Memories of Dorothy
by Herb Dickson

When I first became aware of Dorothy I do not know. She was the wife of my friend, Karl Stredicke. We were all interested in primroses and members of the Tacoma, Washington State and the American Primrose Societies.

Since we lived within a few miles of each other we started trading rides for the meetings. Karl had a long standing heart ailment and died of an attack the summer of 1958. Since Dorothy did not drive I continued taking her to the society meetings. We were married in October 1959.

While Dorothy was still Mrs. Stredicke, she, Ross Willingham and I were on our way to the Kirkland show. Ross decided we needed a cup of coffee. When the check arrived, Ross didn’t have any money with him and neither did I. Dorothy paid for the coffee, a fact she never let Ross or me forget.

Always willing to help
The most important thing I remember about Dorothy is that she was never happy unless she was doing something for someone else. She was always willing to help when needed without being asked and if asked she could never say no. Many times she also volunteered my services.

I used to say to her, “When are you ever going to learn to say no?” She never did. She liked people as well as or more than plants and had a way of getting them to work together for the good of the group. Her motto (which she tried also to make mine) was “If you can’t say something good about a person, say nothing.”

In going through some old letters the other day, I found a thank-you note to Dorothy from Grace Conboy when Grace was APS president. She said, “I want to thank you, Dorothy, for all the little things you have done for the society. You always seem to be in the background — never intrusive; but when you are there, things get done.”

Besides her interest in people and plants she enjoyed taking ordinary flowers and plants and turning them into something beautiful. She went to a floral school to learn and attended demonstrations and refresher courses to keep up with current trends. She enjoyed doing flowers for weddings and special occasions, but she loved making corsages because she could use primroses in them.

Show auricula corsages
Her favorites for corsages were the edged show auriculas because the blooms held up so well. At the primrose meetings and shows she always wore a primrose as a corsage or a flower in her hair and sometimes a fresh floret in little glass vial earrings.

As a final tribute to Dorothy on that bleak December day, besides the regular floral casket piece, I placed a bouquet of show auriculas on one end of the casket and some...
P. denticulata
P. marginata x carniolica

P. cusickiana

P. viali
P. chionantha

Dorothy S. Dickson and some of her favorite plants.

P. florindii
alpine auriculas on the other end. They were picked from plants in our cool greenhouse that morning.

One time we were getting plants ready to enter in the Kirkland show. I had set aside an acaulis with some spent flowers and bad leaves as not worth taking to the show. Dorothy decided to work on it. That plant after her grooming won “best acaulis” in the show.

Giving good advice

Many times she was on radio and television shows to advertise the primrose shows. Once we were both scheduled to be on TV together. The year before she had a partner on the program who did not speak up, and Dorothy had to do all the talking. She coached me ahead of time and kept saying, "You must speak up and not sit there like a bump on a log."

When the program was taped, her coaching paid off. She didn't get a word in. I did all the talking.

Another time before an annual meeting and field trip of the American Penstemon Society she made me promise not to collect any plants for her to help pot and care for. When the caravan stopped alongside a hill covered with penstemon and the other members got out with their trowels and plastic sacks, I sat in the car.

Dorothy said, “What is the matter? Are you stuck in that seat?” So much for my promise not to bring back plants.

In the early 1960s we received an invitation to attend an annual meeting and join the western region of the International Plant Propagators Society. I could not get time off from my job. Dorothy went with instructions to join in our nursery’s name. The society had only individuals as members, so she joined.

One with the pros

For some time she felt self conscious and slightly out of place in the organization of mainly men (only three women at that time) who were college professors or PhD research people. After a few years she was asked to be a speaker and present something on primulas at an annual meeting.

She was very nervous and afraid of making mistakes in front of the highly educated group. I told her the others were specialists only in their fields and they wouldn’t know if she made a mistake.

She came home beaming. Her presentation had gone over big. She was now a recognized specialist on primula. Later she was given a job on the membership committee.

For the last several years Dorothy was floral superintendent of the Southwest Washington Fair in Lewis County. The floral department was a project of the local garden clubs.

Another job well done

Last August Dorothy was able to stay only part of the day in a wheelchair, but she insisted on actively supervising the exhibit. The state inspector of fairs has one special award ribbon for each local fair from the state fair commission that he can give to an outstanding exhibit, organization or an individual contributing to the success of the fair. I will never forget how thrilled and excited Dorothy was when she, as an individual, received that special award last summer.

The uplift in her spirits was almost enough to make her get well. As usual she said that her wonderful helpers who did all the work deserved it more than she did. Immediately she starting planning ways to improve the floral exhibit for the next year.

Thank-you for tolerating my ramblings about a wonderful wife and helpmate. She was truly the better half of our team.

Peter Klein gets credit for J-J

by Herb Dickson

In years past Peter Klein, the origantor of Primula x Peter Klein, a hybrid of Primula clarkii and Primula rosea, made many experimental crosses. When he died July 17, 1957, he left several small vials of seed resulting from some of his crosses.

Pete’s daughter later gave Dorothy some of the seed. One small lot of 15 to 20 seeds was labeled “Juliae x jack.” We planted it and grew 12 that flowered. Six were jack-in-the-green. All 12 had definite juliae characters.

We selected the brightest and best, named it J-J (short for juliae-jack) and introduced it through the quarterly in 1964. It caught on and has proved to be an attractive and reliable hardy plant, also a good parent for hardiness.

We gave our neighbor a stalk of sister seedling — not a jack and not as bright a color as J-J. The plant grew and bloomed so prolifically that in a few years she had it as edging in all her flower borders and grew a big bed of it. She was giving it to her neighbors and providing it for garden club sales.

We had moved away in 1968. On a visit during primrose time we were impressed by the mass display of bloom. She said it was the plant we gave her when we lived next door.

The credit for these two plants belongs to Peter Klein. We merely grew and selected from the seed he produced.

