Primroses

The Quarterly Of The American Primrose Society

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Primrose

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Volume 65 No 4 Autumn 2007

The purpose of this Society is to bring the people interested in Primula together in an organization to increase the general knowledge of and interest in the collecting, growing, breeding, showing and using in the landscape and garden of the genus Primula in all its forms and to serve as a clearing house for collecting and dissemination information about Primula.

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*Please remember to renew your membership*

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Front Cover: Becky Carls’ Photo in the category of “Primulas from Other Gardens” in the 1st Annual APS Photo Contest.

Back Cover: Pam Eveleigh’s composite of Primula in Autumn from her web site www.PrimulaWorld.com

Primroses

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President’s Message

LEE NELSON

Hello, Everyone.

Well, here we are with another summer passing by. I know some of you probably like the heat, though I do not. However, we must not complain as others have had a very stressful summer.

The news by email from my Primula twins in the UK was not very good. Luckily, they weren’t directly affected by the flooding, and my family in southern England also escaped the worst of it. Others were not so fortunate, as we saw from the TV reports. Here in the United States we have had our share of erratic weather, which I hope has not had an adverse effect on any of you. My own garden has come through quite well. With the adequate rainfall, all the heat and humidity has not harmed the Primulas; even the new divisions just planted in June are looking good. Hopefully, I’ll find some nice plants to dig up and take to the show in Victoria next spring.

Our chapter show in Boston this past spring was my first time to bench plants, and I am now feeling less intimidated. I look at my winner’s ribbons and I can’t wait to enter plants in the show next spring. I encourage you all to do the same. Dig up and pot some plants, and bring them to the show in Victoria next spring.

As I travel around the country an “America in Bloom” judge, I spend time with a lot of gardeners. Often I am dismayed when I ask, “Do you grow primroses?” and people reply, “Oh yes, I love their big yellow blooms and they add such color.” Then I have to explain that I am talking about Primula, not Oenothera. How can we overcome this confusion? On a brighter note, I do occasionally meet someone who knows the difference; then I have a chance to tell them about the wonderful opportunities that await them when they join the American Primrose Society. Let’s all share our enthusiasm for the genus Primula. Let’s all work together to recruit at least one new member each this year. Or, even better, work together to form a new regional Chapter of the APS.

Let’s grow together.

Lee

OFFICERS
Practical Magic, Growing Primula from Seed

MARIANNE KUCHEL

One of the most satisfying things you can do during the winter is to start a few pots of Primula from seed. You can grow varieties that would be hard to find in a nursery. The American Primrose Society has a wonderful seed list, and most of the Primula that I have grown from seed have come from that list. In addition, I have collected seed from my own favorite Primula plants.

Although everyone relies on some basic techniques, Primula growers all seem to have their own particular ways of coaxing life from primula seed. Trial and error, and experimentation as to what works best in your area account for the many effective ways you can grow primula from seed.

It is very important to have fresh seed. As soon as the seeds arrive, I store them in the fridge in a closed container. If you collect your own seed or get them from friends, store them also in the fridge until you are ready to plant them. You can also plant them right away. The seedlings will probably not be large enough to plant out in the fall. In that case, you need a cold frame to over-winter them until they are mature enough for garden planting.

Living in Vermont in climate zone 4-5, I have found that the best time to start seeds is February or early March. I use a soil-less mixture, such as Pro-Mix, and I add some fine chicken grit for good drainage. I have found that 3 inch plastic square pots work best. Since I reuse my pots, I make sure they are very clean and rinse them in a 10% Clorox solution. As the seeds are sprinkled on the surface, I try not to overcrowd them. I then cover the seeds with a layer of fine chicken grit that one can find in any feed store. If the seeds are very small, I sprinkle them directly on the grit.

The pots are then bottom-watered and placed in a perforated tray -- the type you can often get from a nursery. Another perforated tray is put on top to protect the pots, and then they go outside. The seeds benefit from the freezing and thawing. As we usually have snow cover, I do not have to worry about them drying out. If there is no snow, check the seedling pots often, as it is lethal for the seeds to dry out. When the temperature keeps steady at around 50 degrees, the seeds should start germinating. If you are impatient, you can bring them in after four weeks, but it is important not to put them in too strong sunlight. Choose a cool bright spot. If the seeds don’t come up, don’t give up on them or throw out the pots. Keep them at least for another year. The seed could have been kept at too high temperature and gone into dormancy. I have had P. marginata and other alpines germinate after two years.

Arlene Perkins, the Primula queen of Vermont, uses a slightly different way of propagation. She does not put her pots outside in her beautiful East Montpelier garden. She finds that chilling her seed in the fridge is sufficient cold treatment. She plants her seed in a seed starter mix as soon as they arrive in January. Arlene keeps them in a cool, sunny place, covered in a zip lock bag. As for seed collected from plants she really wants to develop, she plants them as soon as they are ripe.

Susan Gray, who lives in Nova Scotia, also starts her seed in the end of February or early March. She suggests keeping the pots in bright but not direct light in a cool spot around 62 to 70 degrees, never over 75 degrees; this is too warm and will kill the seed. She uses grow lights 15 to 17 hours a day, and usually has germination in a couple of weeks. Susan has had great luck with P. acaulis, auricula, polyanthus, chungensis, bulleyana, and beesiana, starting them indoors, but has found that P. pulverulenta, sieboldii and japonica need to be cold treated.

Some Primula do not seem to need the cold treatment. To determine which ones do best in the cold, it is a good idea to divide the seeds and put half outdoors and the other half inside under lights. Some growers plant them all inside at 70 degrees, and if they have not germinated after four weeks, they go outside for the cold treatment. If you are growing species, it can be easier to determine what they like by knowing where the species grows in the wild. I have found that European Primula need to have the cold treatment before they germinate. Seed from Primula sieboldii, as it is such a hardy plant, also benefits from spending some time outside.

