Primroses

The Quarterly of the American Primrose Society

Volume 70 No 2 Spring 2012

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 disseminating information about *Primula*.

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Field Cover: Barrie Porteous’ overall winner in the 2011 Photo Contest - ‘Arctic Yellow’- grown in his garden in Ontario, Canada. Congratulations Barrie!

Back Cover: Matt Mattus has been to the Alps again, bringing us back this lovely *P. farinosa*, complete with idyllic mountain backdrop. Thanks Matt.

Front Cover: This is a P. denticulata and auricula and will also be covered in this issue.

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President’s Message

Spring seems to be arriving early in many places; here in the Upper Midwest it is probably about four weeks early. The snow has been gone since mid-March, so the ski trails and hills have closed. This usually heralds “mud-season” but this year the early thaw and warm drying weather have shortened this to a couple of days. The up side of this is that I already have *Primula denticulata* and some of the earlier polyanthus hybrids in bloom in my garden. Daffodils are in bloom, and the trees are starting to leaf out. The down side is that everyone is promising that we will pay for this with a major snowstorm and killing frost in April. As the usual “planting out” date in this area is May 15th, there is still plenty of time for these dire predictions to come true.

On the other hand, I understand that the weather on the Pacific West Coast remains cooler than normal. Some say the season there is three weeks behind normal. This is very aggravating for members getting plants ready for the show! Trying to find something in bloom is the issue. Our Annual Show this year, to be held in conjunction with the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon, is taking place April 6, 7 and 8th. This is a Commemorative Show – it is 70 years almost exactly to the day from when the first APS show was held in Portland. There is a great article on Florence Bellis, one of the founding members of APS, that you can find by going to the HPSO website [www.hardyplantsociety.org](http://www.hardyplantsociety.org) and click farther down on the page on “Much more information” about Hortlandia, the spring sale. At the bottom of that page is a link to the article on Florence Bellis. APS Show attendees will be treated to a series of talks by guest speaker Bob Taylor from Yorkshire, England. He is an accomplished grower of all kinds of *Primula* and auricula and will also introduce us to Florists’ Flowers of the 17th century, some of which are still grown today.
As part of the nostalgic look at primoses and the APS, there will be a display by Barnhaven, the nursery founded by Florence Bellis. The banquet talk will be a look back at some of the people and plants from the past as seen in old Society slides. I hope as many of you as possible will attend the Show and also the Annual General Meeting to be held at 4:00 pm on Saturday, April 7th. As Anne and I have somehow managed to miss Oregon in all of our travels, we’ve decided to visit in style for their Show. That means taking the ‘Empire Builder’ Amtrak train from Wisconsin to Portland. We took this trip to Seattle a few years ago, but two months later in the year. The western portion of the route is spectacular, going through Glacier National Park and then on through the mountains to Spokane where it splits, on to Seattle or to follow the Columbia River Gorge to Portland. It takes two and a half days but avoids all the rush and stress and annoying delays of air travel; that is if that predicted April major snow storm doesn’t cross our path somewhere between here and there.

For those at the East Coast, the New England Chapter Show will be held May 4th, 5th and 6th. More information on the show is contained in this issue.

The Seed Exchange is successfully over for this year, but please have a look at the report in this issue by the director to see if you can find any of the most desirable plants and save some seed for the Exchange for this coming winter.

And this issue has the over-all winning photo from the 2011 Photo Contest. Congratulations to Barrie Porteous for his photo of his “Arctic Yellow’ primrose in his garden, which captures the essence of spring. I am sure many members cannot resist taking photos of their prized Primulas. I take too many, but somehow rarely get something I am delighted with, even with the enhancements of Photoshop! But the entries in our annual Photo Contest show it can be done, and more of us should take the time and effort to take that one perfect photo and enter it in this year’s contest. Winners from the other categories will be featured on the covers of the summer and fall issues.

Growing Primula in Newfoundland

PETER SCOTT

Newfoundland, the most eastern province of Canada, has a land area of 42,030 square miles and is the sixteenth largest island in the world. The island is at the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with the Atlantic Ocean on the north, east and south. The Long Range Mountains in southwestern Newfoundland are part of the Appalachian Mountains. They are now eroded down to the root of the original mountains which were as high as the Himalayan Mountains in their day.

There are no snakes, skunks, deer, porcupines or ground hogs on the island, but in the 1960s, chipmunks and squirrels were introduced, the latter now colonizing the whole island.

Probably, most of us have never been to Newfoundland, let alone wonder about growing primroses on the island, but Peter Scott, an APS member who is now retired, started gardening in Newfoundland when he was in high school. Although he is temporarily not living in Newfoundland, Peter has been kind enough to share his knowledge of the island and his gardening experience with us.

