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Hon. Sec'y, National Auricula Society (Northern Section) England

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TO WHOM WE ARE INDEBTED

R. H. Briggs, Rawtenstall, England

On page 42 of the January 1947 issue of this Journal there is an illustration of the Auricula as it appeared in Parkinson's day, just over 300 years ago, and on the opposite page a reproduction of a modern Auricula. It might, therefore, be interesting and instructive to make an effort to trace to whom we are indebted for the remarkable development which has taken place and converted a rather ragged-looking flower into one of regal splendour.

Though the Auricula as depicted by Parkinson appears rather a mean-looking flower accustomed as we have become to the modern type it was evidently greatly prized in those days for he devoted many pages in his monumental work to eulogising and describing the different varieties then known.

Parkinson died in 1650 and we find one John Rea carrying on the good work. In 1665 his “Complete Florilege” was issued in which is mentioned the names of many fanciers of that period each one no doubt bent on improving existing varieties and vieing with one another in friendly competition.

Rea was born at Kinlet a small hamlet in Shropshire and apart from his Auriculas built up a choice collection of plants which he describes as comprising “The rarest plants and fruits and flowers that I could find in this Nation, France, and Flanders,” and was regarded as one of the leading florists of his day.

It is quite evident he formed an aristocratic connection for one of his engagements was to design a garden for Charles, Lord Gerrard of Bromley, in the County of Stafford. He must have been one of the earliest landscape gardeners for in his “Florilege” there are no less than sixteen “Draughts for Gardens” looking very like wall-paper designs of half-a-century ago.

In writing of his Auriculas he mentions — Mr. Good’s purple — raised by Mr. Austen in Oxford and given to Mr. Good of Balliol College, Mistris Buggs — a very fine purple raised by that lady in Batterse near London.

Mr. Whitmore’s purple — raised by my worthy friend Wm. Whitmore of Balmes who was pleased last Spring to give me a plant thereof. Rickett’s Sable — raised by Mr. Rickett of Hogaden often remembered as the best and most faithful florist now about London.

Altogether Rea mentions forty named varieties from which we get an insight into the many who were quietly working on the Auricula at that period and who no doubt laid the foundation upon which later others built.

It was only by great persuasion on the part of his distinguished
patrons, Sir Thomas Hamner, that Rea rather late in life took up the pen for the benefit of future generations of florists and published his book which was printed by J. G. for Richard Marriott and sold at his shop in Fleet Street, under the King's Head Tavern, over against the Inner Temple in 1665.

Not very far away from where Rea lived a very reverent divine, Samuel Gilbert, was rector of Quatt in the same County, and whether it was the former's Auriculas or the attractions of his daughter Miranda we will not discuss but he became a frequent visitor to Rea's home and ultimately both married Miranda and acquired something like a passion for Auriculas.

He followed up the "Florilege" with a book of his own, "The Florist's Vade Mecum" which, though containing a few original suggestions, seems to be little more than a condensed version of the larger work.

In it however we learn of the belief that the moon has some influence on plant growth for he says, "You must set, cut, or sow, what you would have speedily grow with the increase of the moon."

Gilbert introduces us to two of his collaborators, Peter Egerton of Boughton, near Chester and Thomas Newton, Gentleman to my very good Lord the Right Reverend Father in God, James, Lord Bishop of Worcester, after which he details quite a list of named varieties and particularly mentions a bluish-purple which he saw Mr. Egerton measure against a new half-crown which proved to be a straw's breadth wider than the coin.

Evidently, as far as size is concerned, considerable advance had already been made since Parkinson's day.

Samuel Gilbert besides being a divine and an ardent Auricula enthusiast had the soul of a poet for his Vade Mecum is studded with rhyme and the following deserves to be recorded:

"See how the Bears Eares in their several dresses
That yet no Poet's pen to Light expresses
Each head adorned with such rich attire,
With which Fools and Clowns may slight, whilst skilled admire,
Their gold, their purples, scarlets, crimson dies,
Their dark and lighter head diversities.
With all their pretty shades and ornaments,
Their parti-coloured coats and pleasing scents;
Gold laid on Scarlet, silver on the blue.
With sparkling eyes to take the eyes of you.
Mist colours, many more to please that sense,
Other with rich and great magnificence.
In double Ruffs with gold and silver diversities.
On purple, crimson, oil so neatly placed.
Rusack Flora's wardrobes, now sure can bring
More taking ornaments Urban the Spring."

