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Ask the Growers...
Raising Primroses from Seed

Many primula varieties are simply not available except by raising them from seed. Growing from seed is also good value — you end up with a number of plants from the relatively small investment of the cost of the seed.

A poll of a few growers of primula seed has resulted in the following reports. Growers have their own methods, mixes and successes. You may be inspired by the information sent in by fellow APS members.

The important thing is to get started. Editor.

WHAT, NO GREENHOUSE?

by Barbara Flynn, Redmond, Washington

When I last visited my Aunt Peggy in England the usual flood of childhood memories came rushing back. There on the windowsill stood a neat line of little pots, each containing one or two seedlings and each seedling straight and tall with no sign of wilt or insect damage.

My mother, too, had had little pots of seedlings every year, not just beans and tomatoes but also some other plants. Wallflowers in colors other than brown were a particular favorite.

Perhaps it was because there were not that many seedlings to care for that they did so well. Or perhaps they grew in such proximity to family activities that it would seem natural to give them a little drink when preparing one's own cup of tea. Later, when they were put outside the kitchen door to harden off, they still received extra attention. This time it was soapy water from the washing up chores. I never saw aphids on those long-ago plants.

For most of my life I have grown plants from seeds without a greenhouse. At first it was the windowsill but then seed exchanges appeared out when watering. By April, my husband usually became tired of eating meals from the coffee table so all the pots on our dining room table were moved outside.

CLEAN THOSE POTS

Potting soil changed, too. A mixture of peat and turkey grit, or peat and Perlite in various proportions, seemed to work best, with a top dressing of grit to stop the seed being splashed outside. When watering. By April, my husband usually became tired of eating meals from the coffee table so all the pots on our dining room table were moved outside.

There are all sorts of rules for prickling out and potting on but I have found the most important rule is to allow yourself time. Leave the phone off the hook, take your coffee with you and plan to spend several hours happily alone with your babies. Then the mixes will be right, the plantlets will be handled more gently and any problems will be seen before they become crucial.

The north or east sides of the house seem to suit problems will be seen before they become crucial.

The north or east sides of the house seem to suit young transplants best. For many years I used a sort of "frame" where railroad ties were placed in a square, then another layer of ties added. This was lined with a plastic sheet and about an inch of grit added for drainage. Another plastic sheet covered the top of this contraption when inclement weather prevailed but, for the most
Ask the Growers continued

part, it was left open. A lot of miffy plants did
very well here.

Two years ago my husband decided he could
not take another spring of seeing the dining
room table become a fertile field. He built a
small greenhouse on the north side of our house.
Having a greenhouse is a new experience and
not always a pleasant one. Dead mice in the
pumice bin make nauseating odors and spider
mites adore this haven. The neat rows of
seedlings are a far cry from the windowsills of
yesterday, but the wonder and delight at seeing
a special seed sprout remains the same.

IN A PRIMROSE PLEASANCE
by Joan Donaldson, Fennville, Michigan

The Primula japonica #141 (mix) and #144
(rose) from the APS seed exchange have grown
well for me in my "Primrose Pleasance." I
usually sprinkle my primrose seeds on a
commercial potting soil, cover the flat with
cheese cloth and stick the whole project
outdoors. I let nature subject the seeds to
Michigan's fickle late winter weather. Some-
time in April, I bring the flat in my greenhouse
to sprout.

The seedlings remain on a screened-in back
porch until fall, when they are transplanted. My
primroses are located in a small swale where a
spring trickles through and the soil is rich with
humus. The Primrose japonica are planted
where it can be quite soggy. In this spot they
have self sown and flourished. My only
problem is with rabbits and deer eating the
flowers.

My "Primrose Pleasance" at Pleasant Hill Farm
is sheltered by pines and smaller trees, so it is
not uncommon to have well-budded primula
peeking through the snow in March. The jewel-
like colors of all my primroses add a special
glow to my early spring days.

GROWING SPECIES FROM SEED
by Bob Bunn, Vancouver, B.C.

Knowing that I grow species primula from seed,
some people (our editor among them) have the
mistaken notion that I have some "method" that
is the foundation to my "success."

To the extent that I have a "method," it consists
of mixing a gritty compost, sowing the seeds on
the surface, putting the trays of seed pots out in
the cold and protecting the seeds from being
washed out of place by the rain and protecting
the seedlings from pests.

SEED MIXTURE
So, what is the recipe for the mixture? I don't
have one. I mix assorted things -- like pumice
and granite grit (#1 and #2, which is otherwise
used in the care of chickens) -- with a little peat
moss, until it looks "about right" to me.

The basic idea is to provide a well-aerated
medium for good root development. Published
recipes vary. Some use equal proportions of
peat and sand or grit. Others use a greater
proportion of peat. I have been using more grit
than peat. Next winter, I plan to compare
results using various proportions. Peat and
Perlite, combined in equal volumes, form a
common seed compost. When putting the
compost in the pots, I level it off, but do not
pack it down.

OUT IN THE COLD
As I grow mainly alpines, many of which
require a cold period, I put the primula pots
outside in winter with everything else, whether
they need the cold or not. Checking the
authorities, I find the following judgments:

"Fresh seeds don't need any chilling preparation
for germination and, when wet, will germinate
quickly between 8-15 degrees Celsius. Older
seeds need to be quite wet and kept for three to
six weeks for one or more cold periods under 5
degrees Celsius." (Joseph Halda, The Genus
Primula, p. 356.)

"The majority of Primulas have seed that
survive (dry storage) and germinate in 2-8
weeks at 70 degrees Fahrenheit." (Norman
Deno, Seed Germination: Theory and
Practice, 2nd edition, p. 197.)

"Seed received more than about three weeks
after ripening often benefits from stratification."
(John Richards, Primula, p. 25.)
Ask the Growers continued

Perhaps it is just as well that I put my primula seeds through the cold because much of the seed I plant is not fresh.