Peter’s garden was in the St. John’s area of east Newfoundland. The east coast is a peninsula sticking out into the North Atlantic, and as this great body of water slowly heats and cools, it influences the climate of eastern Newfoundland. The coastal areas enjoy a maritime climate of cooler summers and milder winters. The ground does not get hot in summer and often does not freeze in winter. Usually, the first killing frost is in late October or early November. In spring, the first flowers appear around March 21, but one year were as early as February 26. At times, Peter had flowers in his garden all year round (violas).

The soil in the St. John’s area is a podzol and is yellowish in color. It would be considered subsoil in more favored parts of Canada. Peter incorporated as much organic matter as he could while digging his beds to about 15” in depth and removing rocks as he dug. New plants were watered once at planting and then not watered again. Generally there was enough rain, and Peter thought that the drier weeks gave the plants a little hint of seasons. Because the spring and autumn tended to be damp, plants were not mulched in order to avoid plant rot. And plants were not given any added protection during the winter months as there was usually more-than-adequate snow cover.

For those of us who live in much-less-hospitable climates for gardening, the east coast of Newfoundland sounds like a gardeners’ paradise. And indeed, Peter

Saving seed starts with pollinating!

Make sure your plants are pollinated wherever you may reside so the Seed Exchange is well stocked with APS seed and pride
Scott was able to plant and grow many species and varieties of Primula. Primula denticulata, P. acaulis, P. elatior, P. veris, P. vulgaris and P. polyanthus all grew well for him. He had many plants of the Cowichan variety and said that ‘Wanda,’ one of the offspring of P. juliae was seen throughout the gardens of St. John’s. He mentions that Primula vialii was short-lived and needed to be replaced, usually from nursery stock, and that he never ventured into the candelabra primroses because he lacked a damp spot in his garden.

Of all the many Primula that Peter grew, his foray into raising Primula auricula from seed obtained from seed exchanges seems to have given him the most pleasure. He was pleased with the many different varieties he was able to grow and the plants did well for him. He was very sorry to have to leave this collection when he moved from Newfoundland, but plans to return before long.

Two species of Primula are native to Newfoundland. Both Primula egaliksensis and P. laurentiana grow on the west coast of the island and into Labrador. The soil is alkaline in some localities there and the area is mountainous. Unlike the climate of eastern Newfoundland, the continental climates are influenced by the heat properties of the land masses which heat up and cool quickly. The winters are cold and the summers can be hot. Richards (Primula, Timber Press, 1993) states that P. egaliksensis with its lavender or white flowers is short-lived and “has no garden value.” Richards explains this is one of the “circum-arctic” species which circle the high northern wet meadows around the globe from northern Greenland, Newfoundland, Western North America to Alaska. And while it has no value as a garden plant, he mentions (p. 221) that it is sometimes grown in Botanic Gardens such as Kew where he saw it in 1990.

On the other hand, P. laurentiana, which is also short-lived but sets seed freely, is “a robust attractive plant, the best of the American Aleuritia for the open garden” (p. 234). For Peter, who is familiar with both these species, he felt that, in order to be enjoyed, P. laurentiana’s small size called for an elevated position, and since he did not have a rock garden, he did not include it among his plants.


The book covers a fascinating time period full of new ideas. Carl Linneaus’ classification system had been established and plants were being named in the binomial system; plant hunters were exploring and sending previously unknown species back to Europe, and the early botanical networks were being developed. In the author’s note, Fisher says, “The subject is huge, and this book touches on all aspects from biography to geography, hoping that readers, initially inspired by the beauty of the flowers, will be lured into further explorations of their own.” (p. 4)

This is the spirit that lightens the descriptive paragraphs printed alongside each illustration. In the notes for the auricula, Fisher tells us that Primula were first brought into cultivation by Carolus Clusius (French name Charles de L’Escluse 1526 – 1609) when he was employed by Emperor Maxmillian in Vienna in 1573. Among his other duties, Clusius oversaw the imperial gardens. “The flowers were developed for rich, velvety colours contrasting with the pale “paste” of the centre, and by the 1730s they featured repeatedly in the flower paintings of Jan van Huysum and his followers. As auriculas became collectors’ items their colors were catalogued with tempting names – leather-coat, willow, mouse, murrey, black and “Mistress Buggs her fine purple raised by her in Battersea near London.” (p. 37)

It is well worth reading Fisher’s introduction to the book. In it she gives an overview of the development of botanical studies at various centers in Europe. She mentions authors and artists from this exciting time in the gardening world and lists their works and where they were established. This information could well provide the beginning of a list of galleries and museums that would merit a visit from anyone wanting to study original botanical prints. And it is in these prints and paintings that one glimpses the plants from the past.

