britain is the only country in which named varieties of Alpine Auriculas can now be obtained. An especially fine colored plate of three of them, which I have reproduced in Fig. 2, appeared in 1914 in the Garden Magazine (8). Of the three trusses there portrayed No. 1, Phyllis Douglas, is white centered with a dark maroon ground color shading to light red; No. 2, Argus, also white centered but with a dark red ground color shading to light red; No. 3, Golden Dustman.

Fig. 3. Seedling Alpine Auriculas, Berkeley, April 23, 1922.

Photo: Walter C. Blasdale

gold centered with a maroon ground color shading to blood red. The vivid colors and large size of the flowers suggest to me greatly improved Geraniums, although I fear I may arouse the ire of Auricula enthusiasts by comparing any strain of Auricula with so plebeian a plant.

The seed of Alpine Auriculas may be obtained from certain British firms and yields a good percentage of beautiful plants. A photograph, taken in 1922, of several plants grown from such seed is reproduced in Fig. 3. These plants and others grown since that year have shown wide variation in the size and color intensities of the more deeply colored portions of the petals. In many of them the transition from the darker to the lighter portions is so abrupt as to scarcely justify the term shaded. In others the lighter portion becomes pure white and forms a continuous ring of varied width. In still others there is a distinct change in the primary color justifying the use of the term two-colored. In some the color pattern suggests that found in the Peacock Iris (Moraea glau-copsis) and certain species of Calochortas. There are notable differences also in the foliage; farina sometimes appears on the leaves, more rarely and in small amounts on the petals.

The features which define the Alpine Auricula appeared at different times and places and have been accentuated by selection. Although several of these can be attributed to P. hirsuta, one of the parent species, there is little reason for considering this Auricula a distinct phylogenetic race. Further study of a large number of seedling plants might warrant division of it into races, each defined by groups of characteristics.

Gerald Hew Dalrymple

Horticulturists all over the country will regret the passing of Mr. G. H. Dalrymple, who was one of the ablest men of his profession in his time. He loved his flowers and—may I say it—they loved him.

His delightful home at “House in the Wood” was the Mecca of keen plant lovers and its lovely gardens have often been pictured in gardening journals.

His contributions to such journals were always of extreme interest and demonstrated his experience in plant growing. He had a wonderful collection of plants and cultivated them with an understanding that culminated in success.

He will be remembered for many notable introductions to the realms of commerce, especially his magnificent strain of Freesias, his lovely strain of Primula pulverulenta, his exquisite forms of edged Auriculas as well as his alpines.

His Auriculas were very fine and he was to the last busily engaged in developing new types of these grand flowers.

Horticulture will be the poorer for his passing. Those of us who survive to carry on will miss him, his skill, his generosity, and his hospitality will long be appreciated. The little man with the big heart will long be remembered by those who had the good fortune to know him.

* * *

In part from November issue of “Gardening Illustrated” (England) written by Mr. Dalrymple’s life-long friend, the well-known writer, Mr. G. M. Taylor.

Known to Americans chiefly for his development of the Hartley Strain of P. pulverulenta, his Auriculas, his experiments with and extensive cultivation of Asiatic Primulas, and his writings, the name of G. H. Dalrymple will remain forever bright in Primula history.
THE AURICULA IN ENGLAND

R. H. Briggs, Rawtenstall, England

At what period the Auricula first made its appearance in England is uncertain but Gerard, one of our earliest writers on flowers, speaks of it as being no stranger in 1597 but its introduction to the northern Counties can be more directly traced to the arrival of Flemish craftsmen, weavers in particular, who, fleeing from persecution in their own country settled here.

It is said that just as one such family was preparing to flee in a tiny boat their eyes fell on a little plant in a window-box outside the home they were leaving, so hastening back they placed it with their belongings and it ultimately settled in Lancashire.

