President's Message

By now you should have your income tax hassle out of the way and can expend your energy on growing primroses. I am going to simplify primrose growing for you like the government simplified our tax forms. Don't only grow primroses; but, show them, promote them, spread your knowledge, interest and enthusiasm to other gardeners. Don't forget that probable gardeners, especially young adults will grow primroses and become members of the APS. Now, doesn't that simplify the growing of primroses?

Increased membership is what the APS needs. The big effort this year is for new members. With enough members in an area you can form a local chapter with regular meetings where you make friends, share information and plants, learn more about the cultivation of the many species of Primula and even have primrose shows where you can sell plants to the public and spread your knowledge and interest to a wider circle. It is really simple if you work at it.

Here in the Pacific Northwest after a very mild winter our Primula are looking better than ever and blooming earlier than usual. The six shows in this area should be loaded with top quality bloom of juliae hybrids in the early show to candelabras in the late show. This year we are making a special effort to sign-up members at the shows.

I want to congratulate all the members who helped with the primula display at the Philadelphia Spring Garden Show. I hear it was a huge success.

Get involved and display your primroses every chance you get at garden club flower shows or any other kind of garden show. It is nice to have a special primrose show, but not necessary to show your primroses and acquaint new people with them.

Yours for good growing and showing,

Herb Dickson
I loved that article Irene Buckles wrote about P. cusikiana. I could almost smell them—I had to go and have a smell of some red primroses I’ve got in the greenhouse. I keep them there as its nice and shady. Funny thing, they are a new strain brought out by a Swiss firm and they have called them “Wanda primrose”. They are not a bit like Wanda, wrong colour flower and wrong rootstock. However they are good doers and I suppose Mrs. Public won’t be so critical as me. They have got lovely dark reddish green leaves and dark red flowers and of course I picked them over at the garden centre and picked the 2 I thought best—one pin, one thrum. They are a seedling strain with an eye like Cowichans.

To get back to Irene and P. cusikiana, I knew they existed, I did not know they grew in the Wallowas. I thought they grew “in the middle”. I was struck with their similarity to P. eliatia, even to the stripes of farina on the calyx. In P. eliatia this develops with the bud, and then the flower. I have not noticed it on the seedpod. I am sorry I did not save any seed this year—I had grown a lot of seedlings on and I am afraid I forgot other people wanting it. P. eliatia lasts about 7 months. I did write to Irene, without waiting for the Fall Quarterly. I felt very cheeky and grabbing, but I sent her some seed of P. scottica and some wild primula (primrose I think) I gathered on holiday in the Isle of Wight, on the shady side of a north facing chalk slope.

The other article that really entranced me was the one by Beryl Orchard about Primroses in Devon. I have got an old school friend living in Somerset, almost next door, and I am going to ask her if I can come and see her in March. I am going back to the Isle of Wight as well, if I can, to see the flowers of the plants I discovered.

Luckily the weather has done the unexpected, as it usually does in England, which is why we always talk about it so much. Last year the coldest year on record, this year the mildest. We have had a week or so of frosts in December and now its mild and the West wind is blowing and all the plants think winter is over and Spring has come. . . . I was contacted by a new member, both of APS and also NAPS(M). His wife wanted to collect Auriculas. I invited him to visit and have her some plants. She wanted to buy, but I said No. I discovered the man, Bob Gosby, used to work at a famous old Nursery we had in Wolverhampton, Bakers. No relation. That was the Nursery that introduced Primula Wanda way back in 1923, the year I was born. Bob came back two days later with a large clump of the original Primula Wanda, vegetatively propagated all those years. He informed me it was named after Mrs. Wanda Mills, the wife of one of the Directors. He also gave me an open-ground Primula suffrutescens, a P. capitata with 3 crowns. And told me of all the Petiolarid primulas he’s got. “P. tanneri”, he said, “it’s pretty rare, isn’t it?” He’s got it.

Another friend gave me another marvellous swap, P. aureata forma. Every time he sees me he asks about its health. It was given in a pot with strict instructions it was never to see the sun. His mentor told me not to leave it outside in the frosts—he says it freeze dries and it’s the opposite of P. allionii. So I hedged my bets and I’ve got one indoors, under a polythene Ice Cream box outside; under a riddle and some green net and one outside under a pane of glass. Every night I think it might be frosty I have to put them to bed, under a polythene Ice Cream box outside; under a riddle and some green net shading and a bit of sheet polyurethane indoor. Quite a performance, but it will be worth it if that bud I spy comes out. Next on the list is P. aureata proper—if I can find out whose got it.

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My most notable success last year was P. cuneolica. I raised it from AGS seed, 4 plants, and when I moved them I moved them en bloc into bigger pots. Then they came up the 2nd year I fear I moved one into a pot by itself with as little root disturbance as I could. I have flowered, photographed and collected seed.

Enclosed is my picture taken of P. chionantha which was among seed secured from the 1979 or 1980 seed exchange. Only one seed germinated and the plant which bloomed this year was lovely. Evidently my seed and the seed planned by Linda Bailey came from the same place. I planted the seed in Portland and brought it to my son’s home on Bainbridge Island, last year. We have marveled at the beauty of this plant. The plant set seed which we are guarding and hope this seed will germinate.

When I sold my home in Portland, I brought to my son’s home 39 candelabra plants that Iy and Orval Agre had given to me. They have found the right home—we planted them in a boggy spot and what a great sight they are spring and early summer. We now have several hundred large plants.

Rosemary Burns, 225 Hi School Road NE, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

From time to time, both in Great Britain and the USA there is discussion about ‘Border Auricula’. To add to the confusion, may I ask, what are Border Auriculas? I would say those capable of being grown without protection in the open border. The plants should be attractive, floriferous and compact, and, as tastes forever differ, their colours could be either bright or more subdued.

Perhaps it would be easier to find a definition if we consider what they are not. In the Show Section they are not the edged varieties, but may possibly include Seifs. Alpines are clearly defined by their foliage and flowers being without meal and by the colour on their petals being a lighter shade at the edges. This is a characteristic that is strictly enforced by all three sections of the N.A.P.S.

Other classes we can eliminate are Species Auriculas and Species/Hybrids. If we include the old Dusty Millers and Old Irish Blue we must also include other varieties with meal leaves and flowers as well as those without meal.

In all “Show” varieties including the Alpines, the pips and petals should be perfectly flat and the edges entire, without being notched or pointed. In the informal border they need not be so specific and they could be reasonably notched or fluted as long as they were attractive.

In the Northern Section of the N.A.P.S., exhibits of Show and Alpines in pots, are judged on one stem, the others, if any, being removed or tied down by the exhibitor, but one of the beauties of Border Auriculas is their mass of bloom enhanced by compact attractive foliage.