However, except for a simple credit, Fisher does not give further information about the lovely image of an auricula chosen for the cover. So, as the author hoped, the reader is lured on to further exploration and, of course, in our present day and age, turns to the internet. The illustration of a formally arranged grey-edged
auricula comes from Robert John Thornton’s remarkable volume *Temple of Flora*, a publication issued in England in the late 1700s. It was meant to come out in three parts but was never completed, and finally only 29 large plates, each 22 x 17 ¾ inches, were issued. Produced with stipple engraving, mezzotint and aquatint, the process was so expensive that the project was declared a “botanical folly.” It even became the talk of the town of London for being unsuccessful. By the time he died, Thornton (1768-1831) was destitute. It is satisfying to find that he has been given more respect since; a number of versions have been issued, and more than two hundred years later, using their own copies of the plates and new technology, the Folio Society of London has published a full size facsimile edition.

One of the things that distinguishes Thornton’s publication, and perhaps contributes to its uniqueness, is that Thornton chose his artists from landscape and portrait painters. Unlike most botanical illustrations, those in the *Temple of Flora* show plants in their natural settings. In the case of our auricula, it is shown set against a background of mountains. The effect of having landscape is to make the viewer conscious of the setting and perhaps then to wonder what it would be like actually to find *Primula auricula* in the mountains. Patricia Cleveland-Peck, in her book *Auriculas through the ages; Bear’s Ears, Ricklers and Painted Ladies*, (Ramsay, Crown Press, 2011), describes how this happened to her during her travels in the Alps. “On the day I reached the top of the Kitzbuheler Horn high in the Austrian Alps, the sun was shining but the air was fresh with the memory of snow. From my perch two thousand metres up, however, it was not the magnificent view but the masses of yellow *Primula auricula* growing on the rocky outcrops at my feet that absorbed me.” (p. 7) She quotes the Rev. C. Oscar Moreton (an earlier subject of one of these columns): “Of all the many thousands of wild auriculas which grow in the Alps, the greater part are never seen by the eye of man… To see such a plant for the first time, growing in its native place in the rocky turf of a steep Alpine mountainside, is an experience not easily forgotten, and leaves something of its glory imprinted on the mind.” (p. 7) To have this experience, the modern day *Primula*-lover would have to travel to Europe for the Pyrenees, the Alps or the Dolomites; to India and China for the Himalayas; and, in North America, to Colorado, Utah or Newfoundland to see the plants in their locale. One such *Primula* expert, Pam Eveleigh, has done just this, and all of us who have enjoyed one of her travel talks share the delight and wonder of finding *Primula* in their own native corner of the world. One image, never to be forgotten, is Pam in Tibet, surrounded by a field of *P. tibetica*. (See the picture in this issue - p. 16)

To return to the grey-edged auricula on Fisher’s book cover, it cannot be imagined as something growing in nature, but it is a plant highly treasured by collectors of the day. It is only in paintings and prints such as this one that we can see what an auricula-lover in the 1790s saw, and so have an idea of what the plants of that time looked like. Cleveland-Peck discovered the value of looking at original sources in the research for her book. She visited any number of museums to look at florilegions, prints and paintings. For example, she mentions the *Hortus Nitidissimus* from the 1700s which contains painting by the great artist Georg Dionysus Ehret. “In England, one copy is found in Kew,” she tells us, “and another in the Natural History Museum, and both of these have been digitalized and combined to form an Ideal Copy combining all plates and articles.” (p. 103) This work includes two paintings of auriculas, one by Ehret, and again gives us a glimpse of what was grown long ago in England and on the continent.

Today it is still possible to visit *Primula* in the mountains in far-flung places throughout the world if you are an ambitious traveler. It is also possible to visit the past, through the paintings and prints in museums and art galleries. And to compare the plants from the past to the present day, it is possible to visit a *Primula* show, to go around reveling at the sight of these lovely little blooms, much more easily inspected closely on waist-high display tables. Of course, nothing is better than a garden visit on a day in spring when the visitor can look down to clumps of auriculas in bloom, a patch of color that looks as if it should be part of a magic carpet.

