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Growing Primulas from Seed
by Marie Skonberg

Growing primulas from seed is a very complex task. Primula growers have their own tried and true methods. What works for some can be tragedy for others. I've tried all kinds of methods of growing primulas from seed from scattering the seed in the garden to precise sowing in pots. I'll skip the failure section and go on to a method with which I've had success -- discovered through much trial and error!

Generally I use small three-inch or four-inch square pots filled three-quarters full with potting soil. I top this off with about half inch of Perlite, spray with warm water (120°F), sprinkle the primula seeds on the surface of the Perlite, then spray again to make sure the seed is in contact with the potting medium.

The pots are put in a flat outside in a cold frame covered with screen. I leave them outside for a month or two to freeze and thaw, as in nature. Then the pots are brought in to my cool greenhouse, which is kept at about 50°F. I spray the surface of the pots with warm water (120°F) for two days. Germination usually starts in a week or two. If it doesn't, I cover the pots with snow, if available, for several days. Or I cover the pots with a clear plastic dome. During this time, the pots are watered from the bottom, as I don't want the seed disturbed.

In my area this method works very well if the seed is sown in November, December or January. Sometimes I still sow seed as late as February or early March. The weather conditions of winter -- freezing and thawing -- hasten germination by softening the seed coat, yet it doesn't actually sprout until it is moved to a warmer place. Then the magic and excitement start!

Watching the tiny green sprouts emerge is the most thrilling experience for me. I spend hours in the greenhouse watching, waiting and admiring the miracle of each tiny primrose emerging into the world.

Primula seed is acquired from many sources worldwide. Germination is usually achieved with great success -- 80% or more, but some seed still hasn't germinated after three years.

I also save my own seed, picking the pods after they have turned brown. I dry the seed briefly, clean it and store it in the refrigerator in 35mm film containers. August is too early to plant seed, so I keep it refrigerated until I'm ready to start it.

I have tried planting primula seed fresh from the pod with excellent results, but I have to baby the plants through the winter in the greenhouse and I lose a lot of them.

ON THE COVER
Growing primroses from seed is a rewarding experience. It is often the only way to obtain unusual primulas, especially the species. Various techniques for starting seed and handling primula seedlings, such as those in the cover photograph, are found in this issue.

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Growing Primulas from Seed continued

Some of my primroses self-seed out in the garden if I leave the seed pods on the plant. I have built up drifts of Primula sikkimensis, P. florindae, P. rosea and the candelabras in this way. However, they generally don’t sprout where you want them and have to be transplanted. I recently had to move about thirty plants from the lawn back into the garden.

I’ve found that primula seed will usually germinate if it is fresh. I get the best results with my own seed probably because I’ve taken care of it: picking pods when they are ripe and storing them in the refrigerator. Actually, the best results I ever had came from a seed pod that had wintered over in the garden. I planted it in the greenhouse in April and ended up with six flats of six-packs!

Last winter I had an interesting experience with some primula seed purchased from June Skidmore, the U.S. representative of Field House Alpines in England. She had just returned from a trip to England, bringing with her a fresh supply of seed. I received my order through the mail in October and promptly refrigerated the seed until a few days before Thanksgiving. Then I decided to plant some seed.

I did the spraying and sowing and put the pots of seed out in the coldframe until the end of December when I brought them into the greenhouse. Usually I don’t put flats of seed pots near a heat source, but for lack of space, or some other reason, I put the flats on the shelf above the small oil heater which is my winter source of heat in the greenhouse. The flats were frozen, so I let them thaw, sprayed them with warm water and — miracles of miracles — within four days the seed began to germinate.

Every day I went out to check the pots to find another batch had germinated. Within two weeks I had not 10 or 20 seedlings in each plot but 30, 40 or 50! I could not believe what was happening. I have never experienced this type of germination with any primula seed before. And so far! This was definitely the height of my primula seed germination career. Can you imagine the thrill of going out every day to see that more and more seed had germinated. I was definitely in heaven.

This kind of germination could only have happened with perfect circumstances: the freezing and thawing, the heat, and most importantly, the fresh seed. I don’t know if I will ever be able to duplicate it again but, believe me, I will try. I’m getting goose bumps and my heart is pounding — I’m definitely hyper just writing about this amazing experience.

Marie is one of our enthusiastic primula growers from Alaska. She has also sent a list of her primula seed sources — look for it elsewhere in this issue.

Pollinating Primulas

by John Kerridge

When the editor asked for a description of pollinating methods, it seemed a chance to combine something on the technique of hand-pollinating for selected seed with something on the objectives and direction of a recent program to which my efforts are being applied.

Garden Gold-Laced Polyanthus

In a previous APS quarterly (vol. 49, no. 3) I described the work done trying to modify gold-laced polyanthus plants, most specifically increasing the size of the flower by crossing with other polyanthus, working toward a more showy garden plant. Seedlings were line bred; but as these do not breed true, a wide variety of offspring occur — particularly with differences in their markings. Few, indeed have the classical lacing for the connoisseur, though most are vigorous and attractive plants. The goal of increased size is coming along well.

Primula “Wanda” Hybridizing

The most recent line of interest has been hybridizing, using P. “Wanda” as both pollen parent and seed parent — my latest program of seed production. Here are some details and thoughts about this exciting work.

Victor Costley was a founding member of the Canadian Primula and Alpine Society, now known as the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia, and was very helpful to me in getting started with primulas. Before he died, one of his particular hopes had been “to get some of that ‘Wanda blood” into the colorful plants sold in stores each spring. Bright and showy as these are, hardy they are not. But it should be possible to improve this without losing some of their appeal, to get bright starry flowers on a tougher root stock.

A few years later, the “Wanda” hybrids arrived in Europe and are now available in color lines — new rich shades on plants hardy through our winters here. They still have the tough rootstock of the original “Wanda,” an attractive feature which makes them suitable for division.

Polyanthus-“Wanda” Crosses

Then a project was started here with a view to crossing P. “Wanda” with large colorful polyanthus. Polyanthus seem to be less available now, as it appears they are treated with a growth retardant to keep them low-growing, more appealing to the market these days. Thus the polyanthus habit can’t be easily recognized. But they are always there to be found.

Now for the pollinating process. It is fortunate that P. “Wanda” blooms early, just around the time that polyanthus from the stores are available, plus or minus a little coaxing on either side. Our garden polyanthus come too late, towards May, for this pollinating exercise. “Wanda” plants are lifted from the garden and set in flats thanks to a shovel just the right width and an abundance of garden plants.

Hand-Pollinating Polyanthus

The flats of “Wanda” are set up in the green-
Pollinating Primulas continued

house where the buds keep opening. Not a lot of pollen is formed, and it is more available just before the flower is fully open. We have a thrum form in this area, though a pin form does exist. A quick tug on the petals pulls the whole flower away in one piece. This is easily pulled apart to expose the stamens, and pollen on them is applied directly to the polyanthus pistil.

The pollinating is done in the very early morning for no other reason than this is the only time available. First the greenhouse is warmed up — for one's own comfort but also because I feel this heat helps pollen release. There are mechanisms in the flower that will suppress the release of pollen if it is cold and damp.

As for the polyanthus, here are some useful tips. Only sturdy and top rate plants are used and only ones with pin-eyed flowers. This makes pollinating easier. Open buds are removed — who knows what promiscuous bee has been there before you. But do arrange the pots by flower color and label them before you remove the flowers, as it is easy to lose track of this when you are just looking at calyces. Sometimes you find two or three different colors of polyanthus in the same pot — watch out for this! Separate them and put with their color groups.

As further polyanthus buds open, they are pulled apart and pollinated steadily, keeping their petals in piles of each color to be used as follows.

Back-Crossing with "Wanda" as the Seed Parent

As we have the thrum-eyed form of "Wanda" this is a little tricky. It requires patience to expose the pistil, held tightly within the calyx. Each flat of "Wanda" is crossed with a separate color of polyanthus, and the flat is carefully labeled with the color. Fertilization and formation of seed pods will occur quite readily. The difficult part is bringing them along to maturity because of damping off.