As they would have to be posted for exhibiting, the normal rules would apply regarding presentation, clean unmarked foliage and flowers, etc. I think it would be difficult and unwise to make a rigid specification for Border Auriculas. It was done long ago with Border Carnations, which at first were to be grown unprotected in the open border except when needed for Show; when an inverted cup was allowed to protect the bloom. When the rule that they should be grown only in the open border was relaxed and they were grown under glass, they became exclusively bred for exhibition, with a consequent loss of vigor and hardiness and are now almost worthless as perennial border plants.

By all means breed, improve and exhibit Border Auriculas, but whereas Show and Alpines are grown and enjoyed by comparatively few, almost trouble free Borders are the joy of millions.

Hubert Calvert, 7, School Crescent, Lapset, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 8LX, England
Have the pleasure of lecturing and showing slides of my rock garden and primulas, to garden clubs and elderly groups, also on wild flowers. My rock garden is to complement my first love Primulas, they are the jewels of the garden. I started to grow primroses in earnest the spring of 1970. My garden is in a limited area, but no space is lost; every inch is made to count and to cater to the needs of the primula. I have grown many of these beauties, but alas our Maine weather is too harsh for some; however, many are happy here such as: Garden and Alpine P. auriculas, P. marginata cv ‘Linda Pope’, P. pubescens, P. glaucus and P. rubra. What is more beautiful than a clump of P. sieboldii? My plants came as seed from Barnhaven. One is a lovely Southern Cross the flowers are two-toned with apple blossom pink with a reverse side of lovely blue; the other has a snowflake pattern on a background of deep rose with a white star, I call it the North Star. Have the lovely P. cachiri also P. fontana, P. dontora, P. bulleri and the flaming beauty P. rosea, P. luteola, and the drumstick primula P. denticulata cv. ‘alba’.

Rosetta Jones has shared some of her seed, a wonderful double P. aculis and her Juliae, there should be some nice doubles in the spring. Have some of the older ones such as: Wanda, Snow White, Dorothy, Apple Blossom, Jay Jay and Kinlough Beauty. I would like to have some of the real old ones (one can dream can’t one)?

Of the beautiful double polyanthus, I have a nice assortment from Barnhaven seed and friends, a nice deep rose, pale yellow, white, deep red and a nice lavender.

Have only two P x cowhians one deep red the other a fine purple. A nice reddish-bronze P. × garryana. A good white Hose-in-Hose, Jack-in-the-green. I am trying to get up stock of this one, it came in a packet of seed from the Seed Exchange three years ago. A few Gold Lace and the wonderful P. abschisica. A nice collection of the old P. veris, I like these; the old addage ‘big is better’ is not always so, the old smaller ones are like old wine, priceless!

Ruth Bartlett Huston shared some of her double vernales seed with me last year, am looking forward to seeing these in the Spring.

Some other primulas I have are: P. japonica, bulleyana, cockburniana, chungensi, and iosa. I have seedlings that will bloom in the Spring, that is if they like us in Maine. Plan to try something new each year, as well as to try again some of the lost ones.

Harriett Gurney, 42 Water Street, Fairfield, Maine 04947

“Whew”, the storms are over! We definitely had some real “humdingers” down here. Wind and rain—then more wind and rain—and then for good measure—more rain. I just about tacked a sign in front of our home saying “Beckers Arts and More”. As I’m sure you heard, San Francisco and L.A. really got clobbered too. To top it all off, we also had an earthquake and then yesterday chilling, unexpected frost left everything sparkling with a coat of glister thick as can be.

Thankfully, all the plants are doing A-O.K! My ferns are lavishing themselves in all this rain, and the Primulas seem to be just complacently taking it all in. A couple of species, however, decided to pack their bags and head south for the winter, but I’ve been able to coax the rest into staying.

Greg Becker, P.O. Box 3723, Eureka, California 95501

I have never cultivated very great numbers of auriculas; it has always seemed a mistake to try to compete in the Shows with such people as the late Harold Hall and with the present day Frank Jennings, Jim Sherwood etc., all of whom are/were retired and with unlimited time for their plants.

I am surprised and, I suppose, also flattered at the interest in America of the Stripes. Strangely, I don’t have all that many, as they are reluctant to produce offsets and it is only recently that I have had any to spare. I am trying to produce ones which are definitely Stripes and not just poor-quality Edged pips with a tendency at striping.

I, too, had a poohsir seed-crop this year—and last year for that matter. Oddly, when I took little trouble over the pollinations, I always seemed to get crops of seed but now that I have been taking more care there seems to be a hoodoo on the process. I have told Jimmy Long and I am sure that it holds good for you, too, that there is probably more future in raising seedlings which suit your conditions rather than cultivating just British varieties. It is amazing, in any case, how performances vary even here, with much smaller distances involved. A plant like Margaret Faulkner is hopeless with me but it is a stalwart performer in the Midland Section.

Allan Hawker, Hazel Dene, Spinney Lane, Rabley Heath, Welwyn, AL6 9TE, England

My plants have really been having a week or two looking miserable but today (Jan. 2, 1983) being brighter out, cold but without frost, they seemed to have a perky look. However this is one of the hazards of growing auriculas in the South of England—they are continually being encouraged to forge ahead and then being discouraged by a sharp frost. Both Midlands and further north, they can rest for about three months and when the frost goes it generally goes for good.

Economic mishaps bite deeper into the English way of life but there’s no lack of support for the Auricula Society although I think the plant sales might suffer eventually and hence our income.

... One of our members, Alan Hill said he wanted to make records of the plants shown—he also wanted to control the names given by the grower but this I think roused a rather dampering belief that he wouldn’t be able to achieve that. Gardeners in England develop a somewhat paternal attitude about their plants and from a practical point of view it would be impossible to form a group which would have its ideas accepted.

... Alan Hill’s idea of making a record of the plants which are named and grown coincided so well with your idea. Also it was divulged that Jim Sherwood had done something similar for his own pleasure. Someone in the sixties a man, Kenneth Gould had made a list and I believe Mr. Good had used that as a base and added to it... I’m still trying to keep clay pots for auriculas but the primulas are in plastic pots.

Margery Thompson, 4 Eastlands Crescent, Dulwich, London SE21 7EB, England

I have been a member of the Southern Section of the Auricula Society since 1952 and the Northern Section since 1954. I buy APS memberships for those in Britain and they keep my British memberships current. I have yearbooks and Offsets of the Southern Section complete back to 1962 and Northern complete back to 1955. I have almost a complete collection of Auricula texts going back to McWatts book of 1922. Years back I had material published in both the Northern and Southern year books at various times and two or three in the APS a number of years back.