P. juliae seeds

The word was around that you could not get seed on Primula juliae. I found that leaves grew above the seed pods shutting off the air and light, causing the stem to rot or damp off. By cutting off the leaves around the flower stalk to allow good circulation of air and plenty of light, a grower could sometimes get seed to reopen.

I hand pollinated some flowers of P. juliae with pollen from a big bright red Vetterle and Reinelt polyanthus hybrid and kept the leaves cut away from the seed pods. One pod ripened. The seed germinated and grew into good strong plants.

I selected the brightest, a medium sized deep velvety red polyanthus with many P. juliae characters, named it “Royal Velvet” and introduced it in 1965. It has proven to be a very hardy reliable plant.

—Herb Dickson
Candelabras 

thrive in bogs

by Cy Happy 
Tacoma, Washington

If you can provide a site with moist, peaty soil and proximity to water, be ready for a love affair with the candelabra primulas — from one-foot-tall P. cockburniana to majestic six-foot-tall P. helodoxa.

The rest of us will plant a few P. japonicas on the shady side of the sweet peas and watch them slowly fade away.

Meanwhile, back in the bog, P. japonicas — magenta to white — are seeding themselves by the thousands. Rogue out the undesirable colors and enjoy.

P. pulverulenta with its flashy white meal-covered stems adds a splash of red to the scene. Like most of the candelabras, it hybridizes eagerly with other species of the section, giving a wide range of colors.

Hybrids of P. bulleyana come in orange, yellow and red. P. beesiana hybrids give rose and magenta shades.

Although P. japonica is not inclined to hybridize with other species, it appears to have produced hybrids with yellow P. bulleyana in the garden of John and Clara Skupen where these two species dominate. What appeared to be coral and salmon japonicas popped up among the common colors.

Clara made sure they had growing room and spread the seed in the right areas. Now there is an abundance of the new colors.

Her roguing process is simple. She picks the flowering stalks from the colors she does not want. The good ones go happily to seed. Clara sends seed to the seed exchange by the teacupful.

Take a look this season. The Skupen address is 3204 Ruston Way, Tacoma, WA 98402.
“Dorothy Dickson knew her primroses, and she had a unique talent for teaching us to show, judge and grow ours. But most of all she was a friend to everybody — generous, unflappable and kind.”

This tribute by former American Primrose Society president Jim Menzie is typical of those which have been received by the editorial committee. Primrose growers across the country have agreed that Dorothy "will be sadly missed but remembered with fondness."

Members honor Dorothy Dickson

Dorothy Stredicke Dickson, 69, who moved to Chehalis from Seattle in 1968, died Nov. 26, 1983, at Madigan Army Medical Center, Tacoma, Washington.

Dorothy is survived by her husband, Herb. Other survivors include three sons — Victor, Richard and Albert Stredicke — two sisters, a brother and five grandchildren.

Dorothy was active with her husband in Chehalis Chamber of Commerce, American Rock Garden Society, American Penstemon Society, American Horticulture Society, Royal Horticulture Society, Scottish Rock Garden Club, Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia, Alpine Garden Society of Great Britain. She was a working partner with her husband in the Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery.

The following excerpts are representative of the tributes which have been received:

"Her wealth of horticultural knowledge made her a treasure to those of us new to the primula world. She never failed to share that knowledge with us. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and her devotion to strengthening the American Primrose Society is an inspiration to all of us... Many will have to step forth to do some small part of the great task she so willingly and joyfully shoudered."

— Louise and Flip Fenni

"Few in the East have had the pleasure of meeting Dorothy Dickson. Had this been possible, I am sure the outspoken enthusiasm she spread for trained judges, standard point systems and shows of the highest quality would have had its influence with us. One of the highest tributes that can be paid to this delightful person who had the courage to speak her convictions is that she saw the APS as a broad organization with a local membership and needs rather than a loose regional affiliation with local interests."

— G. K. Fenderson

"My first meeting with Dorothy was as fellow guest at an afternoon tea in Portland, Ore., at which the British Consul presented the copper teakettle to Mrs. Karnopp for "most outstanding American primrose." This year was 1954. Dorothy was wearing a miniature vase with primrose blossoms — to me a novel use for the little flowers. Through the years I’ve often recalled this visual relationship, for Dorothy has been constant in her interest and support of associations with primula of all forms. Her good-natured advice and firm commitment to the primrose society have never flagged. I feel we are greatly in her debt for her unfailing effort toward the growth of the present society."

— Loie Benedict

"Dorothy Dickson, a lady who could be truthful and sharp when the need arose, who gave of her time and energy to the primrose societies with a gracious measure of humor and knowledge of the problems at hand."

— Loreen M. Hansen

"Dorothy loved people and she loved life — and loved hers to the fullest. She gave freely of herself and her knowledge to all who needed a friend."

— Hazel Keller

"Dorothy was a loyal and dedicated member of the Tacoma Primrose Society. Many times after the meeting she would take the Greyhound bus to the airport and walk a half mile to her home."

— Howard Larkin

"Dorothy always had a smile and time to talk, even though there was a lot of garden and nursery business to attend to... I remember the summer picnics we had at their place. She had so many friends."

— Dorothy Campbell

"I can only believe that God needed her to help our members who have preceded her to prepare the great primrose show up there so they will all be ready for us when we get there."

— Candy Strickland

"I first met Dorothy Dickson at an International Plant Propagators’ meeting. Dorothy never missed the annual meetings and mentioned that when the IPPS convened close to home, it was not as much fun as when the meetings were held at more distant locations. We often talked of Herb’s great interest in alpine and rock garden plants with Dorothy humorously referring to him as a seed-a-holic. We shall miss her."

— Milt Gaschk

"To Dorothy Dickson company was always welcome and no trouble at all. We’ll miss her."

— Howy Atkinson

"Lewis County Primrose Society sent money to the Fort Borst Arboretum Society to purchase a tree in memory of Dorothy Dickson. She was such a kind, dedicated person that it is hard to express all that we feel for her."