In addition to the methods used by us North American gardeners, here is some advice from Heather Sell, who gardens in New Zealand. She writes: “I have enjoyed getting seed from APS for several years and have had the pleasure of seeing some lovely Primula flowering. When I receive the seed, it is autumn. Often it is quite hot then, too hot for germinating seed. Sometimes I try sowing out half the seed to see if I can get a better germination. It sometimes does help, but depends on how hot it is. I find it is best to keep them in the fridge until July/August which is late winter for us here in New Zealand.”

Heather continues: “I will sow them in little ice cream pottles in ‘Black Magic Seed Mix’ that I buy at the supermarket. I then cover the pots with river sand. The trays are put in a cool position, where they will slowly warm up when spring arrives. Slug bait is essential as the snails and slugs think seedlings are a free meal.”

“When the seedlings have their second leaves I prick them out into a stronger potting mix plus some fine grit. They are then put in my shade house to grow on, to be planted out later in the autumn. It is great to be able to share the plants with others, as we do not have a great variety of Primula in New Zealand. I enjoy the gold laced, hose-in-hose and jack-in-the-green Primula plus the auriculas.”

I hope these notes from growers will inspire you to get your pots, soil and labels ready. January will soon be here.
Gone Collecting, J. and J. Archibald

JUDITH SELLERS

The letters PIA, HOL, JUR or JJA may not mean much to most people, but these are the abbreviations our APS Seed Exchange uses for the names of some of the greatest modern heroes in horticulture.

The seed exchange list is arranged to provide oodles of information when read carefully. Beside each species or hybrid name are three initials, indicating the donor, with a key to full names elsewhere in the list. Most are the names of enthusiastic Primula growers who loyally donate seeds each year for us all to share, but there are also several listed as “Commercial Sources.”

Businesses such as Barnhaven Primroses and Jelitto Seeds provide Primula seeds of hybrids and species we can not usually produce in our own gardens, so the APS Seed Exchange orders for us, the APS members, from these companies’ on-line catalogues. The companies have the seeds cleared for export to the USA and mail them to the exchange, having billed the APS through a credit card.

The other Commercial Sources are usually field collectors who are experts in plant identification, and dedicate weeks or months each year to searching for something new or unusual to share with growers around the world. These brave people travel and hike through mountains and jungles, tolerate all sorts of hardships in any weather and willingly consume unusual foods because of their passion for plants. In addition to endless patience for cleaning and packaging seeds, the modern collector must have uncommon knowledge about plants, an adventurous spirit, diplomatic skills better than those of most ambassadors, and Olympian physical stamina. The plant hunter must be undaunted by the hazards of modern travel which may be different from but not much easier than those met by Farrer, Wilson and other great explorers in botanical history.

I became fascinated with these collectors after contacting them to obtain seeds for the exchange, and began a bit of research. In this first article about those who provide our wild collected Primula seeds, I would like to introduce “JJA”.

Jim and Jenny Archibald are much more than “Commercial Sources”. They have devoted decades to finding and sharing wild seeds and plants, many of which have become winners on the show benches, and some of which are now commonly grown by gardeners everywhere. As their seeds have been included in our APS lists, you may be growing some today.

The Archibald’s home address is in Llandysul, in west Wales, where they have their own garden in which they cultivate and evaluate many of their finds. They are ‘Gone Collecting’ for about a month each year (all of June in 2007) as they work to find, gather, clean, cultivate and distribute seeds and plants to enthusiastic growers and botanical gardens around the world. They have been doing that together for over 20 years, and Jim can claim an additional 2 decades of growing and collecting plants and writing seed lists and newsletters.

Jim worked at Jack Drake’s Inshriach Alpine Plant Nursery during the summers when he was studying English literature at the University of Edinburgh, and apparently gained enough enthusiasm and knowledge from his mentor to form the goal of becoming a plantsman himself. In 1962 he went with friends to the Atlas Mountains, where he wrote careful notes about the flora and issued his first plant and seed list. By 1964 he and Eric Smith were running their own nursery, The Plantsman, in Dorset. Collaborating with the Botanical Gardens in Kew and Edinburgh and communicating with experts in horticulture around the world, he enhanced his skills to what has been called a “downright genius” level.

In 1975, Smith left the nursery, and Jenny began working there. Jim and Jenny managed to operate the nursery and spend weeks traveling in the field, collecting wild seeds and plants, until 1983, when they decided to focus solely on their seed business. In 1988, they moved to Wales, where they have gardens and greenhouses, sheep, and a peaceful landscape.

It is a very long list of valuable garden plants that has been introduced, (or reintroduced, following disappearance from cultivation,) by Jim and Jenny. Early trips to the European mountains and Mediterranean islands were followed by extended trips to most of southern Europe and North Africa. They have traveled
through Turkey and the Near East to Iran, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In South America, they have hunted for plants in the Andes of Colombia, Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. They have voyaged to New Zealand and toured the South African Drakensberg. They have collected in the mountains of western North America many times. The *Prima parryi* seeds in the APS list of 2006-7 were from JJA seeds, as none could be found from any source in the United States.

Several *Campanulas*, *Irises*, *Crocuses*, an *Euphorbia*, and *Digitalis thapsi*, which Panayoti Kelaidis appreciated as ‘Spanish Peaks’ have been a few of the Archibald introductions. *Rosa persica* seeds were collected at the edge of Iran near Afghanistan, and an entire day was spent cleaning the sticky and painfully spiny fruit when Jim was commissioned by a rose grower who wanted that species for plant breeding. On another trip, Jim’s Iranian guide was an aristocratic Bakhtiar tribesman who was hunting ibex while Jim discovered what was later named *Dionysia archibaldii*. Although considered difficult to grow, this *Dionysia* has proven to be worthy as a parent for many new hybrids.

During their 1986 expedition, they dragged a caravan (trailer) across Europe to Greece and Turkey so they could have a field base camp in which to work and enjoy a few of the comforts of home while on an extended expedition.

