President's Message

It seems that you are stuck with me for another year, and we thank those of you who took the trouble to mail in your ballot.

We received a number of comments on the election. It may appear to be an exercise in futility to mark and send that ballot paper, considering that only one candidate was nominated for each position. However, our constitution states that officers shall be elected by a ballot submitted prior to the Annual Meeting, and it is necessary that we do this. Ideally there would be more than one nominee for each position, but it is often hard enough to get even one. The nominating committee tries hard, and if you can help us — so much the better.

I would like to express our thanks to Maedythe Martin for the fine job she did as Editor of the Quarterly. Members have sent nothing but praise over the years, and Maedythe can look back on all those issues with much pride.

Now we welcome Claire Cockcroft as our new Editor. Claire has already gone to work, and presented us with good ideas at the recent Board Meeting. We wish her all the best and I know you will help her all you can, and respond to her requests for material. We are keen to keep as much color as possible in the photographs, although this is very expensive and cannot be afforded in every issue. We have had donations directed specifically toward making color reproductions, and of course more of these are very welcome.

It has, as usual, been a very busy spring with all the shows and sales. There is a curious lack of poly's on the benches, at least here on the West Coast. Let's be sure they are nurtured back into popularity and not lost. This has happened in the past, for the old books list scores of named poly's that are not around any more.

Your society, through the local chapters, is entering into an agreement with the Rhododendron Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington, to provide plantings of primula. The garden already contains drifts from a planting done years ago by some of our senior members, and will make an exciting display area for primula. Thousands of visitors will be able to see what can be done in their own gardens!

Best wishes for a good year.

John Kerridge,
President

In This Issue -- Companion Plants

As you read this edition of Primroses, you may wonder where all the primroses have gone. This issue is dedicated to companion plants in the Primulaceae family -- dodecatheon, soldanella, cortusa, cyclamen, androsace. Many of these plants require the same growing conditions and care as primula, and many of our members grow and enjoy them, too. I hope you enjoy this quick visit around the primrose neighborhood!

Claire Cockcroft
Shooting Stars
by Ilse Burch, Redmond, Washington

The genus Dodecatheon, commonly referred to as “shooting stars”, contains about twenty species, give or take a few. Many grow well in the garden and are useful in the springtime. Common flower colors range from white to purple and magenta-pink, with all sorts of intermediate shades. There are no orange or yellow forms (somebody prove me wrong on this). Flowers are commonly banded with an accent color at the mouth, and with the prominent exerted stamens have great close-up value. At a distance, they look best in a mass or grouping of three or more.

Shooting stars range in height between 6 inches or so on up to 24 inches. Dodecatheon dentatum is a little thing and is always white, with a contrasting band of dark purple. D. meadia is the giant of the clan, and its largest forms can be 24 inches tall.

All shooting stars are summer dormant. They grow and bloom in the spring and require adequate moisture during growth. Many species are drought intolerant during dormancy, but do best if they do not get bone dry and remain that way for long. D. pulchellum is one of the species that seem to be very tolerant of drought; its roots will rehydrate even after severe drought. The majority of species seem to like the same conditions as candelabra primroses.

During dormancy, dodecatheons’ are at the mercy of the gardener who forgets where they are and digs them up. Of course I have never done anything like this! But I will tell you that if one only breaks the roots up and leaves them in a suitable position, each broken root is capable of generating itself into a plant which may bloom in as little as two years. The root weevil can eat the center of a plant, leaving some of the roots intact which may grow into plantlets. Some shooting stars seem immune to the weevil (D. dentatum, for example), and others are a magnet, such as the white form of D. meadia.

Dodecatheon leaves are quite distinctive, looking like fleshy primula leaves. They have no teeth on their margins, and are a lovely fresh bluish green, except in the albino forms where they are without the bluish cast. The leaves form a basal rosette, and the bloom stalk (which is leafless) shoots enthusiastically skyward, bearing one or many buds that open into the characteristic shuttle-cock shape. All of the species are variations on a theme, in many cases with differences that seem trivial to the gardener. In fact, most of the species are differentiated by the color, shape and arrangement of the stamens.

I like them and have a number in my garden, mostly grown from seed. I recommend growing them from seed — they are easy, and often bloom the second year. Do buy a good form if you find one for sale, or mooch a piece off of a friend if you can. Don’t forget how easy they are to grow from root cuttings if you have a good one and want more just like it (a clone). Remember that seed produces progeny that are different from their parents, and that only by vegetative means (i.e., cuttings, division) can you obtain an exact match.

In summary, the shooting stars are very worthwhile companions to primula in the garden. They are not the most perennial of plants, but with a half-day or more of sun (just so they are not sunburned) they bloom gloriously and enthusiastically in the spring. I heartily recommend them! *

American Primrose Society Bookstore

APS members are able to get special prices on these beautiful books:

- Auriculas, by Brenda Hyatt - $13US
- Primula, by John Richards - $36US

Address your orders and inquiries to:
Thea Oakley, American Primrose Society Librarian
3304 288th Ave. NE, Redmond, WA 98053 USA

Orders must be prepaid in US dollars by check on a US bank or by international money order. Postage and handling: in the US add $3 for the first book and $1.50 for each additional book, or outside the US add $5 for the first book and $2.50 for each additional book.
Cyclamen For Minnesota Gardens
by Karen Schellinger, Avon, Minnesota

As I wandered through my woodland last fall, I was amazed at how well the species cyclamen I had planted over the years were doing. Some had leaves as large as the kind you buy at the florists as house plants. My hardy woodland cyclamen were started from seed in February of 1989. Some germinated right away, some waited until late summer of 1989. The leaves are a beautiful marbled green color and have many variations. Some have predominantly white markings and look more silver than green. They really stand out in the shaded woodland with their striking leaves.

The first time I had seen cyclamen grown in the ground in this country was in Oregon. The plants were a ground cover under the azaleas and among other woodland plantings. Since I am very fond of woodland plants, I had to try some at home, even if I do garden in zone 4 and sometimes zone 3 depending on the weather! So I asked some of our experienced club members if they had been able to grow any in their gardens. The answer was yes!

I couldn't wait to try some from seed, as that is the most cost efficient way to get a number of plants at once, if you have the patience to care for the seedlings. (Growing from seed is a good way to get to know a plant's needs and teaches you to be consistently observant as well.)

The cyclamen species I have grown successfully in the garden from seed are the following: Cyclamen coum, C. hederifolium, C. purpurascens and C. purpurascens fatrense. (Josef Halda discovered this last cyclamen in the wild in the Czech Republic and says it is a separate species, not a subspecies of C. purpurascens; other experts disagree.) I am not bothered by this puzzle, I just enjoy the plant!

C. coum is also said to be among the hardy species and although I have tried it from seed, I'm not sure if I really have the correct plant yet. The authenticity of donated seed listed on any society's seed list can be questionable. (Mother Nature may have created a new hybrid that doesn't resemble the named plant, or the original plant was not what the donor thought it was.) Of the hardy species listed, all but C. coum bloom in the late summer or early fall. C. coum is a late spring or early summer bloomer and as I have none blooming at that time, I either don't have it yet or it did not survive the winter here. I have now ordered seed of C. coum from a reliable source so will see how it does.

Zdenek Zvolanek, who spoke at one of our banquets, mentioned that C. parviflorum (has been likened to a dwarf C. coum) should also be hardy here, as it grows up high in the mountains of Turkey. I was able to purchase a tuber of it this fall, from Sprotter & Martin of England, who ship to the USA. It is planted on the shady side of my new rock garden, another of my trials of a desirable plant whose hardiness here is uncertain.

The cyclamen leaves remain evergreen over the winter under the cover of the fallen leaves. During the next growing season new leaves develop and pink or white flowers appear for quite a long time in spring/early summer or late summer/fall, depending on the species. Some of the species are scented when you get down on your knees to catch the fragrance coming from the little 'shooting star' blooms.

As with any plant, for successful cultivation you look at the growing conditions in the wild. Most of the following information comes from the well-written book, THE GENUS CYCLAMEN, by Christopher Grey-Wilson (Timber Press, 1988).

All cyclamen grow from tubers that undergo a period of dormancy, varying according to their periods of growth and flowering. Many as they mature become depressed or flattened on top. This is particularly true of C. hederifolium.

Some tubers of C. hederifolium can reach nine inches or bigger in diameter.

In most species the tubers are rounded and more or less symmetrical, but in C. purpurascens and C. purpurascens fatrense, the tuber is knobby and misshapen, more so with age.

Josef Halda, in an article for the American Primrose Society, said that you could slice up the tuber of C. purpurascens fatrense like a potato to propagate it. I however do not have enough of that plant to feel I could risk slicing it up to make more!

I also bought tubers from another source a few years ago and they were very elongated and misshapen. I put them in different positions in my woodland garden and shared two with friends on the west coast. Some have thrived and some only just hang on. Obviously some conditions suit them better than others in the garden.