"Wanda" foliage grows fast and covers the long slender stems, holding the delicate seed pods which lie buried under leaves on the soil and are hard to find. The first time I tried this it was necessary to make a mental note of each seed pod and inspect it daily. Leaves can be cut back to allow more air and watering done from below. All the plants, polyanthus too, are kept out of the fresh air — sheltered shelves in the shade are ideal. All the debris such as dying leaves and especially fallen flower petals should be removed. These attract fungus so fast. If a plant dies out, beware the rot induced by wetting the dying leaves.

Seed pods are collected if possible before they split — that is when they are buff colored and brittle, and will "pop" and split a little under light pressure. Check pods at least daily. Too often insects or the wind carry off seeds from open pods. If the seed is only just turning brown, it will soon ripen in a paper bag or envelope. Beware poor seals in the corners of envelopes! Tape them up before you lose the seed. And label envelopes of seed carefully.

Recreating the "Cowichan"?

This describes one project which can keep one out of mischief for a long time while having fun. Results have been coming along — early blooming vigorous plants with rich colors, mostly in polyanthus form. Many of the flowers, deep red in color with hardly any eye, resemble the "Cowichan" polyanthus discovered just a few miles from here on Vancouver Island.

Naively, I thought this was a discovery — that the original "Cowichan" was a "Wanda" cross — but on reading Roy Gender's book The Polyanthus written in 1963, there it was: "Presumably the 'Cowichan' polyanthus is a first generation 'Wanda' cross." Of course, the original "Cowichan" plant itself was sterile, and subsequent lines have been hybrids developed from pollen taken originally from clones of that single plant by Florence Bellis.

One way or another, I have primroses blooming all year round, in the greenhouse or outside. Maybe that is why I like them so much.

Thea Oakley, President of the Eastside Chapter has a magic touch with primulas. Her garden is full of treasures, many of which she has grown from seed as she explained above. This is encouragement for us all to try growing from seed.

My Introduction to Primroses

In 1970 I sent for my first primrose seedlings from Far North Gardens — Bamhaven "Silver Dollar" primroses. I lived in Magna, Utah, 12 miles out of Salt Lake City. They came in the late fall and after planting them — all went well. Beautiful flowers came up the next spring, but the plants died in the summer when we had heat over 100 degrees.

I always loved primroses as a child. In Germany we had himmelschluessel (Primula veris) all over, and I knew that if I ever had a garden I would have primroses in it.

We moved to Alaska and got to see some primroses in the wild. We had no garden and no time, anyway. It wasn't until we moved to Washington and I went to my first primrose show in Totem Lake Mall that I was able to start growing primroses.

Now I grow any type I can get and like them all. I would like to have all the species there are. I just have to find the right area to grow them in. I have many of the Vernales section and many of the Veris, i.e., auriculas of many colors. For the winter, I grow P. malacoides, P. sinesis and P. obconica. The seeds have to be started in June and July for early flowering from January on.

Thea Oakley, President of the Eastside Chapter has a magic touch with primulas. Her garden is full of treasures, many of which she has grown from seed as she explained above. This is encouragement for us all to try growing from seed.

A Synoptic Guide to the Genus Primula

by G.K. Fenderson

A basic reference to the genus Primula, with approximately 1375 species, synonyms and hybrids included.

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A Brief Insight into Craven’s Primula Nursery

by Stephen and Marlene Craven
and not forgetting our daughter Dawn

The "seed" of the idea for our nursery was sown many years ago after reading a book by Roy Genders called Antique Plants. Inside was chapter after chapter on old world florist's flowers like tulips, pinks, auriculas, polyanthus. From then on, I wanted to read all I could on these floral masterpieces. But very little information was to be had, and I soon discovered the plants themselves were as rare as hen's teeth. Some still are.

Perseverance is the name of the game and it started to pay off. A small collection of plants were gathered together from here, there and everywhere, and from this nucleus of stock Craven's was born. It was in 1984 that we placed an advertisement in a national gardening magazine, offering a collection of antique auriculas — the "Pot of Gold Collection." This went off like a bomb and we were on our way.

From day one the biggest influence on the nursery was Barnhaven Primroses. We tried to obtain all we could of the primrose, these most English historical flowers. Breeding and showing became an annual event, looked forward to through the depths of our cold, damp winters. Yet another influence on our small concern was the House of Douglas in southern England. From here we obtained all sorts of alpine auriculas, some nearing the end of their lives, others still as grand as ever.

For several years Craven's sat on the side of one of Yorkshire's largest rivers, the Aire, which helped to keep our benches moist and the atmosphere more congenial for primulas. The nursery developed from an old fruit orchard full of gooseberries — the best — black currents and raspberries, pears and apples. Now it is a maze of tunnels and greenhouses crammed with plants, every sort of gem you can think of — gold-laced polys, double primroses, auriculas, "Cowichans," Barnhaven primulas — yes, the lot!

We soon found out that the trick is to be able to sell them. Our main outlet is mail order, and this has always been our goal — to provide the nearly unattainable to as many people as we can, even world-wide. No longer have collectors to rely on begging from the "clique" of the various societies.

After a brief move to a Victorian garden in Buckinghamshire, Craven's have now found their home back in Bingley, the "Throstles Nest of Old England," the natural place for "florists" back to their roots from whence it all began. We still wish to give people new and exciting introductions in the primula and pink world and look forward very much to making contact with as many primula enthusiasts as we can. Drop us a line now for our up-to-date seed catalogue.

How I Grow Seeds

by Anita Kistler

My seed sowing starts about three days after Christmas. It is so relaxing to go into the cellar and write labels, fill soil mix into pots and then sow the seeds that have come in to that point.

Naturally, before the ground freezes, I have to sieve top soil and compost and store what I need in the cellar. My basic soil-sowing compost is one part each of top soil, compost from my leaves and Gran-I-Grits starter size (for baby chicks). The actual mix gets altered to suit the seeds — more compost goes into the pots for primula, more grit goes into the pots for high alpines and androsace.

Then I sow the seeds. Fine primula seed are sown on top of the starter grit which I use as top-dressing on the pots. Big seeds like arum or arisaema go on top of the potting mix, and then I top dress with the grit.

All the pots stand in a pan of warm water until the grit changes color from the moisture. Then they stand for 24 hours in the warm basement. From there they go into plastic bags and get the shock of outdoors until they germinate.

The seeds will germinate in their own time and, being outdoors, they get plenty of light and stay moist in the bags. Once they are up, off come the bags, and the pots go into an old picnic table in dappled shade, with only screens over them for protection. The screens break up the rain drops and keep off the petals which drift down from the flowering cherry trees.

I am in no hurry to prick out the seedlings. I wait until the primulas are real rosettes, and then they are pricked out into individual pots. I use almost the same mix as for the seedlings. The next move is into garden soil with very little shock on the pan of the plant.

To go back several steps, when I write the label for each seed pot, I include the plant name, source of the seed — a friend, or American...
News from the Chapters

This time is a catch-up from March for most chapters. Notices were omitted from the summer issue in order to have more room for conference reports.

Pennsylvania
Doretta Klaber Chapter
In February we had a primula seed sowing workshop in one of my sheds. In May we had garden tours arranged by member Hope Punnet. Visited her garden and two adjacent gardens of non-APS members. All very different, but all very interesting.

June was our annual meeting at Kistler's. We have arranged by member Hope Punnet. Visited her PENNSYLVANIA summer issue in order to have more room for chapters. Notices were omitted from the Chapters before the mad rush. Then on to happy hour and a run-up to our plant sale after the meeting, so sale can be set up before the meeting. The discussion was followed by supper.

Bob Brotherson gave a glowing report of the Portland. The discussion was followed by supper. Discussion of the successful primula symposium in Portland. The discussion was followed by supper.

Note from Don Keefe, Editor: Juliana Primulas, but a group of avid primrose lovers and growers. Siegel is treasurer. So the Doretta Klaber Chapter was elected: Dot Plyler. Bob Broiherson is editor. Bill MacGillavry, Nettie Gale, New Dawn, Pearly Gates, Cloud, Maiden's Blush, Mrs. King, Mrs. Firelight, Gold Jewel, Hybrid Pink, Irish Gem, Barnhaven sold the following Juliana plants: Bounty Primrose Lodge, Roberta, Royal, Schneekissen, Snow Maiden, Springtime and the Dove.