John Zanini, 10378 Devonshire Circle, Penn Valley, California 95946

... What really prompted this note is “Fungus Gran” affliction and the enclosure of a seed catalogue with the J.R.H.S. for November. At the end of this catalogue—(S. E. Marshall & Co. Ltd.) is a brief list of pest and appropriate chemical controls. Under Sciarid Fly it recommends “Caterpillar Killer” which is a trade name for a product made in Germany and distributed in UK by the chemical manufacturers May & Baker of Dagenham, Essex. Surprised by this and when I remembered, got a packet of the stuff off my shelf of chemicals (1), only to discover Sciaridae Fly is not among the list of pests the distributors (M&B) printed on the packet!! However they state the ingredient contains 80% TRICHLORHON which may be available in USA under some product brand name and worth a try.

... May I add that I greatly appreciate you giving “credits” to the takers of the photos used in the APS Quarterly. The one of “Singer Stripe” was a great surprise—it took a couple of days for it to dawn on me how it came to appear in the APS Quarterly! Your photo of Mrs. Van Sickle was also a very pleasant surprise to me for I have corresponded with her on occasion and now I know what she looks like!

I noted the article by J.W. Martin about primrose cvs.—very good! The P. cuskkiana feature article—photo spread is almost splendid.

I see I’ll have to take teacher by profession Allan Guest aside next time I meet with him; I noted the article by J.W. Martin about primrose cvs.—very good! The P. cuskkiana feature article—photo spread is almost splendid.

I, too, had a poorish seed-crop this year—and last year for that matter. Oddly, when I took little...
Surely one of the rewards of growing primula is the fall bloom that so often blesses the garden. A few late blooming polyanthus, along with the fall crows, was the last color in the garden this past year. What a treat to walk through the shade garden long after a freeze has turned all else to brown and still come upon petky heads of blue and red and yellow polys atop crisp green rosettes of leaves. Though not uncommon, still it’s somehow unexpected and thus a bonus.

Have some seeds going from a few of your premier growers and hybridizers—Ruth Husson and Rosetta Jones. Look forward to adding these to the garden.

Our display gardens are our joy and have taken over the yard of the original family homestead. As shade was ample, a wildflower garden seemed natural. And, of course, primula fit right into the scheme. Don’t ever recall not growing primula, but a deep interest in them derives from joining APS and some of the British primula societies not so many years ago.

I’m constantly agonizing over the unkempt nature of our grounds, yet generally feel better when visiting other nurseries. Don’t you feel just a little uncomfortable if you come upon a nursery that is as neat as the proverbial pin? My recent travels took me to England and one small nursery I visited was so tidy that I felt guilty about buying a few plants, as taking them broke the perfect symmetry of the displays. I can think of innumerable nurserymen who are better at growing plants than keeping weeds out of the rock mulch.

Steven John Kelley, 2325 South Watertown Road, Long Lake, MN 55356

... Comments on the condition of exhibit were surprising (Summer Quarterly). I gather that there was a similar state of affairs not too long ago at some of the British shows. That is far from the case now, however. The pots are always clean, even to the point of having been scrubbed. One recent stroke of innovative genius was to place the plant in a new pot of the same size as that in which it was grown for the exhibit. Apart from a small line around the top, it looked as if the plants were growing in fresh containers. Many of the Vernales exhibits are lifted in autumn or spring and taken into the greenhouse, were they are brought to flowering. In doing so, it is possible to remove any dirt or vermin from outside. Very frequently the top of the soil is covered with a fine layer of grit which gives the surface a clean appearance, levels it off and also acts as a good, contrasting background for some colours. We even have one grower who finds the most beautiful black gravel which can cause some of the lighter-coloured mountain species to stand out in sharp contrast. Another recent feature has been the return to the custom of a hundred years ago to topping the pots with freshly picked sphagnum moss—not peat but the green plant. When combined with clay pots, this looks most effective.

The question of allocating points is one on which many of us feel great unease. In the past, the pots were almost always clean, even to the point of having been scrubbed. One recent stroke of innovative genius was to place the plant in a new pot of the same size as that in which it was grown for the exhibit. Apart from a small line around the top, it looked as if the plants were growing in fresh containers. Many of the Vernales exhibits are lifted in autumn or spring and taken into the greenhouse, were they are brought to flowering. In doing so, it is possible to remove any dirt or vermin from outside. Very frequently the top of the soil is covered with a fine layer of grit which gives the surface a clean appearance, levels it off and also acts as a good, contrasting background for some colours. We even have one grower who finds the most beautiful black gravel which can cause some of the lighter-coloured mountain species to stand out in sharp contrast. Another recent feature has been the return to the custom of a hundred years ago to topping the pots with freshly picked sphagnum moss—not peat but the green plant. When combined with clay pots, this looks most effective.

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Primula Flaccida (Delavay)
Balakrishnan — A new name for a familiar plant

by Jerry J. Flintoff
Seattle, Washington

Roy Green, in his excellent mono-graph on the Asiatic primula species, briefly mentions early in the work that the well-known P. nutans must now be called P. flaccida, without giving any why or wherefores in the way of explanation. Any replacement of a widely known and well-entrenched name will no doubt be troublesome for many growers. Many gardeners may resent the change as being one more example of the vagaries and caprices of otherwise serious men of plant science.

Such changes in naming plants (taxonomy nomenclature) however, arise from basic rules agreed upon and adopted by botanists of every nation for the purpose of creating uniformity and stability in naming plants. In the process of ensuring uniformity and stability many long-forgotten but validly published names are discovered by researchers. Such changes arise from the basic injunctions that: 1) a plant can have but one valid Latin name, and 2) the first properly published name takes precedence over those published at later dates.

The first use of the name P. nutans was by the Russian naturalist J. G. Georgi in 1775 (Bemerk. Reise Russ. Reich 1:200. 1776) for a Farinose (Bifdseye) species which ranges widely from Scandinavia across northern Russia. For one reason or another this name was not adopted by botanists and the plant became known by the name P. siberica which was published a few years later by the famous Austrian, Jacquin (Misc. Austr. 1:161. 1778). Since both men were describing the same species, the name P. nutans must be adopted for this species, since it is the former published name of the two.

Georgi’s use of the name P. nutans had become long-forgotten by 1886 when the French botanist Franchet unknowingly used the name (Bull. Bot. Soc. France 33:69. 1886) for the sumptuous fragrant lilac Soldanelloid species which his compatriot, the Jesuit priest Delavay, had discovered in Yunnan province, China.

A few years ago an Indian worker noted this fact (Balakrishnan, in J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. 67/63. 1972). In order to satisfy the nomenclatural rules a new name had to be found and he chose the name P. flaccida (Delavay) Balakrishnan to replace the homonym P. nutans Delavay ex Franchet.