In 1718 Richard Johnson wrote a book entitled "New Improvements in Gardening" in which he gives seven characteristic points of what constitutes a good Auricula in the eyes of skilled florists, probably the first attempt at standardizing. These were further implemented by Philip Millar in his "Gardener's Dictionary" published in 1731 and by James Thompson, a Newcastle florist who in 1757 published a brochure under the title "The Distinguishing properties of a fine auricula."

It is evident that interest in the Auricula had become very widespread for places so far apart as Newcastle, Chester, Shropshire, London, Oxford, Worcester, have been mentioned as being centres of interest and that some concrete idea as to what an Auricula should be like had taken shape.

At what period "edged" or as we know them "Show" varieties first made their appearance cannot definitely be stated but it was probably about 1750, at any rate John Slater in his "Amateur Florist's Guide" published in 1776 gives a list of such then known which included Rule Arbiter, Hortain and Pott's Eclipse, these were probably the harbingers of this new class of Auricula but were quickly followed by Popplewell's Conqueror, Gordon's Champion, Wrigley's Northern Hero, each giving a clue as to the identity of those who were at work on the Auricula at that period.

As to how these edged varieties came into being has so far baffled the brains of our ablest scientists, theories have been propounded but none have met with general acceptance.

It was not only in England that what amounted almost to an intensive attack on the Auricula was made, for, as Dr. Blasdale has shown by his illuminating researches both in France and Flanders, great improvements were taking place, and despite the perils and difficulties of travel in those days it is more than likely that there was an interchange of views if not actually of plants.

We have seen earlier that Rea imported the rarest plants from both France and Flanders to enrich his garden and it would be strange if these did not include some Auriculas, in which he obviously specialized.

In 1792 Maddock published his "Florist's Directory" and from that time on there is almost a spate of books which if not devoted solely to the Auricula the latter claims a goodly portion, indeed, one could say that at this period it ranked second only to the Carnation in popular estimation.

But neither Maddock nor Hudson, who in 1794 wrote his "Florist's Companion" nor yet Isaac Emmerton — whose name will always be associated with the most noxious and nauseating composites ever recommended for the Auricula — throw much light on those who were really responsible for the improvement which was taking place, especially in the "form" of the Auricula. We owe it to Hogg who in one edition of his book — "A Concise and Practical Treatise" published in 1832 supplies a list of no less than sixty florists, too many to enumerate whose names had been appended to new varieties raised by them.

There is no doubt but that the Auricula at this period had been enormously improved both as regards size and form since Parkinson's day, but it is probably equally true to say that it was left to an ardent band of enthusiasts working in the last century to add the final refinements. It was about this time that two enthusiasts, George Lightbody and Richard Headley, began to make their presence felt in the Auricula world and enriched it with many new and improved species.
varieties, two of them bearing these names are still to be found in private collections and are, despite the passing of over 100 years, considered the finest of the grey-edged varieties.

Both were born in the same year, 1795, George Lightbody near Falkirk, Scotland, and Richard Headley in Kent, but despite the distance separating them they became firm friends and each agreed to name the best plant he raised after the other, hence we go: George Lightbody raised by Headley and Richard Headley raised by George Lightbody. Many other excellent varieties were raised and shown by these veterans but none seem to have survived or were ever held in the same high esteem as the two varieties named.

Up to this period there is no reference to any division of Auriculas into "Shows," as we now call edged varieties, and Selfs, and what are now popularly described as "Alpines." Indeed, it was not until Charles Turner, a florist of Slough near London, came on the scene that we find the distinction made.

