President's Report

As 1998 was coming to a close — it was a shock to learn of the sudden death of our Past President and Board Member — Dr. John Kerridge of Vancouver, Canada. He was a very successful grower and hybridizer of primroses and contributed enormously to the Society. John had many Primrose friends on both sides of the Atlantic and he will be greatly missed.

Two other members of long standing have also recently passed — Orval Agee of Oregon, whoever the years was known for his plant photography and Don Keefe, a keen grower and member of the Washington Chapters. On behalf of the APS I send my condolences to all the families.

On a brighter note I am pleased to say we now have an Editor. Jennifer Kurth who lives in Arlington, Washington, has come to our rescue and with the help of a newly formed Editorial Committee, a Quarterly has been produced. Articles are always needed and I would encourage, or should I say implore, members to send in articles, letters, etc. that would be of interest to readers.

President's Report Continued on page 4

Please Note:

THE EDITORIAL DEADLINE FOR THE SPRING 1999 ISSUE OF PRIMROSES IS FEBRUARY 15th
At the present time, membership is around 600 but only a handful of members are contributing articles and in order for the society to succeed, more participation is needed.

In the Spring issue of *Primroses* the membership list will be added and if members would like to have their e-mail address printed alongside their name and street address — please send me the information as soon as possible. I feel this would be an easy way for members at home and abroad to communicate and share ideas on growing primulas. For new members this would be particularly helpful.

The Seed Exchange, again in the capable hands of Pat Wilson, is in full swing and thanks go to all the members of the Juneau Alaska group who have filled numerous packets of seeds. This task was indeed a labor of love!

The National Primrose Show and Plant Sale this year will be hosted by the Tacoma Washington Chapter, in conjunction with the local Rock Garden Chapter. This three-day event will be held in Puyallup, Washington, approximately thirty miles south of Seattle and I encourage members in that area to exhibit plants for public viewing. April is probably the best time to see primroses growing in gardens in western Washington and also a great opportunity for out of town members to visit this part of the State, see the show, attend the banquet and meet other APS members. (For details, see the enclosed flyer).

In this issue you will also find a ballot slip for next year’s Board, and it would be most helpful if members would return it with any comments or suggestions that would benefit the society.

As we enter this year of the millennium I wish you all good health and successful gardening and ‘If winter comes — can spring be far behind?’ — I hope not.

June Skidmore —
Mercer Island, Washington

Orval Donavan Agee

By Jay Lunn, Hillsboro, Oregon

Orval Agee, a life member of the American Primrose Society since 1970, died in Clackamas, Oregon on October 10, 1998. He was 91 years of age. Orval was born April 24, 1907 in Roseburg, Oregon. He married Ivanel (Ivy) Griffith in 1927; she preceded him in death on October 16, 1978. Orval lived in his home on Wood Street in Milwaukie, Oregon from 1929 until his death.

He was employed by Reed College as a maintenance worker from 1919 until retiring in 1972 — in excess of 40 years on the job. At his funeral, Valora Baton, Oval’s second cousin, said that he could repair anything at Reed that needed fixing, except possibly a broken heart — and the College had never asked him to fix one of those.

Ivy (listed as Mrs. Orval Agee in membership lists) was an active member of the APS as early as 1948. She did not drive an automobile, so Orval chauffeured her to meetings. He also became interested in primroses after being exposed to them for a while. After Ivy’s death, Orval continued to provide transportation to others who needed a ride to a meeting, picnic or show. If he was asked a question about primroses in public, he would more than likely respond “Oh, I don’t know;" but privately, he could invariably tell you all about the subject.

Orval was an outstanding photographer. His subjects varied from family members, friends, hunting excursions, mountain vistas and wild flowers, but he focused primarily on primroses.

Many of Orval’s photos have appeared in the *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*. One appeared in the quarterly as early as January 1956 (a time in which the Kodachrome he was using had an ASA rating of 10) and as recent as this summer’s issue. Many of the slides now in the APS slide library are photographs taken by Orval, even though they may not be identified as his. He would often offer me film, use of his flash attachment or camera, if that was what I needed to get pictures at shows.

Orval was a long-standing member of the Oregon Primrose Society and life member of the Valley Hi Chapter. He held practically every office in these chapters, many of them for multiple terms. You could always depend upon his being on the job when it was time to set up for shows and assist in conducting them. At the meeting place for the Oregon Primrose Society, he always had the hall ready for the meeting and the coffee perking before anyone else arrived. Orval invariably greeted you with a “Hi,” a wave of the hand and a mischievous smile.

He exhibited a variety of *Primula* species and cultivars at the local and
National Show

In 1998 the Tacoma Chapter of the American Primrose Society presented its first-ever one-day Primrose Show with members of the Rock Garden Society as our guests. This year we are hosting a first-ever three-day National Primrose Show with an invitation to Rock Garden members to participate.

Last year’s show was very fine and we trust this year’s will also be a great success. The dates for the show will be April 16-18, from 10 a.m. till 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday. The site of the show will be in the Expo Hall of the Western Washington Fairgrounds. It will be in connection with the Puget Sound Mini Spring Fair. We have increased our schedules to include a vast variety of primroses and a good selection of companion plants including miniature shrubs, bulbs and miniature dish gardens and small ferns. The dish gardens have a category for children under 12 and another for those from 12 to 16 years. It is asked that those bringing dish gardens let the show chairman know ahead of time to prepare table rooms.

We present a number of demonstrations, a banquet with a special speaker and guest of honor. Judging will be Friday morning and the banquet Friday evening. For those who want to extend their visit, there is a Best Western Hotel in close proximity to the Fairgrounds.

We welcome and encourage all to enter plants for the show, or to purchase plants from our plant sale.

Cy Happy and Esther Strickland are co-presidents; Esther Strickland is show chairman; Thea Oakley is plant show chairman. All other members are active participants.