In addition to returning home with herbarium specimens, living plants and viable seeds, Jim and Jenny have always kept extensive notes about their collecting. Soil type, location, elevation, aspect to the sun, surrounding vegetation, an exact description as well as dates of bloom and seed production were all recorded for each plant. The Archibalds use this information and share habitat facts with prospective growers in order to improve the likelihood of successful cultivation. Jim has always been meticulous about taxonomy, so many reputable seed or plant catalogs include in their notes the fact that the “seed was from Jim Archibald” and therefore is the true form, correctly named and classified.

“Few people can rival the extent of their knowledge of plants in the wild and even fewer can equal their experience of growing and propagating these same plants in cultivation.”  (Ward)

Jim and Jenny continue to collect and share plants and seeds, and Jim will be a guest speaker at the West Wales Group meeting of the Hardy Plant Society on October 2, 2007. I envy those who will be there to hear him.

References:

www.jjaseeds.com, the official web site of Jim and Jenny Archibald

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**Winter Reading Special**

With the fall season comes the prospect of cozy evenings spent by the fire, and what could be better reading than a “set” of old quarterlies from APS? Did you know Herb Dickson wrote a piece on how to hybridize your plants? Have you read the enthusiastic and colorful articles about primroses and Barnhaven written by Florence Bellis in the early days of APS? Have you read the synopsis of the great primula conference of 1991? There are many fine hours of reading in just under 14 inches of shelf space. This is a great opportunity.

There are many copies of old quarterlies at Cherri Flock’s house, and she would like to get them out to you, the APS members. Some issues are now out of print, but there are just under 30 sets of an almost complete run and this is your chance to have your very own set. And once these are gone, they are gone forever. The cost is a nominal $25 postage paid, and can be sent to you immediately. The sooner you order, the more complete set your set will be.

Here’s a great gift to yourself! Learn more about growing *Primula*, how to raise them from seed and read some history of the society. Do you know what the Bamford Trophy is? Revisit the great shows of the Pacific Northwest and how the show winners did it. Lose yourself in useful articles about collecting and growing our favorite plant.

Send your order to:

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Tualatin, OR 97062
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*They can be in the mail to you in no time at all.*
In the Summer 2006 issue of Primroses, Maedythe Martin wrote a report on the “Spring Shows at the West Coast” (p. 33). She said the entry *Primula marginata* ‘Agee’ was outstanding, in perfect condition and had won the trophy for Best Primula at the show of the Alpine Garden Club of B.C. She described the plant as having “...long narrow toothed leaves smothered in farina, which sometimes has a golden cast. The clear violet-blue flowers are thrum.” I was under the impression that *P. marginata* ‘Agee’ had pin-eyed flowers. The basis for this idea was planted many years ago when, at one of the Oregon Primrose Society Chapter shows, I asked Orval Agee whether this clone was a pin or thrum and he replied that he didn’t know. Etha Tate was nearby and overheard my conversation with Orval. Etha told me she had a plant of it in her greenhouse and I could go over and check it out. That afternoon when I left the show, I went past her place and peeked in her greenhouse. I found a *P. marginata* with ‘Agee’ written on the tag and it was a pin! In Mary Robinson’s book *Primulas - The Complete Guide*, she says that *P. marginata* ‘Ivy Agee’ has “... mid mauve blue slightly frilled, thrum-eyed flowers with a well defined farinaed eye.” G.G. Smith, B. Burrow & D.B. Lowe, in their book *Primulas of Europe and America*, don’t say whether “*P. marginata* ‘Ivy Agee’ (P. m. ‘Agee’)” is a pin or thrum.

In my effort to find more information about this question, I went to the Index to Volumes 50 and 51 that Jacques Mommens compiled when Maedythe was Editor. It referred me to an article by Fred Knapp in the Spring 1993 issue (p. 6) about “*Primula Marginata* on Long Island.” The photo that accompanied the article was identified as *P. marginata* ‘Agee’ and definitely was a pin. I suspect that Maedythe may have used one of Orval’s photos from the Editor’s cache to accompany the article.

In the Spring 1977 issue of Primroses, the Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery had an advertisement that said “Introducing Marginata Hybrid ‘Agee’ - A neat compact plant with small dark blue flowers and beautiful foliage well mealed and margined - A product of Ivanel Agee’s [sic] work in species hybridizing - SUPPLY LIMITED - One to a customer,” but there was no indication of the flower form. I searched Orval’s photographs of show pictures to see if I could find any more clues. I found one photograph which included an entry tag within the picture that indicated it was *P. marginata* and the name of the plant was “Agee.” It was a pin-eyed plant. It had been entered in the Tacoma show on April 2, 1977, but the portion of the entry tag that showed the exhibitor’s name was not part of the photograph, only that it was exhibitor # 10. In the Winter 1979 issue of the Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society (pp. 1-4), Kris Fenderson wrote an article entitled “Primula Marginata - Its Forms and Hybrids”. He mentioned *P. marginata* ‘Agee’ as “... a recently selected American cultivar with small, well-rounded dark blue flowers carried well above heavily powdered foliage.” He didn’t say whether it’s a pin or thrum flower form.

This named plant is commercially available in its thrum form, but is this the real thing? It is often referred to as ‘Agee’, but should it be called *P. marginata* ‘Ivy Agee’ and who named it to honor Ivy? This quandary demonstrates the need for a registry. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who has a pin-eyed clone that was obtained as *P. marginata* ‘Agee’.