At that period the Alpine Auricula was not regarded as of equal merit with edged varieties, the segments of the corolla were indented and the centre more or less hexagonal, Turner set about to remedy these defects and according to his own statement his aim was to produce a flower minus these defects, more varied in colour, and flat. Turner had as collaborator a Wm. Willison of Whitchurch and between them they laid the foundation upon which others subsequently built to give us the Alpine Auricula as we know it to-day.

Turner's role was evidently that of showman for it is recorded he became a frequent exhibitor at Spring Shows in London where his seedling Alpines came in for much admiration and made an immediate popular appeal owing to their rich and varied colourings.

It was about this time also that the distinguishing terms light-centre and gold-centre came to be adopted, the former applying generally to those flowers whose petals were blue, violet mauve, purple, whilst the latter applied to those whose petals were crimson, brown, maroon, a distinction which is still found convenient.

Although there is abundant evidence that Lancashire had played a large part in developing the Auricula it was John Beswick of Middleton who set about improving Alpines and who was responsible more than any other in these parts for popularizing them though for quite a long period growers of "Shows" would have none of them. Indeed, even to-day there are old Auricula fanciers who refuse to have anything to do with Alpines regarding them as too easy to grow and not demanding any of the old florist's skill and therefore beneath their dignity. Headed by James Douglas, founder of the "House of Edenside" the next quarter of a century brought a galaxy of stars to the Auricula firmament and included such well-known personages as The Rev. F. D. Horner, J. J. Keen, Ben Simonite, Samuel Barlow, as well as many other Northern enthusiasts.

James Douglas was born in 1837 and became one of the founders of the Southern Section of the National Auricula Society and was one of the foremost cultivators of his day — many of his introductions still grace our exhibition tables. Later he specialized in other flowers, particularly the Carnation, but on one occasion in later life declared that his earliest love was still the strongest and that the sight of a stage of Auriculas stirred up feelings that no other flower could do.

Born in the same year as James Douglas the Rev. F. D. Horner became an enthusiastic and intelligent devotee of the Auricula and a frequent contributor to horticultural journals, he collaborated with George Kidson in writing a "Gardening for Amateurs."

It was whilst incumbent of Kirkby Malzeard, a small hamlet nesting in a fold of the Yorkshire hills not far from Harrogate, that he devoted his leisure hours to developing the Auricula and especially to the raising of seedlings, many of which became popular favourites, his Ossian, a splendid green-edge, is still in cultivation and much sought after.

It has been said of him that on one occasion
Ben Simonite

he traveled to a London show with one of his plants in a glass case to prevent its being damaged; he was one of the founders and first secretary of the Northern Section of the Auricula Society.

The North has good reason to be proud of the name of Ben Simonite, honest Ben he was affectionately called for he was a native of Sheffield.

Born in 1834 he commenced growing Auriculas when quite young and later a warm friendship between himself and Horner developed.

He is reported to have told a friend that for the first ten years he never raised a plant worth a brass farthing but fortune must later have made ample amends for many of his introductions became noted and most noted of all his “Shirley Hibberd,” considered one of the best green-edged varieties ever raised. He passed away at the age of 75, a tombstone bearing a medallion of an Auricula plant marks his last resting place.

J. J. Keen came on the scene a little later than those previously mentioned and though now well over eighty is still almost as keenly interested as ever in the Auricula and delights to discourse on his association with noted raisers and exhibitors; his long period as secretary of the Southern Section having brought him in contact with all leading growers and exhibitors. He has raised many new and good varieties but his name will always be remembered and honoured as the raiser of “Argus” a light-centered Alpine which marked a distinct advance in that class at that time and probably gained more “Premier” awards than any other single variety. It is still a very robust grower and only this year gained for an exhibitor “Premier” award in Manchester.

Samuel Barlow

Samuel Barlow was born in 1825 and was one of the old school. Though not born in Middleton — the cradle of Auricula culture in Lancashire — he spent most of his life there and was soon attracted to the Auricula.
He was one of the founders of the Auricula Society and when Horner relinquished the secretariatship in 1891 was appointed his successor.

As the raiser of Mrs. Potts and Mrs. Henwood, varieties still in existence, his name is revered by Auricula growers, particularly in the North.