Barnhaven also sold P. julia and the miniature polyanthuses "Red Riddle" and "Red Velvet." I am making copies of the catalogs to send to the present owner of Barnhaven 3, located in Brittany, France, and naturally, a set for the Keefes.... June program: Round table discussion on the collection and storage of primula seed. No meetings July and August.

Note in the newsletter: Other Perennials. Most gentians are not difficult to grow. Rick Lupp, owner of the Mt. Tahoma Nursery in Graham, advised that most fresh seed from gentians will germinate readily but that older seed is often difficult to start. By the way, Rick says that he has about 30 different species of gentians for sale.

Seattle Chapter
May program: Slide presentation by Jay Lunn on "Native Primula of the United States." August meeting: Potluck picnic. The excellent cooks of the Seattle Chapter provided a wonderful picnic lunch for this chapter's summer meeting. Jane Skidmore, president, was hostess for the gathering of primula enthusiasts. Members explored June's fascinating garden with its multitude of troughs filled with rare and unusual plants. Those who attended the symposium "Primula Worldwide" may remember that June gave a talk on making these useful containers which are so well utilized in her own garden.

After lunch there was a plant swap where everyone went home with at least six new plants. A report was given on the APS board meeting and elections of Chapter officers were held. The officers are: June Skidmore, President; Lew Mickelson, Vice-President; Jane Mickelson, Treasurer; and a set for the Keefes....

Continued on page 46

Barnhaven Primroses 3
by Angela Bradford

It is well known now how Florence Bellis founded the Barnhaven strains in Oregon in the 1930s and how, in the early 1960s, she sent the seeds to Jared and Sylvia Sinclair in the tiny village of Brigsteer in England's Lake District. They carried on the tradition with outstanding success — Florence Bellis was delighted with what they had achieved — and they also added new series to the range as well as developing the double auriculas and the Primula sieboldii. By the late 1980s they were ready to retire, but the hoaxes of protest when they announced their intention led them to carry on for just one more year, and then one more.... But they eventually decided that 1989 would be the very last year of pollinating.

Meanwhile, fate was taking a turn. In the early 1980s a gas engineer who had yearned all his life to be a farmer was taking early retirement so that he and his younger second wife could set up a bed and breakfast business in the country where they could rear animals as a sideline. They had already decided that they would like to settle in the Lake District, and after failing to acquire the first property they had intended to buy, they eventually settled in Brigsteer.

Their daughter was a professional academic librarian who, in her increasingly scarce spare time, was a keen hobby gardener with an interest in old-fashioned flowers. Now is the time to come clean and admit that I am that former librarian. So, one spring day, on a walk with my stepmother, I was talking about my garden and how I wanted to get hold of some in-hose polyanthuses. "Oh, that's easy," said my stepmother, "you must meet the Sinclairs." And that's how it started. We met and became friends. Whenever I could get away, we visited the Lake District, and the Sinclairs taught me the trade. As the years went on, work in the library became more onerous, and my heart yearned for the green fields and the peace of the countryside. Time passed; the Sinclairs talked about retiring. Could I do it?

"Do you know what you are taking on?" they asked. The answer to that was no, not really. But at least it would be a job I would enjoy.

We started to look for property in England and came across another snag. If I were to give up my library post, we could not afford to buy a property. It seemed the project was impossible. And then, in 1989, another turn of fate. The previous year we had a holiday in Austria. We had taken part in a competition and won second prize — a week's holiday in the same resort the following year. But 1989 marked the bicentenary celebrations in France. My husband, who is a translator, was keen to go, and anyway felt that he needed to spend more time in France to keep his language up-to-date.

So, at the last minute, we shelved plans to go to Austria and went to France instead.

On a shopping expedition, we were idly looking in estate agents' windows and gradually formed the impression that property was much cheaper in France than in England. Moreover, the kind of property we wanted — a smallish house with about an acre of land — was very common in France while being extremely rare in England. Well, imagine a perfect sunny day; a sandy beach on a rocky headland with pine trees coming down to the shore; a picnic of bread, cheese and sausage; a bottle of wine.... "We could live here, you know," I said.

That was July 1989. Since I was employed on an academic staff contract and had to give a term's notice, we decided to move in January,
Barnhaven Primroses continued

1990. There followed the usual rush of selling our property in England, finding and buying one in France and finding out all the regulations to do with running a business in France. However, since both France and the U.K. are members of the E.E.C., there were surprisingly few formalities to complete. On the night of the January 18, 1990 we crossed the English Channel in a force nine gale, arrived safe, if somewhat tired, in time to sign the final papers for the house and set about installing ourselves.

The house we chose is a typical farmhouse of the region called a longere. It is made of the local granite with a slate roof into which are set dormer windows. Originally the living quarters were contained in one end and the cattle byre in the other. Now the byre has been turned into a living room with a huge stone fireplace. The village of Plouzelambre has 200 inhabitants, a church, a Mairie, a telephone box and not much else. Our nearest shop is two miles away, but there are supermarkets within easy reach and the sea is only four miles away.

I had to get authorization to start une exploitation horticole. It arrived in the Mairie. It’s a page long, and is a list starting: Vu la loi d’orientation agricole du 4 juillet 1980; Vu la loi no. 84-741 du l’er août 1984 and so it goes on to the end of the page. But the important bit is at the bottom: DECIDE: M. BRADFORD ANGELA est autorisée à exploiter des parcelles s’une superficie de 0.60 ha en la commune de PLOUZELAMBRE.

The Barnhaven seeds were sown in March 1990. I took advice from a local grower on what compost to use. Unfortunately, it proved to be totally unsuitable and that, along with a prolonged heat wave, led to a large proportion of the plants dying. So Barnhaven 3 nearly foundered before it had properly begun. Still, I salvaged the plants I could and repotted into a better compost recommended by someone else. The plants flowered in 1991, were pollinated by hand in the time-honored Barnhaven way and the resulting seeds were sown as soon as they were ripe. At the time of writing — February 1992 — there are about 12,000 plants in pots. The first flowers are appearing and a new season’s pollinating is only a few weeks away.

I found that growing primroses commercially on my own was very different both from helping established and experienced growers like the Sinclairs and from growing them myself as a hobbyist.

In the beginning, it was hard to come to terms with the scale of what I was doing. The knowledge that every action mattered, that there would be no one on the spot to advise, that every failed plant was my fault and no one else’s and moreover meant a reduction in profit, was extremely unsettling. From being an experienced professional on top of any situation the job could throw at me, I had become a novice who was faced with a new problem practically every day. Letters and phone-calls to the Sinclairs at this stage were very frequent indeed. How they must have dreaded yet another envelope with a French stamp! Their kindness, forbearance and wise practical advice is a debt that can never be properly repaid, but without them, Barnhaven 3 would never have got started. Sylvia and Jared, you have always shunned the limelight, but I would like my gratitude to you to go on record.

The land that we bought had been a farm, but it had not been used for some years. Parts of it are very wet, which makes it unattractive to local farmers but perfect for growing primulas. We first viewed it in September 1989 after a summer-long drought. Most of the surrounding countryside was parched and yellow, but these fields were still green. We had some anxiety as to whether this would mean it would flood in very wet weather, but since the land is about 300 feet above sea level and well supplied with brooks and streams, we decided to take the risk. In fact, this has proved justified, though there are parts which do become squelchy after prolonged storms.

We needed a shelter to protect the plants and decided on a tunnel with open sides. The most common tunnels are completely covered in polythene which keeps the structure rigid. Since we wanted free air circulation up to about the 5-foot level, we obviously could not use this system. The tunnel that we chose is British and has galvanized supports which are embedded in concrete. All the metal components are fixed together by clamps, so that none of them is pierced. This means that the basic structure is very strong and rigid. The polythene is guaranteed for five years. So far it has lasted two, so we have yet to find out whether it lives up to its promise, though it has come through some fairly severe gales.