— Marie Fagerman, Secretary

"Both Herb and Dorothy have been very active in APS, going far beyond the usual limits. Dorothy is widely known as slide show chairman. She has taught countless growers the fine points of growing the plants and then how to groom them for showing. But I think that perhaps her greatest single contribution is in her work with judging. I was a student in the first judging school she taught and have repeated the training many times. Her format and outlines improved a bit, but her helpfulness, pleasant manner and personality never changed. Dorothy will be missed."

— Ruth S. Bartlett Huston

"As I remember Dorothy, she was a very warm and caring person whose life literally revolved around the American Primrose Society. She was never too busy to help another primrose lover or encourage anyone who showed an interest. She often traveled by bus to Portland with her shopping bag loaded with plants and papers to conduct judging symposiums. Just two months after her first surgery Dorothy came by bus to Portland to do the flowers for my youngest daughter’s wedding. She did it because she was a friend... This good friend will be missed but never forgotten."

— Thelma Genheimer

"We will remember Dorothy, not for her knowledge of primroses or what she did for the APS but rather for her warmth, humor and courage. She conducted herself daily with the kind of courage that bought her life to live the quality of life we all seek. Dorothy had a gift of life. She didn’t see it as “ashes to ashes and dust to dust” but rather as a gift that must be taken to the heart and used. She was capable of compassion, understanding and wisdom that touched us all. Above all, she approached life with a twinkle in her eye and a smile in her heart. We’ll all miss her for our own personal reasons. But she really isn’t gone as long as we remember her. Dorothy Dickson passed through our lives and left her footprint on our hearts."

— Cheryl Genheimer for Valley Hi Chapter
Primula warshenewskyana

by Don Hackenberry
Reedsville, Pennsylvania

Primula warshenewskyana is a primula I take the greatest pride and joy in growing — because of its intrinsic worth as a lovely and delightful plant, because it has increased prolifically, because of my sense of achievement in growing it so well in a part of the planet where uncommon primulas aren't supposed to grow, because I'm growing it better than the British, because I got it from a far-fetched source, because I want to make "warshenewskyana" a household name, because in growing it over several years it has taught me about how to grow it and because it has taught me not to canonize anyone's written word about a plant, including my own.

Primula warshenewskyana Fedtschenoko has pink (with hint of lavender) notched petalated flowers and finely toothed leaves. It is a member of the Farinosae section, related to P. clarkei and rosea.

Roy Green says, "The distribution of this species appears to stretch from eastern Bokhara in Turkestan to the north-western Himalaya, where it grows in streamlets and the wet ground about springs at an elevation of 1700-2700 m."

Jim Archibald says that the material generally in cultivation is v. rhodantha from Afghanistan, and he fears that the typical species from the Pamirs is less easy to grow because he lost his.

A different experience
My experience — not one you can draw objective conclusions from — is precisely the reverse.

In 1973 I purchased a pot of P. warshenewskyana (I pronounce the "w"s as "v"s) at the American Rock Garden Society meeting in Canandaigua, which lived through that summer and fall. (Roxie said I was a brave boy.)

My present plants were grown from seed collected in the western Pamirs of Tadzhikistan by Khorog Botanical Garden. They are thriving.

The other considerations besides growability of the type and the variety in our climate are the material originally obtained, the site provided and my having learned more about how to grow plants.

Don't believe everything
I don't believe everything written about a plant — even if I wrote it. For instance, I wrote in my last nursery catalog that "it must be lifted and divided every June or else."

This year we had our rainy season in May, and I thought that a deluge lay ahead in June. Instead we had a drought for the duration of summer, and I feared to lift the plant.

It didn't increase as much as usual. Nothing grew this year. But it didn't start to rot like the unlifted plants of previous seasons, except for one container. (I have been growing it outdoors in two-gallon containers of peat moss, leaf mould, sand and fine chicken grit plunged in a wet sand bed.)

This poses the question: Why should a plant that propagates itself by stolens rot from being left unmolested and undisturbed and thrive on being ripped to pieces every year?

For one thing, dividing keeps the plants one step ahead of "the rotten world around us," but dividing crowded clumps of perennials and replanting them in the same soil among the same fungi still effects their rejuvenation. Perhaps improved air circulation and root run suffice to keep them fungus resistive, but I had better locate and prepare suitable alternate sites to move them to in the future.

Effects of containers?
I wonder if container growing isn't so confining that it forces them to grow in a more crowded fashion than they would otherwise, and this demands the annual lifting. I wonder if they may extend their stolons a bit farther before sending up a new plant if they were grown in open ground. They may.

On the other hand, one central rosette becomes several rosettes in a season, and one would still have to lift them or lose them. I'm going to start finding out next year. This fall, for the first time, I've planted some in open ground and a lot in the wet sand bed.

If you lift in fall, as I did this year, it would be a good idea to plant out the detached stoloniferous offshoots in a wet sand bed for the winter to prevent frost heaving next March. One advantage of June lifting is that the small offsets have had a chance to establish and anchor themselves.

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One reason I grew them in containers is that I found they like sun in spring and shade in summer, and I could move them. But oaks should be able to provide that for you, and so could a lath house to which you apply shade cloth or conifer boughs in summer.

Need more fungicide
Open ground cultivation may require more frequent fungicide applications (Banrot) than container growing in a
relatively sterile medium. I have failed to grow individual plants in small pots. I put 50 of them in 2½-inch pots and one survived. I may yet try ¾-inch pots, but I've just about given up hope of stocking garden centers with them, even though they multiply fast enough to do that. The best way to prevent blast (fungus conquest) is to share.

Green says they are tiny plants. They might be if you starve them. In the past I fed them with Miracle Gro; but since that company jacked up its prices to pay for television commercials, I plan to use Blue Peter next year.

Primula warshenewskyana is an ideal plant to learn from because it reacts to adversity, but the reaction is not immediate demise. It gives a person a chance to come to the rescue.