STORING SEED

If you acquire seeds too late to give them at least several weeks at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or less (very cold weather is neither necessary nor even desirable), you can plant them anyway, or save them until next winter. Not all primula seed needs a cold period to germinate. And, if they do, this can be provided by a rest period in a refrigerator. When saving seed, put the packages in a jar with a lid or in a zip-lock bag in the refrigerator.

Unless I have only a small number of seeds of a species, I always save some. If something goes wrong, I can try again the following year. Too much seed should not be put in a small pot, anyway. When I sow the seed, I empty part of the packet in a small, shallow dish and try to push the seeds out individually to get a sparse, even distribution in the seed pot.

In the Pacific Northwest, we get a lot of winter rain. To keep the seeds in place during the rains, I usually use a covering of grit, but often don’t rely on just this. Since my cold frames are already filled with plants, I put greenhouse panels over the seed trays. The panels are held up by stacks of bricks and kept in place by more bricks. In gentle rains, I take the covering off long enough to water the pots.

CARE OF SEEDLINGS

In the spring, when the temperature is right, seeds germinate in some pots only a few; in others, too many. Now the tiny plants have to be protected from slugs and they eventually have to be transplanted. One reason for checking seed pots frequently for germination is to remove those with plants starting to grow to a relatively safe location. I choose a place out of direct sun, yet where there is good light and where measures have been taken against slugs.

Two of the leading dangers to young seedlings are slugs and very tiny aphids on the leaves and stems. "Deadline" around the area where the seed pots are sitting substantially reduces the first problem. Even so, I have found that vigilance is still required. Pots may be checked for slugs at night, using a light, and in the mornings. If slug damage is found and the perpetrator is not in the pot, look for it. It may be under the pot, on the side of the pot, or in the drainage hole of the pot or a nearby pot. It may be under the side of the tray. Keep in mind that slugs can be quite small when young.

Seedlings are frequently beset by tiny aphids, which will not be noticed by just looking down at the plants. Look closely at the leaves, especially the lower surfaces. The sooner these pests are detected and dealt with, the better. If just a few are found, they may be picked off with tweezers. If necessary, spray the seedling with a mild solution of insecticidal soap.

Warning: These pests can attack your plants earlier than you might expect. In milder climates, such as that of the Pacific Northwest, slugs feed on warmer days, even in winter. Be on guard!

Books usually recommend that seedlings be transplanted when two true leaves appear. Unfortunately, I transplant relatively little at this stage of growth because I plant a lot of species (from many genera) and have more seedling pots than I can get done at my poky rate before the next winter arrives. Of course, the older the plants, the more the root systems get tangled together. Be careful when separating the seedlings.

FEEDING

The young plants need to be fertilized. The pots can be set in a solution of liquid fertilizer. When I don’t get around to transplanting for a while, I fertilize the seed pots in this manner. I use liquid transplant fertilizer at first. Afterwards, I use mostly fish and seaweed fertilizers. Keep track of whether your pots are in need of watering. When the plants are tiny, either water from the bottom or with a fine enough spray that they are not washed out or flattened down.

Finally, I would emphasize the following points: Do not put too much seed in one pot. Crowding can foster disease and makes transplanting more difficult. At most, cover the seed with 1/2 grit or forestry sand, as light is favorable to germination. Do not let the seed get washed off the surface. Do not let your pots dry out, either before or after germination. Do not let moss and liverwort grow over your pots. Keep young plants in a place with good light and air circulation, but away from direct sunlight.

You ought to read something more substantial and authoritative than this little article. Observe and experiment. If something goes wrong, try to analyze what may have happened. If, for some reason, you don't wind up with plants (you only planted one species, let's say, or the slugs got them or your pots dried out), try again.

You will eventually have the satisfaction of growing your primulas from seed -- and many species are hard to get any other way.

TWO-IN-THREE

by Norman Singer, Sandisfield, Massachusetts

Of the 36 packets I ordered for the 1994 growing season, 23 germinated. Among those 23, only six have been transplanted so far. So far, not a brilliant success, but it means I have achieved my usual 65 percent success rate for germination.

I use a 50-50 mix of jiffy mix (soilless, sterile mix) and soft sand, with a bit of Osmocote. The pots go outside on a latticed tray and are covered with another tray. This helps break the force of the rain.

With Jefferey Charlesworth, we start about 2,000 seed packets a year. We collect from everywhere. The seed is saved for two years, in case mor germinate.
In Memoriam

Ross Willingham

In the early 1950s, Seattle was a hot-bed of primula enthusiasts. And right in the middle were the Balcoms and the Willinghams. When John Shuman proposed that the APS should include a specialty group, the Show Auricula Floriculturists of America (SAFA), both couples were founding members.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ross and Helen Willingham took on the APS seed exchange and, in spite of Helen's serious health problems, carried on with the same enthusiasm of earlier days. They took their trays of seed packets to all the shows, giving the public a ready source of our specialties and the APS some additional money.

Ross was at his best as a judge. A long, tall Texan, he seemed like he might be out of place. Not so! He was an excellent judge -- a pleasure to judge with and always careful not to favor his own plants.

Primrose Notes

by Cy Happy

As the 1992 "Primula Worldwide" symposium wound down I was approached by a charming couple from Japan. We were saying our good-byes with the help of an interpreter when they gave me a small packet of slender grey bulbs. The best our interpreter could convey was "orchids." I suspected they were one of the woodland natives from Japan.

I kept five and gave five to Jim Ely, a Tacoma orchid hobbyist. I gave mine an outdoor woodland situation. Jim put his in a cool orchid house. Mine faded away; Jim's bloomed. He was also able to identify them as *Ponerorchis graminifolia*.