The tunnel is 6.7 meters (22 feet) by 31.6 metres (104 foot). This gives us room for about 60 benches. We can get about 50 plants per bench, so this gives us a theoretical 3,000 plants. We actually have more than that, as the later flowering auriculas and sieboldii are benchled later. In theory, this number of plants could give us 90,000 packets of seed, and it doesn’t seem fair that it never works out like that! But, of course, not every flower gets pollinated, as they can open too quickly on warm spring days, not every pollinated flower “takes,” some series have a very poor yield per pod, some pods get eaten by caterpillars, and others are simply shed by the plant. For the time being, this is the limiting factor of the amount of pollinating we are able to do, since I am getting too old to want to attempt to do a whole day’s pollinating on my hands and knees!

The primroses are grown in a peat-based compost specially prepared for primulas that is available commercially here. Primrose enthusiasts will be grinding their teeth in horror, but the primroses do very well in it. Of course, we are growing for seed production and not for exhibition, so our needs are somewhat different.

Most are discarded as soon as the harvest is over. We have a spring, which until about ten years ago was the sole water supply for the surrounding houses. It runs into quite a large basin surrounded by flat stones on which the local women used to do their washing. There is still a right-of-way from the road to the spring, but of course it is not used any more. On analysis, the spring water proved to be bacteriologically clean but to contain 86mg/litre of nitrates, so it is undrinkable now — though it probably saves us having to buy fertilizer! We have been told by locals that it has never been known to fail, even in prolonged drought. It
Board of Directors' Meeting

July 11, 1992

Present: Cy Happy, Addaline Robinson, Flip Fenili, Don Keefe, Rosetta Jones, Don Howe, Candy Strickland, Etha Tate, Thelma Genheimer, Al Rapp and Barbara Flynn

Cy Happy, president, brought the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. and read the agenda. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

Treasurer's Report: Addaline Robinson presented her report, which showed a balance as of June 30, 1992, of $6,771.30. She also read Jay Lunn's report on the primula symposium, copies of which had been mailed to members of the Board. There was discussion on expenses for the quarterly.

Greg Becker could not be present but sent a taped report from earthquake country. On the subject of the symposium he has received nothing but positive feedback. It was not only rewarding personally but financially. He went over the finances of the symposium, including the funds retained for late expenditures. The Japanese had a wonderful time and will probably start importing Japanese tulips after the symposium.

The next board meeting will be at Mary McCrank's Restaurant on October 10, 1992. A motion to adjourn was made by Etha Tate, seconded by Don Keefe.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Flynn, Secretary
**BORDER OR GARDEN AURICULAS**

Here’s what Lou Roberts had to say about dividing a border or garden auricula: “When dividing, save detached offsets or take cuttings cleanly off side growth. Auriculas root very readily in sharp, clean sand. We use sand with a little peat added.

“Prune off about one third of the root length with a sharp knife, cut these into inch pieces and cover inch-deep in the sand and peat mixture, keeping on the dry side for two months in a green house or cold frame. A few will produce new plants to be potted up the following spring to grow on and give bloom the next season.”

Taken from the APS Quarterly, vol.1, no.2, October 1943, p.13.

**GROWING CANDELABRAS**

Candelabra primulas are very easy to grow from seed. Mary strips the seed from the pod after it turns brown. Then in the fall she sprinkles the seed in our candelabra beds. Hundreds of seedlings come up in the spring. It is best to grow candelabras in an area where the ground stays moist. However, you can grow them in any semi-shady place providing you keep the roots moist.

Recently we left home for a week’s vacation during a rainless hot spell. We didn’t advise the caretaker about the need to water the candelabras enough to keep the soil moist. When we returned home, many of the candelabras were dying or dead. Fortunately, the little seedlings survived as the taller, fully-grown candelabras around them provided shade from the sun.

**GIANT FLORINDAE**

According to the article titled “Sketchbook” on p. 38 of the January 1944 APS Quarterly, apparently written by President E.S. Bradford, a Mrs. Walter Schibig had at least one plant of a giant Primula florindae that was almost six feet tall. It was in her Seattle garden, on the edge of Puget Sound, in a woodland area, in partial shade with plenty of rich soil and perfect drainage. It thrived in the cool mists and fogs that drifted over.

Primula florindae, by the way, is a plant that is very, very easy to grow from seed. It is a tough, vigorous primula that thrives in part shade in cool moist soil. However, when there is a lot of hot dry weather, increase the supply of water substantially.

In the same “Sketchbook” article, Mr. Beattie says it is “hardy as a rock” when grown in his area in Ontario, Canada. It is a useful addition to the garden, providing summer color through July and August with the added benefit of a subtle fragrance.

**“PINK PEWTER” LAMIUM**

“Pink Pewter,” like “Beacon Silver” and “White Nancy” is a delightful silver-leaved lamium but with pink flowers. The lamiums do very well as companion plants for primulas. This one originated in England and in late June was on sale at the Hayes Nursery near Issaquah, Washington. It blooms in the late spring along with the late-bloomers among the primulas.

**PULMONARIAS, ANOTHER COMpanion PLANT**

“Roy Davidson” is, in my opinion, one of, if not the best of the named pulmonaria hybrids. It was selected by Jerry Flintoff a few seasons ago and is a variety of Pulmonaria saccharata, perhaps a cross between P. longifolia and P. saccharata. This is another choice perennial useful as a companion plant to the earlier blooming primulas. It has sky blue flowers in the spring, and the leaves are evenly mottled with green and silver. It is a tougher pulmonaria than most, is very resistant to mildew and the silver coloring in the leaves seems brighter than most other species and varieties.

**A MOISTURE-LOVING PRIMULA**

Primula rosea is an unusually hardy, very prolific and easy species to grow provided that a moist area is available. Most of our P. rosea is planted under the edge of large cedar trees, hardly a place where you would expect them to thrive. Yet they continue to grow under such difficult conditions because we give them a shot of water whenever we turn on the garden hose, and we fertilize the ground whenever the roses start to look a little unhealthy. Usually P. rosea flowers are a unique bright pink color. There is a larger variety called P. rosea grandiflora. Last year we also acquired the variety “Gigi” with lovely light pink flowers that we are now growing in other parts of our garden.

The Primula rosea flower stems appear barely out of the ground when the first flower blossoms open up and more flowers appear daily. The stems keep rising so the flowers can be seen from a farther distance. The bright pink color is stunning, so much so that visitors would frequently comment on their beauty. This is one primula species that I would definitely recommend for your garden.

We also have clumps of “Peter Klein” a primula which is a cross between P. rosea and P. clarkei. It has light pink flowers with a white eye. It is a very choice hybrid that, strangely enough, will grow in drier ground than that preferred by both P. rosea and P. clarkei. It is vigorous and prolific. I have even divided them by separating the crowns in late fall and splitting each crown with a knife to form two plants. They all recovered from my surgery.

**HORSE MANURE**

We use a lot of mixed horse manure and sawdust in our gardens. Often we can obtain a truck-load free or for a few dollars. Dairy farms will deliver a very large load of cow manure sawdust for around $50, but we prefer horse dung. We often use composted steer manure mixed with Canadian peat moss and soil from our compost bins when planting out seedlings or dividing and replanting primulas. Unless it is fully composted, cow manure may be filled with seeds from shot weed or other noxious weeds that create havoc in the garden. Usually we use the horse manure/sawdust mix in the fall as top mulch, then mix it into the soil during the spring.

**WILD ANIMALS**

Besides the usual opossums, raccoons and grey squirrels that cruise around our garden, we...
Primula Seed Sources

from Marie Skonberg

Marie has kindly sent a list of the nurseries and seed companies from whom she orders the seed which she raises with such delight. You may want to write to them for a seed list.

Craven's Nursery
(Stephen and Marlene Craven)
1 Fouls' Terrace,
Bingley, West Yorkshire
England BD16 4LZ

Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery
(Stephen Frank)
2568 Jackson Highway
Chehalis, WA 98532

Holden Clough Nursery
Dept ARGS, Holden
Bolton-by-Bowland
Clitheroe, Lancashire
England BB7 4PF

Thompson & Morgan
Dept 120-2
P.O. Box 1308
Jackson, NJ 08527-0308

Field House Alpines
(June Skidmore, US Distributor)
6730 West Mercer Way
Mercer Island, WA 98040

Karmic Exotic Nursery
Box 46
Shelburne, Ontario
Canada L0N 150

Chiltern Seeds
Bartrum Stile
Ulverston, Cumbria
England LA127 PB

Josef Jurasek
Lamacova 961
15200 Praha 5
Czechoslovakia

Mojnic Pavelka
P.O. Box 95
741 01 Novy Jucin
Czechoslovakia

Primula Notes

Continued from page 17

found that a skunk passed through the area a couple of days ago. We recently found a mole hole in one of our paths last week, but the mole evidently found one of our neighbor's yard more to its liking.