Auricas in the Garden

By John A. O'Brien, Sr., Juneau, Alaska

Recently, in the Fall 1998 Primroses, there was an excellent article by Claire Cockcroft, on garden auriculas, and many enjoyable photos.

This has prompted me to write an article giving further information on what we have found here, in southeast Alaska, on growing auriculas outdoors.

Here at our location, we are between the rain forest in front of us, and the mainland continental influence behind us. Precipitation averages 54.62 inches a year, counting both rain and the water equivalent of the snow. Minimum temperature is 20 below zero, although it runs colder, to 35 below, up nearer the glacier.

Perhaps 30 years ago we bought our first two garden auriculas. We lost both. They died within two years.

And right here is where I can give worthwhile suggestions to those needing information on how to grow them. Don’t plant them where it is wet in the garden. I don’t mean where there is standing water — I mean where it is wet at all.

One I planted in a side garden, with a raised bed near the house, with a northly exposure. When it’s extra rainy, lots of water drips and even pours down from the roof and gutters. I know with gutters it’s not supposed to run over, but ours do. It was soon “curtains” for that nice auricula plant also.

So there is an important, a vital hint, don’t plant auriculas where it’s wet or damp.

Next, when a person looks at photos or slides of auriculas growing in the wild, every scene shows rocks where the plants are showing. Mostly they are on mountain slopes, where broken rocks and gravels are stuffing down, and even in crevices in rocks.

So auriculas like to be in an open exposure, very well drained, and in a gravelly type soil, near rocks.

Here in our part of Alaska, we put them right out in a full sun exposure. The Alaska garden pictured on page 5 of the Primroses, fall, 1998, is a raised bed about 8 inches above the regular ground level. Your writer spent several days of spare time, years ago, mixing in at least one-third of small crushed rock, as three-quarter minus often mentioned by the late famous expert Florence Bellis, and coarse sand, along with quite a bit of crushed eggshells, and some bone meal. Also, I put in compost, as the soil had been poor and infertile in that bed, and a bit of composted steer manure. The most important point I feel was the one-third crushed rock and gravel.

Some readers may be in developed areas where there is no gravel readily apparent. So where and how did I get my gravel? First, around here in Alaska, the road department spreads gravel on the roads when it gets snowy and icy and...
AURICULAS Continued from page 7

slippery. Then in the spring there is a good bit of gravel on the paved road right in front of our house. So before the city crews swept it up, I hot-footed out there, and swept it up and carried it in 5-gallon buckets back to the bed I was overhauling.

Also, I went to the Sand & Gravel Company and asked if I could get a couple of buckets of the small crushed rock. They graciously said I could and they wouldn’t even charge me, as they said they never charge for just a couple of buckets full. So I got the crushed here and there, and the coarse sand a person can get in our yard, by just digging down deeper, and mixing it in, there are also a lot of rounded rocks there from when the glacier was here a couple of hundred years ago.

This may seem like a lot of writing to let you know how we found out by experience what works, but I can guarantee it works here 100%, and will work for you also. We have never lost even one auricula plant in that bed, which has been there for several years now. The auriculas are happy there, and bloom and increase nicely. Claire Cockcroft had it exactly right in her article, in that we also divide plants every three or four years, or sooner. In fact, in the photo you’ll see some open spaces where we had recently divided and taken out some increase, to give the auriculas more room.

In this bed we haven’t had an auricula die, but in the regular raised bed, growing on rows, we seem to lose about five percent of the auriculas each year; whether from old age or a fungus or rot from the compost or what, I don’t know. Overall increase far exceeds any small loss.

It has been said that no amount of cold will kill an auricula primrose. We grow ours one-hundred percent outdoors, from seed starting on. They are never coddled or in a cold frame or alpine house or greenhouse, just left outdoors. We do mulch with seaweed in the fall, and put spruce boughs over our garden beds in November, if I can get to it. But older age is creeping up on me, to where I sometimes don’t get enough seaweed or spruce boughs. The plants seem to be understanding and do well anyhow.

If you use these pointers your success with garden auriculas is, I believe assured. This information doesn’t come from just our own experience, but from suggestions in over 50 years of the quarterly Primroses, and reading several books, past and present, about growing primroses and auriculas. So I’m just passing on lots of people’s experience and observations, for you to mull over and use as you see fit.

In summary, plant auriculas in an open exposure, where drainage is very good, with at least one-third of crushed rock and coarse sand mixed in, in raised beds or the rock garden, with some bone meal, crushed egg shell, and composted steer manure mixed in. Most of our plants we started from seeds, from the APS Seed Exchange, and from Herb Dickson, and from Barnhaven. They all were good.

The plants grow slowly to start, being the size of a nickel to a fifty-cent piece at the most the first year, and then bloom, starting the second year, here. Happy Gardening!

AURICULAS Continued from page 7

Plant Portrait

By Ann Lunn, Hillsboro, Oregon

Primula incana

My introduction to Primula incana was a photograph taken by Orval Agee. He said he always remembered the plant’s name because it was planted in an old tin can — “incana in a can.” Since then I have seen P. incana in the wild in Colorado and in a garden. All have convinced me that it is well worth trying in my own garden.

Primula incana is a native North American species whose range extends from eastern Alaska east and south through Canada to Colorado and Utah. There are also two isolated areas on the southern shore of Hudson Bay. In the northern extremes of its range, the plants can be found at sea level whereas in the south, the altitudes can be as high as 10,000 feet.

Found in moist, boggy areas P. incana usually grows on calcareous (containing lime) soils. In Colorado, where the accompanying photographs were taken, the ground was very soggy at blooming time in early July. The soil presumably dries out later in the summer and the soil is frozen in the winter.