Every time you water. 'A teosp. per go/, . . .

Potting Soil
Fertilizer
Magnifiers
Insecticides
Knife
Hanging Basket Labels
Sprayers

312-885-2242

President Herb Dickson called to order the Oct. 8, 1983, board meeting of American Primrose Society following a dinner provided by the Dicksons. Proceeds of the dinner were donated by Herb to the treasury of APS. Main topic of the meeting was "building funds for APS." The president recommended the society stress memberships first so members will receive the quarterly. Then local membership should be emphasized so members will stay in touch with local societies through newsletters.

Each membership paid to the local society before Dec. 1, 1983, nets the local society $1 if dues are paid to the local treasurer and sent by him/her to the national treasurer in a group before Dec. 15. All dues are renewable in November, and each society needs to push its membership drive and build ways to increase funds for APS. APS now totals 715 members, of which 200 are new this year.

Donations received recently by APS include $300 from Washington State Society and $200 by G. K. Fenderson. Both are greatly appreciated. It was noted that pledges or donations to APS are tax deductible because the group is a non-profit organization.

A motion was made to increase yearly dues, beginning with memberships made for 1985. Regular memberships will go up, and three-year memberships will be abolished. Life memberships will increase to $200, and sustaining memberships will be $50; but any donations will be accepted. A notice will be inserted in the quarterly. The motions were seconded and carried.

In a discussion on the price of quarterlies and their mailing changes it was agreed the price of quarterlies will be $2 each for those from spring 1977 to the current ones. Mailing charge will be $1 for any up to 5 to the same address. Index, Vol. 1 through 34 will be $2.

Need for replacement for editor was discussed. Mr. Dickson said he would invite Peter Callas from Boulder, Colorado, to take the position.

Washington State Society is host for the 1984 national show. They need to know how each society can participate. Irene Buckles, show chairperson, will contact local societies. Mr. Dickson will provide enough plants so one can be presented to each new member signed at the show.

Next board meeting will consider 1984 membership drives and how to conduct them. An advertisement will be placed in at least one horticultural magazine for publication in February, March and April. This will be an attempt to increase membership. The president will write the ad.

A motion was made to sell seed at the show only to members as an incentive for people to sign for membership at the show.

Dorothy Dickson was ill and not able to be at home for the meeting. Members of the board expressed their concern for her.

A motion to adjourn was seconded and carried.

President Herb Dickson called the winter meeting of American Primrose Society to order on Jan. 14, 1984, after a delicious dinner. Herb prepared the main course, and board members provided desserts.

The board discussed finding an editor for the quarterly. Peter Callas is unable to be editor now. Brian Skidmore recommended a job identification for quarterly duties. Mr. Dickson appointed Brian to define jobs and to recommend candidates. There have been several offers to help, which are appreciated.

Lesa Smith, promoter of the primrose quilt to be raffled at the national convention, said work is proceeding satisfactorily. She will provide photos of a similar quilt which will be sent to distant groups along with tickets. A motion was made, seconded and carried that Mrs. Smith would order 4,000 tickets for the quilt raffle from Caroline Printing Company. Tickets will sell for $1 donation. A motion was made, seconded and carried that the drawing will be held at 4 p.m. on April 15, the final day of the national show. The winner does not have to be present to win. It was decided ticket sales should be handled through chapters, not the quarterly. Mail-ins must reach Irene Buckles no later than April 14.
The board discussed the need to bring young people into the society. With the normal drop each year, APS needs to strive for a membership of 3,000.

A motion was made, seconded and carried that the seed exchange list be mailed separately from the quarterly each year.

Any donations to APS in the name of Dorothy Dickson, who has died, will be used to publish the spring quarterly with color photographs as a memorial to her. Mr. Dickson also announced establishment of an award he is presenting in memory of his wife. It will be the "Dorothy Stredicke Dickson Memorial Bronze Award for Outstanding Service to the American Primrose Society" and will be given each year to a living member of the society.

A motion was made, seconded and carried that Helen and Ross Willingham be made life members of APS and that a certificate of appreciation be sent to them for their service with seed exchange.

Those interested in a round robin should contact Ruth Huston. Four groups are still functioning. She will continue to operate them.

In lieu of a nominating committee, Mr. Dickson suggested the slate remain the same. Ballots will be inserted into the quarterly by Irene Buckles.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and carried.

---condensed from reports by Esther (Candy) Strickland, APS secretary

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Primrose Lane Nursery
13631-196th S.E., Renton WA. 98056
PHONE 235-1277

SEED of DOUBLE ACAULIS
NEW SEED CROP IN AUGUST
Minimum Order - 50 seed - $5.00

Rosetta Jones
Phone 852-0330
6214 South 287th Street
Kent, Washington 98031

Plans are under way for our spring garden visits on May 5.

We are not sure how many or which gardens as this report is written, but we do know the day will peak at Edith and Bill Collin's beautiful woodland garden across the Delaware in New Jersey. This garden was featured in the Time-Life garden book series.

We would be happy to find a place in a member's home for any APS members interested in visiting our area, especially for the spring garden visits. This is an area of great historic and horticultural riches.

Those who want more information can contact Dee Peck, 8813 Patton Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19118, or Claire Muller, 2001 Ridley Creek Rd., Media, PA 19063.

Bad spring, summer

I want to record for posterity that the summer of 1983 in this area was the greatest for spider mites and the worst for primulas that we can remember. All this followed the wettest, slug-fostering, root-rotting spring in years. All we need now is to hear that we have just had the coldest winter in history!

Fortunately we had a long mild fall, and the primulas appreciated it. This was apparent in the number of healthy plants brought by members of the Doretta Klaber Chapter to the fall meeting and plant sale at Lee Raden's "Alpineflora."

We enjoyed scrutinizing Lee's intriguing rock garden, which is built on a series of gravel mounds. Each mound is situated to supply a different microclimate suited to the plants that grow upon it. The drainage is superb, which probably was not an advantage this summer.