Following Samuel Barlow came a new generation of Auricula enthusiasts including his son-in-law J. W. Bentley, the raiser of many new and splendid varieties, particularly Alpines. Thomas Lord, Ken Thompson, John Tonge, George Lord, F. Faulkner, Wm. Grindrod, Wm. Midgley, and many others, all of whom took a share in improvising and enriching the Auricula and increasing the varieties available.

Thomas Lord, who hailed from Todmorden, a borderland town between Yorkshire and Lancashire, was a regular die-hard and for a long time would have nothing to do with Alpines. It was more from a sense of duty as an official of the Society than for any love he had for them that he eventually took them up. He grew Show varieties superbly.

The passing of many of these worthies, though of great loss to the Society of which they were members and to Auricula culture generally, seemed only to serve to bring forth another generation of enthusiasts, Shipman, Riddle, Lennie, Grindrod, Gardner, Bamford, Cookson, and many others in the north and the present James Douglas, G. H.

Mr. Shipman was president of the Northern section and a real enthusiast — rarely on Show days did he fail to stage a good batch of seedlings, his “Greystroke” was considered one of the best grey-edged varieties raised for many years. His collection was probably the finest in the North of England but unfortunately suffered from the ravages of the war.

Although Mr. Riddle’s association with the Auricula Society began later than some of those mentioned he soon set about the task of improving still further upon existing varieties and raised many new ones, several of which received the Award of Merit.

Amongst his introductions were J. W. Gardner and A. Mottershead, gold-centres; Hilda Crowther, Clara Riddle, Dan Bamford, light-centres; Lucy Johnson, green-edge; John Ridd, grey-edge; and J. H. Watson a brilliant scarlet Self.

Though now an octogenarian he takes as great an interest as ever and is particularly keen on raising seedlings. He was secretary to the Northern section for 16 years and piloted the Society safely through the difficult war years.

In such a review as this it is quite impossible to name all who have taken part in bringing the Auricula to its present stage of perfection, or to do full justice to those who have been mentioned, but enough has been written to convey some idea of the many in various walks of life who have played a great part in its development.

The writer wishes to express his thanks to the Reverend G. D. Dunlop for his assistance, especially in supplying much information respecting the work of Gilbert and Rea.
SPHAGNUM PROPAGATION OF AURICULAS

George L. MacAvery, Snyder, New York

With reference to Auriculas (garden type) in the eastern part of the United States, I have not had the difficulty recently with their culture and propagation most eastern writers seem to have. However, I use my own methods on them, methods which perhaps, are rather unorthodox when applied to Primulas as a whole. Two large beds of approximately two hundred clumps each came under my supervision at the nursery after several years of neglect. The beds looked — for all the Auriculas you could see — like two patches of quack grass. When they bloomed in the exclusion of their grassy forest, which companionship they seemed not to resent, I selected all the clumps that had desirable flowers and potted them in large bulb pans in pure sphagnum. These pans were plunged to their rims in limestone gravel. Watering was a thorough saturation daily and feeding consisted of a soaking every two weeks with a nutrient solution made up of one teaspoon of Rapid-gro to each gallon of water.

Two months of this and the plants were removed and all the divisions cut off the old stump. The root development in the sphagnum was tremendous. The small divisions were all potted in pure sphagnum in 3 inch pots, again plunged in gravel and carried on as before division. These divisions developed quite an attractive leafage and started throwing blooms again in September. At this time they were taken from the pots and planted, sphagnum and all, in a freshly prepared bed of 2' depth. The soil mixture used to fill in this bed after excavating consisted of 1/5 rotted sod which had been liberally treated with superphosphate, 1/5 sifted peat, 1/5 sharp sand and 2/5 rotted manure. A pH test of this mixture showed me that it was too acid so some screenings from limestone gravel were mixed in and a thin dusting of ground limestone laid on top of the soil after planting.

The location of this bed is near but not next a building on its north side so that the plants get direct sun until approximately 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. The following spring (1946) these plants were all of specimens quality and most of them had developed additional crowns. A number of the plants, however, did not show a large enough bloom to be considered worth while and propagation of those plants was discontinued.