An article entitled “Why Name a Primrose,” authored by Dorothy Dickson, was published in the Spring 1982 Primroses (p. 5). In this article, Dorothy discussed the naming of plants and mentioned the American Primrose Society’s procedure for naming show and exhibition alpine auriculas. The text in her article referenced Volume 15 (actually Vol. 13), No. 1: pp. 15-16, Winter Quarter 1955 for this purpose and pointed out the need for a registry for all named primrose plants. The Fall 1975 issue of Quarterly of the American Primrose Society (now called Primroses) contained a completed “Official S.A.F.A. Registration Form” for the *P. x auricula* ‘Beth Tait’ on page 15 (S.A.F.A. is an abbreviation for the Show Auricula Floriculturists of America). When the information called for in this form is published in the Quarterly, it serves as a registry for the plant described. She called for a dedicated volunteer to work on registering other primroses. Dorothy Springer developed a “Juliana Hybrid Registration Form” in 1994 and compiled information on named *P. x juliana* hybrids. None of the information that has been submitted to her has been published as of this date. I’m afraid the documentation of this type will in time end up in a landfill and be lost to history!
Procedures in Pollinating
by Mrs. J.V. Roberts
Excerpt from Volume 10, Issue 4
(Spring 1953) - page 6

Those of the old school of bees or fairies—if there be any left—will not be interested in this little piece, nor will the individual who with brush in hand flits from bloom to bloom dabbing pollen here and there, all the time fancying that he or she has turned the trick, when the bee, who may have gotten up much earlier in the morning, has already accomplished the work in much the same fashion.

Neither mystery nor extraordinary skill is involved in hybridizing; however, exacting care in performing each step in pollinating is absolutely necessary for specific results.

The first step is to get a stock of first quality plants, choosing colors which especially appeal to your taste. If you are patient and want a large stock from which to choose, get the seeds from the best strains on the market; if not, visit the gardens of the breeders who have pioneered for years in this work, and buy plants. (If you do not take up too much of their precious time they will help you with advice as well as with the selection of your plants.) In this manner you will save years and will profit by the great advances others have made.

Watch your plants and study them until you have formulated your plans and have a mental picture of the plant you wish to produce. The actual process of pollinating is quite simple.

1. Preparation of the seed parent: Pick the plants best suited to your purpose: many hybridizers pot up their seed plants because it is said that a plant whose roots are trimmed will produce more seed. One grower uses a well-ventilated screen porch for his own most particular crosses. The plant, being portable, is more readily available as each stigma becomes receptive. Emasculate all buds just before they begin to open leaving only the calyx holding the pistil. Bag with cellophane and wait until the stigma is clear and sticky. It is then receptive to pollen, which should be applied thickly. Bag again to prevent foreign agents entering. If introducing more than one cross on an individual plant mark each blossom with a small jewelers tag on which is a record of the pollen cross. These records are invaluable for future work and are a source of great interest when the parentage of a lovely Primula is in question.

2. Preparation of the pollen parent: Get a flower from the pollen parent as soon as the pollen has a powdery look, and tear the blossom in two all the way down to the calyx. Bend the corolla backward until the anthers are exposed enough to brush their pollen on the pistil. The pollen blossom may be saved in the refrigerator for several days, so that procedure may be repeated a second and a third time to be absolutely sure of “a take”. (Many times a pollen blossom may come from a friend’s garden and be quite precious.)

It is true that a greater percentage of the seeds are viable from the legitimate cross, “thrum on pin”, but many prefer the illegitimate cross, “thrum on thrum”, which gives fewer seedlings, but a greater percentage of thrum-eyed plants. Seldom, unless tempted by exceptional color or form, ever use a pin-eyed plant either as a pollen or pistillate parent.

When your seedlings have bloomed, cross-pollinate those showing superior characteristics in form or color. You really have to be patient as the second year does not give the results you may begin to expect in the third year. You should continue this procedure year after year, always discarding to the compost pile every slightly inferior plant. Bring in new “blood” from carefully selected plants to avoid the weakening sometimes induced by interbreeding. By intelligent handling and ideals kept high, anyone can eventually grow beautiful and distinctive Primroses from their own crosses.
APS Website Developments

SUSAN GRAY

Since my last report, in the Spring 2006 issue, a lot of work has gone into the website development.

There are now two main areas of the website, one geared for the general public (in hopes we will attract more members!) and one exclusively for the members, known as the “Member Area” accessible by members’ unique ID and passwords (“PINs”). This has special features included to enhance membership with the society.

In the Member Area, we have the digital edition of the Pictorial Dictionary, which was last published in 1967. It is not yet complete but hopefully all 108 pages will be completed by next winter if not sooner (It’s better to give a long range rather than say soon and not be able to meet it!). A special feature of the on-line version is a link directly to Pam Eveleigh’s website, taking the reader to a picture of the species that is being described in the Dictionary.

We have also included the APS forum or discussion board in the members’ only area. Among the topics for the discussion board are tips on seed sowing, hybridizing, questions on such items as how to grow primroses, seed exchange, and also a venue for plant exchange among members. It can be a valuable learning tool for the members.

An additional feature in the Member Area is the ‘Round Robin’, a new electronic version of the roundabout correspondence between members in wide-spread places, this time using a blog software. Possible topics include breeding double auriculas-failures and successes; creating a primrose path; developing a primrose garden; growing P. allioni and its hybrids and more. Some of us who like to jot down records in a journal, a diary or some other form of recording their experiences will find this blog of interest. The blog entries can be brief, daily or occasional snippets, even once a month is fine and pictures can be included. All you have to do is pick (or create) a topic, and inform me. I’ll set your account up and you’ll log on your account to make your entries. On the Round Robin web page, links will be made to your blogs so other members can visit, read, and even leave comments. This new Round Robin should be just as much fun and rewarding as the old one. Do make use of the Member Area, sharing your interest in all things about Primula with other members.

A new Board position has been created; the Membership Chairperson keeps a membership list and we encourage members to provide their email addresses for one of the purposes of reaching you easily for renewal reminders. This also assists me in providing new members with their PINs. The Membership Chairperson does not have every member’s email. Obviously some do not have or use computers but for those who do, please make sure he has your current one. In March, I sent just over 100 emails to addresses in the US to provide the PINs. I had nearly 20 that were returned “undeliverable”. Anyone who hasn’t received a PIN and wishes to access the Member Area, please inform me (inquiries@americanprimrosesociety.org). I’ll gladly send yours.