According to Christopher Grey-Wilson, the easiest cyclamen to grow outdoors is C. hederifolium. It is able to withstand severe cold as are C. coum and C. purpurascens, with the last two being more particular as to preferring woodland soil and conditions.

All species must have quick draining soil and some protection from strong winds. They dislike clay or heavy soils, though a steep slope may help. Light requirements are dappled shade and protection from any hot sun. Good light is essential for good growth as well. They are not fussy as to soil pH as long as the drainage is good, but ideal soil pH is slightly on the alkaline side of neutral.

They do not mind root competition — it may even help to keep the ground well drained for the tubers, thus preventing rot. Duplicating conditions in the wild means "A warm dry bank; sloping leaf-mold in light deciduous woodland or at the edge of a woodland, among conifer roots, though not in dense shade; a dry patch at the foot of a wall or fence". (Christopher Grey-Wilson.)

Most species should be planted with the top of the tuber just under the surface of the soil, according to Grey-Wilson. I think in Minnesota we need more soil over the tuber. So I plant my cyclamen by holding the leaves, with the tuber hanging in the hole, and when the leaves are even with the ground I push the soil into the hole. The tubers are about the size of a quarter and I think they prefer to have three to four inches of soil over...
them in our severe climate. [Ed.'s note: Planting depth varies by species. Cyclamen planted too deeply tend to produce odd-looking necks called floral trunks that allow growth points to reside the preferred distance from the soil surface. Snow is an excellent mulch, preventing temperatures at soil level from dropping really low.]

My happiest cyclamen are on the slope of a hill under a large deciduous oak, facing east with the hill behind it to protect the plants from the northwest cold blast of winter winds. It is my favorite place in my woodland garden because it is where I put my "treasures". They greet me every spring when I have had enough of winter and wander out to see if anything is peeking out from under the oak leaf cover.

Wilson recommends working bonemeal or well-rotted cow manure into the surface of the soil in early autumn. In my woodland garden, where years of leaves falling and composting have created a rich soil four feet deep, I am lucky enough not to have to add anything if I don't want to. However, I do like to work bonemeal in around plants in the fall to give them an extra treat.

The Cyclamen Society advises:

"To start cyclamen from seed is easy, but may require patience. The ideal time to sow seed is immediately after the pods open. In most cases this means in July, August or September. This is the time when seeds have maximum viability. Any well-drained sterile soil mix is fine. Sow the seeds about one inch apart and then cover with the same finely sifted sterile mix.

Water by standing the pot in a few inches of water until the surface becomes moist, or use a watering can with a fine rose. Surfacing with grit will allow more air to reach the seeds and prevent the growth of mosses and liverwort.

If the seeds are spaced well they can be grown on for 12 to 18 months without disturbance. Premature pricking out may cause breakage of the first seedling root or cause a growth check. Keep the pots in a shady place and do not let them dry out."

The seeds I've received and planted were all in the months of January or February, so they were in a dormant state and would not germinate right away when planted. You must soak the seed in hand-hot water with a little liquid dish soap for 24 hours. Drain off the water and repeat the procedure and sow immediately after the second 24 hours. Thus a higher moisture content is restored to the seeds and the germination inhibitors are removed.

Again from the Cyclamen Society:

"The first appearance of the seedlings may take several weeks after germination. The seed first produces a single fine root which then develops a swelling just below the seed to form a tiny tuber. A stalk forms between seed and tuber and as it elongates this develops into an inverted U-shape, which forces its way "elbow first" through the compost. Finally the stalk straightens and pulls the seedleaf out into the air."

I have let my seedlings grow on until they are the size of a dime as there is no advantage to pricking them out like faster growing plants. Seedlings do not develop the habit of summer dormancy. This means that if they are kept shaded, cool and moist throughout their first summer they will continue to grow. If you do this you will gain an extra six months growth and reach flowering size that much sooner. The species cyclamen appear to do better if the compost is kept slightly moist throughout the summer, even if dormant.

I have planted cyclamen in the garden both in the spring and in the late summer. I have had them come through the winter in their seedling pots under the leaves and snow that blew in on top of them because I did not get them in the ground! I discover more tough plants that way!

The Cyclamen Society suggests transplanting in the fall when the weather is starting to cool and root growth is resuming (in Minnesota that would be only into pots, not the open ground). If I am transplanting into a pot for growing on in the greenhouse over the winter, I add grit to the mix for drainage. Cyclamen must have good drainage in a pot or the tuber will rot.

Seed is available from most plant societies you may belong to, just look for the hardy species I've listed.

SEED SOURCES:
The Cyclamen Society
Vic Aspland
12 Davis Avenue Tipton,
West Midlands DY4 8JZ ENGLAND
Dues: Overseas-7 pounds per year

Jim & Jenny Archibald
Bryn Collen, Ffostrasol
Llandysul, Dyfed, SA44
Wales, UK (England)
List is free — seed price in dollars

Nurseries in the USA that ship:
Russell Graham, Purveyor of Plants
4030 Eagle Crest Road, N.W.
Salem, Oregon 97304
Catalog: $2.00 ★
Monsoon Asia is a euphonious phrase encountered with increasing frequency, and its association with strange and unfamiliar scenes excites the imagination of many readers. But little is generally known about the monsoon other than it is a seasonal rain-bringing wind which drenches parts of Asia for half the year from April to October. In contrast to this summer monsoon which blows as a southwest wind from the Pacific and Indian Oceans toward the hot interior, the winter monsoon from the northeast, originating in the China Sea and blowing down from the cool Asiatic highlands toward the warmer oceans, is more often dry. These are Asia’s two seasons — the wet and the dry — and the winds that make them so are termed monsoon from the Malay word musim (through the French) meaning season.

Between 5,000 and 15,000 feet elevation there are, in the monsoon region of the Asiatic mainland, two main types of plants hardy in the temperate zone; the lush of growth and the slower growing, tougher types. (Below 5,000 feet, vegetation is tropical — the great flower belt lies between 20 and 30 degrees N. Latitude which corresponds to most of Mexico on this continent — above 15,000 feet coldness and growing conditions make acclimatization here almost impossible.) This difference in plant life ranging over the intervening 10,000 feet occurs in country mountainous beyond belief. The great portion of rain is deposited, though by no means exhausted, on the first high range the monsoon strikes and as the wind hits successive ranges on its northeasterly course, losing more of its cargo with each encounter, the vegetation of the windward slopes is affected accordingly. Naturally, the leeward side of the ranges takes the scanty remainder. The most abrupt and striking change in vegetation occurs when a chain is sufficiently elevated to intercept the bulk of the rain causing extremely lush growth on the south slope and practically barren conditions on the north.

Thus it is that Sikkim in northeastern India, northern Burma and southwestern China produce the majority of the fastest growing primulas — most of the Candelabras, Nivalids, Periolarids and Denticulatas. And that the northern slopes of the ranges produce many of the so-called woodlanders belonging to the Cortusoides group, and, along streams, some of the bell flowering types. The latter is also found in Sikkim and other wet areas but higher altitudes restrain their growth. With the usual few exceptions, all of the bell flowered Sikkimensis section in popular cultivation grow between 12,000 and 15,000 feet — sometimes higher — but seldom do they descend to a point where the highest climbing Candelabra, P. aurantiaca, is to be found at 11,000 feet.

Why the Asiatics from areas of heaviest rainfall give trouble under certain foreign weather conditions is readily apparent, for though we water religiously during the summer we cannot duplicate the coolness of the heights and air currents, the clouds and mists. Take the Candelabras for example. Practically everyone grows them successfully despite occasional losses which this account hopes to explain. With their swift cycle of growth, prodigious bloom and seed production, it is easily seen how this very rapidity and prodigality can shorten the life of the plant unless certain precautionary measures are taken. Rapid growth is always a soft growth and in areas of intense summer heat, more shade and more water should be given. In all climates, watering should be done in the cool of evening lest the sun cook the wet plants. When planted near deciduous trees additional water should be given to replace the amount transpired. Allow plenty of room for good air circulation. Use only leaf soil or compost for all Asiatics, but especially the lush growing ones; other fertilizer encourages even a faster growth than is natural. In their homeland the top soil is pure decayed vegetable matter to a depth of three to fourteen inches depending upon rainfall, but such an amount is not advisable in this country. Candelabras can take, and much prefer: a heavier-soil to better retain the moisture. In the western and mid-western areas of the States a heavier soil may be particularly desirable because of the hot summers and cold winters.

One of the main tricks in growing Candelabras successfully is division after flowering, or at the latest immediately after seed harvest. There is a period later when roots are short which makes moving inadvisable. To be safe, they should be divided at least every two years and where hot, humid weather prevails, every year would probably be better, but a little experimenting will decide the better course. Early and frequent dividing is one of the best checks on crown rot which is brought about chiefly through the natural decay of the central crown spreading around the surrounding new crowns when conditions are favorable. A mushy spot starts in the center and if unchecked the entire plant dissolves into an evil-smelling mess. During unnaturally humid weather the occasional use of dusting sulphur is an excellent preventative and if the rot has not spread too far, will be an effective check. In fact, a salt sack of sulphur kept handy can stave off many plant ills. Somehow it recalls the asafetida bag tied to so many childhood memories...