Editors note: the above article was submitted in response to the Winter issue of the Quarterly (Vol. 41, No. 1) and has been corroborated by Kris Anderson, Grout Hill, South Acworth, NH. The editor committee welcomes comments on articles and gives it warm thanks to both Kris and Jerry for their help in updating the taxonomy of this important primula.
The Origins of the Pennington and Allanbert Strains of Gold Laced Polyanthus

by Hubert Calvert
Wakefield, West Yorkshire

I first fell in love with Gold Laced Polyanthus when I saw a hand coloured engraving of one named 'Burnard's Formosa' in a book called 'The Floricultural Cabinet', published in 1834. I bought a packet of Gold Laced Polyanthus seeds from an English commercial firm of Seedsmen (not Barnhaven) in anticipation of seeing lots of Formosas when the seedlings bloomed. However, there were very few that even approached the standard of excellence proposed by the 19th century florists. It was not until 10 years of hand pollinating and selecting that I got just one I dared to exhibit at the Northern Section of the National Auricula and Primula Show (1974). It won a 1st prize and I named it 'Pennington Lady'. It is still living after 10 years but no longer wins prizes. One of its progeny, 'Pennington Gem', won 1st and 2nd in the 1976 Show but unfortunately died in the severe winter of 1981/82. I discovered a plant in a rough border last year which bore a label (hardly distinguishable), reading "Red pin, may make good parent". This sister seedling of 'Pennington Lady', has made quite a large clump. It is quite hardy and reasonably long lived, so I used it as a seed parent. This Pennington seems to be unique in that no Barnhaven blood is in its constitution. However, the firm from whom I originally the seed told me that long ago they used to grow varieties including 'Tiny' and 'Beeswing', so it is possible that Pennington and Barnhaven strains could have a common ancestor.

The Allanbert Strain

About 1973, Allan Hawkes of Hertfordshire, sent me some Gold Lace Polyanthus seeds which produced some intriguing results. Three of the resulting plants had soft, very hairy leaves and looked noticeably different in the bed, being greyer than normal ones. A slender upright stem carried 6 to 10 fairly small (⅝" to ¾") 6 petalled flowers, coloured light red, with pale yellow facing and centres, on long slender pedicels. These were so different from any I had seen that I wrote to Allan enquiring about the origin. It turned out he got the seeds from a friend in the USA who got them from - guess who? - Mrs. Florence Bellis. These 3 plants were crossed with 'Pennington Lady' with excellent results and the best, called 'Allanbert Red', won 1st prize in its class in 1978. Allanbert is the combination of our two names, Allan and Hubert. In the first generation cross there were about 8 percent of the plants with hairy leaves which, unfortunately, like their hairy parents were difficult to maintain and eventually died. However, 'Allanbert Red' was a successful prize winner for 3 years, after which it also died, but not before some very promising seedlings were raised from it, by back crossing to both parents and by selfing and brother and sister matings. The latter gave the best results and I am now concentrating on vigour and longevity. Some plants inevitably inherited the weak constitution of the red hairy parents. I hope this can be eliminated by vigorous selection and crossing back to the Pennington Strain while still maintaining the best exhibition qualities.

Allan Hawkes' anonymous friend in the States turned out to be none other than our mutual friend Jimmy Long with whom I correspond regularly. He is as keen about Gold Lace Polyanthus as I am and I understand that seedlings from my Allanbert Strain are being used in U.S. breeding programmes, which pleases me greatly. The more enthusiasts there are following the right road, the sooner shall we recreate Gold Laced Polyanthus to the Standard of Burnard's Formosa.
Meeting of Officers & Board Members
January 29, 1983
American Primrose, Primula and Auricula Society
Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery, Chehalis, Washington

The main topic for discussion was finding ways to increase APS membership. Suggestions were made to contact primula enthusiasts through other plant societies by showing our Slide Programs and also by written invitation to attend local chapter meetings. Most felt Primula Shows were the most valuable way to reach the public. A motion was made for all Chapters and affiliated societies to put forth more effort for APS membership at the local shows. A campaign to encourage new members to join at the 1983 Spring Shows is being set up by Herb Dickson. Each new member will receive a free primula for each year of membership paid for during show hours. Herb Dickson will have signs made for this campaign and will also donate plants.

Dorothy Dickson announced a March 5th Judges Symposium to be held in Chehalis. Those passing the written exam will qualify as Student Judge.

Round Robins were briefly discussed. There have been problems with some being lost in the mail.

Slide Chairman Dorothy Dickson asked for slide donations, especially of primula species. A motion was made that a $1.00 charge, over and above postage, be paid by members renting the slide programs. This will help cover the cost of the slide boxes.

How best to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of APS was discussed. A motion was made to contact the American Horticultural Society about co-sponsoring a Primula Conference in 1991.

A request was made for more articles to be submitted to the Quarterly, such as personal growing experiences and plant hunting trips.

Elizabeth Van Sickle, Secretary

Show and Tell
by Dee Peck
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The 1983 Philadelphia Flower Show opened on March 6, a chilly tag-end-of-winter day. It continued throughout a raw rain sodden week, but none of the more than 200,000 visitors was disappointed. Inside the Civic Center it was Suddenly Spring, and all the senses were delighted by the color and fragrance of the season of rebirth. Only three weeks earlier the area had been swept by a twenty-inch blizzard and this provided such a vivid contrast to the subsequent glories that it made one giddy!

As usual, primulas were in evidence everywhere, a major feature of the dazzling floral background. Of course, the crowd-pleasing hybrid polyanthus were most evident because they are easiest to force on a commercial scale. In the horticourt the real growers vied with one another in forty-six competitive classes ranging from simple herbs to sophisticated orchids.

The new Hardy Primula class, only two years old, drew a number of the area's best growers. Most attractively displayed were Primula abschasica, P. acaulis (dwarf and double forms), P. allionii, P. berniniae (Windruss form), P. frondosa, P. juliana ('David Green', 'Garryard Crimson', and the dwarf Sakata strain), P. kisoana and P. marginata x Agee. Ribbons were taken by APS members Anita Kistler and Lee Raden. Forcing primulas for show in this area is not an easy proposition so these two deserve our applause.

In other classes, Lee, Anita, and Claire Muller were winners in the Hardy Rock Garden Plant and Dwarf conifer divisions. Lee Raden and Dee Peck also took ribbons for their collections of Ten or More Plants - Saxifraga and Ferns, respectively.

Another snowfall closed the show. The participants left, pleased that all former attendance records had been broken and that they had helped bring a preview of Spring to the winter-weary East Coast!