Be that as it may, Lancashire has always been the County in which the Auricula has been most highly cherished and most assiduously cultivated and much of the improvement in the Auricula is due to the patience and enthusiasm of its artisans.

It is just possible that the same climatic conditions which have made Lancashire the pre-eminent County in the cotton industry may have contributed to some extent to the successful culture of the Auricula, the humidity of the atmosphere generally and the absence of aridity for any long period in summer favouring both.

But Flemish craftsmen settled in other parts of the country according to where the particular crafts were practised and eventually pockets of Auricula culture developed, one such pocket appeared in the Midlands as witness the invitation here recorded—old English spelling used.

"Lichfield", April, 1769.

"Your company is desired to Dine with the Friendly Society of Florists and Gardiners at the House of John Barnes, at the Chequers, in Lombard St., Lichfield, on Tuesday the 25th day of April, 1769, where will be held the Shew of Auriculas and Polianthes for which there will be the following Prizes:

For the best and completest Auricula...........£0.10 0.
" second best ........... 5. 0.
" best and completest Polianthes............. 10. 0.
" second best ........... 5. 0.

The flowers to be of your own culture and delivered to the Stewards by Twelve o'clock, proper care will be taken of them until a Committee is chosen to determine Prizes.

Dinner to be on the table at Two o'clock.

We are, Sir,

Your most humble servants,
Richard Fenton and
John Bramhall,
Stewards.

Another such pocket was formed in East Anglia, as the rather quaint notice taken from an old Ipswich newspaper shows.

Ipswich, April 17th, 1776.

"The Auricula Show at Simon Jackerman's at the Bowling Green will be on Thursday, the 25th inst. when each of the persons who produce the two best flowers, if they have been their own property for three months, will be entitled to a Prize.

A Prize will be given to him also who shows the best seedling, if it is of his own raising.

The flowers to be at the Bowling Green by 12 O'clock where the company of Florists will be esteemed a favour."

Dinner at Two.

Jas. Blyth, President.
S. Simpson
H. Moore
Stewards.

N. B. The Bowling Green will be open the same day.

These pockets unfortunately have died out, the Midland section ceased to function, the Southern section ceased activities during the war years but is now trying to re-organise, Lancashire alone has stood firm in its allegiance to the Auricula through good years and bad.

Though organised Societies in other areas ceased to exist it must not be assumed there is little or no interest in the Auricula outside Lancashire, quite the contrary, the issuing and advertising recently of a Year Book by the parent Society has revealed a widespread interest and enquiries as to where best to obtain plants, both for garden decoration and exhibition, as well as for cultural advice, came from almost every County in the British Isles.

It was in 1872 the devotees of Lancashire and adjacent Counties banded themselves together to form the first Auricula Society and it is recorded on the first page of the Minute Book that a Show should be held each year in Manchester and every year, with one exception—that being when the Exhibition Hall was destroyed in the City—the Society has fulfilled its obligation to its members.

There were occasions during the two wars when it seemed almost hopeless to carry on but the dour and dogged members would not accept defeat and to-day it is a flourishing Society enjoying a greatly increased membership.

As to the Auricula itself it cannot be denied that as a garden favourite it has suffered eclipse, for the time being at any rate, by the introduction of greatly improved strains of Primroses and Polyanthuses—with which florists have worked wonders—but there are signs already that the neglect from which it has suffered so long has been recognized for a recent advertisement calls attention to newer, brighter, and better varieties.

In contrast, those few florists who have specialised in the cultivation of the Auricula from the exhibitor's point of view have evolved a flower of a beauty and perfection beyond which it seems well nigh impossible to go.
The Auriculas illustrated by Gerard and Parkinson are miserable looking specimens compared with the noble trusses which adorn our exhibition tables to-day, indeed it is hard to believe they can be one and the same plant.


The "Show" Auriculas with their quaint and unique Dresden-china-like appearance, though not suitable for garden decoration are in increasing favour by those who can give them the slight protection they need and so richly deserve, for no other plant in the floral world can vie with them.