If Ross ever had a speciality, among those outstanding plants I remember were his hybrids of the species in the Cortusoides section. One year at a South Seattle show, he brought many beautiful long-stemmed beauties perfectly presented.

After Helen died in November, 1992, we did not see much of Ross but, remembering better times, he was one of the best. Ross died in January 1994.

Cyrus Happy

CHOICE PRIMULA FROM SEED: A FEW TIPS

Two of the most common questions I hear from folks who are far enough along with their interest in Primula to have begun trying to grow some of the choicer sorts from seed are: "How do you grow these plants from seed and how do you get the plants past the seedling stage?"

All of our Primula seed is started in the same manner. I use a well-drained, porous planting mix with a thin layer of grit on top. Use a mix and a grit available and familiar to you -- there's no magic formula! Plant larger seed on top of the mix and cover with a thin layer of grit. Fine seed should be sown directly on top of the grit and watered in a bit.

I then place my seed trays on a shelf in an unheated, open-ended grow house with a layer of shade-cloth over the plastic. The pots are then left until germination takes place. In spring time, this is generally a two-to-four week period. Seed planted in the late fall will usually germinate the following spring.

Primula seed does not germinate well when temperatures go beyond the upper 60s for more than a few days at a time. Because of this tendency toward poor germination at high temperature, I do not plant Primula seed received after the first week of April and do not resume planting again until the first week of November.

Seed planted in September and October will usually germinate well. However, the plants are generally too small to make it through the winter in good condition. Plants from seed planted too late in the spring will often suffer from the heat because of their small size.

Spring sown seedlings are pricked out and planted into two and one-half inch pots as soon as they are large enough to move. I wait until the plants have at least two true leaves (not the cotyledon leaves). They generally reach this size in May or June. At this stage, plants of the Auricula type are moved right into the grow houses where they grow and make off-sets at such a rate that they are ready to be moved into their permanent position by fall of the same year.

Primula seedlings of other sections than Auriculastrum are also potted into two and one-half inch pots as soon as they are large enough to move. The plants are then held in a north-facing shed, toward the front where the light is good, until cool weather returns in the fall.

I have found that larger, older plants of the Himalayan Primula, as well as other plants that like cool summers such as Meconopsis and Ourisia, do much better in a similar cool, north-facing situation during the summer. I used to lose many of my Primula seedlings in the past when I grew them on in the hoop houses for the summer after their first move up to a pot from the seedling stage. When it comes to most seedling Primula, think cool!

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Seed Sources

This is a very short annotated list, compiled by Marie Skonberg and Maedhyte Martin, to help you find additional places from which to order seed. You will want to write for a list of seed available.

There is a much more extensive list in the Winter 1994 issue of Primroses. Other sources of seed you find would always be of interest. Send them to either of us.

FIELD HOUSE ALPINES, June Skidmore, 6370 West Mercer Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040 — very good selection, seed viable, species range good.

BARNHAVEN PRIMROSES, Langerhoud, 22420 Plouzelambre, France — good-sized packets, great range of listings, wonderful garden hybrids.

CHILTERN SEEDS, Bartrre Stile, Ulverston, Cumbria, England LA12 7PB — great variety, very viable, occasionally good species listed, changes from year to year.

CRAVENS NURSERY, 1 Foulds Terrace, Bingley, West Yorks., England S13 4LZ — sells 'Wanda Hybrids', seed very good, segregated by color, named varieties, new British introductions, other primula hybrids and some species.

JIM AND JENNY ARCHIBALD, 'Bryn Colfer' Ffostrasol, Llandysul, Dyfed, Wales SA44 5SB — wild collected seed, amazing variety, some primula and some primula hybrids.

JOSEF HALDA, P.O. Box 110, Hradec Králové, 501 01 Czech Republic — all wild collected seed, a dozen primrose species, can be very expensive but only place you can get some seed.

SALTSPRING PRIMROSES, Suite 1102, 4660 West 10th Ave., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6R 2J6 — selected hand-pollinated seed, one of the few places to find gold-laced and 'Wanda Wonders'.

PETER ATKINSON, 16035 S.E. 167th Place, Renton, WA — wonderful hybrids, never know what from year to year, Elizabethan recreations ('Virgin Queens'), 'Woodsy Wanda', 'Fountain' series, Juliana crosses, double acaulis, double auricula.

ROSETTA JONES, East 170 Donoon Place, Shelton, WA 98584 — very fine hybrids of double acaulis and double auricula, great seed picked at peak of ripeness, vigorous plants with very form.

Editor's Note: One of the best ways to get seed is to trade with other members. Approach them courteously and have something to offer in exchange. Another way is to use the APS seed exchange to get Sukata and Jelitto seed. Both companies are wholesale only, but are very generous to the APS seed exchange.

Under the Overhang

All seed that you collect yourself, purchase or receive from a friend or seed exchange performs best if you store it properly prior to sowing. I keep my seed in small paper envelopes stored inside a plastic bag in a dark refrigerator. I find that most seed stored in this manner will retain its viability for many years.

Seed of the Petiolarid section and other Primula, such P. rosea, P. elliptica and P. clarkei, should be sown as soon as ripe, without storage, if possible.

Growing Primula from seed is nothing too complicated. Common sense and attention to detail — such as watering and moving seedlings to larger pots as needed — will go a long way toward increasing your success and enjoyment.

Plant Portrait

PRIMULA HALLERI

You have constructed a trough following the instructions given by Karen Schellinger in the Spring 1994 issue of Primroses. Now you are searching for the right primulas to fill it. How about a small plant with striking farinose leaves and bright violet flowers? How about a species that will grow easily from seed in almost any soil? How about a plant with a ready source of seed — the APS Seed Exchange?