Notes and References


Cleveland-Peck, Patricia. *Auriculas Through the Ages; Bear’s Ears, Ricklers and Painted Ladies*. (Ramsay, Crown Press, 2011)

Seed Exchange Thoughts & Observations

AMY OLMSTEAD

I’ve just completed my second year managing the seed exchange. While it has consumed many winter hours, it has also been a fun opportunity to learn. I’ve been able to see what the members of the society are growing and where their interests lie. Whether primarily in species, crosses or a bit of both. Or it could be choices from mostly the Primula section where lots of our seed comes from the folks at Barnhaven. I must confess when I first joined APS I looked for their seed and ordered those instead of seed donated from members. But now that I have become more knowledgeable about what I can grow, where my interests are now and who is donating seed, my choices have changed and I find I prefer mostly species with a few of the crosses mixed in for fun, just to see what I’ll get. And these mainly come from our members who grow a fantastic array of species from all over the world!

Receiving the donations of seed in the fall is always a treat! I really look forward to seeing what members are growing in their own gardens. It also helps me to understand what I might be able to grow in my gardens here in Vermont. If I see something come in that I hadn’t thought I could grow from someone with a similar climate to mine, I’ll give it a try. This year we added either the state, province or country that each donor hails from, in the hopes that it might help narrow down your choices of seed and to make your growing more successful by matching similar growing climates.

I’m always on the lookout for something new and different to add to my gardens and I’m open to trying something that might not be quite hardy for me, but with a little research on a particular species’ needs I just might be able to push the boundaries a little. For instance, I always thought I shouldn’t grow auriculas in the open gardens, but now I know that if I want to grow show and fancy auriculas they should be grown under some protection. It’s the border and alpine auriculas that can be very happy and adaptable to the open gardens with just a little attention to soil and siting. So now I’m growing as many of those as I can.

Collecting seed has become an addiction for me now that I’ve been at it for many years. I just can’t let a nice full seedhead get away! At work for a small nursery I am always on the lookout for ripening seedheads and keep a few envelopes in my pocket just in case something catches my eye. If I could convince more members to give seed collecting a try, our selection for the exchange would be so much more diverse than it is now; and we also wouldn’t have to buy in as much as we do now, so please give seed collecting a try. You’ll find it to be so rewarding!

While looking over the seed lists of the past two years I can see that there are trends in what members consistently choose first and which get left for the lucky dip round. The Barnhaven Cowichans are a very popular choice either from Barnhaven themselves or from a member grower. The same goes for anything blue; if it’s blue, it is first to sell out. Last year we were very lucky to have many auricula crosses donated from a couple of generous growers on the west coast and needless to say they were very popular. Anything from a few particular growers are usually ordered first by members in the know, so becoming more involved with your local chapters will give you insider information on who is growing what and what to look for when the seed list becomes available.

Every year there will be a number of really unusual species that are offered by the seed collectors from Europe and you can bet those will be requested early on in the exchange. We who do the ordering don’t always know if they are the most growable but you can bet they will be treasured by whoever can get them to grow to flowering. And if they are fortunate enough to collect seed from them you can be sure they will be a very hot item come seed ordering time next winter!

What we never seem to have enough of are seeds from the section Cortusoides. Any sieboldii, especially the named forms or strains. Anything hand-pollinated is always popular as are the American natives from the section Parryi. Anything in the double forms will be selling out quickly too. As well as the aforementioned “anything blue.” Please consider collecting and donating anything from these groups for the exchange next year.

From year to year trends in color and flower form, popular species and crosses will ebb and flow as growers’ tastes change, but one thing I know is a constant: our members are passionate about Primula. And the more we can get our members to grow from seed the better our exchange will become.

Seed from the APS seed exchange that is first to be chosen and quick to disappear include some of the following:

**The Cowichan Polyanthus**, with their velvety colors always go quickly. From deep red to amethyst and amazing blue, they are treasured by APS members and there can never be enough seed.

**Anything Blue**, from the humble primrose to the stately show auricula, if it is blue, it seems to be wanted by almost everyone. See if you have anything blue in your garden, and try for some seed.

**Primula sieboldii**: for those members clever enough to save seed from your *P. sieboldii*, the rest of us that request seed from the seed exchange are grateful! If you are more adventurous, try some hand pollinating of these lovely flowers, originating in Japan.

**Doubles**: it takes a special gift to hybridize the doubles, be it with primroses or auriculas, but if you happen to get some seed from a double flower, you are a miracle worker and the Society would appreciate any seed you can send.

**Look around your garden and see if you might have some seed that fits into one of these most desirable categories and save it.**
Summer Candelabra Primula in a Victoria garden

DIANE WHITEHEAD

Spring primulas thrive everywhere in Victoria, BC’s mild rainy winter and early soft spring. Summer rain, though, is rare. Victoria is a cool Mediterranean climate, mostly Zone 7 to 8. Three Victoria gardens are noted for streamside displays: Hatley Park, one of the early residences of the Dunsmuir family, and now the site of the Royal Roads University; the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, a school for gardeners in a shady area sloping down to a stream; and in Carmen Varcoe’s garden on a winding country road on the outskirts of town.