PRIMULAS BLOOMING IN AUGUST

Except for scattered candelabras, cortusoides or julianas in bloom, about the only primulas flowering in our garden are the Sakata plants such as the miniature "Julian Hybrids" strain and the dwarf "Lovely" juliana strains. Many growers in the Northwest complain that the Sakata julianas are only half hardy. We have found that most of them come through our usually mild winter. But to be on the safe side, we often lay some cedar boughs over them when a freeze is expected.

GROWING AURICULAS

We have many auriculas growing in our garden, about 12 named, mostly show and exhibition alpine auriculas growing in pots. With few exceptions, the auriculas have an abundant crop of offsets waiting to be removed from the mother plants. It amazes me how tough, prolific and beautiful many auriculas are. This year we grew most of them in full sun in 80 and 90 degree weather, week after week, without permanent damage. Gradually we remove the plain and bilious colored plants and dispose of them.

From the Mailbox

Letters from our readers

Some of the letters are from early in the spring but weren't included in the summer issue to leave more room for symposium reports. Now they're here — letters from Alaska to Minnesota to Pennsylvania, even from England and France!

July 1992

Dear Editor,

First, I'll tell you what we have been doing lately. After getting the place here up to date on weeding and things we went to our cabin at Lake Tagish for a bit over two weeks..... It is quieter and more peaceful — more restful than around here — and more rustic. We have electricity but no plumbing or furnace.... The climate is so dry — it's really too dry for primroses as far as we, or our friends we gave starters to here, can tell....

I think there is a likelihood of some wild primroses in that area in locales favorable to them, such as near lakes above the timberline, also perhaps near swampy places. I'm mostly guessing, from noticing over the years in various publications, that there are wild primroses in northern Canada and Alaska.

I think I just about saw a wild primrose late last summer when my little dog and I hiked up to a lake above timberline near Fraser, B.C. That is near to and a bit beyond our cabin, proceeding north — beyond what is called the White Pass where the gold seekers left Skagway to go to the Yukon gold strike in 1896. I didn't have my camera along, regretfully, so I couldn't take a photo. I'm not sure when I'll get up enough steam to hike up there again.

The "Dusty Double" auriculas also took hold. I have two small plants, both with a nice cluster of newly grown green leaves. In accordance with what you said — to feed it — I put a bit of bone meal around them and scratched it in, also a bit of composted steer manure. Plus the soil is good soil as we have gardened in the same place over 30 years. So I believe the plants will be happy. When I get to it, I'll mix in a bit of coarse gravel and small rocks around the two auricula plants, also a bit of crushed egg shell. Hopefully, they'll all grow well.

In fact, my problem is that the soil has gotten so fertile that primrose plants grow like mad and go to huge clumps in a season, and I don't have room to separate the increase even though we sell some surplus plants each spring. I should pull myself together and get some more starters potted up and sell them or get some more brains to figure this out better. We also trade plants with other gardeners....

The good Lord willing that your writer keeps plugging along, we will have a slide show and meeting this fall and winter here in Juneau and at some nearby communities. The Society will almost surely get some additional membership from that. It would be good if I did a show at Sitka and Ketchikan, and even Wrangell and Petersburg. There are several other small communities where in time it would be good to do something, like Hoonah, Kake and Yakutat and Angoon.

The latter are very small, principally native communities. Do they have primroses? You can bet on it. Some of those little communities have one or two kinds of primroses that someone started there years and years ago and that took hold. If one can get to places like that, and kind of know someone, there are fertile possibilities to do a bit of trading....
From the Mailbox continued

August 30, 1992

Everyone is plugging along here. It's the busy time of year in the north for everyone so we aren't as closely in touch as we can be in the fall and winter seasons.

Misty Haffner was over to show us correspondence she had with the secretary. Also, Misty brought over two good sized pink candelabra plants that she grew from seed we shared with her that Marie Skonberg sent us.

We had a nice card from Caroline Jensen.... She mentioned her seed from the APS seed exchange didn't germinate well for her. Due to the busy season I haven't been able to ask other primula growers how their seed did. Misty Haffner said hers came up well. Two other people still have their seeds in the refrigerator. What happened is that we not only got seeds from the Society but also from Peter Atkinson, Dr. Kerridge, Mrs. Jensen and June Skidmore. Also, from Jack Drake in Scotland. Some of my labels faded out so that I can only give an overall report, which is about 80% of the primrose seed we planted late last winter and early spring came up like mad, and about 20% of the flats didn't come up yet....

Mr. McDoLe over in Douglas told me a few weeks ago that after his P. florindae finished blooming they threw up new flower stems about six inches long from the centre of the spent blooming stalks....

The thought occurs to me that my wife and I would like to donate primrose books to the Juneau-Douglas library system. The garden club has donated funds for some and we would like to donate several books. If members have primrose books they no longer want we would buy them or trade some of our miniature denticulata primroses for books — say perhaps three denticulata plants for one book, or more, if that's what it should be. We have over a dozen of those plants, which we are told are rare, flourishing out in our garden.

I think we have about a dozen primrose books in our own library. We don't have some of the early ones, like the book by C.G. Haysom. We haven't yet decided on forming an Alaska Chapter of the APS. Of the people I've talked to, some urge us to do it, others feel their needs are served nicely by the present arrangement of belonging to the main society with the benefits they have available there. We plan, in any case, to have a slide show or two throughout southeast Alaska in the fall and winter. This in itself gets primrose growers together and we also keep in touch over the phone and by correspondence and personal visits.

I would like to thank everyone again on behalf of us Alaskans who attended the symposium for the pleasanssness and wonderful welcome we all received, and the informative and enjoyable activities.

Oh, one more note. The plants we bought at the plant sale, about two dozen, all took well except about three. The rest are increasing and now, with the shorter days and cooler temperatures as fall approaches, three of the plants are sending up blooms, along with other primrose plants in the garden. From now until freezing we can look forward to blooms here and there on several different kinds of primroses. Not as much bloom as in the spring, but very welcome — to be admired and even amazed by the beauty of some of the flowers.

The "Mary's fuschia" Don Keefe sent us threw up a bloom in mid-summer that had a few extra petals in the center and recently threw up another bloom that was double.

Slugs have been plentiful all season. We're going to put out some beer traps today. That's where a person puts cheap beer in a container — they like cheap beer the best — and we put a lid over the container, propped up a bit, so the slugs can crawl in and drown, but the rain doesn't get in and dilute the beer. I caught 21 slugs in a small beer trap in just a few days, so they do work if one gets a type of beer they like. Some beers don't catch anything. Some years back we got a generic beer and that really worked. Lately we put in a part bottle of Lucky Lager beer and that's what we caught the 21 slugs with.

Sincerely,
John O'Brien - Juneau, Alaska

August 1992
Dear Don Keefe,

A question was raised in "Primula Notes" in summer 1992 Primroses about a double-flowered gold-laced polyanthus illustrated in the Wisley Handbook Primulas and Auriculas. This was a plant of the Penlan Strain raised by Dr. Cecil Jones of Penlan, Llanelli, Wales. It was a poor example of the strain. I recall exhibiting a perfectly formed double GLP in London in 1983 that had been given to me by Cecil. It was described in the National Primula and Auricula Society (Southern Section)

Yearbook as "a really startling plant."

Cecil Jones began the Penlan Strain of double primroses and polyanthus some 40 years ago. One of the few strains to be created independently of Barnhaven, Penlan doubles have won many cards at NAPS shows over a long period.