A member of the Aleuritia Section, P. incana is a small plant whose leaves are covered with white or yellow farina particularly on the underside. The name incana means “quite grey,” a reference to the amount of farina present. The one- to three-inch long leaves are elliptic to spatulate with small teeth on the margins. The height of the 2- to 14-flowered umbel ranges from 2 to 15 inches. The plants in Colorado had relatively tall flower stalks, perhaps to raise the umbel above the surrounding grasses to facilitate pollination. The plants I have

Plant Portrait Continued on page 17
On November 23, 1998, the American Primrose Society lost one of its most kindly and gregarious supporters. Don only started growing primroses about ten years ago but he entered into his new hobby with all the gusto and enthusiasm he had brought to every phase of his life. He grew primroses from seed and delighted in every bloom, comparing each with those in other gardens and finding unique properties in many. Some of us were fortunate enough to receive starts of his beloved ‘julies’ such as ‘Mary’s Gold’ or ‘Mary’s Fuchsia’ named after his lovely wife Mary, an active and talented gardener. No visitor to their garden ever went home without a boxful of beautiful jewels from their borders.

Another hobby was using his computer and several Primrose clubs benefitted from this as he delighted in finding new fonts to make the newsletters more attractive.

Don was a retired Air Force chief warrant officer who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. He was born in Seattle on May 27, 1918 and obtained a degree from the University of Washington after he retired from the Air Force.

The memory of Don cradling a small and delicate ‘julie’ in his big hands with an expression of rapture on his face will stay with us forever. Thank you Don.
shows, and other entertainment were provided under the League's auspices, it was an opportunity for boy to meet girl and its political critics sneeringly called it a matrimonial agency where farm laborers could meet servant girls. These criticisms only had the effect of increasing membership still further as more and more young people flocked to join.

The League also introduced colorful mason-like regalia (see photo) and ceremony to their meetings and were instrumental in introducing a new social life into rural communities that were far removed from the bright lights of the city.

It wasn’t long before the League’s membership extended far beyond the clergymen and landlords who traditionally made up the local Conservative Associations. By 1891 it had enrolled one million members and a further million by 1900.

The success of the Primrose League was an historic example of the British Conservative Party’s ability to put down roots countrywide and although political historians of that time have given much more attention to radical movements — it was the Conservative Party that in terms of members and political activity which were in retrospect more important.

**Does the Primrose League still exist?**

Yes, of course it does. It is a great piece of British political history and on the 18th of April 1998 its members gathered in memory of Disraeli in Parliament Square and placed a wreath of primroses on his statue before lunching at Hughenden Manor, Disraeli’s former home.

Just as Lord Randolph Churchill saw the challenges of the political scene in 1883 the present Chancellor Petre Crowder (Queen’s Counsel) sees similar challenges in the last years of the twentieth century and an inspiration in reviving the Conservative Party after its defeat in 1997.

As a footnote to this remarkable story of Disraeli and the Primrose League it is of interest to note that on June 28, 1897 the 22-year-old Winston Churchill made his first political speech at a meeting of the Primrose League at Claverton Manor Bath, which is now the home of the American Museum and the city where June Skidmore, President of the Primrose Society of the United States, spent her childhood and teenage years.

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**A thank you to John Kerridge:**

**John Hayward Kerridge**

1930-1998

On Monday, November 16, John left a message on my answering machine. He said he had received some special seeds from Peter Ward. He decided to start his seeds immediately and the rest he wanted to share with me. He had already mailed them.

This seemed unusual, as John’s normal habit was to start his seeds in February.

I received the seeds on Wednesday, the 18th. On Thursday, the 19th, I received a call from Dennis Oakley telling me John had died.

It was with regret that I realized I would not be able to thank John, not only for his seeds, but for so many things, among them exposing me to his passion for *primulas* and *auriculas*.

I would like to thank John...

Dear John:

It is because of you that I am losing my lawn. Gradually, I am taking space to grow more and more *primulas* and *auriculas*.

It is five years ago now, since you invited me to my first B.C. *primula* show at Southlands. My first exposure to the beauty of the show plants. I was entranced. After I joined the *primula* group, you took the time to share your knowledge with me. You exposed me to the wonders of self/cross pollination, tissue culture and all aspects of growing.

It is through your guidance and encouragement that I entered some of my own plants in the Alpine Garden Show and also the American Primrose Society show.

I had not realized what a thrill it would be when I received not one but several ribbons.

Thank you for helping make my retirement a time of joy and achievement.

John, I will not forget what a difference you have made in my life.

I shall miss you.

Respectfully,

Ruby Chong
Goodby to John

Thanks to Thea Foster we first met John at a meeting of the Alpine Garden Club, and were delighted when he invited us to visit him and see those acres of Primulas flourishing in his garden. We were really impressed by the flats of seedlings in his greenhouse and over a cup of tea in the kitchen he explained that these beautiful flowers are easier to grow from seed than we had ever realized.

It was not long before John persuaded us to join the APS, where we have made many good friends. He continued to invite us over and one day, over the usual “cuppa” he asked if we would be interested in helping him to start a club for those who, like us, were interested in growing Primulas. Well of course we were very interested in hybridizing, one of his biggest interests, and we were very impressed by all his accomplishments, especially with his favorite gold lace varieties.

John found the time and energy for all the things he accomplished while still working full time at a Vancouver hospital as an allergist. He took on the task of President of the APS which called for many trips down to Seattle for meetings, etc., and we were horrified to learn that he usually could be found working among his beloved plants at 5:30 a.m. before going to work. He just explained that it was usually dark by the time he returned so that was the only way he could do it. That’s dedication for you!

He introduced us to hybridizing, one of his biggest interests, and we were very impressed by all his accomplishments, especially with his favorite gold lace varieties.

In retirement, John relied on his property on Salt Spring Island to carry on his Primula growing and hybridizing. He had customers all over the world for his seeds and so many-seeds that he had to buy a small fridge to keep them in.