The use of sphagnum for the Auriculas was purely a chance thrust and its overwhelming success with me was quite a surprise as previous experiences had given only wretched results. The sphagnum was tried after reading Henry Correvon's book on Rock Garden and Alpine Plants*. The soil mixture I used in the bed was also due to advice given me by an old European gardener who claimed he had grown them in Austria in such soil mixtures years ago.

After joining the Primrose Society I was particularly intrigued by the description of Show Auriculas, given in the Quarterly. After searching through every catalog and list I could lay my hands on, I came across an English one which listed seeds of Show Auriculas. I rushed off a draft. Three flats were seeded: No. 1 was put outside to freeze and thaw a few times, No. 2 was watered with warm water (140 degrees F) for three days running, and No. 3 was merely placed in a 60 degree house with bottom heat. No. 3 germinated in five days and Nos. 1 and 2 are just now germinating, ten days later. I am midway in the process of seeding the 4th flat in vermiculite to see if root development of seedlings will be any faster in that medium.

Three months have elapsed since writing the above notes the first of April (1947) and the Primula season has come and gone in almost constant rain. The Auriculas all had exceptionally fine foliage as a result of the excessive rain and the bloom heads were heavy as a general rule. I had one small seedling with a gray edge but unfortunately it was pin-eyed. The largest florets occurred among the darkest colors. The wine and lighter shades carried rather heavy trusses at 1 - 1 1/4" florets. Another heavy clump that did quite well was of the same hue as Gordon Douglas illustrated in the National Auricula Society's Year Book for 1947 but which was not of the same classic form as Gordon Douglas. In the main, the entire bed was of good growth and more or less convinces me that if you keep the Auricula well fed and properly watered in a spongy, limy soil, the climate and altitude will not too much adversely affect it.

A MESSAGE TO MEMBERS

The Society extends warmest wishes to its members for all that is good in the next year. The management of the Society falls wish also to thank you for the appreciation and cooperation you have given so wholeheartedly and which is such a large part of our success.

In view of our modest membership fee we should like to have you help conserve both time and money by advising the Secretary, Mrs. S. R. Smith, Route 16, Box 102, Portland 2, Oregon of actual or impending change of address. Also if you will be able to forward dues promptly to the Treasurer, Mrs. John H. Holmes, Route 6, Box 1104, Portland 1, Oregon, a considerable saving will result. Those who wish to give special support to the Society may do so by becoming Sustaining Members which membership may have been for $5; Active membership is $1.50.

The Quarterly is the Society's connecting link with the bulk of the membership and is guided by your wishes. Its design is for the practical use and enjoyment of both new and old members and to that end we ask for your requests as to subject matter and encourage questions on culture, etc. Perhaps a Question and Answer page might serve us well. All communications of this nature should be sent the Editor, Florence Levy, Box 218, Gresham, Oregon.

Winter Care

Snow and ice are the best winter protections, and though there is no substitute for snow, ice can be produced as needed in freezing weather by a gentle spray from the garden hose. A heavy watering often bruises foliage at such times. Ice protects plants from drying, and if evergreen boughs, corn stalks or other airy material is at hand, these placed over the ice slow up the thaw. Boughs or other material are often sufficient.

Fall-planted seedlings should be watched during periods of freeze and thaw and replanted when cast out of the ground. Ice and/or other mulch are especially recommended for seedlings.

Place poison bait in all mole runs to protect plants from field mice. Hidden under foliage at intervals throughout the garden will also reduce the menace which at times takes heavy toll of plants. It is also advantageous at this time to place small mounds of any standard slug or cut-worm bait beneath leaves.
OLD AND MODERN POTTING COMPOSTS FOR AURICULAS