Equally successful has been the Penlan Strain of GLP. He has also had a remarkable record in the creation of new types of primula. In addition to the double GLP, Cecil was the originator of the double "Jack-in-the-Green" polyanthus, a GLP with a most attractive blue background colour and most recently, a double polyanthus flaked in the same manner as the old type of carnations.

Sadly, Cecil was forced to give up his hybridizing work owing to family illness and has moved away from his fascinating garden at Penlan. He has always been most generous in giving away his outstanding plants and seeds. A member admiring a winning show entry would frequently be told, "Take it home. That will save me the trouble of carrying it all the way back to Wales."

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Notes from the Editor

Auriculas, auriculas, auriculas
Herb Dickson has been a backbone of the American Primrose Society for so long — supplying plant, plants and more plants for shows, sales and to customers — that no one can imagine him not being there. However, Herb has begun to think of retirement. So some of the rest of us APS members will have to begin to fill the gap.

One person has stepped forward with some initiative. April Boettger, Herb’s able assistant in the nursery for the past couple of years is hooked on auriculas. She is even planning to set up her own nursery.

In order to collect an initial stock of plants, April has been visiting members who have collections of auriculas and offering to replant the lot for some offsets in return. An enterprising approach! Both Cy Happy, president — who has been meaning to replant his auriculas for some years now — and Larry Bailey have taken April up on her offer. Plant exchanges with John Kerridge in Vancouver and Maedythe Martin, the editor, are underway. April even hopes to get to England next year to get some of the named plants we auricula enthusiasts so desperately want, but which are so hard to obtain. Good luck, April, with your plans.

Primroses for the Sales
Next year will be an interesting one at the sale tables at the chapter shows. One regular, dedicated source of plants for the sale table, Darlene and Lyle Heller, have had to give up their plant propagation because of Lyle’s health. So once again, other members will have to step in.

Start growing some primrose offsets now. In order to encourage you, President Cy Happy has set up an account at McConkeys in Sumner, Washington, where you can purchase supplies — pots, potting soil mix — at wholesale prices as a society member. This is a COD account, and you may want to write for a price list:

McConkey Company, Sumner WA 98390-0369.

Only case lots are available, so chapters may want to put together a joint order. The purpose of this effort is to encourage APS members to grow extra plants for exchange or sale within the society with the least expense. Order supplies with the intended spirit of sharing.

Journals, journals, journals
The editor has received a fine assortment of publications on exchange from other societies over the summer. However, due to limited space in this issue, reports on information about primroses contained in these journals will be postponed for the next issue. However, there is one piece of information APS members may be interested in.

A video of the 1990 National Auricula and Primula Society (Southern Section) auricula show is available. It runs for nearly 40 minutes, says the notice in the 1991 yearbook, with special attention to the finest details of the plants. There is a commentary of some of the plants by recognized experts.

I guess we need to find out if it is VHS compatible. The cost is 12.50 pounds per tape. For information write to Mr. Colin Jamieson, who put in the notice at 116 North View, Eastcote, Pinner, Middlesex, England HA5 1PF or the treasurer of the Southern Section, Mr. R.C. Feline, 76 Green Lane, Worcester Park, Surrey, England KT4 8AR.

WANTED

Indexer for the quarterly.
Anyone interested?
Contact the editor.
March 1992
Dear Editor

... About four years ago I got seed of the Petiolares section primula in the Scottish Rock Garden Society (SRGS) seed exchange. The seed was received the end of January or the first week in February. I believe they were P. edgeworthii and P. petiolares. I never have had luck germinating them because you have to have fresh seed, and what I got was probably too old. But I kept trying, anyhow.

That time I planted the seeds as usual on top of the peaty, well-drained gritty mixture and put the small pots in plastic bags. Of course, I watered the pots well first. Then the pots went under florescent lights on 24 hours steady. In two weeks or less the seed had germinated! I knew at once they were petiolares-type because of the leaves.

I don’t know if it was because the seed was fresh, or what. But at last I had good luck.

... I’ve been trying different mixes for troughs to see which I like best. If you like, I’ll send you the results. Around here they are now using something called “fibremesh” instead of wire reinforcement in the smaller forms. I would still use wire in the larger ones myself.

In Minnesota we have to set the troughs on the ground and cover them with leaves for the winter. Although there is one rock garden member that has a really long trough five feet or so and two to three feet off the ground and he never does anything to protect it. He lives in the twin cities area 60 miles south of me. But it still gets 20 below zero down there. He’ll shovelsnow on it if there is any.

The form was made over a large styrofoam “trough” left over from an “English” flower show one of the department stores had in the spring. They were just going to discard it anyway ....

Fondest regards,
Karen Schellinger - Avon, MN

August 25, 1992
Dear Editor

... The seed business is going quite well and hopefully we shall be meeting up with June when she visits England in September. June had a fabulous “fan letter” from Marie Skonberg — about our seed, no less. And there have been others. I have been frightfully busy....

... Our seed list contains very little that is new. [Ed. note: new from the last one, but lots of interest to primula growers] Our plant list, on the other hand will contain all sorts of new goodies! [Ed. note: plants not available in North America] For example, we shall be selling American species next spring, all being well. Primula elisiae, P. rusbyi and P. mistassinica alba have all been potted. June has sold out of seed of all these species, which is rather surprising — selling American primula seed back to the Americans. Primula rusbyi flowers on and off all the summer in my greenhouse here and is much admired.

On the other hand species which we thought would be popular, for example P. scotica, have not gone so well....

Other popular choices were the anomalous primroses — Hose-in-Hose, Jack-in-the-Green — and P. sieboldii. We have many forms of P. sieboldii for sale — plants that is — all raised from the marvelus Barnhaven strains. They are one of our favorites and are much easier and harder than people think. The picture of the

continued on page 32

Book review
by Hans Roemer


Among the more recent books on the genus Primula this is no doubt the most comprehensive and complete one. Josef Halda presents a review of the entire genus and provides full botanical descriptions complete with nomenclatural references for each of nearly 500 species. The distribution and habitat annotations are of consistent quality, a feature that will be especially appreciated for the large number of taxa that have yet to be tried in cultivation. The history of discovery and introduction to gardens is given where applicable; and for those species that have been grown in gardens before, brief cultural notes are provided. More thorough indications of cultural requirements are mainly found for the European and near-eastern taxa.

What makes this book truly remarkable is the combination of the thorough and complete text with high-quality drawings for nearly 400 species and subspecies. To call these illustrations by Jarmla Haldova a “labor of love” would be an understatement. The 30 color photographs halfway through the book are an additional bonus. After decades of herbarium, literature, garden and field studies, much of the latter in Asia, this husband and wife team provides us with detailed written and pictorial portrayals of many species whose few of us have ever known to exist. Browsing through these pages, even long-time primula friends will therefore be amazed anew at the full diversity and beauty of this lovely genus.

For all its comprehensiveness, the book does not seem to be without its share of mistakes. Unfortunately, several are in a part to which everybody turns first, the color photographs. The name P. hirsuta is “lost” under a photograph of a petiolard (could it be P. vernicosa?) and two pictures of a purplish pink species (P. beessiana?) are labelled P. bulleyana. A beautiful photograph of P. var. moorcroftiana is labelled var. "moorcrofti." On p.146 a "P. aureata" caption is placed under the drawing of a quite different species. Could these examples be only the “tip of the iceberg”?

For the non-botanist inclusion of an illustrated glossary of technical terms would have been desirable. The general parts of the book consisting of three pages on the genus and four pages of garden notes are good reading, but seem disproportionately brief.

Despite the above, this book should be regarded as a rare treasure. It was printed as a paperback with the obvious intention of cutting costs. This is unfortunate because it has resulted in a volume where the poor quality of the paper and binding is in no relation to the significance of the contents. The material makeup of the book may therefore not stand up to the frequent and extended use it deserves as the new standard reference for the genus Primula.

WANTED — PRIMULA TOUR LEADER

Secretary Barbara Flynn has suggested a 1994 APS tour of European gardens and growers featuring primula and auricula. All we need is a tour leader. Any volunteers? Please send a note to Barbara.
1993 Dues Reminder

1993 membership renewals are due November 15. The annual rate for both domestic and foreign membership, individual or household, is $15 U.S. per year ($16 for renewals postmarked after January 1); $40 for three years; or $200 for an individual life membership. Membership is based upon the calendar year. The year your membership expires is shown in the upper right-hand corner of the address label affixed to the envelope used to mail your quarterly, Prim-roses.