Besides visiting his time-share property in Mexico he became quite a globe trotter, visiting China, Morocco, Indonesia and Malaysia, for example — not to mention his many trips to Britain where he was always looking for new named varieties.

Ever since our group began John has been very generous with seeds and plants and of course always ready to share his expertise, passing on all the tips he got from Herb Dixon on his many trips down there.

We have always said that without John there would be no group as he was our anchor. Imagine the shock when we discovered that during a game of squash he suffered a massive heart attack and died! We are finding it very difficult to accept, as he was always such an active guy.

We know that John expected us to carry on, as we are even mentioned in his will. It will not be easy, as he left very large shoes to fill, but by spreading the load he carried so well maybe it will work out. We can only do our best.

Oh John — you will definitely be missed!

Renee and Dennis Oakley
Richmond, B.C., Canada

The family suggests donations be sent to: Canadian Federation of Humane Society, 102-30 Concourse Gate, Napear, Ontario K2E 7V7, Canada.
Want More Primroses?

Back issues of the A.P.S. quarterly, *Primroses*, are available from the A.P.S. Quarterly Librarian. Prices depend on the issue date:

- 1991-1995 $1/copy
- 1990 & before $0.25/copy

A set of quarterlies running from the 1940's through 1990 (a few issues are not available) is priced at $40. VISA accepted.

For availability or for ordering copies please contact:

Cheri Fluck
17275 Point Lena Loop Rd.
Juneau, AK 99801-8310
USA
Tel: (907) 789-0595
FAX: (907) 789-2593
E-mail: cheri@ptialaska.net

Twins

Would you like to join an overseas primula group, but you’re confused about international currency exchange rates? Becoming a "TWIN" will make it easy for you. A.P.S. members in Canada and the U.S. can pair up with members of the National Auricula and Primula Society (NAPS), Northern Section, where A.P.S. members pay the annual A.P.S. membership for their English twins in return for membership in NAPS, Northern Section. For details, please contact:

Dennis Oakley
10060 Dennis Place
Richmond, BC V7A 3G8
Canada

To Fry Primrose Leaves in March with Eggs...

Take a handful or two of Primrose leaves. Mince them very small, beat them into a dozen eggs; your pan being very hot, cool it a little, and put in a piece of butter. So put in your eggs, fry them very soberly; when it is enough on that side, turn it in again on the other side; when it’s enough, scrape on sugar, scruise on the juice of a lemon or two.

*The Whole Body of Cookery, Dissected, Taught and fully Manifested. London. 1673.*

From the book "The World is your Garden:..."

Idaho were considered to be the same species. *Primula alcalina* was determined to be a new species in 1984, long after the APS Dictionary was published.

*Primula incana* is definitely hardy, but may be short-lived as are some of its close relatives. Some authorities recommend growing it in an alpine house in a peaty, gritty soil mix. In areas with very cold or dry winters, plants can be grown outside in the open garden in light shade and with very moist conditions during spring and the flowering season.

The most reliable method of propagation is by seed which germinates readily. Seedlings from early spring sowing should be transplanted in late summer when they have achieved some size.

Seed of *P. incana* collected in the wild by John Roden is offered in this year’s APS Seed Exchange list. Order some and give this small, delicate North American native a try!

Sources:

Still in love with the primrose

By Karen Schellingler, Avon, Minnesota

As I pushed my aunt's wheelchair out the nursing home door in California, she excitedly brought my attention to all the primroses planted along the sidewalk to the car. She could no longer talk due to a stroke, but let me know by waving her arms around how much she still loved them. They will cheerfully greet whomever comes to visit loved ones with their bright bouquets of color.

My aunt's delight reminded me of when the primrose case its spell on me years ago. When the first plant I had raised from seed bloomed I was amazed that I could grow something so beautiful when I didn't know what I was doing! After our long Minnesota winters, they were a delight with their bright blossoms beckoning to me.

I became acquainted with the Barnhaven primroses before I joined the American Primrose Society. I faithfully followed the instructions from my woodland garden.

The leaves fell naturally from the trees, protecting the primrose plants at their feet. Each spring I faithfully removed the leaves and the primroses bloomed happily. I was truly amazed that these lovely plants could survive our -30F winters with no problems. Even lack of snowcover did not harm them if there were enough leaves on them.

The first primroses I tried were seeds of the Barnhaven Polyanthus and also Acaulis. The acaulis is not long-lived with me, although I have one plant that is the exception. It is a bright golden yellow and the first to bloom. It even survived some neglect and lack of water, much to my surprise, when I became busy on other projects one summer. I have divided it and now give it the attention it deserves.

Next, Primula denticulata delighted me with its perfectly round ball of blooms. Often a spring snowstorm would knock the flower stem down but otherwise not harm the plant. These look best planted in groups and start easily from seed. Groups of white, pink and lavender are stunning and always are welcome in my garden.

I became curious about the farinosa primulas because of their tiny compact growth with little bouquets of pink clustered on top of short stems: The Primula farinosa, as well as frondosa, halleri and modesta. Primula Halleri and modesta are not long-lived for me. They seem to need a good amount of moisture and excellent drainage at the same time. Dividing the p. farinosa and frondosa often helps keep them going.

I became infatuated with the julianas and tried to grow many of them from Barnhaven seed. The germination was not as good as the polyanthus so I concentrated on others. (In later years Barnhaven seed from the Sinclairs in England germinated very well, as does the seed from Angela Bradford now. Or maybe I was starting to figure out what I did wrong.)

The cortusoides section of primulas are as wonderful as the others. I especially fell in love with the sieboldii and joined a Japanese primula club, successfully germinating the sieboldii, along with a smaller primula that did not prove to be hardy. Divide when they become very crowded to keep them healthy. Once when I was dividing them, shaking the dirt off and making piles of roots, I caught our young golden retriever removing the roots from one pile. Whatever my hands touched, she always wanted to pick up. She was just trying to help!