On another topic, we have a Photo Gallery on the website. There are “Members’ Gardens” and “Plants Grown from APS Seed Exchange” and we would appreciate receiving photos from members to share with others. Some of you may have tried growing some rare or unusual primula species from the seed exchange, we’d like to see photos of your successes. Please share with us. That is what APS is all about, sharing our love of Primula. Remember the website is mainly created for you and its success depends on you!

Susan Gray
APS Webmaster

Have you seen the Original American Primrose Society Pictorial Dictionary yet?

Available to all members on the APS website in the Members Only area - passwords issued with renewal - CD also available on your membership renewal form.

Available Online 2007

On the American Primrose Society webpage you will find an accurate scan of the original Pictorial Dictionary, with the ability to search for species by name. Also included is a new introduction to the digital edition, and a few pages from the editor’s original copy.

Search, browse, enjoy!

http://www.americanprimrosesociety.org
Editor’s Notes

There are a few things I wanted to bring to your attention in this issue.

First is what I hope will be a continuing feature in the Quarterly, and a nod to past-editor Matt Mattus, Growing with Plants (from Matt’s blog). Matt is a truly fine photographer, among many other things, and has so many interesting plants, as well as thoughts on them, they simply must be shared. In this issue (facing page), I’ve picked out some photos of *Primula* Matt took on his trip to the Alps. I encourage you to have a look at his blog at http://exploraculture.blogspot.com.

Second is our Second Annual Photo Contest (another of Matt’s great ideas). The deadline is fast approaching (December 31) and we want it to be another success, so please send in your photos! There are four categories to enter in, and the winner of each category gets their picture on the cover of the Quarterly. Wouldn’t you like to see your plant on the cover for all to see?

The 2008 National APS Show will be held in Victoria, BC Canada next spring, and we hope to see many of you in attendance. Speakers and garden tours are being arranged now, with people and places you won’t want to miss. Look for more information to come out in the Winter 2008 issue, but circle April 24 to 27, 2008 on your calendars now!

While we’ve got you excited about all this, wouldn’t you please let us know what you think? I would really like to see more dialogue between APS members included in the Quarterly, and that has to start with you, the Reader. Letters to the Editor, whether they be compliments, complaints, or comments, are always welcome. If you’ve got a tip you can pass on, a question to ask, need help with identification, whatever, please drop us a note. *To start it off, could we have your thoughts on organic pest control, if you use it, what you use and how it works? Please send your answers to editor@americanprimrosesociety.org. We’ll post responses in the next Quarterly, along with a new question.*

And lastly, while we’re talking about you, could we also remind you that without your membership, the APS would not exist. It’s renewal time, and we’d love to see you back again. And while you’re at it, would you think about getting a gift subscription for a friend? Garden club subscriptions are dwindling the world over, and in order for the APS to continue, with rising costs and global memberships, we need more members. Or perhaps you would consider a donation, large or small, to help keep the Quarterly going after more than 60 years in print? Please contact Jon Kawaguchi, Treasurer, for more information on how you can be a benefactor for the American Primrose Society.

Jane Guild
Editor
CATEGORIES:
Primulas Grown from
APS Seed Exchange
Primulas Grown in My Garden
Primulas from Other Sources

FORMAT:
4” x 6” or Digital (at 300dpi)
About 5” of your screen

RULES:
Photos can be taken from 2008 and 2007.
Open to all Members except Editorial Board.
Label on the back with your name and address and provide
photo details including year taken, location and species or
cultivar.

Prizes:
1st overall - Your name inscribed on our Photo Contest plaque
8” x 10” framed copy of your photo on display at the National
Show
Cover page of the quarterly, Primroses, Spring 2008
1st in categories - Cover page of the quarterly, Primroses, 2008

Winners will be notified early spring 2008

Deadline: December 31, 2007
JOIN IN THE FUN! SEND PHOTOS TO THE EDITOR AT
editor@americanprimrosesociety.org

PHOTO ESSAY
Not a contest - but a chance to share your ideas in print.
The Editorial Board Committee invites all members to submit
a photo essay, in about 600 words and preferably, but not
necessarily, accompanied by a photo, under any of these
categories:
1. My Favorite Primula and why.
2. Primula received as a gift and what it meant to me
3. What the APS means to me
Submit to the Editor for publication in Primroses during 2008

American Primrose Society
NATIONAL SHOW
Victoria BC
Thursday April 24 to
Sunday April 27, 2008
Cadboro Bay
United Church Hall
Speakers and Banquet, Saturday
Sunday Garden Tours
Seed Exchange

Primula

From the Garden of Marianne Kuchel

Just a reminder - please save your seed...
Pixie Eyes are alive and well in Alaska

“Pixie Eyes were just making their appearance in the rocky areas…”
~ Julia Haldorson

John Mercer’s Hybrids

“He names his hybrids after his family, and his early ones were named after his sons, Philip and Gordon.”

~ Julia Haldorson
Where do new plant introductions come from?  
Notes on a hybridizer – John Mercer

MAEDYTHE MARTIN

Primrose collectors are always excited to find a new variety. But where do they come from? Luckily there are a few dedicated souls who hybridize plants and with success are able to introduce new varieties. John Mercer in Yorkshire, England is one of these clever people.

John began hybridizing *P. marginata* and *P. x pubescens* two or three decades ago but I only became aware of his work in about 2000. April Boettger and I were putting together a presentation on *P. marginata* for the Western Winter Study Weekend to be held here in Victoria, B.C. and I asked to borrow some slides of *P. marginata* from England. One slide showed a picture of ‘Philip’ and once I saw it, I was absolutely besotted! It is a beautiful plant, with silver toothed leaves and a deep blue-purple flower with a silver edge to the petal.