Philadelphia Flower Show
A midwest childhood taught me how to cope with clay, sticky stuff which clings to everything when it is wet with the abandon of a long lost lover. It in no way prepared me for gardening in hardpan, a substance which superficially resembles clay though it does not cling at all. In fact, it is so firm that it is possible for us to drive over much of our farm in almost any kind of weather. In some ways the stuff is like rock for it is almost imperious to water and offers very little in the way of nourishment. It also has a fanatical habit of retaining its status quo. We have had to learn to live with it, not fight it for one does not lightly consider trucking away 40 acres of the stuff to replace it with something more tractable. Nor is dynamite the answer for our well driller offered no hope in that direction as he probed to considerable depths in quest of the life giving fluid.

One plus is that each hollow holds water for greater or lesser periods. Larger ones have been deepened and widened to form 5 ponds of various sizes. A smaller one was also cleared for a day or so but the surplus eventually percolates away to pop up elsewhere as “springs” just as it always has done.

One glance at the per bale price of peat was more than enough to let us know that our bog plants would have to make do with something else. Our substitute was stable cleanings “hot of the griddle”. Naturally, in no time at all, we had a super “lawn”. Since this was not the object of our efforts and attempts at weeding removed a distressing lot of the fill we had so laboriously trundled in, we resorted to our old friend, black plastic sheeting. In due course the offending weeds had been reduced to whisps of “hay” which could be whisked away with the leaf rake without taking any of our precious fill with it. This time we made haste to cover the source of trouble with a generous topping of coarse sawdust straight from the logging mills. This, another friend of our kind, was nice to have at least one of the lot back to the earliest of the old florists blessings (or crossed fingers!) while others managed to sneak in on their own. Some, like the taller candelabra sarracenias, soldanellas and other choice bog dwellers. Because each garden presents its own unique set of conditions, only trial and error will disclose which plants will succeed and which will not, or which will love our offerings not wisely but too well. Inevitably the changing seasons are not the same–so that today’s successes may turn into tomorrow’s failure. The fact that no plant community is a static thing only adds to the sense of challenge one gets from trying something a little different.

Primula rosea has multiplied itself into something of a problem but when spring brings its masses of shouting pink, all is forgiven.

Primula cockburniana arrived because it had managed to make a pest of itself in the cramped confines of the peaty rock garden. It too took to life in the bog with unbound joy. All went well for several years until its flowering time had the misfortune to coincide with a particularly foul stretch of weather. Very few viable seeds were formed to continue the show of this monocarpic species. Meanwhile other plants which had had no such problems usurped its territory. It appears that this species seeds best on clean ground for they also appear in the plastic lined sawdust path where they are at the mercy of feet and wheel barrows.

Even P. viali has managed to provide us with a few seedlings although never on a scale of any of the others. It is nice to have at least one of the lot which can be trusted among orchids, sarracenias, soldanellas and other choice bog dwellers. Because each garden presents its own unique set of conditions, only trial and error will disclose which plants will succeed and which will not, or which will love our offerings not wisely but too well. Inevitably the changing seasons are not the same–so that today’s successes may turn into tomorrow’s failure. The fact that no plant community is a static thing only adds to the sense of challenge one gets from trying something a little different.

Anomalous Primroses in the U. K.

by Bernard M. Smith
Gravesend, Kent, England

All three Sections of the National Auricula and Primula Societies have a class for Anomalous Primroses in their Show Schedules, and all three receive a fair amount of entries. However, the uninitiated might well ask “What is an anomalous primrose?” Without trying to preach to the converted, let me quote The Concise Oxford Dictionary which defines anomalous as “irregular, abnormal”. So there we have it, abnormal primroses, going back to the earliest of the old florists who made much of them in their day. But what is an abnormal primrose? Well, Sacheverell Sitwell in his delightful book Old Fashioned Flowers’ lists them as:

Jack-in-the-Green
The flower can be of any colour, but it must have a ruff or frilled sleeve of green.

Hose-in-Hose
It is two duplicate flowers, one inside the other, a two-decker arrangement. Both of the flowers are exactly the same colour.

Jackanapes
Is similar to the Jack-in-the-green. The flower has a saucer or saucer which is the same colour as the flower but must have stripes of green in it.

Jackanapes on Horseback
Has a bunch of leaves growing from the stem under the flower.
Galligaskin
The 'curled cowslip' of Parkinson. Has the calyx abnormally enlarged and welted.

Clown
Is striped and spotted white.

Pantaloon
Or 'Jack-in-the-box.' A sub-form of Hose-in-Hose where the calyx is green but striped with the colour of the corolla.

Feathers
Or 'Shags', have an elongated calyx which is cut up fine like a fringe round the flower.

Roy Genders in his book 'Primroses' states that Jack-in-the-greens were at one time called 'Jack-in-the-pulpit' and the polyanthus forms were sometimes known as Welsh Jacks. He also records the Jackanapes-on-horseback is the 'franticke' or 'foolish primrose' (or cow-slip) of polyanthus form described by Parkinson in his 'Paradisus' of 1629.

In the United Kingdom the Show Reports for the period 1976 to 1982 show the most successful exhibitors in each Section were as follows:

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**NORTHERN**

**For Jack-in-the-green**

W. D. Deere
4 Firsts
5 Seconds
2 Thirds

J. Mercer
2 Firsts
1 Second
2 Thirds

Miss E. Pickering
2 Firsts
1 second

---

**MIDLAND**

H. A. Cohen
2 Firsts
1 Second
1 Third

Miss N. Tye
1 First

G. Mckee
1 First

---

**SOUTHERN**

Dr. C. Jones
4 Firsts
2 Seconds
1 Third

A. Edmondson
1 First
1 Second
3 Thirds

Miss G. A. Lewis
2 Firsts
1 Third

Miss M. L. Thompson
1 First
1 Third

A. Edmondson
1 Second
1 Third

---

C. M. Hecker
1 Second

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My only success was in 1979 when a Jack-in-the-green raised from the late Agnes Johnson's seed took a First in London and I named it Anderson Island Gem. Alas, in 1980 it was unplaced and, I believe, later died of shame.

Of the named plants shown during the period under review we had 4 Robert, 4 Tipperary Purple, 1 Maragret, and 3 Renee in the 'Jacks' and 1 Belle, 1 Tip Top, and 1 Agnes in the 'Hoses'. All the rest were seedlings.

Other interesting plants shown were 4 Jackanapes seedlings, 1 Hose-in-Hose cowslip and 2 Gold Laced Hose-in-Hose.

No account of Anomalous Primroses in the U.K. would be complete without reference to Dr. Cyril Jones of Llannelli who not only shows his excellent 'Penlan' strain of Gold Lace, 'Dyfed' strain of blue ground Silver Lace, and Double Gold Lace, but caused gasps of delight when he showed his 'Penlan Double Blue Jack-in-the-greens. A photograph of one appeared, alas in black and white, in the N.A.P.S. Southern Year Book for 1981.