When Candelabra plants grow old the flowers sometimes lose their rounded fullness and open into skinny distortions with narrowed, widely separated petals. Should this happen there is one thing to do — uproot and burn the plant. If it is caused by a virus known as cucumber mosaic, as it is now claimed, burning is the only safe course to take. In any case, it is always advisable to keep growing on a new stock of plants either by lifting and...
The Common Primrose

by Penelope Harrison, Yorkshire, England

Many erudite articles have been written about rare and difficult primulas; here are some thoughts concerning the common primrose, *Primula vulgaris* (Hudson, Fl. Anglica: 1762); *Primula = “early blooming”, vulgaris = “common”.

*P. vulgaris* is one of the best known and most loved of the wild flowers found in the British Isles. The first blooms in early spring (February and March) herald the arrival of warmer days to come, and few would argue with the poet John Clare when he asserts:

I love the rath primroses, pale brimstone primroses
That bloom in the thick wood and in the green closes,
I love the primroses whenever they come.
(Rath = early blooming - O.E.)

The common primrose is usually found in open woodland, occasionally on grassy banks, mostly in heavy soils. The plants love dappled shade provided by deciduous trees and shrubs. They do not appear to appreciate pine/coniferous composts, even when used as mulches, possibly because coniferous composts and leaf molds are too sterile due to the naturally occurring insecticides found in the resinous barks and needles. Such sterile conditions prevent infestations of the flora and fauna usually abundant in deciduous leaf molds. The primroses appear to have a symbiotic relationship with this flora and fauna and do not thrive if it is not present. Plenty of farmyard manure and well-rotted garden compost will usually encourage these soil dwelling life-forms, though, and if the soil is right for the primroses, shade or lack of it is less critical. [Ed.’s note: Primroses thrive on the breakdown products of decomposition. They may prefer deciduous leaf mold because it breaks down faster than pine/coniferous leaf mold that may lack sufficient nitrogen when not fully decomposed.]

The common primrose is locally abundant, but is becoming rare in some areas due to over-picking and also destruction of its natural habitat. It has been picked for culinary and medicinal use since very early times, with accounts from various herbalists concerning its uses. The leaves were once boiled as “greens” — Leonardo da Vinci is quoted as stating they “are very appetizing but not very digestible”. He suggested their use for bladder stones; Culpepper recommended the boiled leaves be made into a “wound salve” (ointment), while Gerard suggested they could cure a “phrenzie”. Modern uses are as an expectorant for bronchitis, using the dried root stock, and as a mild sedative using a tisane made from fresh flowering plants. The flowers can be candied and used as cake and sweet decorations. A word of caution: some people are allergic to all Primulaceae. The most noticeable reaction is a form of dermatitis from the primula parts by sensitized individuals.

The wild primrose has a delicate pale yellow single flower that has occasionally resetting self-sown seedlings or sowing some of the millions of seeds one plant produces. Notice the leaves of such deformed plants. They are usually lumpy looking and the edges are deeply cut into sawteeth. This is the typical virus look and all plants bearing such evidence should be destroyed quickly to check its spread by the aphid carrier. *P. japonica*, the Bartley strain of *P. pulverulenta* and some of the Candelabra hybrids seem most susceptible. In *P. japonica* the color of the flower often breaks and streaks as with tulips infected with virus. However, it has been noticed that new leaves often seem infected but later develop normally. Stepping outside of the Asiatic group for a moment, one of the Juliana hybrids always appears to have virus during long stretches of wet weather but returns to normal with a little sunshine. So before burning your plants be sure they are really infected. There is much yet to be learned about this disease in connection with primulas.

The majority of Asiatics are herbaceous, *P. smithiana* [Ed.: *P. prolifera*], *P. poissonii*, and *P. helodoxa* being the Candelabra exceptions which come readily to mind. And unless there is a large planting, the herbaceous ones should be staked to prevent injury or destruction during early spring work. *P. bulleyana* is one of the latest Candelabras to show up but not as late as the bell flowered primulas. On the Pacific coast *P. florindae* doesn’t put in an appearance until the latter part of April, and even veteran growers give *P. microdonta* [Ed.:...
The Common Primrose continued

spontaneously mutated to give several distinct forms and flower colors. Some of these forms make good garden-worthy plants and most are reasonably easy to acquire.

‘Garryard’ forms, strictly speaking, are a polyanthus type but some have single stems. The most frequently seen form is ‘Guinevere’, deep apple blossom pink single flowers with bronzed reddish stems and leaves. These first occurred in Garryard, County Kildare, and are propagated by division. The plant itself needs to be split every two or three years, ideally after flowering.

A great curiosity, known since the 16th century, is ‘Viridis’ — the Green Primrose. The petals are a delicate lime green, either leaf-like in texture or a typical flower petal. They may also be either single or double. This plant is incredibly rare and presumably expensive if you can find anyone willing to sell you a piece.

Other double forms have appeared in the wild from time to time and have made good garden plants. Easily acquired ones are ‘Sue Jervis’, a delicate salmon pink; ‘Elizabeth Dickey’, a clear yellow double in the stem, polyanthus style. This name, also related to pagan symbols, commemorates the Green Man of the Forest, Herne the Hunter. “Jacks” make very good garden-worthy plants, being sturdy and frost-hardy; some are easily acquired, others are not. The other, most often seen form is the Hose-in-Hose, where one flower emerges from the center of another, a sort of semi-detached double. Its common name came from the fashion for (men) wearing two pairs of stockings (hose), one full length to the groin, the other ending at the knee. These were often kept up (at the knee) by a rosette of lacy leaves. These first occurred in Garryard, County Kildare, and are propagated by division. The plant itself needs to be split every two or three years, ideally after flowering.

A very sturdy and highly recommended plant is the double “Jack” called ‘Dawn Ansell’, that can flower on and off all year and is a delight at snow, hail, gales and heavy rain. “Jacks” are part of a group of plants with mutated parts that were first noted in the Middle Ages and whose common names reflect fashions and beliefs of that time. Jack-in-the-Green commemorates a pagan fertility symbol that was Christianized about then, a face in a circle of leaves, variously known as Jack-in-the-Green or The Green Man. The symbol was frequently used as a “boss” on the vaulted roof of a church and has persisted to the present day as a Public House name. Early gardeners of whatever religious persuasion thought the flower in a circle of leaves — the mutated calyx — looked similar to this symbol, and gave the plant the same name. Jack-on-Horseback or Jackanapes-on-Horseback has a tuft of leaves halfway down the stem, polyanthus style. This name, also related to pagan symbols, commemorates the Green Man of the Forest, Herne the Hunter. “Jacks” make very good garden-worthy plants, being sturdy and frost-hardy; some are easily acquired, others are not. The other, most often seen form is the Hose-in-Hose, where one flower emerges from the center of another, a sort of semi-detached double. Its common name came from the fashion for (men) wearing two pairs of stockings (hose), one full length to the groin, the other ending at the knee. These were often kept up (at the knee) by a rosette

Soldanella
by Karen Schellinger, Avon, Minnesota

Soldanellas are among the most loved of alpine plants, according to Duncan Lowe in a 1988 AGS article. These delightful natives of the European Alps bear flower stems of fringed lilac or white pendant flowers that float above a base of short-stalked, rounded, leathery leaves. They are scarce however, according to that article, because they are difficult. That’s a red flag in my face!

So three years ago while visiting and plant shopping in Portland, Oregon, I saw and bought quite a few different forms of Soldanella at one of my favorite nurseries. I am a CHAMPION suitcase plant packer when traveling by air! I had seen them in a park growing under a blaze of azaleas that were in full bloom. What a breath-taking sight — all those gorgeous colors. I was in Portland about the middle of April, a perfect time for driving around and admiring the masses of azaleas that are planted everywhere.

Back home in my garden in Avon, Minnesota, I dug a hole about 20 inches deep by four feet wide. I lined this hole with two layers of weed cloth to keep the tree roots and worms out of my pine duff mixture that I got from a friend’s pine woods. I wended the plants over in my greenhouse that winter so I could divide them and not risk losing the plants by putting the only ones I had into the garden for the winter.

So that spring, after dividing the plants, I placed them in the special bed I had made for them. They took off like crazy! Most of them have more than doubled in size. The following spring all flowered well, for probably two weeks longer than expected because some were later flowering than others.

I have seen soldanellas in fellow members’ gardens without the special pine duff soil mix and I think mine look happier. In one garden the plants were grown in rock garden soil with limestone rocks around them, while in another garden an acid bog was home for the plants. I know from growing them in pots that they must have good drainage yet be kept moist or the roots will rot and die.

Soldanellas are not showy plants, so if you’re not careful while strolling through your gardens, you might miss them. Their dainty lilac or lavender fringed bells delight me when I work near them in the garden. I expect to see little fairies dancing around under them! The leaves are right on the ground, but the flower stems are usually about three inches in height.