Florence Levy

A considerable number of American members will, for the first time this spring, be keeping a daily watch for the appearance of Show and Alpine Auriculas grown from imported seed as a result, largely, of interest stimulated by the National Auricula Society (Northern Section) of England. And although only one really fine seedling may occur out of hundreds grown, yet any Edged Auricula or quite good Alpine will be treated respectfully here, at least until such time as they become more generally grown. Their acquisition necessitates a method of culture entirely new to most American gardeners and we will be wise to follow in the footsteps of those skilled in their raising until, at any rate, we become familiar enough with them and their behavior to competently evolve our own practices. Only in recent years have Florists’ Auriculas become sufficiently real for us to get about freely among classifications of the various Edged varieties, the Selfs and the Alpines. Newer members may wish to refer to the late G. H. Dalrymple’s Auricula Chart describing the four types of Show Auriculas and Alpine Auriculas published by his permission in the July, 1940 Quarterly (Vol. 4 No. 1).

Alpine Auriculas, having no meal for the rain to spoil and being of a more rugged constitution, can be grown in the border or rock pocket as successfully as ordinary Garden Auriculas, but the finest specimens are usually given pot culture for greater appreciation of the individual plant and for exhibition purposes. Show Auriculas are always pot grown and given overhead protection as in cod frames or the like to protect the meal, for keener private enjoyment as well as for exhibition, because they are less robust, and because one couldn’t do less. Anyone with Auriculas falling into this category can do no better than follow Mr. R. H. Briggs on How to Grow Auriculas (National Auricula Society’s Year Book for 1947) in which monthly procedure is outlined step by step. Mr. G. Lancaster in the same issue on The Time to Re-pot is also good and will be of particular use a year from now.

Mr. Briggs devotes a full page to composts in his article, and since a suitable soil mixture is our first concern this subject might be further explored although we will probably be guided by the mixtures of Douglas and Dalrymple as given, or variations of them. Only a quick comparative review of early and modern composts is necessary to discover how consistently the trend has been toward leaner — or more correctly speaking less rich — mixtures. Quite shortly the relationship between the tightened belt and a longer life expectancy was noted. Perhaps Emmerton’s mix is the most notorious but Maddock’s, before him, is a masterpiece of precision and imagination: “1/2 rotten cow-dung, two years old; 1/6 sound earth of an open texture; 1/8 earth of rotten leaves; 1/12 coarse sea or river sand; 1/24 decayed willow wood; 1/24 peaty or moory earth; 1/24 of the whole, ashes of burnt vegetables.”

A contemporary, S. Curtis, dispensed with loam entirely and used “2/3 rotten dung from hot beds reduced to mould and 1/3 peat or bog-earth and sand in equal parts.” These are samples of late 18th century composts.

Emmerton published his murderous mixture in his Treatise (1819), a recipe handed down by his father and upon which he claims to have improved: “1 barrowful of goose dung; 1 barrowful of sugar baker’s scum; 1 barrowful of night soil and 1 barrowful of loam.” To this was added bullock’s blood. He promised that this would cause Auriculas to increase as the couch grass in the fields but his contemporary, Thomas Hogg says in his Supplement to the Treatise on the Culture of Florists’ Flowers (1833) that notwithstanding Emmerton’s vain boasting, his plants “were never long-lived with him; that he was sending for fresh plants from the country almost every year, more or less, to keep up his stock; he never sold any at that time; he might, perhaps, exchange or give one away occasionally; but he grew them entirely to gratify his own fancy. When he was obliged to leave his nursery at Barnet, in consequence of his having libelled the parson of his parish, a magistrate went to prisonmen in the King’s Bench: he, after this removed to Paddington, and occupied a small nursery and flower garden near me; where he continued for awhile to grow Auriculas, along with other plants, for sale; but he was far from being successful with them; he complained, by way of excuse, that he had not got his compost in right order, and that the London air did not seem to suit them; he at last gave it up, as he was neither likely to gain either credit or advantage by the pursuit; and sent a few of his best flowers to be taken care of by Mr. Moore, of Finchley.”

Hogg and Emmerton are the Gilbert and Sullivan of the floral world. They seemed to be unable to get along either with or without each other and their names will probably always be paired. In his 1833 Supplement, Hogg says “I am not aware that any other flower has had half the pangs and trouble bestowed upon it as the Auricula, in regard to compost;” — but “I do not find it necessary to mete them out with that exact proportion which my late brother florist, Emmerton, used to impress upon me, at the time I assisted him in the writing and compilation of his Treatise; this was the beginning or dawn of my Auricula fancy, eighteen years ago; and I have cultivated them with tolerable success ever since.”