In conclusion, now that the 'big brother' seed firms are offering gold laced and other polyanthus including the cowichans, various other primulas and multitudes of juliae hybrids and laced primroses, all mainly raised in Holland and mass produced in Japan or one of the European countries, it is always possible that hand pollination may one day prove uneconomical and that Barnhaven may have to cease production. Since there will be no other source of hand pollinated Anomalous Primroses, as only Barnhaven offers a hand pollinated mixture, why not order some now and help to keep them in cultivation. You may be helping to preserve a bit of Britain's heritage as well.
Forcing Primroses for the Philadelphia Show

by Lee M. Raden
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

The Philadelphia Flower Show is proclaimed as the largest flower show in the United States. Encompassing some 5½ acres at the Philadelphia Civic Center it runs for nine days (March 5th through 13th this year). Two primrose classes were in the show from March 8th through 10th; Alpine and Woodland. This was the first year these two classes, exclusively for primrose, were in the show. A number of members from the ARGs and APS exhibited.

Forcing blooms for this early show is, at best, a very iffy situation. The climate is such that in some years the ground is frozen solid prior to the show and plants cannot be lifted from the garden for forcing. Therefore there exists a need to grow all primula with any potential for the show in pots in the alpine house. The alpine house is kept at night temperatures 34°F. and day temperatures generally do not exceed 50°F. January to March.

A technique for forcing was taught by Margery Edgren of Woodside, California, formerly of Philadelphia. The hard forcing is done in the basement under four-foot fluorescents, and it doesn’t matter whether they are standard cool white, warm white, or any of the more expensive ‘growing’ tubes. The important thing Margery taught was the plant should be approximately 1” under the tubes. This closeness to the plants creates a heat problem which can be alleviated by having a high-speed fan blow air over the plants twenty-four hours a day.

One month before the Philadelphia Show (February 6th), the following plants were placed under lights for sixteen-hour days, and on February 21st they all went on twenty-four hours days: Primula frondosa, P. dariaica, P. farinosa, P. marginata ‘Freedom’, P. juliana ‘Sakata strains’, P. juliana, P. vulgaris, P. vulgaris ‘double form’, P. x polyanthus, and P. denticulata. By February 6th, all of the plants have set their vegetative and flower buds and an effort was made to break them under the artificial conditions. Primula kisoana and P. x bilekii refused to force; otherwise the above-mentioned plants were either at full flower, or almost full flower, two days before the show.

One thing immediately noted on forcing is the intensity of the flower color is lessened considerably under fluorescent lights. This is especially noticeable with the Juliana and Acaulis types. It has no effect on the Marginata.

Show Auriculas are an entirely different matter. At any given time in the winter, in various states of growth, the alpine house has somewhere between 75 and 100 auriculas. You have to let them do their own thing; they bloom under glass between January and June. For the Philadelphia Show—‘Argus’, a yellow Self, a red Self, Primula x pubescens and P. berninae ‘wind rush form’ were sufficiently along that some of them could be chosen for the bench.

These plants must be carefully watered at all times to prevent water spotting or the farina is ruined. It was thought that not enough artificial light intensity was applied to break the Auricula properly.

Alpine plants generally do not force like many of the herbaceous perennials. Having recently been in touch with the head engineer at GTE Products Corporation—Sylvania, it is their recommendation the metal halide lamps might give the light intensity for forcing many alpines and primula. It is a large expense to indulge one’s Self (no pun intended), but might be the answer for our plants, especially the Show Auricula.

As luck would have it, when writing this article on March 15th, exactly one week from the time the plants were entered, the auriculas are coming into their glory.

Philadelphia Show—1983
Class 334-B

Willing Willie
Willing Willies in our group
Are needed mighty much
Keeps our muscles all in shape
and keeps our hearts in touch

Thelma M. Nelson, 1967

continued
Getting Started with Primroses

"The Green Scene", Horticulture in the Delaware Valley
Dee Peck

The Primula is probably one of the best known plants throughout the world, and yet the average gardener is barely acquainted with even the commonest kinds. Somehow they have acquired the reputation of being exotic and consequently very difficult to grow. Many of the loveliest are exotic and impossible to grow away from their native terrain, but many others can be grown by the expert gardener, and a generous number will flourish even under the hand of the beginner. Here we will deal with the last category and add a sprinkling of the more difficult for those who relish a bit of challenge.

Most of the four hundred or so species of primroses are hardy perennials and are scattered extensively throughout all parts of Europe, Asia and North America. Oddly, only one species is found below the equator—Primula magellanica of South America. Probably the greatest number are native to Asia and were introduced to the western world by plant explorers of the last century such as Farrer and Kingdon-Ward.

Primulas are classified into thirty sections based on botanical characteristics such as direction of leaf edge curl, the presence or absence of petales (leaf stems) and whether or not the plants possess "farina", a silver or gold colored meal present on petioles (leaf stems) and whether or not the plants possess "farina", a silver or gold colored meal present on buds and stems. An attractive solution is an array of colors—pink, rose, pale blue, red, white orange, bronze and deep velvety purple. These hybrids are properly known as P. acaulis.

Also growing wild in Britain and much of the continent are the cowslip, P. veris, and the oxlip, P. elatior. They are not flashy beauties, but have a quiet charm and are of special interest because they, crossed with P. vulgaris (or P. acaulis) are thought to be the progenitors of the fantastic hybrid polyanthus primroses.

The polyanthus primrose (Primula x polyantha) is a hybridizing triumph. It exists in every color, some brash and brilliant, some pale and subtle, some so deep a purple as to be almost black. All carry a cluster of blossoms on a six to eight-inch stalk. There are many forms, from charming miniatures to giants with stumpy stems and massive flowers. There is 'Jack-in-the-Green', an old form with a green

shake gently to remove soil, and carefully separate the crowns. Trim the roots of each division lightly, remove dead leaves and spent blossoms, shorten the leaves by about one half, and replant in rich, well-drained soil. Make sure the crown is at soil level and carefully spread the roots, firming the soil about them. Some dilute liquid fertilizer at this time will help counteract the shock of transplanting. Care must be taken that the divisions never dry out. Water religiously until established, and shade if necessary. This method of division can be used for most primroses and will increase choice colors rapidly.

Although it is one of the easiest primroses to grow, it is important that Primula denticulata be well-drained in winter. It has rather heavy, thong-like roots, which, along with the crown, will rot in standing water. It prefers a shaded position but will tolerate more sun if planted near a large rock for shade and a cool root run. A stone mulch is also excellent. It promotes drainage, cools the soil and conserves moisture. Primula denticulata is not pretty when bloom is over. The foliage has enlarged to foot-long cabbage-like leaves and the tall stems are topped by undisturbed seed heads. An attractive solution is an inter-planting of deciduous ferns. The uncurling fronds appear after the flowers of the primroses are gone. This same camouflage can be used with other early flowering primroses.