Profitable chapter meeting

As usual the plant sale was rapid and profitable. Good food was followed by Howard Roberts’ talk on "The Lazy Man’s Way of Growing Primulas from Seed," which helped new members understand that it takes only ordinary gardening skills to produce within a year a magnificent border of colorful polyanthus and acaulis from seed.

Many chapter members have prepared for entry into the primula classes of the Philadelphia Flower Show on March 11-18. A few grew more difficult exotics in alpine

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Pennsylvania members organize garden visits

by Dee Peck
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania

and cold greenhouses, hoping the timing would be right and that their plants would open at the right time.

Others dug dormant polyanthus, acaulis, julianas and others from the garden and stored them in cold frames, moving them to a cool window and under lights to bring them to bloom. Timing is always a problem. It's not easy to wake up a primrose four to six weeks early and convince her to look her best!
Easter is usually the climax of the primrose harvest, and I can remember when some Devon families used to make a good profit from this inland sea of pale gold. The town hunger for flowers made their picking and bunching most rewarding.

There is a small flower shop near one of London's main line stations, and many times I have glanced in the window to see the tight bunches of primroses with their fringe of green leaves bringing a breath of Devon and its lanes to the smog of the city street. I have seen city workers pause for a moment in their rush-hour madness to pay whatever price is now demanded and hurry on, clutching these small round butter-colored posies.

Family business

Until a few years ago whole families used to make a real business of "primosing." In the evenings when the children came home from school, and at weekends, they would pick in silent concentration, stopping only for a swig from a lemonade bottle or thermos flask, and to bite at a pasty or sandwich.

When the children started to get bored, mother would spur them on by telling them stories, probably of her own childhood, and how different things were then. They didn't pick straight into bunches but tied them irregularly and put them in baskets. They were careful to give each other a wide berth as far as fields were concerned and always to shut the gates, for the goodwill of the farmer was essential.

As soon as they got home the flowers were put into bowls of cold water. Then when the windblown and sunburned children had gone to bed, mother and father made up the bunches.
Fifty blossoms went to a bunch, all tied up with darning wool, put back in water and boxed in the morning, then taken to the railway station to be weighed and put on a passenger train to Paddington, thence to Covent Garden. There the humble primrose held its own among the exotic freesias and mimosa.

High prices in February
In the early dark of the next morning they were sold, and the commission agent sent through the checks to the different families whose names and addresses had been carefully printed on each box. If the harvest started in February, as it sometimes does, the blooms fetched a high price. In March it went down a little — but at Easter, of course, it rose again.

Big families with several children could make 50 or 60 pounds during the five or six weeks' harvest — I'm talking about the 1960s; whether parents and youngsters still go "primrosing" I don't know.

I don't know either if Primrose Day is still celebrated anywhere, and I wonder how many people remember this was held to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Lord Beaconsfield on April 19, 1881. The primrose — prima rosa — was said to be his favorite flower, and the Primrose League was a Conservative Association formed in memory of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, having for its objects "the maintenance of religion, the estate of the realm and of the imperial ascendancy of the British Empire."

Pickers drop blossoms
Sadly, over the past two decades these flowers have become more and more rare. In spring the lane past our house is strewn sometimes with wilting blossoms which have been pulled up in fervor by young and old alike and dropped as soon as their novelty wore off.

Bicycles pass with their carriers loaded with bluebells, too, which have been wrenched from the ground, their poor heads already drooping, the white parts of the stems dangling instead of being cut and left in the ground, if they must be picked at all.

Like most wild flowers they are so much more beautiful left growing in their natural environment; and in spite of the banning of the digging up of roots, they are still dwindling. One reason an old countryman gave me for this was that there are fewer rabbits, for they grazed the grass short in the kind of places suitable for primroses. Now these plants have to compete with longer and coarser grass, which perhaps accounts for their being crowded out.

Maybe we just have to accept that in some way all this is fulfilling great Nature's plan.

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Primula micropropagation multiplies special plants

by Wilbur C. Anderson
Mount Vernon, Washington

The micropropagation of primulas has its greatest value as a breeding tool for increasing clonal lines for F1 hybrid seed production. Once the inbred lines for seed production have been identified, any quantity of plants can be micropropagated.

The cost of propagating double P. acaulis due to the limited multiplication rates, is estimated at about 2 plants per $1 from each source. The price per unit would dramatically increase with smaller quantities. Therefore, micropropagation is not an economic alternative for seed production. Small quantity increase of clonal lines is still most effective through divisions.

To have successful micropropagation of any crop requires awareness of sterile culture techniques, expensive facilities and equipment. I suggest reading an introductory book on tissue culture, such as, "Introduction to Invitro Propagation" by D. F. Wetherell (1982, Avery Publishing Group, ISBN 0-89529-161-4).

The establishment of cultures of primula is through removing the division from the mother plant. This is washed in tap water. The outside leaves are removed with a scalpel, and the shoot bud is excised with some surrounding tissue.
Tissues are surfacedisinfected for approximately 15-20 minutes in 10-fold diluted laundry bleach with about 0.1% liquid detergent added. The reaction can be basically stopped by rinsing in 100-fold diluted laundry bleach. Since the shoot buds are in close proximity to the root system, internal tissue contamination by bacteria and fungi causes contamination of the cultures. This is a serious problem with plants with limited divisions and can delay the successful establishment of a clonal line for many months.

The culture medium that I developed for double acaulis is listed below for 1 liter of medium.

**Sucrose**

**Anderson inorganics (note accompanying table)**

**i-inositol**

**Adenine sulfate-dihydrate**

**Thiamine-HCl**

**Indole-3-acetic acid**

**6-Benzylaminopurine (BAP)**

**pH adjusted with 1 molar NaOH or HC1**

**Phytagar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiplying and Shoot Medium</th>
<th>Rooting Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 grams</td>
<td>30 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1X</td>
<td>0.5X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 mg</td>
<td>100 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 mg</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4 mg</td>
<td>0.4 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 mg</td>
<td>0.5 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 mg</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 grams</td>
<td>6 grams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This culture medium must be dispensed into appropriate culture vessels and autoclaved or sterilized in a pressure cooker for 15 minutes at 15 psi. Once the media has been cooled, it is ready for use.