Primula halleri is your answer. The entire plant is small, in keeping with the scale of troughs or a small, shady pocket in the rock garden. The three-inch glossy pale green leaves grow upright to show the thick coat of white farina on the underside. Crowning the five to seven-inch stem is an inflorescence of up to 20 slightly nodding violet flowers with yellow throats. A distinctive feature of this species is its long (3/4 to 1 inch) corolla tube that accounts for its earlier name, P. longiflora. Like its relatives in the Aleuritia section, P. halleri is deciduous, leaving only a meal covered resting bud in the winter.

In nature, P. halleri can be found in the wet alpine meadows and damp limestone rock fissures of Europe (Alps, Carpathians, Balkans), Armenia and the Caucasus. Most growers agree that it thrives in rich, well-drained soil in half shade. The plant prefers lime, but can grow without it. The majority of references list P. halleri as a short-lived plant. However, John Richards has found that it will flower freely for 10 years or more when planted in wet, humus rich soil in conditions favorable to P. rosea.

Primula halleri grows easily from seed, often flowering in the first year. Seeds do not need frost treatment to germinate well. It will set seed easily or can be propagated by division after flowering.

Whether you have a shady trough or moist area in the rock garden to fill, why not give P. halleri a try. The results will be well worth it!

Literature cited:

Report submitted by Ann Luan, Hillsboro, Oregon.

This Plant Portrait is submitted by the Oregon Primrose Society in lieu of a chapter activity report. Meeting times for the Chapter are listed with Chapter News.
Beginner's Corner

November 29, 1993

I am thinking about creating a new primrose bed under an oak tree. While there is too little sunlight to grow grass there, the area is full of wildflowers in spring.

1) Would full to moderate shade be too much shade for a new primrose bed?

2) If leaf mould and compost are in short supply, what would be a good substitute to add to a newly dug area intended for primroses?

3) What can I plant as good companion plants to primroses?

Sincerely,

Frances Stagg,
Peoria, Illinois

APS member Mary Kordes of Ahmeek, Michigan replies:

June 10, 1994

Dear Frances,

My husband and I garden perhaps 450 miles directly north of Peoria, Illinois on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. Our climate is cooled by Lake Superior, and our plants sleep under a snug blanket of 36-to-40 inches of snowcover all winter. I am by no means a primula expert but this very special genus has certainly become an addiction for me in the past few years.

1) You question whether full to moderate shade is suitable for primroses. Remember, primulas are mainly cool climate lovers and shade will offer some degree of cool comfort for your plants.

2) Your second question requests alternative sources of humus. Leaf mould and compost are excellent soil additives, but all forms of once-living plant materials nourish soil and improve its texture.

You wrote that wildflowers abound under the oak you have chosen as guardian of your new primula bed. Since they grow there, surely primulas should do well.

3) In answer to your third question, your native wild flowers would be delightful companion plants for your primroses. They are well suited for your climate and many will bloom either... continued on page 35

A Trip to the Governor's Mansion

Juneau, Alaska - May 13, 1994

by Misty Haffner, Alaska Group

The Southeast Alaska Gardening Conference and Trade Show was in full bloom. A group arranged by APS Slide Librarian John O'Brien made their way under sunny skies to the mansion of Alaska's Governor.

In the travel group were APS President Dr. John Kerridge (Vancouver, B.C.), APS Librarian Thea Oakley (Redmond, Washington), APS Seed Exchange Coordinator Marie Skonberg (Ouzinkie, Alaska) and local Alaska group members John O'Brien, Lenor Sandor, Cheryl Fluck and Misty Haffner.

Our original plan was to visit with Alaska's First Lady Erma Lee Hickel, but this was impossible as she was away on a circumpolar travel forum. Mrs. Hickel, a primula enthusiast, has helped with the "Alaska Wild and Tame" slide program by providing John O'Brien with slides taken by her mother, Aline Strutz, of Anchorage. Mrs. Strutz, now in her 90s, is one of the American Primrose Society's pioneer members in Alaska.

We were graciously hosted at the Governor's mansion by House Manager Karen Newton. In the library, we had tea and cookies with State Gardener Joe Leach and Assistant Gardener Macie Burns. The conversation enjoyably centered around both wild and domestic primulas.

After tea, our group moved out to the gardens where we found the yard completely edged with Juliana hybrid "Dorothy" cream coloreds in full bloom, along with clumps of dark lavender julie hybrids. There were scattered groups of P. denticulata in various shades of lavender, rose and white. And starting to emerge in the spring sunshine was P. floriniae. We helped with identification and cultural information.

On behalf of the APS, our group presented two double vulgaris 'Dawn Ansel' and 'Quaker's Bonnet', along with a 'Garvyna Guinevere' and a smoldering red 'Cowichan' grown from Dr. Kerridge's seed.

Group photos were taken and good-byes said. We then headed back to the trade show where our APS booth was busy with customers eager to purchase primulas. A great day! ♥

Photo by John Kerridge

Misty Haffner, Marie Skonberg (APS members in the Alaska group) and Macie Burns (left to right) in the garden at the Governor's Mansion.
Like one of the APS seed exchange orders, I went off in May of this year to find Marie Skonberg, APS Seed Exchange Coordinator, in Ouzinkie, Alaska. It proved to be a more distant place and a more exciting trip than I ever imagined.

From Vancouver, I flew south 150 miles to Seattle to catch Alaska Airlines flight north (over Vancouver again!) for 900 miles to Juneau, capital city of the state situated in the "panhandle." Communities there, sprinkled beneath glorious mountains and glaciers, are inaccessible by road. The "Marine Highway" ferry system connects the many coastal towns. Another flight of nearly two hours reaches Anchorage, and in spite of a good view, I saw no signs of human habitation, just snow-capped mountains as far as the eye could see, with wide glaciers dropping into the ocean.

From Anchorage, a 90-minute flight on Era Aviation took me to Kodiak Island, just south of the Alaskan and Kenai peninsulas and, surprisingly, south of Juneau, near the Aleutian Islands chain.