Primula caveberiana is a good lavender form of P. denticulata offered by many nurseries. It is shorter (four to six inches) with beautiful silver farina on buds and stems.

From late March to early April the "bird's eye" or farinose primroses appear. The type, Primula farinosa, is a tiny three-inch lilac-pink beauty covered with silvery meal. Primula frondosa is almost identical, but somewhat larger. Primula rosea is a glamorous cousin—tiny, and a glowing rose pink. It needs more moisture and thrives near running water. Primula modesta is a Japanese relative, very similar, except that it is covered with gold meal rather than silver. All have a white or yellow eye, the reason for the common name. The last two are somewhat more difficult, but P. farinosa and P. frondosa are well worth trying. They want the same culture as P. denticulata, and especially love the gritty, humusy stone mulch.

The vernal primroses arrive at the height of spring. They are the ones which most of us know, and are the easiest of all to grow. The true "primrose" is the wild primrose native to the British Isles, Primula vulgaris. Its pale yellow blossoms are borne singly on short stems that rise just above the foliage. Crosses with its Turkish counterpart, the pink P. sibthorpii, have yielded hybrids in an endless array of colors—pink, rose, pale blue, red, white orange, bronze and deep velvety purple. These hybrids are properly known as P. acaulis.

With few exceptions, primroses share the same cultural needs: a rich humusy soil, good drainage, moderate amount of light—the need for each depending upon the degree of the others. For example, if your primroses are in shade, moisture requirements are lower than if they are in the sun for part of the day. If your soil is sandy and fast draining, watering must be frequent—more so than if your soil is a humusy loam. Fortunately all these factors can be modified, as we shall see.

The name Primula springs from the Latin word "primus", or "first", signifying the plants' early appearance. The very first to appear in our area is Primula denticulata, close on the heels of the last snow, and occasionally caught by it! In mid-March, this primrose emerges from swelling buds that remained, barely visible, when the foliage of the previous summer died down. A sphere of blossoms opens even before the stem elongates. The leaves expand as the stem rises slowly, usually to about ten inches in height. The bloom period is three weeks, and bloom color is usually pale lavender. However, forms are available in pure white, purple, pink, and red—all with a white eye. Self-sowing is common, and it is a good idea to pull and discard unattractive colors before they seed. Good colors can be allowed to seed, and can also be easily divided after flowering, in the following manner. Carefully lift the clump,
Primula juliae has produced the P. juliae's best forms have small size, x Juliana. The hybrid line of Primula Japan and the Pacific Northwest. The vernal primulas, unlike the deciduous denticulas and farinosas, retain their foliage throughout the summer and even into the winter. Watering is very important as the leaves can be badly disfigured by red spider and the plant weakened in conditions of drought. For the same reason, partial shade and rich moisture retaining soil are essential. If grown under sunnier conditions, as described under denticulas, and the hard center portion of the rhizomes can then be dug into them! You won't forget where they are and inadvertently dig into them!

The two groups of Auriculas that can be grown out of doors are the European mountain or alpine Auriculas, and the garden Auriculas. The wild mountain or alpine species and their hybrids are an extensive group and are indeed lovely. They are by no means impossible to grow, but tricky enough that they do not fall within the limits set for this article. However, as your expertise increases, do try some! They are somewhat difficult to find, but many can be obtained from nurseries selling alpine plants. Others can be grown from seed, available through the American Primrose Society and American Rock Garden Society seed lists. A few worth trying are: Primula auricula v. albocincta, P. rubra (also called P. hirsuta), P. x pubescens, and P. marginata.

The garden Auriculas are similar to, but larger than, the alpine Auriculas. Through hybridizing, the color range has been expanded from the original yellow and lavender colors, into odd and interesting shades including brown, mahogany, maroon, crimson, and grey. They usually are found in catalogs simply as Primula auricula. The heavy foliage lasts all season and well into the winter. Their culture is identical to the alpine Auriculas, but they are tougher and easier. Choose a site as described for the mountain species, and plant in a good, gritty soil. Then cover the surface with a thick stone-chip or gravel mulch and partially shade the plants with large rocks if natural shade is absent. They can be divided after flowering just like the other primroses, but often the roots are scanty and it is wise to treat such divisions as cuttings until more roots develop. A special cutting bed with a plastic-covered frame is useful for this. Place it in a bright, but shaded area and take care that it is not too moist or the crowns will rot. Just barely moist at the roots and humid around the foliage is the key to success.

Appearing just a little later than the vernal primroses, but very similar in their cultural needs are the Japanese woodland primroses, members of the Cuprousoides section. The one most commonly grown is Primula sieboldii. This is a relatively easy and long lasting primrose which grows into clumps of scalloped oval leaves. Its underground rhizomes creep over the lightly shaded forest floor, forming three-inch high mats. The umbels of large one to two-inch flowers rise well above the foliage. The species color is magenta-rose. However, pinks, reds, and a pure white are available, all with notched petals, some deeply cut, lacey and frilled—truly beautiful.

After flowering, the foliage dies and disappears. The rhizomes can then be easily lifted and divided—but need not be so often as other primroses. Because of this early dormancy and late spring appearance, it is a good idea to carefully mark the patches so you won't forget where they are and inadvertently dig into them!continued
Another lovely Cortusoid primrose is *Primula kisoana*. It has tufts of geraniumlike leaves covered with white fuzz, surmounted by three to five rose colored blossoms. The leaves are not completely expanded until after flowering. It spreads by underground stolons—new baby plants appearing as much as a foot away from the parent—rather like the strawbery begonia (*Saxifraga sarmentosa*). When a good root system has formed on the offsets, they can be severed and transplanted into well-prepared soil. If the situation is to its liking, this primrose becomes a veritable ground cover. It can also be grown in the rock garden if partially shaded and well mulched with rock chips.

As mentioned earlier, the culture of the Cortusoides is identical to that of the vernal primroses except that they are heavier feeders. Therefore, whenever dividing and replanting, a well-enriched soil is a necessity. If not dividing, an application of 0-10-10 early in the fall will be appreciated by the plants—hardening them and sending them into a healthy dormancy for winter, Nitrogen at this time leads to soft, tender growth that will not survive winter’s blasts.