Primula cortusoides and polyneura both do well for me and if you grow many from seed you can select some with larger flowers. I am always careful where I put the siegoldii as they go dormant in summer and are late to rise in the spring.

I was pleased to find a primrose that bloomed after all the spring ones did and so planted P. japonica in different spots. A favorite was 'Glowing Embers' because of its bright dark pink color.

I became interested in rock gardening the same time as I started trying to grow P. auricula. The garden hybrids seem to germinate easily, as did P. pubescens. One year, I grew them in pots in my small greenhouse instead of planting them out. What fun all the different colored blossoms when there was snow and fierce winds blowing outside the glass.

The rock garden soil mix was one-third loam, one-third sand and one-third peat, with a good amount of grit mixed in. I used granite grit for my first bed, but now I believe that limestone chips would be better for the alpine primulas.

I have always been under the impression that you can’t grow P. marginata from seed but have since seen very large, wonderfully healthy plants grown from seed by Jay Lunn. They gave me some cuttings and some of them took well. I will put them outdoors next spring.

I have learned not to put special plants in the garden too late in the year. I bought a double red hepatica from Russell Graham a number of years ago and put it in the garden in October. It did not survive the winter, sadly. Storing the plant in the green-
LOVE Continued from page 19

house over the winter, however, requires not overwatering it or the roots will die.

My early tries at starting plants from seed were not very satisfying at first. I did not use a soilless mix but dug garden soil instead. So of course many of the seed just rotted or grew a delightful fuzzy fungus all over them.

I placed the seed trays outside in January and some of them began to germinate in April. I soon discovered that I wanted larger plants for my garden in May. Now, in January, I plant seeds on top of a peat-based soilless mix, moisten and drain them well. The plastic covered flats go into our almost freezing garage for two weeks, then I bring them into the north side of the greenhouse or under shop lights in my basement which is attached to my greenhouse.

I leave the plastic on the flats until the first true leaves show. Uncover too soon and many of the emerging little plants will die. Make sure the flats have been sterilized with a ten percent bleach solution to protect the seedlings. That was another thing I didn’t think I had to do and as a result lost a lot of expensive seed. Shortcuts often end in disaster.

When I see those lovely round, curly edged leaves I start to fertilize the plants with 10-10-10 every two or three weeks. Fertilizing full strength too soon will burn the tender roots, so I hold off until the plants are well on their way.

My husband enjoys the primulas almost as much as I do and shows his friends around the garden when it is in bloom. With all my other gardens, I have to be sure to take time to “smell the primroses” too. My love of the primrose will continue until I can no longer garden and beyond. I will have to cultivate a young gardener’s interest in my favorite plant so that I can come to their garden in spring. That is many years away for this 53-year-old gardener, I hope.

My aunt is 85 and primroses still bring joy to her. Once a gardener always a gardener, even in a wheelchair.

Don’t Forget!!!
The Editorial Deadline for the Spring 1999 issue of Primroses is February 15!

Also:
Our new e-mail address is: www.backyardgardener.com/aps.html

PROPOSED SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 1999

President: Ed Buyarski – Juneau, Alaska. For Ed, gardening is a business and a hobby and he really enjoys growing and promoting primroses. He owns a landscaping business called Ed’s Edible Landscaping. He became a Master Gardener in 1991 — joined the APS in ’95 and is currently the chairman of the Alaska group.

Vice President: Cheri Fluke – Juneau, Alaska. Cheri has lived in Juneau since 1970 and has been growing primroses and auriculas for a long time in her large garden and greenhouse. She is currently Quarterly Librarian of the society.

Recording Secretary: Pat Wilson – Juneau, Alaska. Pat has served as Coordinator for the 1998 and 1999 Seed Exchanges and has been Reporter for the local group.

Treasurer/Membership Chairman: Fred Graff – Seattle, Washington. Fred has a background in banking and is entering his second term as Treasurer of the society.

Board Members (through 2002): Roger Eichman D.D.S. – Nordland, Washington. Roger has been gardening for fifteen years, growing many types of primroses, and was active for several years with the Alaska group. He and his wife recently moved to Washington State.

Ruby Chong – Burnaby, BC, Canada. Ruby is a native of Canada and a semi-retired accountant. She enjoys growing primulas from seed and green-edged auriculas are among her favorites. For four years she has been an active member of the British Columbia Primula Club.
First Things First

By Ilse Burch
Redmond, Washington

Seeds
An adventure

Seed starting is an adventure, and marks a rite of passage from a gardener who just buys whatever plants are available to one who really cares about plants and gardening. Growing plants from seed elevates the gardener above the ordinary, regardless of what kind of seeds one is growing. If you want to have your finger on the pulse of the garden, grow seeds. Seed growing requires courage and enterprise. Somewhere, children have an easier time accepting this challenge than do adults. I guess that children are more accustomed to miracles and have faith that the seed will germinate.

My first act of gardening was to plant a handful of marigold seeds in a little area that my mother compelled my older brother to dig for me. I was four when I did this, and I can still remember it clearly. I can't claim that the act was wildly successful, but it was a start. Most importantly, it whetted my appetite for a lifetime of gardening and observing nature. By starting so young, I bypassed the worry of failure. I am hoping that this article will encourage some of you to try something new and truly exciting.

A prudent person might ask why one should bother with seeds when so many varieties of plants are available commercially. One reason is that seed doesn't transmit diseases like growing plants do. In the case of primula species, root aphids, vine weevils and various rots may appear from growing plants that appear to be healthy. Another reason to grow from seed, especially primula species, is that one plant often isn't enough in the garden. Three plants are nice and five are even better. Or one might grow a bunch, and trade some to a friend for something they have grown.

Seeds are tiny things, but they contain a powerful life force — witness the seeds of lotus growing after thousands of years in a tomb! They will try to grow if the seed is still living if they have reasonable conditions. This is easy to do, relatively inexpensive and tremendously rewarding.