But neither the seed order nor I have arrived yet! Ouzinkie is on Spruce Island. Ten minutes in a light plane would have made it, but fog banks rolled in and obscured the dirt airstrip. The pilot made a tight turn and returned to Kodiak. There are huge mountains all around and one can easily become disoriented in the thick fog.

The last leg of the journey to Ouzinkie is finally accomplished by boat! The seas that day were rough and big fishing boats were diving their bows under. Jim Skonberg's boat got us there in 90 minutes -- thanks to radar and a depth sounder -- in almost zero visibility and very sloppy seas.

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Weather rules on Kodiak Island, located in the Gulf of Alaska. Gale force winds, rain and fog of zero visibility are commonplace. Delayed airline flights and waiting at the airport are things we live with, as our APS leader discovered first-hand during his May trip to Alaska.

After an afternoon of waiting for the winds to subside and the fog to lift, we finally boarded a five-seater Cessna 206 airplane on route from Kodiak Island to Ouzinkie. Weather permitting, it's a 10 minute flight! We were five minutes out of Kodiak city, almost to Pleasant Harbor on Spruce Island, when a fog bank rolled over Ouzinkie. Visibility was zero, right down to the deck! Our pilot banked sharply and we were on our way back to Kodiak. No making it home on the plane today. I don't know if John's smile was out of relief or if he was reassuring me.

John Kerridge, our APS president, is a man of great talents and patience with primula, which he grows to perfection. He is absolutely dedicated to growing from seed, hand pollinating and to the APS in general. A soft spoken gentleman, John doesn't lose his cool and is always sharing his great knowledge of primula with anyone who is interested. I've never thought of him as being adventurous, but now I know this side of him, too.

If you are looking for adventure and a decidedly different lifestyle, come and visit me. As John Kerridge found out this spring, things in Alaska are a bit different than he had imagined.

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Finding the Seed Exchange Source

SEED EXCHANGE H.Q.

Spare a thought for those well-travelled seed orders and replies; the headquarters of our APS seed exchange is remote indeed. Marie works single-handedly in limited space at home to get your seed orders out, all while caring for her family and grandson, a beautiful garden and a packed greenhouse, not to mention work for the Russian Orthodox Church and Sunday school teaching.

Ouzinkie is a native fishing village; a close-knit community in this peaceful part of the world. Leaving the dock, where bags and supplies are lifted up by hand-line, you pass in succession the local store, the post office, Marie's parents' home, her grandmother's place, and, then, her own. The pick-up truck has to be tough for the dirt roads -- no licenses seem necessary out here. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are the run-abouts for the local folk.

There are no other primula growers right here -- except Marie's mother and those with donated plants -- and there are really no gardens, except in the Skonberg family. Yet the temperate climate is very suitable for primula. The cold is not as intense as you would expect, due to the ocean's influence. Rain is plentiful. So is seaweed. And long summer days. The soil is poor and lacking organic matter. It needs a good deal of work with compost and other material. There is a layer of about a foot of volcanic ash in breaking up the soil.

In bloom were fine specimens of *P. vulgaris*, *P. denticulata* in reds, whites and blues. In mid-May, clumps of *P. florindae* and candelabras were just showing. Only a few native Alaskan species were found in cultivation: *P. tschuktschorum*, *P. egalikensis*, *P. cuneifolia subsp. saxifragifolia*, and in the gardens of Marie and her mother, *P. incana* and *P. stricta*.

BELLINGHAM CONNECTION

Senior Alaska gardening club members recall that earlier settlers were sending mail orders to Bellingham, Washington for plants. Marie's aunt Katie, a native of Alaska, has passed away but is remembered by many as a fine grower. A few of her Bellingham imports remain in the family's gardens.

Once your APS seed order arrives in Ouzinkie, it is packaged promptly -- along with hundreds of other orders averaging 35 packets each -- and is quickly on its way to you, courtesy of the tiny local post office. I don't know how Marie does it!

As APS members, we get a lot of pleasure from this personal service and from those little seeds -- seeds containing the potential for years of beauty!

News from the Chapters

A summary of the chapter meetings

ALASKA

It was a very busy spring in the Junea-Douglas area with programs into early May. The "gardening at noon" programs were followed shortly by the Master Gardener's conference and trade show. In between there was tending the garden and having plant sales each Saturday, plus the APS booth at the trade show and showing visiting guests around. Our spring comes later than further south and when it does, everything happens fast with the rapidly lengthening days. Report by John O'Brien, Sr.

PENNSYLVANIA

Doretta Klaber Chapter

The chapter held a very impressive primrose show April 30, 1994 at the Exton Mall in Exton, PA. We were amazed and delighted at the quantity and quality of primroses on display. Exhibits included troughs, doubles of both *Primula auricula* and *P. vulgaris*, *P. frondosa* and *P. farinosa*, *P. sieboldii*, *P. polyantha*, *P. veris*, *P. kisoana*, *P. cortusoides*, *P. hirsuta*, *P. Halleri*, *P. x pseudocampanula* in many varieties -- 'Wanda', 'Snow', 'Springtime', 'Early Girl', 'Lady Greer', 'Lois Lutz', 'Dorothy', 'Millicent', and 'Kinloch Beauty'. "Jack-in-the-Green' and 'Hose-in-Hose' were there, too. Unfortunately, no *P. japonica* were in bloom at the time of the show.

JoAnn and Fred Knapp brought to Delaware Valley a most interesting display of *P. marginata*, illustrating the differences in the leaf structure of the various forms. Plants displayed were 'Drake's', 'Pritchard's', 'Kesseling's', 'Dr. Jenkins', 'Caerulea' and 'Linda Pope'. The Knapps have given this chapter so much encouragement, time and effort and we thank them.

The chapter was also grateful to April Boettger for making a special effort to send us some uncommon double forms. Rick Lupp also sent several plants as donations to the chapter. We very much appreciated his contributions.