My experience with double acaulis as to multiplication rates which varied from 1.5 - 2.5 fold increase on each monthly subculture. Primulas have been slow in multiplication and, consequently, the high unit cost results.

The manipulation of the culture medium between different varieties and species will occur in varying the concentrations of indole-3-acetic acid and 6-Benzylaminopurine. Both of the substances are growth hormones, and they interact together for the optimal shoot multiplication and growth.

Rooting is accomplished by planting individualized shoots on the rooting medium. The primary difference between the media is the elimination of 6-Benzylaminopurine and a reduction in indole-3-acetic acid concentration. Rooting requires also about one month incubation.

The plantlets are removed from the culture medium, washed and planted into a porous planting mix. A dilute spray of Captan and Benlate (150 mg each per gallon) are sprayed weekly to control pathogens. The plantlets are placed into a humidity tent for several weeks until growth has actively resumed before placing in the normal greenhouse environment.

**Anderson Inorganics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>mg/liter</th>
<th>mM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNO₃</td>
<td>480</td>
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<tr>
<td>NH₄NO₃</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaCl₂•2H₂O</td>
<td>440</td>
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<tr>
<td>MgSO₄•7H₂O</td>
<td>370</td>
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<tr>
<td>NaH₂PO₄•H₂O</td>
<td>380</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₂BO₃</td>
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<td>MnSO₄•H₂O</td>
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<td>ZnSO₄•7H₂O</td>
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<td>KI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Na₂MoO₄•2H₂O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Na₂EDTA•2H₂O</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wilbur Anderson is a horticulturist with Northwestern Washington Research Unit of Washington State University, 1468 Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

Visitor to research laboratory inspects "test-tube babies."
Careful photography isolates plants

by Cy Happy
Tacoma, Washington

Most primula fans want to preserve images of fine plants they discover in the pot, garden or native habitat. Often the photograph or slide fails to capture the beauty of the plant, and images we wanted to share for publication don't measure up to the standards required.

Mistakes are the best way of learning. When a picture is not good enough for publication, figure out what went wrong. Then go back and do it right.

Polaroid film offers a good way of learning — mistakes in a minute. You get smart fast.

Isolation is the key word in plant portraiture. Background should never dominate. The subject should stand alone. Here are ways to win the battle of the background:

1. Have it totally out of focus.
2. Replace it with a sheet of velour paper. Buy several shades of grey and black.
3. Illuminate the subject (leaving the background dark) with a well-controlled flash, mirror or other reflective surface.

Focus must be sharp on the principal blossom or feature of the plant. The viewer will scarcely notice if the focus is soft on the rest of the plant.

Motion of camera or subject is the other cause of blurry pictures. If you settle on one black and white film, let it be Tri-X, film speed ASA 400. It is fast enough so you can hand hold most shots and, more important, fast enough to freeze moving subjects on a windy day.

Now what about camera angle? Have your lens at about the same level as the top of the plant, then work up or down (usually down) for the best framing. Shoot horizontal subjects with a horizontal format and verticals with a vertical format. Fill the frame. If flowers seem to be looking in one direction, have them looking into — not out of — the picture.

Velour paper provides backdrop for laced polyanthus.
T.C. Clare isolated *P. cashmiriana* in the garden.

Now let's look at things in shades of grey. Bright red flowers and dark green leaves turn out time and time again as the same shade of grey. That's very annoying if you want to have the flowers well separated from the background.

To correct this, you can throw more light on the flowers only or put a red filter over your lens. A yellow filter may do the job if the leaves are not yellow-green. Anyhow, a set of filters can be useful at times. Blue and yellow flowers seem to photograph more like we think they should without filtration.

Finally, the terrible problem of the perfect exposure. Use a light meter or a single-lens reflex camera with an internal meter.

Get a grey card, a photographic 50-percent neutral grey card from a real camera store. For every shot put the grey card in front of the subject and take a light reading off the card. Then photograph the subject at that reading.

If the flowers are white or yellow, close down a stop and shoot again. If the flowers are very dark red, blue or purple, open up a stop and shoot again; but basically believe your grey card light reading.

Color photographs generally do not work well in black/white publication. Good color negatives will produce good black and white prints, however, if they are printed on Panalure paper. Go to a good black and white processor — such as Custom Photo in Tacoma — to have the transition made properly.

Now you are ready. Please label and share your black and white photos of primulas for placement in the quarterly file. It is best to send 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 prints for publication, and be careful not to damage the emulsion by printing too firmly on the backs of the photos.

Thank-you!
This plum-colored double primrose was raised in 1955 by the Van Kirks of Eugene, Oregon, from seed developed by Joe Lewis, gardener at the capital gardens in Olympia, Washington. Many doubles grow to perfection their first year or two — a burst of youthful vigor — and then disappear from lack of attention, genetic flaws or harsh winter weather.

Sitwell discusses double primroses

Many primula fanciers do not have access to garden books printed 50 or 100 years ago, but the information from early growers can be useful and entertaining. This is an excerpt from Sacheverell Sitwell’s delightful book, “Old Fashioned Flowers.” Mr. Sitwell was eager to encourage American growers, and we are sure he would have been glad to share these ideas.

The rare primrose requires, not unremitting attention, but those acts of forethought shown to an ailing invalid. It is a matter of draughts and damp; while the light must not be too strong for its eyes, or the sun too hot for its petals. And there are primroses, as well, of unexpectedly strong constitution and with the temperament of fresh-air fiends. If their nurse understands them, they will thrive; but, also, certain climates suit them more than others.