What is it?

A few details are important to the seed grower. The first concerns the seeds of a named plant, which are not going to be identical to that named plant and thus are not to be called by the same name. This is true whether the plant was "selfed" (self-pollinated) or not. The seedlings may be similar, but they must not be offered as being the same as the parent. The seeds should be offered in a list as being "from ________ variety." Some seeds are offered as a "strain," which is a group of individuals which show variety, but fall within a certain type. This grouping is like Primula florindae color strains. These are usually grouped by color in seed lists. When you grow them you will find the occasional oddball, because there is a genetic assortment and it is all a game of chance. Please don't be too quick to toss the oddball ones. Sometimes they are wonderful, e.g., the green primroses, and the hose-in-hose forms. I think it would be great if someone found a green Primula florindae, and it is not impossible to suppose that one will come along!

The planting

What you need to grow seeds can be reduced to its simple essence — a seed, a growth medium, and water. More sophisticated methods simply translate into more germinations. You could just plant your seeds in the ground, wait, then see what comes up. This method is often used to grow hardy annuals such as poppies, which hate disturbance and don't transplant well. Putting seed directly into the ground isn't recommended with prim-rose seeds are so tiny that, if they die at this state they will seem not to have germinated at all. What the grit does is act as a microscopic mulch and keep the seed from dehydrating. Obviously, if you use too much grit the seed won't get enough light to germinate, so one must spread it sparingly. I always use this grit coating myself and I wouldn't recommend it if I didn't think it worked. However, somewhere out there someone is having good success with another method. I'd love to hear about it. But for a low-cost hydration method, I don't think you can beat a grit coating.

Sow now or later?

There are the inevitable exceptions to this rule, but you should sow the seeds as

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American Primrose Society Bookstore

Society Guides from the National Auricula and Primula Society, Midland and West Section (Great Britain):

- #8 Primula allionii, Forms and Hybrids, by Bob Archdale and David Richards, 1997 — $4.00 US, shipping $0.75 US
- Primroses and Polyanthus, Guide to Species and Hybrids, by Peter Ward — $35.00 US

Address your orders and inquiries to:
Thea Oakley, American Primrose Society Librarian
3304 288th Ave. NE
Redmond, WA 98053 USA
Thea’s E-mail address: othea@halcyon.com

Orders must be prepaid in US dollars by check on a US bank or by international money order, made out to Thea Oakley, A.P.S. Librarian. Postage and handling (unless otherwise noted): in the US add $4 for the first book and $1.50 for each additional book, or outside the US add $6 for the first book and $2.50 for each additional book.

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soon as you get them from the vendor or the society. I garden in the Pacific Northwest, but I suspect that if you garden in Minnesota or some other cold locality you will have to start your seeds later or under some protection to prevent them heaving as they germinate. You may have to improvise, but gardeners are great as improvising. If you life in Hawaii, you will have to try to cool things down for your seeds. Good luck! It is harder to cool things down than heat them up.

The germination (a.k.a. the waiting)

The best place to start your seed pots, in my humble opinion, is under a polyethylene tunnel (supported by wire fencing) on top of a table, outside in dappled shade. The elevation helps keep the slugs off. Of course, these directions are good for temperate zone plants only. Tropical seeds would not survive outside except in the summer. The pots should either be watered from the bottom or a fine misting hose should be used to water them. If you disturb them while they are just beginning to germinate, they may die. The tunnel keeps hard rain off. A heavy rain can be fatal since it may wash the seeds right out of the pots. The polyethylene tunnel also keeps the humidity up, and that helps the seeds germinate, too. Be wary of the birds! They will dig in anything! As I always say, we gardeners really love nature!

Never attempt to start primula seed in a window of your house, unless you like to keep your house really cold. If there are small plants growing in your carpets, you probably have the right conditions in your home for starting seed. The best temperatures for germination of most primula species are between 35 and 65 degrees F. Seedlings growing in too much warmth and not enough light are sickly things and seldom survive to adulthood. The seedlings will have a pallid appearance and be “stretched.” It is better for them to grow in cooler temperatures and lots of light. That will give you a stocky little seedling that is very hardy.

If you life in Hawaii, you get a wave of germination after each cool period when the sun warms my tunnel up a bit. It is like Christmas to me to see the seedlings come up. Even when I can tell right off that they are not what they purport to be, I still enjoy them. Often, they are something better!

I think that one should never try just one pot of seed. Try at least 20 pots (this is just one flat), so you will always have successes. Believe me, you will have at least one pot in ten that will never come up, and it will not be due to anything you did. The seed might not be fertile, or the donor washed his plants, dried them and then packed the seed he had in the pocket anyway. If you really want a particular plant, order seed from at least two places, and plant both, then compare. The more “civilized” a plant is, the more quickly its seed germinates. Believe me, you will have at least one pot of seed that will never come up, and it will not be due to anything you did.

My next article will be about how to get those seedlings separated, using a technique which works so well you will be surprised how many seedlings you can get out of a 4” pot. My record is 500, and they all lived!*
Plant Societies

National Auricula and Primula Society
Invites all auricula and primula lovers to join in this old society. Membership includes yearbook.

Northern Section
D.G. Hadfield
146 Queens Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire, England.

Midland and West Section
Peter Ward
6 Lawson Close, Saltford, Bristol, England BS31 1BG.