The last primroses to be considered here are the Candelabras. The members of this group are moisture lovers and thrive at bog’s edge and pondside. *Primula japonica* is the typical candelabra primrose and the one most often grown. It is quite tall and large leaved, commonly attaining a height of two feet. It will carry as many as six tiers of blossoms, the first tier opening close to the newly expanding leaves. As the stem elongates, succeeding whorls of bloom open for about three weeks, illuminating the transition of spring into summer. When fully open, the leafy clump is as much as a foot across, the foliage long and toothed. *P. japonica* prefers shade, but with adequate moisture at

the roots will tolerate a sunnier spot—
even the perennial border. The colors
range from wine, through rose and pink, to white. As with *P. denticulata*, they come easily from seed and self-sow freely. By culling the poorly-colored seedlings, one can obtain quantities of good color selections with little initial outlay. Some of the excellent named varieties obtainable as plants are ‘Glowing Embers’, ‘Miller’s Crimson’, ‘Alba’, ‘Pink Lady’, and ‘Rosea’. Because they are so prolific it is easy, when one has space, to have them in great drifts. When grown this way they truly light up the pond, stream-side or woods that is their home.

Candelabras go completely dormant in fall, retaining no leaves to mark their location through the winter, and since they resume growth very late in spring, one must be careful to mark or remember their location—and not despair of their reappearance.

Other candelabras that the more skillful grower might try are *Primula Beesiana* (which appears just after *P. japonica*), *Primula Bulleyana*, and the hybrid of the two, *Primula x bullesiana*. Another to try is *Primula pulverulenta*. The Bartley strain combine blossoms of a lovely pink with silvery-meal covered stems. *Primula Cockburniana* is the smallest Candelabra, having only two tiers, but the variety ‘Red Hugh’ has the nearest to true red blossom of any of the primroses.

Having been captivated by primroses, and wanting to try a large variety not easily obtainable, growing them from seed is the next logical step. Here is a simple method that works.

Gather together in your work area the following materials: a very fine sterile planting medium such as Jiffy-Mix, mixed 3:1 with sharp builder’s sand; coarse grit or fine gravel; some paper towelling cut to fit the bottom

Primula x bullesiana  
photo by Dee Peck
soon as they are large enough to handle (usually when first true leaves appear, place flats in bright shade, for a couple of weeks. When they continue protection with screen. Keep moist but not soggy, and continue feeding as it helps retain the fertilizer in the mix, thus reducing the need for frequent feeding.

Using two and one-half inch pots, or flats, fill with the above mix. Again use paper towelling squares in the pots—or a sheet of newspaper in flats—to hold the medium in. Prick out seedlings and set to just below the first set of leaves—one per pot and one to two inches apart in flats. Water from below and place beneath screens in the shade until established, at which time screens can be removed. Keep well watered and fertilize with soluble fertilizer at least once during the summer.

Plant out in prepared area at least one month before expected frost to allow plenty of root development before winter. This will help prevent heaving. A light mulch of evergreen boughs after the ground has frozen also helps. Auriculas may not be large enough to plant out the first year and should spend the first winter in a cold frame or in an area protected from excessive moisture.

Primroses are so lovely on their own that one cannot imagine improving them. However, with the proper companion plants, they can be a breath-taking sight. Thoughtful inter- and over-planting can also brighten those periods when even a primrose is unattractive. The right foliage background highlights and makes even a primrose more outstanding. When choosing companion plants, be aware of color and texture as well as timing. Choose colors that will contrast or complement—not clash or compete. Remember the aforementioned facts of wine-red Primula juliae highlight clumps of pale blue chionodoxa, vivid blue scilla or pale yellow (not orangey) miniature daffodils. Think of plume frying-heat with its delicate foliage and pink hearts planted behind a white, pale pink or rich purple Primula acaulis, and blue forget-me-nots at the feet of Primula japonica. Other possible companion plants are: the evergreen white candy-tuft; the small campanulas such as C. carpathica, C. portenschlagiana, or C. cochlensfolia; the woods phloxes, Phlox divaricata and P. stolonifera; the early native irises, Iris verna and I. cristata, especially the lovely white form of the latter—the list could go on and on.

Imagine needed or broad-leaved evergreens as a background, or wildlings such as the epimediums, wild ginger, jack-in-the-pulpit, false and true solomons seal, rue anemone, lacy corydalis and the ubiquitous geranium-like foliage of the foam flower. Surround some primroses with a carpet of gold-thread. Primroses and wild flowers were meant for each other!

But I have saved the best to last, for in my opinion, the perfect complement to primroses are the ferns! The evergreen polyponds and delicate spleenworts can clamber over the rocks and peer from crevices near the auriculas. The damp-loving osmundas and the ostrich fern are perfect neighbors for Primula japonica, and the beautiful maidenhair fern gorgeously fills in as the denticulatas pass their prime.

Then, when all the clamor of spring is over and the primroses are gone, careful planning will produce a second and third act to follow. The cast of characters might include the gay" astibles, the native lilies, the imposing black cohosh, and the tall late-flowering anemones. The blue, blue gentians and purple asters can bring down the curtain!

I would like to end with a quick reprise on primrose culture. In general, I hope I have convinced you that primroses are easy to grow if their basic requirements are met. All like rich soil, good drainage, plenty of moisture and some degree of shade. They should be divided every second or third year, with the exceptions noted, and replanted in well prepared soil containing plenty of peat or leaf mold, bonneal, wood ashes, and in the case of the denticulatas, auriculas and farinoses, plenty of fine stone chips or coarse gravel.

Fortunately, pests are not a big problem with primroses. Plenty of moisture fends off red spider, and if they do insulate themselves, malthion takes care of them. Of course, plenty of moisture also attracts slugs like a magnet! A mulch of gravel or cinder helps discourage them—their tender bodies don’t like to crawl over it. Some say a saucer of beer draws them to a watery (beery?) grave. A flat piece of stone or wood with a cool dark space beneath will attract them and they can be destroyed en masse. A good chemical treatment is Murphy’s Liquid Slug-it. It destroys slugs and snails and is harmless to warm blooded animals. There are a few minor pests that I won’t even worry you with because you are unlikely to ever encounter them!

So you see—getting involved with a few pretty primroses can open up a whole new world of gardening. To quote Doreta Klaber, that marvelous grower and writer: "Beware! I warn you! Primroses cast a spell. The only way to avoid it is to have nothing to do with the plants. Once you start to grow primroses you are lost. You want more and more, earlier and later kinds, more varieties, more species, more colors. You start with a few plants. You are entranced. Soon your little patch spreads. You divide your plants because you want pools of one
color. You raise primroses from seed to have them by the hundreds. A corner at the edge of the woods soon becomes ... a Primrose Path. The path grows, new paths branch off. Primroses are insidious, they are devastating—growing them becomes a habit. And few things can possibly give you so much pleasure in both anticipation and fulfillment.

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Perennials Time-Life Encyclopedia of Gardening by James Underwood Crockett.
All About the Perennial Garden Montague Free. Doubleday and Co., Garden City, N.Y.

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