We prefer that foreign members make payment in the form of an international money order.

However, payment may be made by personal check in currencies of Australia, Austria, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland. Checks payable from foreign funds should be in an amount based upon the current exchange rate, plus five percent.

Make checks payable to the American Primrose Society and mail to:
Addaline W. Robinson, Treasurer
9705 S.W. Spring Crest Dr.
Portland, OR 97225
U.S.A.

NOMINATIONS
for officers and directors will be accepted by Don Howse before December 31, 1992. Write to:
Don Howse
Porter Howse Farms
41370 SE Thomas Rd
Sandy, OR 97055

NORTHWEST FLOWER
AND GARDEN SHOW
APS will have a display booth! Volunteers willing for a tour of duty in the booth, or to help set up or take down, contact the co-ordinator:
Peter Atkinson
16035 SE 167th Place
Renton, WA 98055

Matsumoto Sakurasoh and Primula Club Invites you to join

- Japanese society for lovers of all primulas.
- Yearbook, with English summary.
- Seed exchange.

Send US $20 In cash, registered mail for one year's subscription (April to March)
Writte to: Mr. Kazuo Hara, Secretary
Yoshikawa-Koya 647-51
Matsumoto, Nagano,
399 Japan

Final Report on the Symposium
"Primula Worldwide"

September 30, 1992
Dear APS Officers and Board Members

I want to thank each and every one of you for voting me a lifetime membership in the American Primrose Society. That was an extremely generous and kind gesture and I truly appreciate it. It is very rewarding to me to know that you were all so pleased with the symposium and that you also felt it was a resounding success. Thank-you, too, for reimbursing my expenses.

As you may or may not know, I decided to leave the farming business in August of 1991 and held off re-entering the work force until the symposium was over. I knew that there would be no way I could have done a good job on the symposium if I was dividing my time with it and a new career.

Now that the symposium is over and I have just completed organizing and hosting my parents’ 50th anniversary, I am preparing to begin investigating job opportunities. Because of this, I will not be able to write a post-symposium report as originally planned. But since we have the speakers’ presentations on video and post-symposium quarterly with all of its reports, my report would probably have been redundant at best. However, I have sent the sponsors and co-sponsors the symposium photos supplied to me by Jay Lunn. I hope and trust you can appreciate and understand my decision. I will also be sending Addaline, the treasurer, my last expenses report and will ask her to distribute the balance of the profits.

On a lighter note, I certainly wish you all could have attended my parent’s anniversary party — what a bash! For starters, we acquired a 1941 Chev sedan (my folk’s first car) and parked it by the building entrance. The we enlarged their wedding picture to 4' x 6' life size, mounted it, and placed it next to the car, which we had decorated in the same manner as it was on the day they were married. We also set up a large family history display with photos and albums and a family tree dating back to 1722.

We had a five-piece band playing the “big band” songs (my dad was a musician in the big bands during the 1940s and 1950s) and hired professional dancers to do an array of dances that were popular during this era. Then I did a 20 minute humorous history and roast of our family. These activities teamed with a decorated hall, a seven-tiered cake and a huge buffet with lots of wine and champagne guaranteed a fantastic time for all. My parents and the 200 guests really seemed to appreciate all our work, but I think I had the best time of all! No one enjoys a good party more than me!

I just can’t get away from these earthquakes! I was in Lakeport, California, on Saturday, September 19 and got hit with an earthquake. Then I came home to Eureka on Sunday the 20th and got hit with another one that night! Aren’t you glad I don’t live in your town? Geez, this is ridiculous.

Again, thank-you for all your support and my life membership. May you all have the best of the upcoming holidays and I hope this letter finds you all well.

Sincerely,
Greg Becker, Symposium Coordinator

Dues Reminder
Membership renewals are due. See page 26.
Primrose Growers in Alaska
A Photo Story with photos by John O'Brien

Thanks to John O'Brien of Juneau Alaska, we have photos of the gardens and gardeners of primrose growers in Alaska. Here are some excerpts from the letter John sent with the photos, and documented proof that primroses flourish in the land of the midnight sun.

Letter dated July 21, 1992
...On primrose matters, I told Misty Haffner I had gotten a card from you and she is going to write you. I called Caroline Jensen and got an okay to send you photos and negatives of the photos we took of her garden this spring. You'll like those.

...Enclosed photos are taken at Caroline Jensen's garden on the shores of Pearl Harbor, near the Shrine of St. Teresa at Juneau, Alaska. Also a photo of Mrs. Ruth Nelson at her garden near Twin Lakes at Juneau. Another photo shows "Garryard Guinevere" and Jack-in-the-Green primroses blooming in our garden at Glacier Valley in Juneau.

Letter dated August 30, 1992
...In contrast to our garden which tends to get overgrown fast, several gardeners in our area, and I can include here Caroline Jensen, Mr. McDole and Mrs. Ruth Nelson, have beautiful well-tended gardens that are grown as show places.

There are an increasing number of enthusiastic gardeners here that garden up an absolute storm and have all sorts of various gardening interests. Dr. Eichman, for instance, likes to propagate and increase plants. Mrs. Flint is active with the Master Gardeners group. Apologies to the many I haven't mentioned....

Mrs. Jensen asked that if you printed any of the photos of her garden, a good photo to print would be the one of "Caroline's Dorothy" as that is special. ✤
Primula Seed Sources

Compiled by Elizabeth Keay

Sources for primula seed are treasured pieces of information to be shared among primula growers. The following list of establishments has been compiled from recent issues of the American Rock Garden Society Bulletin, Alpine Garden Society Quarterly Bulletin and from the following sources:


Canadian Plant Sourcebook Anne & Peter Ashley, 1990.


Addresses are correct in so far as the source was correct. It is recommended that interested APS members write to the supplier for a catalog before ordering to ensure the address is right and the supplier still in business. If readers know of other seed sources, please send them to the editor.

Altiflora Inc.
PO Box 24
Gyotoku, Ichikawa,
Chiba, 272-01, Japan
(Primula seed sought on request)

Mrs. D. Chadwell
18 Parsons Road
Slough, Berkshire, England SL3 8BE
(Seed list, $2 US - Chris Chadwell wild collected seed - includes primula)

Seedalp Switzerland
PO Box 282
Meyrin, Geneva, Switzerland CH 1217

Euroseeds
PO Box 95
741 01 Novy Jicin, Czechoslovakia

Goodwin Seeds
Bagdad South
7030 Tasmania, Australia

J.L. Hudson, Seedsman
PO Box 1058
Redwood City, CA 94064

Southern Seeds
The Vicarage
Sheffield, New Zealand 8173

W. Atlas Burpee Co.
Warminster, PA 18974

Geo. W. Park Seed Co., Inc.
Cokesbury Road,
Greenwood, SC 29647

Stokes Seed, Inc.
Box 584
Buffalo, NY 14240

Southwestern Native Seeds
PO Box 50503
Tucson, AZ 85703

Elite Alpine Seeds
L. Kreeger
91 Newton Wood Road
Ashehead, Surrey KT21 1NN England

Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery
2568 Jackson Highway
Chehalis, WA 98522

Sakurasoh Inventory - Watch for it next issue!

Did you wonder what happened to the promised inventory of all the named Primula seiboldii that were available at the symposium "Primula Worldwide"? The editor is working on the inventory and there will be more news next issue.

APS Supporters

By Cy Happy

Cy Happy, president, gives us a bit of background on two companies that have been faithful supporters of the American Primrose Society.

Schultz Instant

I like companies that handle their own public relations. Two of our local horticultural suppliers have been taken over by big corporations. Gone are personal contact and personal service, and public relations is handled by some remote advertising agency.

But not Shultz. The company was started in 1947 by A.Y. Schultz, is family owned and Mr. Schultz still takes part in the management. A call to their PR person, Norine Neiderwinner, at 1-314-298-2700 will bring you information, samples, or a case of "Schultz Instant" for the trophy table by return mail.