Hogg used a number of mixtures, the following being representative: “one barrow of rich yellow loam or fresh dung earth from some meadow or pasture land or common with the turf well rotten; one barrow of leaf mould; one ditto of cow-dung; two years old at least; and one peck of river sand, not sea sand.” Whereas Emmerton’s compost was 3/4 manure Hogg reduced his to 1/3.

There are a number of other interesting old composts using different ingredients in varying combinations but like those above are of historical value only. Of a more practical nature is Douglas’ compost published in the Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1834 (Vol 59), one which Mr. Douglas says was used by him since 1890 but which was apparently altered sometime after 1934 as it differs from the present one given in Mr. Briggs’ article. The 1934 compost consisted of “1 barrow load of fibrous loam torn into small pieces; 1 barrow load of...
two year old leaves riddled through a 1/2 inch sieve; 1 barrow load of rotted horse manure, also riddled; To every barrow load of compost add one 5" pot of bone meal, one 5" pot of coarse sand; and one 5" pot of crushed oyster shell. The 1947 compost is “four parts fibrous loam, one part well-rotted horse manure and one part leaf-soil two years old. The loam is torn into small pieces and after mixing the whole is rubbed through a half-inch sieve, and to each bushel is then added one pint of coarse Bedfordshire sand.” “In conclusion Mr. Douglas says there is one thing many people fail to realize that and is the Auricula requires nothing more for its sustenance than a good virgin soil and that if any fertilizer is added it should be natural manure and not any artificially prepared substitute.” “Bone-meal is eschewed because of its tendency to develop maggots in the soil.”

Still quoting from Mr. Briggs: “Compost used by Mr. G. H. Dalrymple of the Bartley Nurseries, Mr. Dalrymple says they now use the John Innes composts in which they have found Auriculas grow very well.”

The John Innes potting compost is given in the 1946 Year Book of the National Auricula Society (Northern Section): “7 parts sterilized Loam, 3 parts Peat, 2 parts Sand, to which is added — 1/4 lb. John Innes Base per bushel, 3/4 oz. Chalk per bushel. The John Innes Base can be obtained from various sundriesmen ready mixed or can be prepared by mixing together—2 parts (by weight) Hoof and Horn Meal (1/4 in. grit.) 2 parts (by weight) Superphosphate, 1 part (by weight) Potassium Sulphate.” Obtaining the Hoof and Horn Meal presents the only difficulty for American use of this compost.

Mr. J. E. Henwood, a famous fancier, writing for the R.H.S. Journal for July, 1890 gives a simple compost and excellent advice: “The most essential thing towards the successful cultivation of the flower is a proper compost and without it it is not to be expected that the plant can be grown to any degree of excellence.” “This should consist of two thirds good fibrous loam, and one third rotten leaves and well decayed horse manure; add to this sufficient coarse sand, or granulated charcoal, to make the whole porous when pressed into the pots. This simple compost will keep the plants in health and vigor. Avoid artificial manures and stimulants of all kinds, or else, like the drunken man, the plants will go soft.” “Watering is at all times a most important feature in Auricula culture; never let them get dust dry, and never keep them sodden. Both are great evils. Try and hit the happy medium. “There are but few secrets worth knowing in Auricula culture, and here they are: A sweet, wholesome compost, perfect cleanliness, and proper attention to watering. Give them these, and success is assured.”

Seed of P. verticillata Available

Dr. Walter C. Blasdale of Berkeley has given the Society seed of P. verticillata for distribution. All members in good standing may share by sending request and self-addressed stamped envelope to the Secretary. P. verticillata is recommended for either warm localities or greenhouse culture. It bears fragrant yellow blossoms in superposed umbels. Dr. Blasdale’s article describing this species will appear in the near future.
BLUE RIBBON PRIMROSES

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