Hudson, writing of the Auricula in his "English Florist" published in 1794 says—

"The Auricula is the glory of the garden for the variety of its colouring, the stateliness of its form, the delicacy of its fragrance." Hudson was right, but to appreciate what a lovely thing the Auricula can be one should see it in its proper setting: look in at the garden gate of one of our old English cottages or walk in the old-world garden of one of the "State-

ly Homes of England" there, clothed with beauty and grace, cascading with joyous abandon on to the red-tiled paths, immune alike to frost or drought, it flourishes and multiplies and yearly proclaims its message as a Herald of Spring.

Rules governing Alpine Auriculas and Show Auriculas as outlined by the late Mr. G. H. Dalrymple are set forth on page 14, July, 1946, Quarterly.
SIX MEETINGS, JUNE THROUGH NOVEMBER

Mr. Robert E. Relder, formerly of Oregon State College and currently with the Shell Oil Co. as entomologist, addressed members of the Society in June on the subject of the life cycle and habits of Strawberry Root Weevil. Mr. Relder stated that control of the over-wintering adults, which usually become active in April, would materially reduce infestation. It was pointed out that this insect had been content to feed on wild strawberries until cultivation destroyed its original source of food and that now the beetle was gradually developing a fondness for an ever-widening type of plant material. Cultivated strawberries, Rhododendrons, Camellias, Roses, Saxifrages as well as Primulas are on the preference list.

A picture of intense activity was drawn when Mr. Relder said there were at least six species of these hard-shelled beetles working at the same time—the adult form above ground chewing leaves, the larvae below eating roots. Topside damage is not dangerous but evidence of the beetle is seen in chewed-out leaf edges of the above plants and shrubs. The beetle feeds at night, usually hiding in the soil at the base of the plant during the day, often remaining underground a week in which time a deposit of eggs may be made.

Control of the over-wintering adults is important for much of the infestation which follows is caused by the egg-laying of these stragglers. The first bait should be placed about the first of April in climates similar to that of the northwest, the second and third baits should be around the first of May and June. Baits composed of calcium arsenate or sodium fluo-silicate in a beet or apple pomace carrier are considered best. Bait should be placed under the leaves next to the crown for best results.

Red spider mite, a summer pest, builds up extensively by midsummer if predators are not numerous and drought conditions are permitted. Most plants have a specific species of mite which suck the plant juices causing a characteristic yellowing of foliage. Soap and nicotine sulfate in water provides effective control. Since the mites cling to the underside of leaves the reverse side of foliage should be sprayed. The soap causes a chemical reaction which releases the nicotine more effectively in addition to washing the wax off the mite allowing better contact.

Mr. Relder stated that damage could be reduced to a minimum by timely application of pest controls and sanitary conditions.

The annual picnic, July 16th, was an outdoor holiday at the Redwoods Gardens, Dora Broetje's thoroughly charming place in Milwaukie. It was one of those delightfully informal affairs where many made speeches and all picnicked well. Mrs. Carl Linke was in charge of arrangements.

In August the members were brought back to seriousness by a review of the sections of the genus by Donald O'Connell. Inasmuch as this presentation was a forerunner of Mr. O'Connell's comprehensive presentation of the sections with descriptive enumeration of the known species scheduled for the coming Year Book and succeeding numbers, justice will be done by the author.

Colored slides of Mrs. A. C. U. Barry's Primula plantings and speci-
slopes. Mrs. Torpen told of her surprise and delight at finding an ancient apple tree in full bloom, alone save for the crags in the background and Muscari in the fore. A native tapestry, dagger and photographs of the people and region were brought for the visual enjoyment of members. Mrs. John M. Young talked on the Cortusoides Section listing the species and giving references where pertinent information could be found particularly suggesting the material in the October, 1943 and January, 1944 Quarterlys. The hardiness, handsome foliage and beauty of bloom of these species were discussed with the added point that the Primulas of this section require less water than other Asiatiques. Differentiations between the closely related Primulas Veitchii and lichian-genesis were pointed out. The much desired pure white Sieboldii is now listed by growers as “Purity”, Mrs. Young stated, and that it was the only pure white Primula due to the absence of the characteristic yellow eye.