Many chapter members worked to set up the display booth and stayed with it, answering questions during the show. While visiting our booth, several people joined the chapter and several others took away applications forms.

On May 1, chapter members visited three gardens; two of them belonging to members: In addition to his fine primroses, Bill Seigel's immaculate yard garden contained many fine plants of interest, including the popular Arisaema sikkokianum, phlox and other colorful spring bloomers, all growing in good health. Divy Godshall's extensive woodland garden charmed us with its many "primrose paths." The primroses, all in prime condition, blended very well with the native plants to create a most appealing effect. Nadeen McShane, who is not currently a chapter member, is involved in constructing a new garden on a beautiful hillside site with a marvelous view of pond, fields and woods. We hope to be able to visit this garden in another year or so to enjoy its development.

Every February, the chapter holds a seed sowing workshop. This year seeds germinated in such profusion that we may not have enough buyers at the plant sale! We may all already have more primulas than our gardens can accommodate. These plants are largely from the generosity of the Sakata Seed Co. We're anxious to see whether the plants come through the winter well. My Sakata seedlings are vibrant and healthier than the seedlings from species seed. It all goes back to economics, I guess. If you're going to succeed financially in the plant world, you'd better produce a strong and healthy product. And apparently Sakata has.

Report by Dot Plyler, Chapter Chair
**News from the Chapters continued**

**OREGON**

Oregon Chapter

The Oregon Chapter meets every third Friday from September through May at 1 p.m. at the Milwaukie Community Club (42nd and Jackson Street) in Milwaukie. For more information on meetings and programs, please call Ann Lunn at (503) 604-4582.

**WASHINGTON**

Eastside Chapter

Meets the first Monday of every month at the Universal Savings Bank, 6615 132nd Ave. N.E., Kirkland at the Bridal Falls Mall at 7:30 p.m.

Seattle Chapter

Meets four times a year. Contact June Skidmore, president, for information.

Tacoma Chapter

Meets the first Tuesday of each month, except July and August, at the United Methodist Church, 1919 West Pioneer, Puyallup, at 7:30 p.m.

Wichita Chapter

Meets the second Friday of each month, except July and August, at 305 S. 43rd St., Renton at 7:45 p.m. Family members and other guests are welcome.

June: A discussion on seed -- Peter Atkinson found some seed is still viable after refrigerator storage, while some seed does not require cold treatment. A discussion on dividing primula -- look for secondary roots, divide the larger plants. No hard and fast rules on this, except do not divide during July, August or September. April and May are generally best times. Keep plants well watered, with good ventilation and constant care until good root system is established.

September: A video shown at the “Primula Worldwide” symposium was featured at our September meeting. Tape donated by Rosetta Jones.

Suggestions?: Any ideas on how to rid gardens plagued by moles?

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

British Columbia Primrose Group

Meets every two months, starting in January, on the third Wednesday at Southlands Nursery, 6550 Balaclava, Vancouver, B.C. September meeting: The tape “Primula of the Clouds” with the presentation by Ron McBeath. Many flats of seedlings started by President John Kerridge were distributed for care and potting on. Report thanks to Thea Foster.

**Notes from the Editor**

**Information received at the Editor’s desk**

**SLUG MISCELLANIA**

Two notes on slugs have come to my attention in the last while. In the Rainforest Gardens catalog (13139 224th St. RR #2, Maple Ridge, B.C. Canada V2X 7E7), a product called Slug and Snail De-fence is listed. It is a four-inch vinyl strip impregnated with salt that keeps slugs and snails out. Sounds like it would be worth a try. It is $10 for a 10 meter roll.

In the summer *Newsletter* of the National Auricula and Primula Society, there is a little report by “RWA” (Bob Archdale?) which notes slugs are reputed to have “no less than three sets of sensory organs and can detect food sources up to 100 yards away.” (p. 4).

An old fashioned remedy is to water the primula beds with diluted Jeyes Fluid, which, as I recall, is a disinfectant for bathrooms with a strong, clean odor. The smell is reputed to keep slugs and snails away. There must be a North American equivalent. Perhaps some supermarket sleuth can help us out with a product name.

**SEED COORDINATOR PUTS PRIMULA ON FRONT PAGE**

Marie Skonberg, of Ouzinkie, Alaska, has had an article published on the front page of the Kodiak newspaper. Congratulations! Keep up the good work on getting gardening and primroses in the news!

**NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY**

APS has recently set up a reciprocal agreement to advertise each other’s societies in the bulletins. Notice the New Zealand ad in with other societies at the back of this issue. APS has a surprising number of faithful members from New Zealand. Let’s make an effort to know them better. There are some issues of the New Zealand bulletins in the hands of the executive. If you are interested in seeing them, contact President John Kerridge.

**A SPECIAL REQUEST**

Society Librarian Thea Oakley asks if anyone who received seed of *Primula tschuktschorum*, a species from Alaska that was listed in the seed exchange last year, had success in growing it. Please send in a short report, you lucky ones that got seed.

**Journal Report**

*by Ann Lunn, Hillsboro, Oregon*

**FANTASTIC JOURNEY**

The Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society (June 1994) takes the reader on a fantastic journey through the Ganesh Himal in central Nepal. It is difficult not to turn green with envy of the travelers when reading about the spectacular scenery and marvelous plants that were encountered. In addition to many species of orchids, arisaemas, meconopsis, pleiones and other beauties, there were the primulas!

*Primula reticulata* was found in a gully together with *P. capitata* and *P. obliqua*. The latter two were in seed. The following day, while on a search for Iris staintonii, the soft blue and white flowers of *P. buriana var. purpurea* were spotted. Masses of *P. primulina* were found growing amongst Cyananthus lobatus.