My soldanella bed is under a large maple tree and enjoys high, open shade. The sun never hits the plants, although I think morning sun would not harm them. Heavy shade would not allow the plants to multiply well, and I think flowering would also be hampered.

The success of flowering soldanellas, according to some growers, is good winter cover. The flower buds should not be subjected to severe cold temperatures that would destroy the buds of next year’s flowers. I’m always sure to have enough cover on the bed in the form of pine

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needles and duff or leaves. I prefer the pine needles. Then the composition of the soil remains a sandy, acid one that drains well, yet stays moist, just as the plants need for healthy growth.

I am sorry to report that the cursed slugs find soldanellas a favorite food. They always seem to pick the most beautiful plants to destroy. [Ed. note: Slugs and snails particularly like to eat the flower buds during winter when they are held close to ground level.] I throw slug bait around quite generously; I don’t like the looks of bait all over, but hate the sight of destroyed plant foliage worse. My slugs are so vicious that they totally eat some plants, leaving no sign of them.

The Soldanella species I am growing include the following: S. alpina, S. carpatica, S. hungarica, S. hungarica ssp. major, S. pusilla, and S. villosa. Check your seed lists and plant catalogs for these gems and try your hand at making them to home, too.

Two of my favorite mail order nurseries are Bovees Nursery and Collector’s Nursery. (I am able to grow many things that are listed as zone 5 in these catalogs, and I am zone 4 or sometimes zone 3.)

The Bovees Nursery
1737 S. W. Coronado
Portland, OR 97219
Catalog — $2.00

Collector’s Nursery
16804 NE 102nd Ave.
Battleground, WA 98604
Catalog — $2.00

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The Common Primrose
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decorated garter, perhaps the original “Gallygaskin”, but no one is sure.

Growing the common primrose can lead onto other paths — many growers collect old or modern prints and paintings of their favorite flowers. Others paint their own or do their own photography. Some growers research the background of the plant with all the forms documented, and as can be seen, sometimes this background is quite unusual. I hope that some of you reading this may be tempted to try the common primrose - the “prime flower” of the Middle Ages which was praised as “the fairest and the best”. ✪

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Plant Portrait
by Ann Lunn, Hillsboro, Oregon

Cortusa -
CLOSE COUSINS OF PRIMULA

A plant sends up its first bud and we anxiously await its opening. This is the time of year when gardeners reap the rewards for planting seeds and transplanting all those seedlings. I have been watching a batch of seedlings labeled Primula heucherifolia in hopes maybe John Richards is mistaken and some gardener out there indeed does have the true species.

One tray of seedlings labeled P. saxatilis (not from the APS Exchange) just did not look right. The leaves looked more like P. heucherifolia. Could it be? The flower buds were checked daily and finally, they opened up to.... Cortusa mathioli. They are not P. heucherifolia, but a nice surprise nonetheless.

Cortusa are members of the Primulaceae family and closely related to the genus Primula. In fact, Richards states that Cortusa only differs from the Primula section Cortusoides in that its anthers are fused into a ring. These fused anthers cluster around a long protruding pistil, giving the flower a dodecatheon-like appearance. The petals, however, remain in a forward-facing, bell-shaped ring around the anthers. Richards feels that Cortusa evolved from the forerunners of the Primula section Cortusoides fairly recently.

Cortusa is a widespread genus found in Europe and Asia. Various sources place the number of species at one, two and up to eight. The species everyone seems to agree upon is C. matthioli with its one-sided racemes of 3 to 15 pendant rose-purple flowers. The flower stem rises 4 to 8 inches above a basal rosette of attractive dark green reniform or cordate leaves that look remarkably like P. geraniifolia. The leaf blades are palmately lobed, each lobe having irregular dentate margins. The petioles and the undersides of the leaves are covered with hairs. There are several forms or variations of this species.

Other reported species are C. altaica, similar to C. matthioli; C. semenovii which has smooth leaves and yellow flowers; and C. turkestanica (sometimes erroneously listed as P. turkestanica), which grows 1 to 2 feet tall with magenta flowers. Josef Halda’s seed catalog also lists C. sibirica and describes it as being 4 to 6 inches tall with pale purple flowers.

While botanists sort out the number of species in the genus, gardeners can be assured that the best Cortusa habitat is in cool woodland soil with light shade. Since Cortusa have a preference for limestone, some lime might be incorporated into the soil. The plants are deciduous and will form an underground resting bud in late summer. One source reports they are hardy to -4 degrees F.

Cortusa are easily grown from seed, which ideally should be sown as soon as it is ripe. Propagation methods include dividing plants in early spring or taking cuttings of the thick, mature roots in late summer.

C. matthioli and sometimes other species can often be found in seed
Under The Overhang
by Rick Lupp

SOME EASY ANDROSACES
Androsaces are lovely little plants that are close kin to the primroses and range from very challenging plants for the alpine house to very easy going plants that will self-sow about when happy. Here we will discuss some that are not only very lovely but also easy to please with a minimum amount of attention.

Androsace carnea and its various subspecies make very good garden plants for us when given a well drained soil or scree and protection from the hottest sun. These plants form slow spreading mats of needle-like rosettes with clusters of small blooms that range from shades of pink to white, held on three to five inch stems. Some forms have foliage that colors in winter to shades of bronze and red. Seed is almost always available through various plant society seed lists and is well worth growing for the variations that you find in the seedlings. Seed sown in winter will produce seedlings the following spring as well as another flush of seedlings the second year in most cases.

When A. carnea is grown in close proximity to A. pyrenaica, spontaneous hybrids are almost sure to appear and a number of deliberate crosses between the two species have been made as well. One of the best known and most widely distributed of these hybrids is Line Foster’s plant A. ‘Millstream Hybrid’, a great favorite of ours that produces tight mounds of tiny rosettes of needle-like foliage covered in early spring with almost stemless blooms of soft pink fading to almost white with age. The stems tend to elongate with age as a means of assisting in seed distribution. We have grown many seedlings from A. ‘Millstream Hybrid’ in the past and selected a very tight mounded form with large, pure white blooms to distribute as the cultivar, A. ‘Venus’. Both of these hybrids can take full exposure in the rock garden or scree where they make attractive, long-lived plants and where they can form tight mounds of up to ten inches across and only a few inches in height.

A plant with a very different look that is equally easy to please is A. lactea. This plant makes small mounds of quite long dark-green needle-like foliage with elegant, airy sprays of white blooms with a small yellow eye. This plant blooms later than most other androsaces and is almost sure to self-sow a bit without becoming a pest. We like to use this plant in a trough, where it looks good growing for the variations that you find in the seedlings. Seed sown in winter will produce seedlings the following spring as well as another flush of seedlings the second year in most cases.

Another easy self-sower is A. hedraeantha, a native of Bulgaria. This plant forms tight little buns of shiny, dark-green, wedge-shaped foliage that is topped with sweet scented pink flowers held on four inch stems. Unlike A. lactea, this androsace is one of the first to bloom each year for us and blooms over a long period.

An excellent choice for full sun in the garden or scree is A. villosa in its various subspecies and forms. This plant makes small mounds of very hairy rosettes that in some forms such as A. villosa var. arachnoidea appear very silver and woolly. Most forms produce a very heavy bloom of sweet scented white flowers with a small green or yellow eye. An added charm of these plants is that after the blooms are pollinated they gradually change to rich rose pink from the eye outwards.

Last of all we would like to encourage you to try another little charmer for the more shaded areas of your rock garden or scree. A. mathildae makes very small mounds of shiny-green, acute foliage with many very small blooms held singly on 1/4” to 1/2” stems. This plant has a long bloom period and self-sows well in a cool, rich gritty soil mix. This is one of tiniest of the androsaces and makes a terrific addition to a miniature garden.

Let these easy androsaces add interest and charm to your garden. Give them a try!*

Plant Portrait
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catalogs or seed exchanges. For a nice surprise next spring, why not try them? You could have a nice patch of plants with, as Farrer describes, “taller stems carrying a loose shower, like falling stars of a rocket, of pendent rosy-magenta bells.”

SOURCES:

This Plant Portrait is submitted by the Oregon Primrose Society in lieu of a chapter activity report. Contact Ann Lunn, chapter president, for meeting information. *
45th Tacoma Primrose Show
April 1-2, 1995, Tacoma, Washington

The Tacoma Chapter (APS) had a disappointingly small show this year from the standpoint of entries. There were only 171 benched plants, with several divisions missing. Rarities and Oddities are always low, but some of the more popular divisions had only low, single digit entries. The number and quality of sales plants were high, as usual, but sales lagged both days.

Both members and interested mall visitors seemed pleased with our display of plants on the show and trophy tables, even though these were located out of main-stream traffic. Our competition was the Easter Bunny in the Rotunda and Gottschalk's sidewalk sale — plus a beautiful warm and sunny day that kept the usual number of visitors away!

We continued our use of the Round/Oblong table combination in various configurations that effectively showcase our plants. Rhodies and primroses were featured in a garden-like floor display by The Pacific Northwest Rhododendron Society. Master Gardeners manned a nearby table.