It is perhaps, the melancholy truth that if sufficiently cared for they will always survive. There could be no greater mistake than to imagine that they are capable of looking after themselves. They may seem to disdain these offers of assistance, but, unless help is always available, they will disappoint, at just the moment, it may be, before flowering. And the second year, out of any batch of primroses received, there is likely to be an altogether inordinate proportion of failures.

We are speaking, of course, only of the rare and genuine old primroses. Many of these have an ancestry of one or two hundred years, so that their weak and flighty health is no matter for surprise...

One thing appears to be clearly established: there are four types of double primroses that have come to England from abroad. These are Madame Pompadour, known once as Crimson Velvet, an excessively difficult flower of a glaring ruby red colour. There has been much discussion as to the reason for its name. One writer to a gardening paper instances the case of the 56th Regiment of Foot, who were named “The Pompadours,” from the fact that when the Regiment was raised, in 1756, the facings were of a crimson or puce colour, called, at that time, Pompadour. This is to suggest, then, that this flower is at least pre-French Revolution in origin.

A de Moulin is a purplish double primrose, supposed to be of French, or Belgian, origin; but its history is confused because of its being found frequently in Ireland, where the family of Lord Ventry have the surname of de Moleyns. Probably this coincidence has no connection with the flower; but A. de Moulin is, at least, a century old. (Note: This was written in 1939.)

The third type is Marie Crousse, purple edged with white, and not, in the writer’s opinion, of outstanding interest. The fourth is Rose du Barri, a beautiful rose colour, not of strong constitution, and probably of early Victorian origin...

(Sitwell then discussed the varieties of Cocker Bon Accord primroses raised in Aberdeenshire.)

It is, perhaps, safe upon general lines to state that all the rest of the double primroses have claims to be considered as Irish in origin, or flourish there, at least, more than anywhere else; although in parts of Scotland that approximate to Irish condition of climate, they grow nearly as well. The future of the double primrose depends, indeed, upon diligent search in old Irish and in Scottish gardens. There are, by now, a good many persons engaged upon this pursuit.

Before the War they grew in Ireland in great profusion. One primrose grower writes that, before 1814, old plants could be bought by the dozens and in limitless quantity. There are persons who remember, in their youth, seeing whole quarter-acre plantings of the rarer forms, many of which are now extinct and unobtainable.

Species and Cultivar Primulas

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Section Cuneifolia Balfour f. of the genus Primula contains several attractive small species from widely divergent geographic areas — Japan, coastal northeastern Asia, islands of the northern Pacific and the mountains of California.

The section is presumed by some to be allied to the sections Auricula and Sphe
dyilia (Florabundae) because of its involute (inwardly-rolled) leaf vernation. Pollen studies have determined the pollen grains of Primula cuneifolia Ledebour and P. suf
frutescens A. Gray to be of the “Farinosa
type.”

Members of this section are cultivated, although usually with difficulty, outside their native regions. The plants require a damp, gritty fertile growing medium and suffer from high temperatures or lack of moisture during periods of active growth.

Seed likes light, cold

Seed appears to require light and ex-
posure to cold temperatures to germinate well. Thin sowing, careful watering, a porous soil mix and good ventilation are im-
portant. Seedlings and mature plants are apt to damp off under adverse condi-
tions, especially those of high temperatures.

Primula cuneifolia Ledebour is native to Japan, northeastern Siberia, the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan mainland. Within this distribution it can vary widely in its ap-
pearance, and thus several subspecies or varieties have been recognized and have at times been given specific status.

Primula cuneifolia is a small, slender perennial with wedge-shaped leaves coarsely dentate along their upper half. The type for the species has a long slender winged petiole, but this may be lacing in some phases.

The scape is 6-30 cm tall and carries one or two (rarely more) deep pink to purple (sometimes white) yellow-eyed flowers. The corolla limb may be deeply cleft in some forms, and in the type the corolla tube only slightly exceeds the calyx.

Differing leaf blades

Subspecies hakusanensis (Franchet) W. W. Smith et Forrest from the wet alpine slopes of central and northern Honshu in Japan is presumably differentiated by its more rounded leaf blades with short,
shallow, sharp teeth; a short, broad petiole; and a corolla tube which may twice exceed the calyx. Ohwi gives this and the other segregates of *P. cuneifolia* only varietal status.

Subspecies *heterodonta* (Franchet) W. W. Smith et Forrest is from Mount Twaki in northern Honshu and is larger, with thinner more coarsely dentate borader foliage, longer pedicels and larger corollas with longer tubes.

Subspecies *saxifragifolia* (Lehmann) W. W. Smith et Forrest is the most diminutive of the group. It occurs in northeastern Siberia, in the Aleutian Islands and on the Alaskan mainland. The plant is very small and few flowered and carries its pink or white deeply notched corollas on short scapes.

**Delicate nipponica**

*Primula nipponica* Yatabe is found on moist alpine slopes at elevations of 1500-1800 meters in northern Honshu, Japan. *P. nipponica* is a small and delicate plant with wedge to spatula shaped leaves, dentate along the upper margins. The blades taper to a broad petiole that may not become evident until the plant is in fruit.

The delicate 4-10 cm scape lengthens and thickens at maturity; it carries one or two umbels of white, funnel-shaped, yellow-eyed flowers. A second superimposed umbel is most often a feature of cultivation.

*Primula suffrutescens* A. Gray derives its name from the woody trailing rhizome present in mature plants in the wild. This is an American native, both fine and difficult and one which continues to tantalize and frustrate the collectors of such rarities.

*Primula suffrutescens* occurs at elevations of 300 to 3900 meters in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, growing in areas of decomposing granite. It is a plant accustomed to two brief growing periods, spring and early autumn. It may undergo a semidormant period in mid-summer and benefits from the long snowy winters of its native mountains.