At 4,100 meters (13,500 feet), a carpet of diminutive *P. tenuiloba* was covered with starry white flowers. An accompanying photograph by Bill Baker illustrates the flowers that seem much too large for the tiny rosettes of leaves. The plants were growing on vertical, peaty banks.
On high rocky slopes, the travelers found and photographed *P. muscoides*, another cushion primula with tiny white flowers and even smaller toothed leaves reminiscent of *P. minima*. Near a patch of Gentiana tubiflora, the travelers found *P. stuartii* with large umbels of butter-yellow flowers and *P. sikkimensis var. hopeana* with nodding white bells.

**ON THE SUBJECT OF TROUGHS**

The Spring 1994 issue of the Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society contains an article describing plants for troughs. Geoffrey Charlesworth categorizes dozens of plants into "types," depending on the growth habit, desirability, family, etc. In a sometimes tongue-in-cheek manner, Mr. Charlesworth imparts a great deal of knowledge about plants to try in troughs.

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**From Primroses to Stormy Seas**

continued from page 15

the boat was going to stop him from checking out the APS seed exchange. He watched as the boat's bow dove, pounding into the seas, spraying fine water over the boat time and again. His sea legs were fine, even though he rarely has been out in rough seas. No, he didn't get seasick! Dressed in my husband's fishing coat, he stood at the bridge of the boat, taking it all in, as brave as any Alaskan fisherman. Most city people may have freaked out on such a trip. Not John. He says he wants to come back and visit again. I certainly hope he does.

I have more respect and admiration for him now because it takes one of adventurous spirit to go from primroses to rough, stormy seas and still come out of it all with a smile.

As an example of a Type 2 plant — these are the desirable, beautiful, rare and difficult ones — he includes *P. altionii* in the group "that would fill you with joy but are more likely to burden you with grief." *Primulas clarkei, minima, wuennenana and modesta* are mentioned as being easier to grow. Success with *P. scotica* in considered to be a minor miracle.

**ANOTHER JOURNEY**

The June/July 1994 issue of Horticulture includes a beautifully illustrated article by Christopher Lloyd on the gardens of Inverewe, Scotland. One photograph alone entices primula lovers to visit this exquisite garden. Masses of candelabras of varying colors are grown together with iris and meconopsis. A backdrop of Rhododendron luteum and R. hunnewellianum complete the picture. May and June are the best months to see the Asiatic primulas at their finest.

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**Round Robin**

Have you sent off a letter yet to join a Round Robin? This is one of the benefits of an APS membership. Information is shared in circulating packages of letters. For new members, this is a great way to make new friends and learn more about primulas.

**WHAT YOU GET!**

Robins are packages of letters by members of the Robin group containing information and news on primula. It may be a general Round Robin, or it may focus on one particular species or hybrid. An initial cover letter from the Robin chairman is sent to the first Robin member on the list. This person sends the first letter and his or her letter to the second person on the list, and so it goes, with each member adding a letter.

Lots of first-hand information and news about individual gardeners and their gardens are yours for the effort of writing about your own garden and gardening experience! It is possible to include seed, and members are encouraged to do this.

**WHAT TO DO!**

Write a letter to Don Keefe, Chairman of the APS Round Robins and express an interest in being matched with other APS members sharing your interest.

**New Robins**

There are two robins circulating — more can be formed. If there is interest in the following topics, new Robins will be formed for those interested in:

- *Hints for beginners*. A mix of novice growers and some comments from more seasoned growers who can supply that bit of information that makes all the difference.
- *Primula marginata*. A few experts in the area could be coaxed into writing an initial letter to encourage others interested in growing these fascinating members of the Auricula section.
- *Primula sieboldii* and *Sakurasoh*. Named varieties of *P. sieboldii* are staged each spring in their own little theatre by growers in Japan. The increasing interest in these beautiful members of the primula family must mean there are collectors who would like to compare notes.

**Show Auriculas**

There is a renewed interest in these compelling, attractive but difficult members of the Auricula section. Some of the members who have had some success might be willing to share their growing advice. Sources of plants can be discussed. Recommendations for suitable crosses, if you are thinking of hybridizing your own seed, could be described by growers with knowledge of the characteristics of these jewel-like plants.

Send your name now! Don will match you up with other APS members sharing your interests.

Write or phone:
Don Keefe
22604 NE 20th Place
Redmond, WA 98053-4001
Phone (206) 868-5150
Board of Directors' Meeting

Held July 9, 1994 at home of APS President John Kerridge, Vancouver, B.C.

This is a summary of the board meeting minutes.

Treasurer Addaline Robinson was unable to attend meeting. Her written report was tabled until the October 15, 1994, board meeting. President John Kerridge requested that all reports for board meetings be submitted in advance of meeting date to allow directors time to review them prior to meetings.

Larry Bailey suggested the treasurer prepare a report on anticipated APS revenues and expenses. A discussion of the number of members and where new members come from followed.

APS Slide Librarian John O'Brien of Alaska was unable to attend meeting. Board expressed a vote of thanks to John for his speedy efforts in getting out APS slide programs.

APS Quarterly Coordinating Editor Maedlythe Martin reported that the Frank Cabot donation, used to cover color printing charges for the Spring 1994 issue, had not all been spent. The remainder will be used to offset color printing charges for a cover for the Fall 1994 issue. The editor reported that she will be stepping down from her position once the Fall 1994 issue was complete. She outlined a number of proposals to help make the transition easier. The board voted to strike a committee to canvass nationwide for a new editor and to examine ways of dividing editorial responsibilities. The committee will also review the current budget for the APS quarterly. President John Kerridge expressed thanks to Maedlythe for her work over the past three years.

APS Librarian Thea Oakley reported that stock on some books available through APS has been depleted.

APS Seed Exchange Coordinator Marie Skonberg reported that mailout of surplus seed was completed and sent to chapters for distribution.