The primrose motif for special awards to the winning plants has proved so popular that it was repeated again this year—Royal porcelain cups and saucers, mugs, plates, framed prints, notecards—even towels and candy! In addition, winners received either 10 oz. Schultz Instant Bloom Plus or 8 oz. Green Light Super Bloom.

The Best Plant in Show award went to Dan Pederson’s well-grown and well-potted Primula saxatilis, Best Plant in Show.

by Dan Pederson,
Louise & Flip Fenili

British Columbia Primrose Group Show
April 22-23, 1995, Vancouver, B.C.

The 3rd Annual Show and Sale of the B.C. Primula Group was held at Southlands Nursery in Vancouver. Due to the congestion within the nursery, we were located this year on the grass verge just outside the nursery gates, with the show benches housed in an A-frame structure covered with fine meshed netting to provide shade. In case the weather turned against us, a large plastic sheeting was stored at hand, but this wasn’t required.

UBC Botanical Gardens provided a fine display of species, including some large pots of Primula sieboldii that many of the public wanted to purchase and were disappointed that no such large pots were available on the sales tables. Other species included P. cortusoides, P. reidii, P. modesta, P. chionanthe, P. rosea, and some huge P. helodoxa brought up by April Boettger. There were some fine P. auricula displayed by Thea Foster, who also provided the signage, and many members brought various named show auriculas — ‘Serenity’, ‘Argus’, ‘Paradise Yellow’, plus a nice, red selfed. Thea Oakley showed her green P. vulgaris, a rare treat for us.

A big thank you is due to Thea and Harold Oakley, who provided overnight security when all the plants were moved into the A-frame, by parking their recreational vehicle across the entrance. The many fine plants brought up by April greatly contributed to the success of the sale, and a fitting end to the first day took place when many of us trooped off to a Richmond restaurant for dinner and a social time together!

by Dennis Oakley

A full show bench at the BC Primrose Group Show.
American Primrose Society
1995 National Show
April 8-9, 1995, Tukwila, Washington

The National Show featured a prime example of North America's newest auricula — the Picotee by Herb Dickson. Appropriately enough, this prize-winning plant was grown by the hybridizer himself. The sunny yellow trumpets of its ruffled garden auricula flowers were outlined by a lavender margin; its leaves had a toothed outline and the plant was a good grower with strong, sturdy flower stems. And Herb was not the only exhibitor of Picotee plants at the show. Four other exhibitors showed Picotee plants that they’d raised.

The Primula subsection was well represented by a prize-winning group of three cheerful yellow plants: *Primula acaulis*, a Hose-in-Hose and a *polyanthus/acaulis*. Their exhibitor, Dorothy Springer, returning to the show bench after an absence of some years, also staged the best plant in show — a deep garnet Jack-in-the-Green *polyanthus* that had the same dark red color spilling over to tinge the ruff and the leaves for a rich effect. Another deep-toned Jack-in-the-Green displayed an eyeless flower like the 'Cowichans' with the dark amethyst color typical of the deep-toned 'Cowichans'.

Rosetta Jones continues with her double auricula hybridizing program and the newest plant was a very double Victorian golden brown with a hint of green, a son of ‘Brownie’ which has won many prizes in previous years. The scent of all the auriculas haunted the show bench.

A fine plant of *Primula rusbyi* representing the North American primula species was staged by Herb Dickson. These plants are difficult to raise in cultivation, and this plant was in good form. *Primula bellidifolia* was shown by April Boettger, who had raised this handsome Asiatic from seed. The silver meal covering the stem and flower buds complements the exotic purple flowers.

A new variety of *Primula sieboldii* with a large, showy flower was exhibited for the first time on Northwest show benches by Al Rapp. Thelma Genheimer of the Oregon Chapter discovered it growing in local gardens and has distributed it. The round-petalled flower is pale lavender-pink with a darker shading to the edge of the flower, giving it a hand-painted look.

Companion plants filled a show table with a colorful rainbow of *Lewisia* blooms. A handsome, crisp *Dodecatheon meadia* sported seven or more stems of blossoms on an obviously healthy plant. The large pot of double acaulis ‘Sunshine Susie’ brought by Thea Oakley rounded out a fine spring display for the National Show.

by Maedythe Martin

1995 National Primrose Show Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best in Division</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Exhibitor</th>
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<td>D. Springer</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Etha Tate Award</em></td>
<td>Orange red</td>
<td>D. Springer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyanthus</td>
<td>Orange red</td>
<td>D. Springer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hose in Hose</td>
<td>Butter yellow</td>
<td>D. Springer</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Light yellow, dark center</td>
<td>D. Springer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyanthus/acaulis</td>
<td>Red julie x Jay Jay, no eye</td>
<td>D. Springer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Julie</td>
<td>Red julie x Jay Jay, no eye</td>
<td>D. Springer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack in the Green</td>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Ivanel Agee Trophy</em></td>
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<td>Cy Happy</td>
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<td>'Ralph Balcomi'</td>
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<td><em>Ellen Page Hoydon Trophy</em></td>
<td>Dusty (gold) brown</td>
<td>R. Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Double Auricula Seedling</td>
<td>Yellow, gold</td>
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<td><em>Mrs. C.C. Chambers Award</em></td>
<td>Yellow green, purple edging</td>
<td>H. Dickson</td>
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<td><em>Primula rusbyi</em></td>
<td>H. Dickson</td>
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<td>Auricula</td>
<td>Yellow, purple edging</td>
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<td>Yellow gold</td>
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<td>Red background</td>
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<td>Gold Laced</td>
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<td>P. modesta</td>
<td>T. Oakley</td>
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<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>White P. sieboldii</td>
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<td>Pink <em>Dodecatheon</em></td>
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<td>Decorative planting</td>
<td>Salix, P. juliae, P. kleinii</td>
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<td>Sweepstakes</td>
<td>P. juneata</td>
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SEED EXCHANGE – GATHER & SAVE SEED!
SEND TO: MARIE SKONBERG
APS SEED EXCHANGE COORDINATOR
P.O. BOX 70
OUZINKIE, ALASKA 99644
Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society Show

April 21, 1995, Victoria, B.C.

It's a fifteen minute walk from the Oak Bay Guest House to the VIRAGS annual show at St. Mary's Church hall. Judging starts at 9:30 a.m. — the primula section is towards the back of the hall and covers two tables.

Primula judging starts by checking that all the plants are in their proper section. Only two primulas go to the trophy table — the best primula and the best polyanthus.

In the show auriculas section, Maedythe Martin's entry of two green-edged auriculas, both 'Mary of Doonhill', were of fair quality, as was her white-edged 'Snow Lady'. But, her prize plant, a purple self named 'Mrs. Hecker', won best in class and the Watson trophy for best primula. Maedythe also showed striped auriculas that she hybridized. The striped genes for these beauties came from plants that Cy Happy received in the 1950s from Winnifred Wynne in Ireland — 'Mrs. Dargan' and 'Old Irish Green' via Cy's 'Dusty Double'.

Tony James took the prize in Section 45, a group of three alpine auriculas, with 'Argus', 'Dorothy Campbell', and 'Forrester'. In Section 46, two of Victoria's great show competitors faced off with splendid entries. Reba Wingert showed lilac garden auriculas; Claire Hughes showed double cream ones. Both received a blue ribbon.

Species primulas were well-represented. Two lovely Primula sieboldii won for Ken and Suzanne Muir of Duncan, BC. A nice, red P. denticulata from Darcy Gunnlaugsson won its section. And the Muir's took the prize with three P. farinosa.

Tony James won in the vernales section with a very large, red jack-in-the-green, as well as in the gold & silver laced polyanthus section with a nice plant having four stems. Ian Metaggart-Cowan won with a soft yellow double auricula in Section 52, double primula including both auricula and vernales.

Tony James won again in the polyanthus section with a purple 'Cowichan' sporting a red eye, going to the trophy table as best polyanthus. Tony's 'Garroward Guinevere', having quite richly colored leaves and flowers — so much so that it might really be 'Enchantress' — was a close second, but was nosed out by its dirty pot.

The judges' lunch at the end of judging was a delightful part of the day, with lots of good company, good conversation, and good food.

The show had some wonderful displays. Al and Shirley Smith filled two full-length tables with perhaps two hundred plants, not for competition, just for display. Bill Barker's miniature garden, a landscape on a table top, was meticulously crafted. Jack Todd's Bonsai collection is always a treat.

Of course, attending a show is more fun when you can take something home with you. The Muir's had their own sales table, with very, very choice but inexpensive plants. There was also a silent auction and the Society's own sales table, where you must draw a number to take your turn.

Photo by Maedythe Martin

Best Polyanthus, purple with a red eye, Cowichan' strain, by Tony James.

Photo by Maedythe Martin

Best in class and trophy-winning Best Primula, Maedythe Martin's purple self Show auricula.
Pesky Critters

Regional reporters were asked what sort of pests were encountered in their regions on primroses, and how these pests were handled. Read on and you'll discover an effective recipe for sowbug repellent, directions on how to catch that elusive, but oh, so destructive mole that's been rototilling your yard, information on coping with all sorts of four-footed pests, and some suggestions about slugs.