**Prefers gritty soil**

It was introduced to cultivation in England in 1884 and continues to be grown there and elsewhere with modest success. In this country it will survive in the company of the species of subsection *Erythrodosum* of the section *Auricula* (*P. hirsuta* and its allies) when grown in the gritty fertile soils of a raised bed.

*Primula suffrutescens* is a dwarf perennial bearing its current foliage at the ends of congested woody rootstalks. The tiny leaves are 1.5-3 cm long and broadest just below their tips. Wedge-shaped or spatulate, they are fleshy and deeply dentate to crenate along the upper margins.

Very erect, the 3-13 cm scape carries a two to ten flowered umbel of bright pink flowers with a yellowish tube.

Members of this section are all a significant challenge to serious growers of primulas. They are at their best in the open garden in cool damp climates, but success has been achieved by some growers with careful cultivation in alpine houses or cold frames.

**References:**


Exquisite show auriculas inspire past, present growers

Every year on the last Saturday in October for well over a hundred years a group of men and women have met in an ancient chapel in Manchester.

Members of this group — where the aristocrat rubs shoulders with the postman — are custodians of the mystery and fancy of a species of primula that began in Europe centuries ago. These primulas became the object of the highest form of the florist's art in the Low Countries long before the Dutch interest in the tulip led to the near-deification of that flower in the 17th century and the resulting economic collapse of the markets.

The group is the National Auricula Society. Members of this little-known group are dedicated to the cultivation of the show auricula and many other species of primula. However, the love of the auricula is the mortar that binds this assorted band of enthusiasts together.

Roots go to 17th century

They claim they are "Florists" first and gardeners — maybe. They are privy to the skills of a fancy that has its roots in the religious intolerance of the 17th century.

Frank Jacques is former president, life member of the society and senior member of all northern Florists. Jacques, head of a stainless steel fabrications company, is probably a direct descendant of the Huguenot refugees who fled the Low Countries to escape persecution and settled in the Middleton area of Lancashire.

I consider Frank Jacques to be today's greatest living authority on the history and development of the show auricula. His research in 1972 for a society Centenary journal led him to believe that the progenitors of the modern auricula were introduced by some of the hundreds of skilled artisans who flocked to settle in the districts Middleton, Rochdale, Norwich, London and Paisley. Most, he believes, came after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

Gardening journals of the 17th and 18th centuries extolled the beauty of the auricula and the skill of the Lancashire hand loom weavers in the cultivation of this flower. The desirable plants brought enormous prices; 18th century accounts indicated that some plants changed hands at between five pounds and 30 guineas, and the growers walked 16 to 20 miles to show their treasures.

Exacting standards

Standards laid down by fanciers are so exacting that almost certainly no one will ever raise an edged show auricula with a pip (flower) that can be judged "perfect." Such a specialized flower is obviously of little interest to the nursery trade today because the rate of reproduction is slow and the genetic make-up of the show auricula is so complex.

Sir Rowland Biffen wrote a treatise on the auricula shortly before he died in July 1949. He concluded after some 30 years of study and experiment that hybridizing with a view to producing a show specimen of acceptable quality was a process that required dedication, skill and not a little luck unless one had almost limitless time, patience and space.

Nevertheless, development of the edged auricula over the centuries testifies to the singlemindedness of those whose devotion
Old Redoute print of early auricula varieties includes plants described by color in 1659 as "murray" (top), cinnamon and dun. The striped varieties, thought to be "practically extinct" in 1940, are staging a comeback in England and the United States.

to "flora's gem" encourages them on to produce such jewels of foliage, flower and form.

**Legendary growers**

Lancashire and the neighboring counties have produced many florists whose plants are almost legendary. Robert Lancashire of Middleton and Ben Simonite of Sheffield, famous 19th century growers, and David Hadfield of Cheadle and Derek Telford of Huddersfield, their latter-day counterparts, are mentioned whenever fanciers come together.

Today's growers are no less dedicated. On the traditional first Saturday in May at Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church Hall, Ramilies Avenue, Cheadle Hulme, florists from manor house to terraced cottage meet their peers to do battle for the award of "premier show auricula."

There are no financial rewards. I have never won this award. I have been close, but the honor has eluded me. Hope springs eternal.

Anyone who saw Geoffrey Smith's recent television series "World of Flowers" may have noted the scenes taken at the Cheadle Hulme exhibition in 1982. Mr. Smith talked to me off-camera while members dressed and bench their plants. He remarked about the breathtaking beauty of these aristocrats of the florist's art and admitted he had never seen such an array. He purchased some young specimens at the plant sale.

**What's that plant?**

Many gardeners go through life never having seen a show auricula. A dear friend, retired and living in Prestatyn, started growing them at age 78 and took a first prize in the novice section last year.

The usual response when seeing a green or grey edged auricula for the first time is one of utter disbelief and awe. In some cases one cannot rest until such treasures are acquired and taken to reside as honored inhabitants of the family greenhouse or cold frame.

A plant of clean habits, the show auricula can be grown to perfection in an airy alpine house. It is not difficult to please, but it demands a free-draining compost containing none of the inorganic chemical-impregnated rubbish that suffices today for growing the less discerning plants.

I have seen good plants grow in modified peat-based composts, but fine mature plants thrive in 3/4-inch clay pots with their roots in a homemade compost which closely follows the John Innes No. 2 formula. Add unsterilized loam and leaf mould instead of peat, and add grit to assist drainage.

**Don't overfeed**

Judicious feeding with organic-based manure water when the truss is rising in spring can improve the flower. Overfeeding can and does cause severe problems for such a specialized plant.

If you are interested in the activities of a group of dedicated enthusiasts, plan a trip to the spring show at Harrogate or the exhibitions held annually at Cheadle Hulme, Solihull and the Church House, Brompton Oratory, London. At Cheadle Hulme on the first Saturday in May 1984 you can view the objects of our interest and devotion.

You may want to join us in renouncing the cacophony of modern life and searching for the inner peace that is the prerogative of the florist in the company of his flowers and friends.