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New Zealand Alpine Garden Society,
PO Box 2984, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Echoes of the past

By Peter Ward, Bath, England

When I was researching my book 'Primroses & Polyanthus' I visited Dr. Cecil Jones, at his Llanelli, Wales home, in order to interview him. I should add that I have known Cecil for thirty years or more, first meeting him at the London Brompton show when we had lunch in a nearby restaurant. Cecil has been one of the leading Primroses in the UK and is renowned for his breeding success with both double primroses and gold-laced polyanthus. As well as information on his own activities Cecil loaned me a batch of old catalogues and other interesting literature which was most useful. I later returned this material to him but some while later he suggested I have it and added a folder containing a number of letters. The majority of these were addressed to Captain Comley Hawkes whom Cecil had visited, soon after becoming interested in primroses, establishing a friendship that continued until Captain Hawkes death. One or two of the letters would have been most useful for the book but unfortunately I have only had access to them since publication. Captain Hawkes, a famous amateur grower of old fashioned flowers, was also British research editor for the APS and in regular contact with

Florence Levy (Bellis) and many other well-known APS members. Although many of the letters are only of historical interest, principally because of the identity of the sender, a few contain interesting pieces of information and I thought the following extracts might be of interest.

The first is from (Mrs.) Florence Levy writing from Box 218, Gresham, Oregon in her capacity as the owner of Barnhaven but written on APS headed paper:

Oct. 14, 1946

Dear Capt. Hawkes:

Thank you for your kind letter received a few days ago. Also for request for catalog inasmuch as Barnhaven and myself are one and the same. Catalog is being posted under separate cover and you will be delighted to see figured therein a picture of Jack in the Green.

What a pity some of your lovely old doubles were lost. I should give a great deal to see Mme. Pompadour and should not feel abused were I to catch sight of the Bon Accords, Arthur Des Moulins and those not quite so rare as the Madame. Those old doubles, even to write of them, grip my throat for they are plants that are more than plants, they are horticultural personalities. We have the double yellow which is not listed and a few new ones, but even with the stronger constitution of the newer ones and the excitement of producing new doubles, yet they are not the revered old doubles. It is my sincere hope that you will be able to reestablish your planting.

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Yes, we have a few Jack in the Greens which I hope to increase through seed and divisions. I so love primroses that I cannot say no to those who also love and want them and consequently am always depleting my own stocks. Unfortunately I have even sold all of the seed I hybridized this spring. I have both Polyanthus and Acaulis types but only in red and yellow and hope to have the time next spring to bring in new colors through hand pollinating. Jacks and Hose are very popular in America now, as are all primroses. Please do not think me immodest if I say it is through Mr. Levy’s and my efforts that primroses have become known and popularized in this country. We pioneered the work and have friendships now which extend over this entire continent, England and Australia. But the wonderment is that Americans, in such a short time, took them to heart and are now avid for them. They grow one type and are lost to their charm forever...

Two further paragraphs talk about primrose history and Captain Hawkes is asked to write an article for the quarterly. This letter reads as if it might be the first contact between them. If so, it is interesting because Captain Hawkes is usually credited with having supplied seed to Barnhaven which enabled Florence Bellis to create her anomalous strains. Indeed she herself has written that this was so, yes, yet in this letter she talks about growing and selling seeds of Jacks and Hose. As anyone who breeds them is aware the other unusual forms, like galligaskins, jackanapes and panto...
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On February 4, 1942, less than a year after the American Primrose Society was founded, Henry Francis du Pont joined as a sustaining member and continued to be active until his death in 1969. When he read Line's 1965 description of the Abchasican primrose, he was intrigued by the color and bloom period. The Abchasican primrose flowered in the same time period as the mauve *Rhododendron mucronulatum*, the light yellow *Corylopsis* and the *Hellebores* that he had planted near the Pinetum at Winterthur, his home in Delaware. He thought that the purplish-red petals and yellow eye of the primrose would cover the ground and complement the landscape color provided by the shrubs and hellebores. His correspondence with Line survives in the archives at Winterthur.

On August 28, 1965, he wrote Line that he was fascinated by his account of the Abchasican primrose in the Quarterly of the American Primrose Society and asked to buy some plants. Line responded on September 5 that he would send Mr. du Pont five of them as a gift. In addition, he could supply 50 at $1 each, but wanted to keep a small selection on hand, for he thought the Abchasican primrose a suitable plant for the American Rock Garden Society propagation exchange. It was, he said, unique, for it did not suffer from red spider, blooms prodigiously, and divides like an amoeba. By September 22 the first Abchasican primroses were at home at Winterthur.

Because the first plants had all come from division of one of the two “type” plants that Line described in 1965, they were not expected to set seed. In the Winter 1966 Quarterly of the APS, Line mentioned a second clone and Mr. du Pont asked for plants in the joint hope with Line that seed would be obtained. But Line's second APS article said the second clone had Jack-in-the-green type flowers. A second shipment of 50 plants arrived at Winterthur on September 21, 1966, and were quickly planted. There is no record of whether or not the flowers differed from those of the first plants.

On October 21, 1966, more than a year after Mr. du Pont had requested the plants, Jack-in-the-green primrose flowered in the garden. He wrote glowingly of the lovely landscape color produced by the primrose and its companion spring blooming shrubs and herbs. The photographs in his article all show the “type” form of this primrose, not the Jack-in-the-green version.

By the early 1990's, time and the primrose's inability to produce self-pollinated seed had taken their toll. A number of healthy pin-type (female) plants grew on the Hellebore Walk and a few thrum-type (male) plants survived in the Quarry Garden. Since my wife, Janet, and I were doing volunteer research on seed propagation of the Trillium collection, the Garden Department asked if we could do the same for the Abchasican Primrose. The first year's hand pollination resulted in only three seed pods because of the short supply of pollen from the Quarry. The propagation stock is based on plants from this seed.

Soon after our initial pollinations, a friend of Winterthur gave the garden pin-type plants with Jack-in-the-green flowers. These apparently derived from Line's “clone 2.” The gift plants were divided and, when they had grown, the plants were set out in a drift along the Hellebore Walk. No seed was produced by crossing them with pollen with “type” Abchasican thrum flowers.

Abchasican seed germinates normally. Between 10 and 20 percent will sprout soon after planting. Most sprout after a period of cold stratification. I have had good luck by planting in the fall in a greenhouse that is just kept from freezing in the winter. The 35 to 45 F temperatures are apparently enough to satisfy Abchasica's chilling requirement.