SOWBUGS
by Renee Oakley, Vancouver, B.C.
Reprinted from the Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Club of B.C.

Our outdoor seed bench is just cedar planks on saw horses, but it serves its purpose very well. I noticed that every time I moved a flat, umpteen sowbugs frantically dashed to get out of the light, but as we called them “woodbugs” where I grew up in England, I just thought that they were attracted to the damp wood.

Several seedlings had disappeared, but since we caught slugs up there, we blamed them, of course. Then I spotted an item in a gardening magazine warning that while sowbugs were attracted to wood, leaves, and compost, they also loved to eat young seedlings. Well, that really rang a bell, so we picked up a box of Sowbug and Cutworm Bait at a local nursery and I scattered the pellets underneath the flat where there was no danger of the birds eating them. The next day there were no more sowbugs scurrying around because they were all lying upside down, dead; and oh joy, no more seedlings disappeared. The sow bugs really had been the culprits.

Once the seedlings are big enough to prick out Dennis takes over, but one day he was disappointed to find that several that should have been ready for potting on, had completely disappeared. However, when he tipped out the pots to reuse them, he found in the bottom of every pot small families of — what else? — SOWBUGS!

We were both furious, because for the second time they had eaten some of our best varieties of primula. Among the hints in another magazine, I read that sowbugs are attracted to cornmeal, which unfortunately for them is definitely not good for their innards and eventually kills them. Great! Cornmeal is available at low cost in Bulk Food departments, organic, and much better than the poisonous bait. It did work underneath the flats but took much longer than the pellets.

My first reaction was to mix a generous amount into the growing medium, but a friend warned me that it was also attractive to rats. Well, we had fun and games with rats last year when they kept visiting our greenhouse to help themselves to a box of slug bait. Incidentally, if the latter is harmful to cats and dogs, why didn’t it seem to hurt the rats?

Our next idea was to add cornmeal to the bottom third of the mix in each pot, assuming that was where the little pests entered, so that was what Dennis did next time he did some prickling out. Next morning he found a disaster! The flats had been placed on the extra bench under the apple tree, and almost every pot was nearly empty, with the plants flung all over the place — good ones from Barnhaven seed again! We suspect that the culprits were the squirrels living in the neighbor’s trees, digging down to the cornmeal, so it was back to the drawing board again. It was also back to the poison, as we intended to put a pellet in the bottom of each pot and hoped to Save Our Seedlings.

Well, I went back not to the drawing board but to some old issues of gardening magazines — special ones saved for reference. In the May/June 1993 copy of Organic Gardening I found exactly what I needed — an article written by my kind of gardener, one who liked to experiment with the use of stuff grown in the garden.

The one that really appealed to me was a Salsa-Type recipe with various hot and peppery ingredients. We grow very few vegetables, so I bought hot chili peppers, some garlic, onions, and fresh ginger. Our tomatoes were not yet ripe, and in any case I would hate to use them for an insecticide as they are much too tasty. But I remembered seeing some in the freezer that were slightly freezer-burned so I was glad that I had not yet got around to dumping them in the compost.

Into the VitaMix went a handful of hot peppers, two cloves of garlic, a chopped-up onion, a small amount of fresh ginger, a cup of vinegar, and half a teaspoon of ground pepper. I added the bag of tomatoes and turned the machine on, whirring until it liquefied. In an ordinary blender, the ingredients would probably have to be added gradually, but it should work just as well. Next I put it through a very fine sieve before trying it in my sprayer.

The article contains a warning:

▼ Don't use strong concentrations
▼ Don't get discouraged, try, try again

However, when a blob was running over the sieve I caught it on my finger and put it where any cook would put it — in my mouth! Wow!! Was it ever hot! I can assure you that I will never do that again.

Dennis had complained that there were ants on some young primulas he was planting in rows in a new nursery bed, so remembering the warning regarding seedlings I sprayed the soil between the rows, with great success, as the ants disappeared and did not return.

Now for the sowbugs. Once again I didn't want to spray the actual plants but decided to experiment with a mob I had seen when I moved an empty flat from a piece of old wet wood at the edge of the bed. I don't know whether I actually hit any of them as they sure move once the daylight gets to them. But I soaked the wood, returned the flat, and waited. Next day I moved the empty flat and oh joy — no bugs. This went on for several days, but I did all this during our hot sunny spell, and as the wood dried the blighters came back.

Dennis suggested adding some oil to the mix, which solved the problem of how to dispose of some slightly rancid oil, putting it to good use instead of sending it down to the dump. It worked! Day after day through all the heat wave, no bugs. Now to tackle the others, on the seed benches.

I discovered that it was easier to spread it as goo on the planks with a brush, so in the future I may just liquefy it as much as possible and apply it with a brush. Then I wouldn’t need to bother...
with a sieve or cheesecloth. Also, instead of buying everything and doing it from scratch, I will pick up some ready-made hot salsa when it is on special and add some vinegar, garlic, onion, ginger, and maybe a bit of chili pepper.

Oh, yes, the seed benches? They stay free of bugs even after heavy rain showers. I am hoping that I have cracked it.

**WAR ON MOLES**

_by Ann Lunn, Hillsboro, Oregon_

Our property is surrounded by fields and pastures. Particularly during the summer, moles move in to find worms and grubs in the moister soil of the garden. We have two weapons in this war on these earth-moving pests.

The trap used is the smallest size of cinch trap, a style normally used for gophers. The most effective style is the one with the trigger ring close to the cinch. A recent mound is located and the soft dirt is removed to the level of the bottom of the run. The run itself is dug out until there is a straight section of tunnel at least 6 or 8 inches long.

The trap is set and inserted in the run until the wide end will go no further. A tunnel at least 6 or 8 inches long is dug out until there is a straight section of the run. Another method is to use a piece of plate helps stabilize and anchor the trap. Soft dirt is then piled around the trap and the fingers are crossed.

The second weapon? Oh, yes, that is our 7-year-old chocolate Labrador retriever. She goes along on the trapping expeditions to determine which runs are active and therefore, in which tunnels the traps should be set. She can tell you whether a trap has been successful without the need for you to bend over and remove the plywood. She has also caught several moles by herself (without digging) and proudly brought them for our inspection. No, she is not available for rent!

**DEER, BEAR, MOOSE, ETC.**

_by Misty Haffner, Juneau, Alaska_

We surveyed gardeners from different parts of Alasks to see if they had any problems with deer and other large critters. I'm glad to report that primroses aren't on most deer menus.

Folks who live on the Alaskan coastal islands report the most troubles. One member found that solar powered electrical fencing is effective on both deer and bear in his vegetable garden. Another uses wire fencing to keep deer out of the flowers. In a remote region on Kodiak Island, one member had a problem with bear in the compost pile and in the greenhouses, but a large dog took care of that.

Instead of deer, Kenai, Anchorage, and interior Alaska members have caribou and moose. Moose are a problem in the winter time. They come down to the lower areas where the snow is not so deep and it is warmer. In winters when there is no snow cover, they will eat any and everything they can find.

Thankfully, primulas are not high on the moose menu, either. Instead, Anchorage moose love lilac branches and tulips. Recently, a yearling moose stepped over a friend's primula bed to eat tulips.

Another friend had a moose that loved raspberry bushes. So she had to cover the bushes with chicken wire. Electrical fencing is not recommended, because it just makes a moose mad, and a mad moose will charge all over and rip up your garden!

**SLUGGING IT OUT**

_by Claire Cockcroft, Redmond, WA_

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we joke that the slug should be the official Washington state animal. After all, it outnumbers every other creature!

Washington has more than 20 different kinds of slugs, those land molluscs akin to clams and oysters. Our native banana slug, _Ariolimax columbianus_, can grow to six inches or more. Fortunately, its appetite is mostly for decaying matter rather than for growing plants. The same cannot be said for two nasty imports: the milky slug, _Ariolimax reticulatus_, and the European black slug, _Arion ater_. The pale gray colored milky slug, which exudes a milky slime when irritated, is only about two inches long when fully grown, but makes up for its diminutive size with a voracious appetite. Baby milky slugs seem to feed in herds, and can easily defoliate a small plant overnight. The black slug, which can be reddish brown with an orange-red margin, grows up to six inches and has an appetite for just about everything. We call them "land cruisers" because their tough hides allow them to cruise the garden under drier conditions than most slugs can.

Slugs here lead a good life. Most live from one to three years, during which time they lay around 1,000 eggs. Since they are hermaphrodite, both partners in a mating can lay eggs. Maybe that's why for every slug you see, another ten are lurking in the bush. They do a lot of lurking during the day, hiding in cool, dark, damp places, coming out to feed at night. My garden is damp woodland, so more often than not they are busy feeding during the day, too. Double duty, double damage!