Chapters interested in judging schools should contact Rosetta Jones. It was felt a judging seminar at the national show would attract an audience.

APS Historian Anita Alexander has resigned her position. President John Kerridge will find a replacement.

Ellen Wilson of Seethelt, B.C. has been appointed manager of advertising for the APS quarterly. She will solicit ads and invoice advertisers.

Discussions are underway concerning the 1995 national show. A location and date will be set at the October board meeting.

The Valley Hi and Oregon chapters will donate a national trophy in the name of Etha Tate for the best garden auricula in the national show. (Ed. note: Etha Tate, who died March 23, 1994, was an APS member for 42 years, serving in many positions. In 1992, the APS honored her many contributions with the presentation of the Dorothy Dickson Memorial Award for Outstanding Service.)

John Kerridge will donate a national trophy to be awarded to the grower entering the most species primula in bloom at the national show.

Member Cheryl Fluck of the Alaska chapter will be looking into handling requests for past issues of the APS quarterly.

Don Keefe has revived the Round Robins. He has new forms for former Round Robin members.

The next meeting of the board will be held Saturday, October 15, 1994, at Mary McCraken Restaurant in Chehalis, Washington.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Springer, Recording Secretary

Watch for it!

Seed Exchange List coming in December

The seed exchange list will be sent to APS members in early December. Watch for it! This year's list includes a number of species as well as the wonderful range of garden hybrids.

APS Seed Exchange Coordinator Marie Skonberg has sent some tantalizing notes of the great seeds on offer this year:

- species including *Primula rotundifolia* (mentioned by Ian Scott in the article on Cluny House in Scotland, Summer 1994),
- *P. heucherofila* (described by Ann Lunn and drawn by Jay Lunn, Summer 1994),
- *P. reidii* (prize winner at the VIRAGS show, 1994) and the wild collected *P. alcalina* featured on the cover of the spring issue.
- new hybrids from donors' gardens, including a *P. marginata x allionii*, several Juliana crosses and blue, yellow and amethyst 'Cowichans'.
- true wild collected primroses, *P. vulgaris*.
- a rainbow range of Barnhaven colors, including more named *P. sieboldii*.
- *P. magellanica* collected in Chile.

Most listings are packaged 10 seeds per packet, but some of the rarities contain five seeds per packet. Others contain 50 to 100 seeds where there is an exceptional supply.

Packets this year are 50-cents with a minimum of 12 packets for $6. There will be a limit of five packets for any one listing.

To ensure best choices, send your orders in promptly. Be patient. (As you'll read elsewhere in this issue, Marie Skonberg has a magic touch in coordinating our seed exchange from her home in Ouzinkie, Alaska.) List substitutes or they will be made for you if your selection is gone. Good luck with your orders!

1995 Dues Reminder

1995 membership renewals were due November 15. The annual rate for both domestic and foreign memberships, individual or household, is $15 US 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, *Primroses*.

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.

Change of Address!

President John Kerridge has moved. Please change any mailing lists, or write to him now at:

Dr. John Kerridge, President
American Primrose Society
Suite 1102 - 4660 W. 10th Ave.
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6R 2J6

American Primrose Society - Fall 1994
Society Notices

The New Zealand Alpine Garden Society
invites you to join other overseas members enjoying the benefits of our Society. Two informative Bulletins each year and an extensive NZ Native section in our seed list enhance the contact with New Zealand alpine plant lovers. Enquiries to the Secretary, or join now by sending N.Z. $20 for annual membership, personal cheques welcome.
The New Zealand Alpine Garden Society,
PO Box 2984, Christchurch, NEW ZEALAND.

Matsumoto Sakurahara 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)
Write to: Mr. Kazuo Hara, Secretary
Yoshikawa-Koya 647-51
Matsumoto, Nagano,
399 Japan

National Auricula and Primula Society
Invites all auricula and primula lovers to join in this old society.
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Northern Section
D.G. Hadfield
146 Queens Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire, England
Midland Section
Hon. Sec., Mr. P. Green
Primrose Hill, Bell's Bank, Buckley, Worcs., England
Southern Section
Lawrence E. Wigley
67 Warnham Court Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, England

American Primrose Society - Fall 1994

Society Notices

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Beginner's Corner
continued from page 12

before the primroses, or as your mops of primrose color are beginning to wane.

I have other favorites in my garden to provide diversity in height, flower color and foliage interest: Digitalis, astilbe and aquilegias are beautiful in the background and mixed with primula plants to extend the color season.

Phlox divaricata provides lovely pools of lavender to any pink or white primula and paired with heucheras, especially the newer colored leaf forms such as H. 'Palace Purple' and 'Pewter Veil'. and I couldn't live without ferns and hostas. They take my garden right into fall nicely.

Above all, Frances, have fun with your garden! Move your plants around if necessary until you find a combination that pleases you. Divide them to increase a leaf or flower color or form you'd like to expand on. You'll find your confidence and the pleasure you get from your garden increasing every year.

Warmly,
Mary Kordes,
Ahmeek, Michigan

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The search for a new Editor

A search committee for a new editor has been formed as one has not yet been found. In the meantime, help is needed with some of the specific tasks required to get the quarterly out.

- Initial typing onto computer diskette. Approximately 35 pages. Programs needed: WordPerfect or Microsoft Word. No editorial skills needed - just typing skills. A volunteer to type even one issue would help.
- Editorial proof-reader for grammar, punctuation and consistency in language. Journalist skills helpful.
- General proof-readers who have a keen eye for detail and can find the typos.

Any general comments or suggestions for the search committee for the editor are welcome. Please contact

Ann Lunn, Search Committee Chair
6620 NW 271st Ave.
Hillsboro, OR 97124

READERS

Continue to send your stories and letters to the coordination editor, Maedythe Martin. These are what make the quarterly of interest to each of you.

The American Primrose Society - Fall 1994