It was a real treat to visit John in 2005. He lives on the west side of Bradford, near the road to Haworth, in a pleasant area called Stoney Ridge in a little semi-detached house with real stone troughs in the front yard. The back yard has two greenhouses full of treasures. He names his hybrids after his family, and his early ones were named after his sons, Philip and Gordon. He started producing the *P. marginata* hybrids with ‘El Bolton Form’, an old pinky-purple *P. marginata* found in the gardens of a nursing home of that name near Grassington in North Yorkshire. It was grown and passed around and a plant came into his hands. He crossed it with *P. pubescens* ‘Beverly White’ another plant he had growing at that time. I believe ‘Gordon’ came from this cross. ‘Philip’ carries the fine wire-edge of ‘Wharfedale Bluebell’ one of its parents, a cross with ‘Zenobia’. These two are a significant advance in the range of *P. marginata* colors adding their dark jewel tones, plum and purple.

Another plant John told me about was ‘Victoria’. It is an old one and no one quite knows its origin. It is a smaller plant, probably with *P. x pubescens* in its background, but has nice silver-mealed leaves and bright red flowers. John crossed it with *P. marginata* ‘White Lady’ and produced ‘Dexter Rhys’. This has dusky red flowers with *P. marginata*-type leaves, and is named for one of his grandsons. I was delighted to get a plant of ‘Victoria’ from John last year, and was able to put it in one of the shows here at the West Coast this spring.

How does he produce these new plants? Much like any hybridizer, he takes some care in getting the pollen from the selected plant onto the pollen parent. John does try to cross pollen from a thrum plant onto a pin plant. He puts pollen, using the anthers themselves, onto two or three flowers on one pip, to ensure he gets lots of...
viable seed, and marks the cross with a white tag tied onto the flower head. This records the parent plants used to make the cross, and the same information goes onto the seed envelope when seed is collected a couple of months later. John picks the whole head and puts it into the envelope, then waits for it to dry completely before shaking out the seed. These are grown on and the best seedlings are selected a few years later to go to shows and be named.

When I talked to John recently, he told me he is interested in introducing some new P. marginata varieties from species. In fact he has collected seed of P. marginata in the Alps, but he said nothing he grew was any better that what was already available. However, he will work with available selected forms and cross them and see if he can produce something new and interesting.

This is of interest to me, as my friend Joyce Carruthers gave me a little pot of P. marginata seed she collected a couple of years ago on Mount Chalron in North-West Maritime Alps, in France. When she gave me the pot, there were 9 tiny seedlings, but this spring a bunch more sprang up! I was loath to disturb the seedlings, but by April, the two biggest seedlings were crowding out the others, so I carefully pricked them out. They show a distinct round-toothed leaf. They are happily growing, and in June I pricked out three or four more. There are more than twenty seedlings all together. I think I shall take one to John later this year, to add to his breeding plants, and also make some available at the APS National Show here in Victoria next year. It is interesting how many seedlings have the same round leaf, while others have a leaf more like an auricula – less toothed and no meal. Joyce purposely collected them from plants with good leaf form, she tells me. It will be interesting to see what these plants look like next spring.

John Richards has helped John Mercer in his new P. marginata species breeding program, by taking the pollen and checking it to be sure it is from a species plant. It turned out that some of the ones John wanted to start with were not species but hybrids.

A few years ago I crossed P. marginata ‘Wharfedale Bluebell’ with P. marginata ‘Allen Jones’ and grew on a number of seedlings. There were a wide variety of plants from the cross, from giant purple-blue garden auriculas to more refined plants with P. marginata-like leaves. One I called ‘Blue Lightning’ had a clear blue flower with a white eye over heavily mealed and toothed foliage. I gave one to John a couple of years ago and he tells me he now has a seedpod on his plant that he is carefully watching. It is always so interesting to see what comes from a cross; there is no way to tell what you will get. This must be the appeal of hybridizing – the surprises waiting for the patient grower.

So if you have the inclination, try a cross on your favorite plant, just to see what you get. There may be a pleasant surprise waiting for you!

Wikipedia, the on-line font of knowledge!

Did you know there is an entry for Primula in Wikipedia? Jane Guild, our editor, looked at the entry and was saddened there was very little actual information. There are 148 entries for Primula species names, but of those, only 11 have any information written about them. And there was no link to the American Primrose Society! Jane has added our Society as a link, and I wondered if anyone would “adopt a primrose” and write a paragraph or two about some of the most popular species. Judith Sellers has recently written about P. juliae and perhaps her article can be added: I’ll ask her. Also in this issue Julia Haldorson writes about Primula cuneifolia var. saxifragifolia growing near Juneau, Alaska. I’ll ask her if we can add that on behalf of APS. I will undertake to do P. marginata if some of you will offer to do, say: P. japonica, P. rushyi or P. viallii -- or any other one that appeals to you. Just drop a note to Jane Guild, the editor to say which one you will do. She will arrange to add them to Wikipedia. APS is moving into the cyber-world! Check out Primula at Wikipedia.com

A recent on-line posting on Primula

Have you happened to find this recent article on Primula on the web? For those of you who like to use your computer to find out more about Primula look at this site:

http://www.gardenguides.com/how-to/tipstechniques/flowers/primuas.asp. It is by John Richmond, in England, and you will find a survey of the plants he grows with some pretty pictures. There are ideas for landscaping, using Primula in the garden. Have a look and spend a pleasant few minutes in the world of Primula.

Adding to the range of membership classes

You will notice on the renewal form there are new classes of membership. The APS does need some additional funds in order to be able to keep publishing the quarterly. If any of you can help, please do. The recent postal rate changes in the US are just an example of increasing costs. We would like to keep the quarterly going, so give this some thought.

Is anyone out there?