Slugs lay their eggs in batches under dead leaves, in compost piles, in between the side of a pot and its soil, or in the soil at the base of a particularly tasty plant, like a primula. The white or cream colored eggs, one-eighth inch in diameter, are easily recognized (they look like tiny pearls) and should be destroyed whenever detected. Baby slugs hatch immediately if conditions are right, but they can also overwinter in protected spots and hatch later. During our rainy summers, slugs are hatching almost continuously!

The sheer quantity of slugs in a garden can be discouraging, but there are ways to combat them. The first method is hand picking, but not for the faint of heart. I like to go out in the early morning when the dew is heavy.

Evening searches work well, too. The key to success here is to hand pick on a regular basis. I drop the slugs into a plastic bag that goes in the freezer until then.
trash day. (To me, freezing seems the most humane disposal.) Dropping the slugs into a bucket that has about a half inch of salt on the bottom of it or sprinkling a few grains of salt on an individual slug is also effective. Everyone has their own method — my husband is known as “Tom the Impaler”.

You can make finding the slugs easier by first eliminating their usual daytime hideaways, by placing damp garden debris and weeds from around your plants. Then create artificial daytime hideaways, by placing damp boards over and disposing of any slugs you may find.

I have had good luck in my seed beds with slug fencing, now more readily available in garden centers. A one inch wide band of copper flashing stretched completely around raised beds seems to keep slugs out by giving them an electrical shock when they try to crawl across it. Be careful that leaves and sticks don’t provide a “stairway to heaven” over the flashing. Wipe the flashing down periodically to keep the surface reactive.

Baiting is another choice for slug control, although in my moist garden the plant menu seems to be so good that slugs pass most baits by. With poison baits, I’ve also found that the bait’s ability to attract slugs far outlives its ability to kill them, drawing them to choice plants that I’d rather they didn’t notice were there. Empty citrus halves will attract slugs, but may attract other varmints as well. Check them frequently and dispose of any slugs as previously described. Beer or brewer’s yeast in water will attract slugs, which

drown in the mix. Place a shallow container (an empty tuna can, for instance) in the soil next to vulnerable plants. Make sure the rim is an inch above the soil level; otherwise, you run the risk of drowning beneficial ground beetles that eat slugs. Commercial containers specifically made for this, some with lids to keep the rain out, are also available in garden centers. The beer or yeast mixture breaks down quickly, so dump and renew every three or four days, more often in rainy weather.

Slug baits containing a molluscicide are hazardous to children, pets, birds, and carnivorous ground beetles; as with all poisons, follow label directions carefully. The King County (WA) Cooperative Extension recommends using an empty coffee can with its plastic lid intact. To use, punch holes in the side of the can near its bottom, place the bait on the underside of the lid, then turn the empty can over and force it down over the lid. Put a rock on the top to keep the can from tipping over. This upside down trap keeps the bait dry, so it won’t mold — slugs won’t eat moldy bait — and also prevents access by pets, etc.

Finally, ducks, geese, and chickens find slugs a tasty treat. If you can control them from pinching your nice green plants, they’ll control the slugs. Garter snakes and toads, along with carnivorous ground beetles, munch on slugs, too. Methods that don’t seem to work around here are those that rely on an irritant laid down on the soil. Ground glass, dry lime, and dry ashes are all ineffective in my area.

Whatever method you choose to reduce slug populations, the most effective time to take action is before adult slugs start their serious reproduction efforts in late summer on into fall.
Notes from the Editor

THANK YOU, MAEDYTHE

In the spring of 1991, Maedythe Martin took up the editor's pen for Primroses. After four years and sixteen quarterly editions, she has earned her retirement and the gratitude of the APS for a job well done.

Many members have sent notes expressing their appreciation of the care and enthusiasm that Maedythe put into the job. The Alaska group in particular wished to thank Maedythe for her work as editor. Most of the Alaska membership joined the APS under her editorship, and Maedythe quickly made them feel part of the Society.

Maedythe can be rightly proud of the quality and growth seen in Primroses. Her dedication and hard work will be missed. All is not lost, however — Maedythe promises to continue her involvement in the APS, while now having more time for her own garden. We look forward to more articles by her in the quarterly, as well as more of her stunning striped auriculas in APS shows.

MORE ON DEER

John Kerridge reports that by mid-March, deer near his Saltspring nursery were nibbling off primrose buds and early flowers besides the foliage. Hopes for show material or seed production were rapidly dwindling. He forwarded a flyer for ANIPEL products, designed to repel white-tailed and mule deer, elk, moose, gophers, jack rabbits, prairie dogs, beavers, field mice, voles, and porcupines. These products, extremely bitter to the taste, work by being absorbed systemically into various coniferous seedlings and plants. The only drawback appears to be the skunk-like odor of the spray. John planned to try these products and will report on their efficacy in a later quarterly.

ROUND ROBIN NEWS

Don Keefe, the APS Round Robin Chairman, has resigned because of ill health. Don oversaw the resurrection of the Round Robin last year and has done a marvellous job of starting up and coordinating three Round Robin circles. The APS, and in particular the members of the Round Robins, appreciate Don's efforts and will miss him.

Don wants everyone to know that he regrets having to drop out of the Round Robin so soon. He enjoyed participating and had anticipated being involved for an interesting and prolonged period.

Edward Davis has kindly offered to take over the chairmanship. As each of the letter packets of the three Round Robins make their way back to Don, he will forward them on to Ed, who will take over from there.

Any questions about the Round Robin should now be addressed to:
Edward Davis
226 South High Street
Hillsboro, Ohio 45133
(513) 393-3200

TO COLOR OR NOT TO COLOR

You'll notice that this edition of Primroses has a color cover but no color photos inside. The additional cost of color printing, even just four times a year, can be prohibitive for a small society such as the APS. In the past, individuals or chapters have donated funds to cover color printing for specific editions. These contributions are greatly appreciated; without them, the quarterly's world would be only black and white.

Because so many of you have expressed your desire for us to continue using color, APS Board members have been searching for ways to fund it. One means is to raise dues by a small amount, although this is not a popular suggestion.

Your ideas for a solution to the problem are appreciated. If you, your group, or chapter would like to help, contributions can be earmarked to cover the costs of color printing. ✶

Journal Report
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the fine roots were lost in the washing operation, all crowns and even some of the smaller pieces survived the treatment and recovered.

The separation of a multi-crowned P. pinnatifida was also successful. The roots of this species came apart more easily.

Ian's single pot of P. uniflora had apparently rotted during the winter. There were, however, still some viable roots which were removed from the pot and repotted. The root cuttings took and all grew to produce plants.

WATER GARDENING

Many of our most well-loved primulas delight in growing near water. However, the thought of building a water garden can be a bit daunting to say the least.

The May/June 1995 issue of National Gardening features step-by-step illustrated instructions for constructing a small, very attractive water feature at a cost of less than $200 in 1987. The article contains several nice photographs of completed water gardens or ponds. One which provided an ideal habitat for candelabra hybrids and P. vialii was constructed by APS members, Ernie and Marietta O'Byrne, APS members from Eugene, Oregon. ✶

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Graham, Washington 98338
Pesky Critters
continued from page 30

Remember, every slug eliminated may mean 400 less slugs next year! Follow this by cultivating around plants in late fall to turn up slug eggs that can be destroyed. Or if your climate is cold enough, rototill the garden in the fall to expose the eggs to the elements. The key to success is to keep after the beasties consistently and frequently. Good hunting! ⭐

In Memorium - Ruth Bartlett Huston

Ruth Bartlett Huston, who died in December, 1994, played an important role in the history of the American Primrose Society. Her contributions were quiet ones, unknown to those near her, but recognized around the country and perhaps around the world.

Ruth was many things: teacher, hybridizer, propagator, farmer, nurseryman, rock hound, officer, judge, and friend to many. She served as president of the Tacoma Primrose Society, was an APS judge, and was the educational chairman for numerous Tacoma Society shows over the years. She probably recruited more members for the APS than any other person.

Ruth created several named juliana hybrids: 'So', 'Little Rosa', and the well known 'Bea'. She was an avid propagator; she could and did root the smallest of cuttings. Ruth was a most generous person, freely sharing her knowledge and her plants, and contributed many articles to the Quarterly on propagation, soils, and conservation.

Along with her first husband, Carl, she operated Spring Hill Farm in Gig Harbor, Washington, just across the Narrows Bridge from Tacoma. She is remembered fondly by her many Spring Hill customers, who still grow plants obtained through her catalogs years ago.

I first met Ruth when my children were very small. We would make the jaunt across the bridge to Spring Hill — the kids to see the farm animals — the mom to talk primulas. Unable to pronounce her name, the children called her “Root”. One of my fondest memories is of Ruth giving rides to the children on her little tractor.

After Carl’s death, Ruth married Mr. Huston and together they shared an interest in rock collecting and the making of jewelry. In her later years, she became almost a hermit, not wanting the world to see the ravages of time and illness.