I have used the "seven drops in a quart of water" system when watering auriculas with considerable success over the past 40 years. Shultz encourages moderation in plant feeding — an important lesson.

Shultz has now brought out a new line of pyrethrin insect sprays. Once again moderation has prevailed. I have used it on tender, newly established rose cuttings. The aphids were eliminated after several treatments. The plants were not affected. The product is harmless to us and to our pets.

Shultz also has a line of soluble plant foods for lawns and garden plants. I still like the old "Shultz Instant" bottle with the dropper in the cap.

Goldsmith Seed and Windmill Nursery

Preceding the recent symposium, letters were sent out to horticultural suppliers requesting financial support. One of the few who responded was Goldsmith Seeds, Box 1349, Gilroy, California 95021. This is another family-owned company with its own public relations person.

Goldsmith is the supplier of Primula acaulis "Saga" strain — ten bright colors and a mix — for commercial customers. I have seen at least 30,000 of these plants in bloom at once at Windmill Greenhouse and Nursery in Summer, Washington, in late January. It is a splendid sight. The "Saga" seed is produced in Europe.

This is a good time to thank Windmill for their willingness to share their plants when APS need color in our booths at the winter home and garden shows. A call to Ben DeGoede at Windmill brings the response, "Help yourself; take as many as you want."

Flip Feniili and I feel as if we've gone to heaven when we select a hundred or more plants out of 350,000. Needless to say, we can't resist the unusual ones — the semi-doubles, unusual colors, green flowers and throwbacks to the julies. The only limit is how many Flip's station wagon can hold. 

1993 SHOW DATES

Eastside Chapter
April 16 & 17
Totem Mall
Tacoma Chapter (National Show)
April 3 & 4
Lakewood Mall
Washington State Chapter
April 9 & 10
South Centre Pavilion
Oregon Chapter
April 16 & 17
Valley-Hi Chapter (Oregon)
April 9 & 10
Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Society
April 23 & 24
Victoria, B.C. Canada
When primula growing was just a hobby, the own thing. The first seedlings usually appear in
They are mostly sown in pans of multipurpose
were potted up in August and September of the
We sow candelabras and wild European species
Obviously there are exceptions to this, where
primula seed MUST be sown from pod to pot
and the primroses grow really well in it and
We sow candelabras and wild European species
primula growing was just a hobby, the nursery, we do not have time to prick out into
data into appropriate sized pots. We try to prick out
in a cool and buoyant atmosphere. ....

All the best
Valerie Woolley, Field House Alpines
Gotham, England
February 21, 1992
Dear Don Keefe,

...I'm really sorry to disappoint you, but I grow primroses in a specially prepared primula
compost from a commercial source here in
It is a peat based — though they seem to

You asked me to write about raising primula
about this idea?

obviously parallels with our auricula theatres....

American Primrose Society - Fall 1992

From the Mailbox continued from page 22

Japanese Kadas was most interesting and
obviously parallels with our auricula theatres....

You asked me to write about raising primula
from seed. So much has been said about this
subject that I wouldn't know quite where to
begin. Our seed is carefully stored in airtight
containers in the bottom of an old domestic
refrigerator.

We have seed going back many years and many of
the plants on sale in the nursery this year
have been raised from seed collected in 1988.
We find that fresh seed sometimes needs a bit
of a rest. What do other primula raisers think
about this idea?

They are mostly sown in pans of multipurpose
peat-based compost which is improved by the
important things

We sow candelabras and wild European species
first, auriculas in February along with polyan-

nursery, the seeds were pricked out 28 to a seed tray as
soon as they were reasonably handleable. They
were potted up in August and September of the
same year, except for the slow-growing species.
Each species must be considered on its own
merit — this is a matter of experience. In the

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From the Mailbox
continued from page 32

neglect and flowered from February right through the spring. It was always called "Wanda," even though the colors varied from nearly blue to reddish purple — though whether this was because it was really different varieties or because of variations in soil conditions is hard to say now. I had some in my last garden in England. Some people call it "brash" or "harsh," but I like it for its bold splash of color. I grew white and yellow early crocuses around and through them, and they really lifted the heart on a bleak spring morning.

None of my books gives any indications of who bred and named the first "Wanda." The first julianas (hybrids of P. juliae and other vernales primulas) were called P. pruhonica. All I can find out about this is that the epithet refers to the Arboetum at Pruhonice or Pruhinitz near Prague in Czechoslovakia which was founded by the Austrian dendrologist Count Ernst Silva Tarouca (1860 - 1936). Is this a clue? Did he breed them?

Another book tells me that the first crosses of P. juliae with P. vulgaris were made by G. Arends in Germany and he released the named varieties from 1913 onwards. What is doesn't say is whether any of these were "Wanda." However, yet another source tells me that Georg Adalbert Arends (1863 - 1952) wrote an autobiography called Ein Leben als Gartner und Zucher (A Life as Gardener and Breeder, 1951) in which he lists the new plants he raised. It doesn't say whether it has been translated into English, but it might be worth trying your local library. It's recent enough to be traceable.

I think "Wanda," "juliana," "pruhonica," and "pruhoniciana" are all synonyms, and growers pick between them with not much discrimination. Anyway, if you breed julianas with "Cowichans," what are the progeny — especially if they are then backcrossed and recrossed? I think it's one of these questions like when is a pink a carnation or when is a pansy a viola? Incidentally, we should be grateful to whoever it was who had the inspiration to call them "juliae." They could so easily have been called P. molossjewiciitae, and then where would we be?

You ask about the sieboldii, traditional and doubles. All of them should be available next season. The Sinclairs were unable to give me any sieboldii in my first year here. A severe drought the year before had meant that they got no crop. However, they kept the plants and pollinated again the next year. I sowed early last spring, after which they were promptly covered with 8 inches of snow and treated to night temperatures of -13 C. This seemed to suit them, as they germinated very quickly. They have been in pots outside all winter and are just showing signs of stirring into growth. They will stay where they are until they are on the point of flowering, but they will have to come under the tunnel for pollinating.

I found the traditionals to be quite a fiddle to do, so did not do enough to put in the catalogue. I have plans to do better this year. There are some very pretty jacks which are already coming into flower and some buds which I feel sure will be hose-in-hose when they get round to opening.

It's a two year program to produce doubles seed, which explains why there were none in last year's catalogue. So, there should be some available in the next catalogue, though the color range will be rather restricted to start with. I'm trying very hard not to try to do everything at once. The Sinclairs periodically send me cautionary tales about primrose growers who get mad, worked themselves to an early grave etc, etc! ....

Yours sincerely,
Angela Bradford
Bamhaven Primroses
BARNHAVEN PRIMROSES

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If interested, please send two dollar bills (U.S.) for our list.

Note new address
Craven's Nursery / 1 Foulds Terrace / Bingley, West Yorkshire / England BD16 4LZ
News from the Chapters

Continued from page 10

Don Keefe, secretary.

Suggestions were made for programs for the upcoming year and everyone went home looking forward to our next meeting.

Report by Barbara Flynn

Tacoma Chapter

March program: Rosetta Jones on how to hybridize primulas, how to groom plants for the show.

April program: Show — what went right, what went wrong. Also, how to take care of your plants over the summer. Chapter will be represented at APS booth at the Puyallup Spring Fair, members to staff the booth.

May program: Izetta Renton on primula of Europe.

June program: Primula of Europe — Old World Splendor, video-tape of the presentation at the "Primula Worldwide" symposium in April. Officers elected at this meeting. Peter Atkinson brought a good selection of plants for sale... [Editor's Note: "Primula Worldwide" symposium in April. Officers elected at this meeting. Peter Atkinson brought a good selection of plants for sale... Send a self-addressed envelope to him for a list: 16035 SE 167 Place, Renton, WA 98055.]

Judging school to be held at Candy Strickland’s home in Tacoma on Saturday, June 13. It will be potluck. Cy Happy will do the auriculas and Rosetta will do the rest... All are welcome.

July meeting: Annual APS pot-luck picnic at Herb Dickson’s.

Washington State Chapter

March program: How to hybridize primroses by Rosetta Jones. Peter Atkinson gave a talk on Primula obconica.