I was just visiting with Jay Lunn, and he would like to know if anyone had seed of his P. kisoana crossed with P. polyneura come up for any APS member who got the seed. This is something I’ve always wondered, as well. Are there any striped auriculas out there from the seed I have sent to the seed exchange? Please take a moment to send an email to one of us, Maedythe Martin, Jane Guild or Jay Lunn (lunn@teleport.com) to report on any APS seed that germinated. We need to know!
Pixie Eyes are Alive and Well in Juneau, Alaska

JULIA HALDORSON

In an article appearing in the fall 1999 issue of Primroses, Ed Buyarski reported on the Primula cuneifolia var. saxifragifolia (Pixie Eyes) that he saw near Mt. Roberts above downtown Juneau (see “Wild Primulas above Juneau” by Ed Buyarski, Primroses, Vol. 57, No. 4). Seeds collected by Ed were offered in the 1999 – 2000 APS seed exchange. I like to think that plants from those seeds may be growing today in a garden somewhere.

This summer, I was lucky enough to make two trips to the Mt. Roberts area. Getting to the 1800’ level is easy and fun; it’s a five minute tram ride up and away from downtown Juneau. The first trip was on July 7, 2007. There were sizable snow patches to hike across en route to the 3400’ level on Gold Ridge. Pixie Eyes were just making their appearance in the rocky areas at about 2300’. Moss campion (Silene acaulis) was blooming nearby as well, resulting in a lovely natural rock garden. Higher up, on Gold Ridge, I found large grassy areas where narcissus anemone (Anemone narcissiflora) and several species of native buttercups were in full bloom. Along the way I saw a cute little purple flower called the woolly lousewort (Pedicularis lanata), also in full bloom.

During the last week of July 2007, I made another trip to the Mt. Roberts area and was rewarded with the sight of many more Pixie Eyes specimens in bloom; in most locations white-flowered heather was blooming nearby, as was dark, purple-colored roseroot (Sedum integrifolium). Most of the large snow patches were gone. The moss campion, narcissus anemone and buttercups were gone as well, but other flowers in full bloom included red columbine (Aquilegia formosa), Arctic lupine (Lupinus arcticus), and deep blue monkshood (Aconitum delphinifolium) which is dwarfed with a single flower at high elevations, but is tall and robust with numerous flowers lower down.

Like so many of the shrubs and flowers in the woods and on the ridges around Juneau, P. cuneifolia seemed especially lovely this summer. Perhaps it was the physiological response by the plants to an unusually cold and snowy winter that made them seem so special; or, maybe it was a cerebral response by the hiker who appreciates the warm, summer weather, and the carpet of blooming wildflowers surrounding her, all the more for a hard winter; it’s hard to tell.

Please see accompanying photos on p. 22.

Editor’s Note - Welcome to Julia Haldorson; now on the Board as Membership Chairperson.
American Primrose Society
Minutes of the Board Meeting
August 27th 2007

The meeting was held online and by telephone.

Present: Linda Bailey (Director), Rodney Barker (Director), Mary Jo Burns (Director), Julia Haldorson (Director), Jon Kawaguchi (Treasurer), Marianne Kuchel (Director), Maedythe Martin (President of BC Group and Chair of the Editorial Committee), Lee Nelson (President), Judith Sellers (Vice President)

Others present: Cheri Fluck

Regrets: Michael Plumb

1. The Minutes of May 19th 2007 (AGM) Accepted as presented (Judith / Julia)

2. Treasurer’s Report
   - Total income less expenses January 1, 2007 to Aug. 15, 2007: ($2,255.35)
   - The Treasurer’s report was accepted with a correction to the Society’s name (Judith / Mary Jo).

3. Committee Reports
   - Seed Exchange (Note: The board had previously received Jacques’ report by email)
     - The Seed Exchange produced a final profit of $316.36 (revenue was $2,035.50; expenses were $1719.14). These numbers are virtually unchanged from the last minutes.
     - To economize, next year a printed seed list will be mailed only to those who ask for it, and the complete list (including order forms etc) will be published on the APS website, which will allow for the posting of updates on seed availability. Otherwise, the system for next year will remain the same. The cost of seed will remain at a uniform price of $0.75 per packet. Minimum order 6 packets, maximum order 20 packets, 30 packets for donors (Donors do not receive “free” packets.). All overseas members pay for seed, whether “twins” or not. Donors’ orders to be given priority. A fee of $2.00 will be charged for orders placed using a credit card.
     - ACTION: Maedythe will place a reminder of how the Exchange operates in the Quarterly.
     - Jacques reminded the board that if the Exchange received large donations of interesting seed from APS members, money could be saved as there would be less need to purchase from commercial growers.
     - MOTION (Judith / Marianne): That the Seed Exchange Coordinator be reimbursed for expenses up to the amount of revenue received, but not in excess of US $2,000. Carried.
   - Primroses Quarterly: Editor’s Report provided by Maedythe on behalf of Jane Guild
     - The Quarterly is back on schedule.
     - The Photo Contest was a success. An ad for the 2007 contest will be placed in the summer quarterly.
     - Membership revenue is approx. $5,300, while Quarterly costs are approx. $10,000.

4. Old Business
   - Primroses Quarterly: Sales of old quarterlies
     - Cheri Fluck proposes to sell 27 complete sets of these for $25.00 each. Cheri will cover postage herself.
     - MOTION (Mary Jo / Linda): That Cheri be given authority to dispose of the old Quarterlies in the manner proposed. Carried.
   - Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws
     - Both parts were approved (11 members for, none opposed).
   - Election of new board member
     - Julia Haldorson was re-elected unanimously. There were no write-in candidates.

5. New Business
   - Resignation of Sandra Ladendorf
     - As a result, one Director’s position is still vacant. Cheri has indicated she is willing to stand for this position. Maedythe, Judith and Mary Jo nominated Cheri at the meeting. A ballot will be placed in the winter Quarterly. In the meantime, the President or VP has the right to appoint Cheri to a committee. Cheri will be included in the board email address list from now on.
   - Protection of members’ privacy
     - Tabled for the next meeting.

6. Next board meeting
   - Provisionally set for November 18, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Plumb, Secretary

There is therefore an urgent need to increase revenue.
- MOTION (Judith / Jon): That the Editor word the membership reminder in the Quarterly to include Sustaining Membership of $100 or more, a Donor line, a Gift Membership line, and a $3.00 surcharge if a credit card is used instead of a check. Carried.