The seedlings plants like good moisture levels and a well aerated potting soil. Seedling populations will have flower colors that can range from relatively muddy rose to the good purple-red of the “type.” Because of this, seed parents should be selected as carefully as possible for good form and color.

In the garden the plants like a fairly acid soil. Ours grow best in compost mixed with stone. Quartz pebbles are best because crushed limestone can produce iron deficiency symptoms in the plants. Quartz pebbles also frustrate rodents that cannot get to the primrose roots. The plants should be divided every three years to keep crown rot at bay. They need summer moisture, but in the winter they can be severely damaged by the frost heaving often associated with wet soil.

The Abchasican primrose, though relegated to the status of a variety of *P. vulgaris* by most current authorities, remains a beautiful and rugged plant adapted to survive not just its recent genetic bottleneck,

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but also the environment of the average garden and the 14th-floor balcony from which it brightens the Philadelphia skyline.

NOTE 1: This date in Line’s article is probably in error. Artiushenko’s first Caucasus expedition was in 1957. Line’s first article states that his first seed came from the 1960 APS exchange, the year of Mrs. Artiushenko’s second expedition.

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John and Janet Gyer, who garden in Clarksboro, N.J., are active members of the Doretta Klaber Chapter, APS. Their Fern Hill Farm produces seed of Dr. Martin Pole Lima Beans for mail order sales to all 50 states.

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day to visit England and look at our gardens large and small. He is enquiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors. Primula Amoena, Juliana hybrids in color and variety and unusual types of Acaulis or polyanthus requiring for seeds of hose in a variety of colors.

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USA.

Yours sincerely,

T.H. Lovesay

My final extract does not involve Captain Hawkes but I am sure will be of interest to many. It involves the so-called Painted Polyanthus mentioned in my book but about which little seems to have been recorded. The letter is one of several written by Nancy Lindsay to a Mr. Townsend whom I presume to be the T.A. Townsend who ran a small primrose nursery (over 200 varieties listed for sale!) at Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Barbara Shaw in The Book of Primroses describes her as a very knowledgeable gardener and she ran a small specialist nursery at Sutton Courtney, not far from Oxford. I lived in Oxford for many years and vaguely recall visiting her nursery, basically a large garden in a private house, in the late 1960s but very few primroses were grown, although judging by the letters to Townsend she must, at one time, have had an enormous collection, including many varieties previously unknown to me. Mrs. Lindsay, whom I cannot remember meeting, sounds like a fascinating lady and the correspondence contains all sorts of comments on various individuals and the trade. The letters are undated but must have been written in the early to mid 1950's or thereabouts. The relevant extracts are as follows:

I also have some of the regency (1800-1840ish) Painted Polyanthus which are very brilliant in cherrys and apricots, lilacs and golds on ivory... The Regency Painted Polyanthus like Painted Lady, Rosa

The manuscript for this American Primrose Society quarterly was prepared and submitted to Eagle Press in electronic form with a Macintosh G3 and Microsoft® Word. Manuscript composition used Adobe® Pagemaker® and Photoshop® and CorelDRAW®. If submitting files via e-mail, please compress using a ZIP utility (such as PK ZIP or WINZIP) to insure compatibility between PC's and Mac's.
Munda, etc. are large-flowered mostly with shortish stems (6 ins.), very stiff and formal. My description of Painted Lady for instance, is Brilliantly enamelled carmine, orange and lemon on ivory. The colors are not streaky or blended, but the flowers are as neatly, vividly painted and laced as in the best of the old laced pinks. I’d re add of these in old horticultural journals and seen one or two old badly colored little prints out of old books but I’d never come across any live ones till just before the War. I was staying then with a friend who’d rented a cottage in a remote part of Wales, and was taken to tea one day with a very old lady who was very odd and there I saw some of these painted polyanthus. She had an even odder ancient gardener who never would allow her to part with even one scrap of his painted women (one was called Jezebel!). However in the end I did get a few scraps. Since then I’ve picked up a few others. But one seldom sees them nowadays, unless it’s rarely in an old cottage garden off the beaten track. This is probably the sort of polyanthus which Curiosity sported from for instance. And the red and white hose-in-hose The Clown.

I find this interesting for several reasons. The garden polyanthus, as opposed to the gold-laced polyanthus, did not appear until the late 19th century, when Gertrude Jekyll introduced her Munstead Strain of whites and yellows. Can we really believe that these named polyanthus survived for more than 125 years? Are the painted polyanthus from a later date perhaps and what is their origin? More trips to the RHS Lindley library are evidently needed this winter! Another extract refers to the gold-laced polyanthus and is of interest for reasons mentioned earlier. This is: I’ve several varieties of the true old gold-laced polyanthus, mostly of 1800-1870ish date. The true sorts of those days had large heads of rather small flowers on very stiff stout stems. Most of the esteemed varieties had a solid black, very dark crimson, or rich brown ground, very neatly laced quite evenly and formally with the narrowest gold lacing. They look quite different from the modern gold-laced raised from seed from various nurseries... the true old varieties such as Blackguard, have to be increased by division, as from seed you might raise 100 and only one would be correct according to the old show rules.

In the past the utterances and/or writings of many well-known gardening enthusiasts have tended to be taken (often wrongly as it later turned out) as fact. We all know that history is constantly being rewritten as more information comes to light. Take for example the numerous different stories about the origin of the famous juliae hybrid Wanda. One visit to the RHS library was sufficient to discover the truth. In addition, in the past research was not always undertaken in the same thorough manner, whatever the subject, that has become the norm today. This applies to gardening history and a healthy skepticism towards such things can only help in the search for truth and a better knowledge of what went before.

P. Veris (Cowslip)

P. Denticulata (drumstick)