Those of us who knew Ruth B. Huston well will not forget her. She was part and parcel of those of us who grow and love primulas.

by Dorothy Springer

APS Annual General Meeting
Held April 8, 1995, Tukwila, Washington

Rosetta Jones, President of the Washington State Chapter, welcomed members and guests and introduced APS President Dr. John Kerridge, who also welcomed those present.

Dr. Kerridge thanked Maedythe Martin, the outgoing Primroses Editor, for her service to the Society.

The Secretary received 147 ballots in the mail prior to the meeting. She announced the re-election of John Kerridge, President; Ann Lunn, Vice President; Dorothy Springer, Recording Secretary; Addaline Robinson, Treasurer; and Karen Schellinger and Fred Knapp, Board Members (terms expire 1998).

Herb Dickson presented the Dorothy Dickson Award to Anita Kistler, who was unable to attend. Dr. Kerridge read a letter from Anita thanking the Society for the award:

"Dear Dr. John Kerridge,
Thank you so much for the wonderful letter I received recently. I am very flattered but feel I really do not deserve it.

Over the years, I have read so many flattering words about Dorothy Dickson that I cannot help but feel very humble. Herb is such a wonderful gentleman, always so helpful with good advice to us Easterners...

My best to all the avid primrose growers.

Sorry I can’t be with you.

Gratefully,
Anita

P.S. The Doretta Klaber Chapter is thriving under the leadership of Dot Plyler. It is hard to realize that it is the sole surviving chapter in the east. Primroses are so beautiful, how can they lack growers here in the east? All the best, Anita.”

John also thanked Herb Dickson for his years of contribution to the Society and told him “Good-bye” again by presenting him with a handmade native Indian Cowichan knit hat.

Guests of Honor, Flip and Louise Fenili, were introduced.

John Kerridge showed slides taken during his 1994 trip to Alaska, following which the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Springer
Recording Secretary

News from the Chapters
A summary of chapter meetings

ALASKA
Juneau Area
A very successful plant sale was held May 13, with the first hour reserved for APS members only before the general public was admitted. Cheri Fluck and Roger Eichman demonstrated how to divide primulas.

Kodiak Area
Marie Skonberg hosted the Kodiak Garden Club on a tour of her garden. Her garden was also photographed for an article in Alaska Magazine.

PENNSYLVANIA
Doretta Klaber
Meets four times a year. Contact Dot Plyler, chapter chairman, for details.

Spring was certainly a busy time for this chapter. In May, two local gardens were open for tours. The chapter was also working to organize more distant tours to a commercial primrose nursery. June’s meeting was a picnic and plant sale.

The chapter staged their Primrose show and plant sale on May 11 at the Morris
News from the Chapters continued

Arboretum, a smaller but more compatible location than the mall used last year. Speaking of flower shows, several chapter members took home ribbons from the Philadelphia Spring Flower Show. Congratulations! And congratulations to Dot Plyler, chapter chairman, who was featured in Jane Pepper’s column in the March 24th Philadelphia Inquirer. The piece reflected Dot’s appreciation of growing primroses in her garden, and included a nice plug for the APS.

WASHINGTON

Washington State Chapter

Meets the second Friday of each month, except July and August, at the United Good Neighbor Center at 305 S 43rd Street, Renton, (across the street from Valley General Hospital) at 7:45 p.m. Guests are welcome.

April’s meeting was held at Tukwila’s Pavilion Mall during the set-up of the National Show, hosted by the Washington State Chapter. The cooperation and friendliness of all members old and new was fantastic and made the show a super success.

The theme of May’s meeting was “Flower Sex Education”; Rosetta Jones provided hands-on instruction on how to pollinate primroses.

Eastside Chapter

Meets the first Monday of every month at First Interstate Savings Bank, 6615 132nd Avenue NE, Kirkland, at the Bridal Trails Mall at 7:30 p.m.

April’s meeting included a discussion of the chapter joining the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. No action was taken as the chapter is already a member of the Bellevue Botanical Garden.

Thea Oakley presented a program on “Using Primulas in the Landscape” for May’s meeting, which also included a show and tell session and a plant exchange.

Seattle Chapter

Meets four times a year. Contact June Skidmore, chapter president, for details. Two field trips took the place of a spring meeting, the first to members’ gardens on Bainbridge Island and the second to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. The chapter recently voted to join the RSBG, and studied areas where primulas could best be used.

Tacoma Chapter

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

The chapter’s plant sale and show was held in the Lakewood Mall April 1-2 (see separate story). They also manned a booth at the Puyallup Spring Fair.

May’s meeting featured a program by Cy Happy about the Vernales section of Primula. Cy is known for his excellent programs on Primula and also on rock garden plants.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC Primrose Group

The March meeting was held at Southlands Nursery in Vancouver. Bodil Leamy showed a pan of P. marginata offsets and cuttings of the variety ‘Linda Pope’ in full flower. She explained how easy it was to pull off the offsets and also to take cuttings, which she dipped into some rooting hormone, then shook off the surplus. The result was a pan of all size/small plants that eliminated, at the same time, the long “carrots” to which P. marginata is prone.

John Kerridge followed with a talk and slide show on how to pollinate primula plants. The slides showed the difference between “pins” and “thrumns”. John explained that the greatest seed set would be obtained by crossing a thrum with a pin; a lesser seed set could be obtained using pin-to-pin or thrum-to-thrum. He demonstrated the simple method of pulling a flower gently apart and wiping the pollen bearing anthers across the head of the style (pin). If the pollination is successful, the pin will wither in a few days and the seed pod will begin to swell. The seed will be ripe when the seed pod turns brown and should be harvested before the pod bursts on its own. Seed sown fresh will germinate quite quickly.

John next demonstrated how to prepare a plant for the show bench. He used a pot of a ‘Wanda’ hybrid in full flower, showing that it had more than one crown by the leaves growing in between the flowers. By careful snipping with a small pair of scissors, he was able to remove these leaves along with any faded flowers and a few dead leaves. Since the plant was in a rather dirty black plastic pot, the final touch was to repot it into a nice, new clay pot. The transformation was complete!

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This is a summary of the board meeting minutes. Copies of the Treasurer’s report were distributed by Addaline Robinson and will be filed for audit. Addaline will now keep a separate ledger for the quarterly only.

John Kerridge regretfully announced the death of Margaret Mason in Portland, Oregon. John expressed his thanks to Maedythe Martin for her work as Primroses Editor. Claire Cockroft was introduced as the new editor.

A Membership chairperson has not yet been found. Board members will continue their search.

The American Sakurosoh Society has become a new APS member. The Society has about 50 members at this time.

The Tacoma, Seattle, and Washington State Chapters have joined the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, which will contain display gardens for the APS. A visit or two to the RSBG is needed to determine what will be required in Primula plants.

Since only two new members were recruited from this year’s Northwest Flower and Garden Show, the Board decided that the costs incurred outweigh the benefits derived and voted to discontinue participation. John thanked Thea Oakley for her years of work at the show.

Marie Skonberg sent word that the Seed Exchange filled over 250 orders that averaged 50 varieties each.

Thea Oakley reported that the Library has a new supply of books.

John O’Brien sent word that there are 60 members at the Tacoma and Garden Show, the Board decided that the costs incurred outweigh the benefits derived and voted to discontinue participation. John thanked Thea Oakley for her years of work at the show.

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Officers of the Chapters

Doretta Klaber Chapter
President, Dot Plyler
18 Bridal Path, Chadd's Ford, PA 19317

Eastside Chapter
President, Marilyn Dapses
12607 84th Ave. N.E., Kirkland, WA 98034

Oregon Chapter
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Tacoma Chapter
President, Candy Strickland
8518 28th Ave. E., Tacoma WA 98445

Valley-Hi Chapter
President, Orval Agee
11112 S.E. Wood Ave., Milwaukie, OR 97222

Washington State Chapter
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E. 170 Dunoon Pl., Shelton, WA 98584

Seattle Chapter
President, June Skidmore
6730 W Mercer Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040

Alaska Group
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British Columbia Primrose Group
Contact John Kerridge
4660 10th Ave. W. #1102,
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7K 1N7

EDITORIAL DEADLINE FOR FALL ISSUE OF PRIMROSES IS AUGUST 1

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PUBLICATIONS
Manuscripts for publication in the quarterly Primroses are invited from members and other gardening experts, although there is no payment. Please include black and white photographs if possible. Send manuscripts to the editor.

ADVERTISING RATES per issue:
Full page, $100; half page, $50; quarter page, $25; eighth page and minimum, $12.50. Artwork for ads is the responsibility of the advertiser, and camera ready copy is appreciated. Submit advertising to the editor.
Tips From Rosetta

An expert in raising primula from seed — mostly seed from her own hybridizing program — Rosetta Jones, as promised, is passing on tips for better growing and hybridizing.

SEEDLINGS

Sometimes you can't plant out all the seedlings you’ve got growing in pop bottles or small containers. An easy way to grow them on longer is to give them more room. Prepare a six inch pot with mix and make a depression the size of the smaller container. Carefully transfer the ball of roots into the larger pot and press down firmly. If the root ball is tight enough, you can ease it out a little without breaking it apart.