National Show Planning Committee
- Michael was unavailable to provide details. Dates are April 25-28. An announcement will be put in the fall Quarterly, and full details will go in the winter (January 2008) issue. Collecting the trophies was discussed, but border difficulties concerning silver preclude bringing them to Victoria, BC.

Membership Committee
- Julia Haldorson kindly offered to chair this committee. The President, VP and Board gratefully accepted. Membership renewals and enquiries will be sent to her. Julia invited suggestions from the board.

Website
- Susan Gray cannot continue as Webmaster for now. Jane Guild has offered to take on the job for a stipend of $350 per quarter. An anonymous donor is willing to cover the first year. MOTION (Linda / Judith): That Jane be hired as Webmaster for one year initially, starting this September (2007). Carried.

Updated ones need printing for nurseries, vendors, shows, etc. An important method of advertising.
- MOTION (Mary Jo / Marianne): That Jon be authorized to spend up to $250.00 to pay for the printing of 999 new rack cards. Carried.
- Jane will check the design of the new cards.
It’s Time to Renew Your Membership!

The membership fees for the American Primrose Society have become very important due to the rising cost of publishing the quarterly journal. The total annual membership income of approximately $5,000 covers only about half of the $10,000 it costs to print and mail the quarterly. The recent rise in postal rate in the US has contributed to increased costs. With many garden clubs and organizations having difficulties maintaining member levels, APS is reluctant to raise membership fees. However, we would like to reintroduce the Sustaining Membership category for those who wish to support APS financially, and to add a line for those who would like to donate any amount over their annual subscription fee.

We all enjoy the quarterly, and its color pages are a feast for the soul, as well as a useful visual reference. We want to maintain the quality of our publication and you can help. You may want to give a membership as a year-long gift to a gardening friend, or as a Holiday gift to someone you know. Now is the perfect time of year for gift-giving. Please consider supporting the APS in any of these ways and remember, any donation within the USA is tax deductible and a receipt will be issued.

Sincerely,
The APS Board
Editorial Committee

Getting Ready for the 2007-2008 APS Seed Exchange

As we enter autumn, the Seed Exchange workers are seeking sources for a variety of quality Primula and Primulaceae seeds to share with members. We hope that the weather everywhere has been conducive to an abundance of full capsules this year and that there will be some exciting species available.

The most valuable seed source is our member-donors, so please send your seeds very soon and most generously in order to receive ‘first served’ seeds, the option to buy 10 extra packets, our gratitude, and your name in print on the same page as ‘Barnhaven Primroses’ in exchange.

**USA Donors** are asked to send their clean seeds in spill-proof envelopes labeled with donor name, species and other pertinent information (at least 30 seeds each of three different species) to: APS (PO Box 67, Millwood, NY 10546). **Non-USA Donors**, please mail to Maedythe Martin, 951 Joan Crescent, Victoria, BC V8S 3L3 Canada.

The Seed List should be available in early December, with orders filled beginning in January. All seeds will again be priced at 75 cents per packet, minimum order 6 packets, maximum 20, (30 for donors). All members must include full payment with their orders, with checks or International Money Orders preferred, as there is a $3 surcharge for use of a credit card.

In order to avoid the high cost of mailing to all members, anyone wishing a printed **seed list** and order form should request them from APS, c/o J. Mommens, PO Box 67, Millwood, NY 10546 or jmommens@westnet.com The seed list and printable order form will otherwise be available only on the APS Official Web Site, where it will be periodically updated to indicate which selections are still available.
Membership Renewal

Please send this form (or a photocopy, or print it from the website at www.americanprimrosesociety.org) and mail to the address below. Please make checks payable to the American Primrose Society. Receipts will not be sent unless requested (S.A.E. please).

American Primrose Society  
Jon Kawaguchi, Treasurer  
3524 Bowman Ct.  
Alameda, Calif. 94502

Please renew my membership, which includes a year’s subscription to the APS quarterly Primroses, as well as annual Seed Exchange privileges, access to the ‘Members Only’ area of the APS web site, APS Book Store and Slide Library, in the following category:

___ Annual Membership $25  
___ Three year membership $70  
___ Sustaining Membership $100 per year (or any amount over $100)  
___ Overseas Membership $32 US per year  
___ Three years overseas membership $90  
___ Gift Membership $25 per year (a card with your name will be sent)  
___ Holiday Gift $25 per year (a holiday card with your name will be sent by Dec 15)  
___ Donation $__________  
___ Please send me a copy of the APS Pictorial Dictionary on CD  
   *$3 surcharge for payments by VISA

Pay by VISA: Card # _______ - _______ - _______ - _______  
Exp. Date: ___________

Signature ______________ Name on Card ______________

NAME: ____________________________________________

ADDRESS: _____________________________________________

CITY: _________________________ STATE: ______ ZIP: ________

EMAIL: ______________________ PHONE: ___________________

We will print your name and address in the Annual Membership list unless you tick here __

Featured on our Back Cover

Reproduced with kind permission by Pam Eveleigh, PrimulaWorld.com’s creator, an overview of Primula in the Fall, showing the various ways Primula prepare for the winter and coming spring.

PrimulaWorld’s mission is to help Primula enthusiasts identify species and cultivars through over 2,500 images.

Also included on the website are several invaluable resources detailing the finer points of Primula and their cultivation such as ‘Hand Pollinating’ and ‘Growing from Seed’.


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Primulas in Fall

Some primulas die back completely in the fall, leaving no sign of the plant during the winter.

A typical way for some primulas to spend the winter is as a resting bud. The mature leaves die back and a new set of short leaves are grown closely together to form a protective layer around the growth point.

Often primulas put on a spurt of new growth in the fall. The leaves are shorter and sometimes farina covered. The mature leaves have had their farina washed off during rain.

If you look closely in the Fall, you can see the buds have formed on some primulas.