Dues News

Dues remain unchanged, $1.50 for 1947 payable as early in the year as convenient. Sustaining Memberships of $5 are provided for those who wish to additionally aid the Society in its work. Kindly forward memberships and renewals to Mrs. John H. Holmes, Treasurer, Route 6, Box 1104, Portland 1, Oregon.

The fourteen Quarterly publications issued prior to 1947 are still available although a few numbers will soon be out of print. Entire set may be had for $8.50 from Mrs. S. R. Smith, Cor. Sec'y, Route 16, Box 102, Portland 2, Oregon.

More Gift Seed

The Society wishes to express appreciation to Mrs. J. Robt Chrismon of Greensboro, N. C., Mrs. Lyle Lee, Portland, Dr. C. Wesley Sewall, Boston, Mr. Robert Argle, Kelso, Wn., and Mrs. V. L. Blinn, Akron, Ohio for sending choice seed to the Secretary for distribution in addition to that received from Mrs. John L. Karnopp, Portland, Mrs. John Pearson, Monroe, Oregon and Mrs. W. H. Haydon, Riderwood, Maryland listed on page 25, October Quarterly.

Available to members in good standing upon receipt of a self-addressed stamped envelope are: Primulas capitata Mooreana, Bullesiana hybrida (Bulleyana x Beesiana), japonica (white with pink eye), japonica (red, carmine and pink), helodoxa, chungensis, pulverulenta, pulverulenta Bartley strain (pink).

Here is exotic beauty and oriental splendor for the asking. Mrs. S. R. Smith, Cor. Sec'y, Route 16, Box 102, Portland 2, Oregon is in charge.

Winter is the ideal time to sow Asiatiques leaving seed pans to freeze with the weather. Keep moist and cover with glass pane against heating rains. Transplant in spring to a porous potting mixture and water from the bottom. For habits of Asiatic Primulas and their culture, see page 8, volume 3, No. 1 “Understanding the Asiatiques”.

American Primrose Society’s Year Book

The Year Book (April issue) will carry pictures of spring gayety, as many of the excellent cultural articles on hand as can be accommodated, how to use Polyanthus and Asiatiques in the landscape, will begin the monumental work on sections of the genus Primula with description of known species in addition to the roster, reports of officers and exciting advertisements. If you do not receive your copy by mid-April check up on 1947 dues payment. If not paid, a check to the Treasurer will bring the book; if paid, kindly notify and records will be checked.

Winter Seeding

Now is an excellent time for seed sowing. If seed pans are covered with glass panes, kept moist and permitted to freeze and thaw with the weather, seedlings will come along with the spring and, in many areas, will be ready for permanent positions by June. Remove glass when germination begins at which time a light sprinkling of fine sand is advantageous if seeds are exposed. Young seedlings must be protected from hot sun, rain, pests and birds.

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Blue, pink, red, leathercoats, gold and deep yellow, almost black, lovely pastels and many others.

Their sweet fragrance and beauty of foliage add much to the increasing popularity of the Auricula.

Mixed only—$1 per pkt.

New list of plants and other seed on request.

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National Auricula Society

(of England)

The Society's YEAR BOOK illustrated with COLORED PLATES, depicting recent prize-winning varieties will be ready early February (1947).

Price $1.25 post paid

R. H. Briggs, Hon. Sec'y
High Bank,
Rawtenstall, England

Choice Primrose Seeds from

The Redwoods Garden

Polyanthus seeds in mixed colors. Separate colors in white, pink, red, yellow, and watermelon shades.

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Garden Auriculas in mixed colors of blue, red, yellow, white and soft tan shades.

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