Carmen insists her plants be garden-worthy and soundly perennial. This does not mean she neglects them. They are regularly divided so they don’t succumb to rot. She partners candelabras with woodland plants: ferns, smilacina, pulmonarias, rogersia, epimediums and hostas. They grow in the shade of deciduous trees as the huge conifers are limbed up to allow for adequate light. Carmen likes the look of these later-blooming Primula among Rhododendrons. These are the candelabras that meet her expectations:

*Primula japonica* needs to grow in a well-drained spot as it will rot if it is too wet in the winter. Therefore, it must be watered all summer. It self-sows into bark mulch and gravel paths in her garden.

Seedlings of *P. japonica* ‘Postford White’ are not very robust, and sometimes produce pink flowers.

*Primula pulverulenta* has proliferated with year-round water. It doesn’t self-sow for Carmen, but it is grown very easily from seed as long as it is fresh. Plants bulk up quickly and can be divided easily. She teases apart the crowns in February and March when the new leaves are emerging, and the new divisions will then flower during their first summer.

*Primula florindae* also requires year-round water, and does not mind being wet in winter. Its flowers pick beautifully and its strong sweet scent is enjoyed indoors. It does not self-sow.

*Primula helodoxa* (synonym: *P. prolifera*) is reliably perennial though it also has not naturalized. It can be pulled apart if there are two crowns.

*Primula poissonii* flowers much later than the others, and grows well along the stream.

Carmen finds that her moist soil does not suit weevils, but slugs are prolific. She removes leaf litter around the *P. japonicas* particularly, as a way to try to control slugs.
I have been meaning to share the attached pictures ever since I took them, this Spring. Notice of the 2011 Photo Contest in the latest issue of the journal has given me added incentive to do so!

On May 7th, I had the great pleasure to visit the gardens of Chanticleer, in Wayne, Pennsylvania, not far from Philadelphia. I had lived in Philly for ten years, and often visited Longwood and Winterthur gardens, but while I had heard of Chanticleer, I never managed to get there. So when I went to Philly this year I made it my top priority. And fortune smiled; it was a beautiful day! I was in even better luck because, as I discovered, they have not one but two gardens that feature candelabra primroses, and they were in full bloom that day. The first area is a wet, rocky dell. (Winterthur has a similar grotto, on a larger scale.) The second is a meadow planted with a long, undulating band of *Primula* and cammasia - an inspired combination.

I love the Chicago Botanic Garden, and have been a member ever since returning to my midwestern roots. But for garden lovers, Philadelphia is hard to beat. The area is blessed in its climate, and in having three world-class gardens within an hour’s drive of the city. I believe that Longwood and Winterthur are better known. For those who are not familiar with Chanticleer, I highly recommend it. See http://www.chanticleergarden.org/ for more information.

Sincerely,

Judy Robins
Pam Eveleigh, creator of the PrimulaWorld website, is a modern-day Plant Hunter. Here she is in a field of *P. fasciculata* or probably *P. tibetica* in Tibet. Below is the cover of Celia Fisher’s *The Golden Age of Flowers*, displaying one of Thornton’s images from the 1700s - one of the only ways we know what was grown in the past.

Marianne’s Fishbox Seedlings
MARIANNE KUCHEL WRITES:

“It is a great pleasure to work in the greenhouse and to have some flowers around. We have had more snow so the landscape is rather bleak. I do keep some heat on in the greenhouse to 45F but I can only work there when the sun is shining, when it becomes warm and cozy.

“About the seedlings in the fishbox I sent you. I got inspired by David Mellor who only transplants his seedlings rather large, as he believes they like company and that was seconded by Chris Chadwell, when he spoke at the National Show. Instead of transplanting my seedlings to individual pots when they were large enough, I planted them about 1/2” apart in a fishbox with drainage holes. They really took off, so David’s theory proved right. Of course they were carefully labeled. Their roots get a little entangled with each other but they did not seem to mind a little rough treatment, when they were put in individual pots in the end of the summer. Those same seedlings are now putting up trusses, and now comes the fun part of seeing what comes out. Some of the varieties were smaller so I put two in a pot and am now separating them as they have caught up in size. The soil I use is Pro mix 360, a sterile mix, and I add chicken grit and extra perlite.”
The New England Chapter of the American Primrose Society
2012 Primula Show
Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, MA
May 4, 5, 6, 2012

The Judged Primula Exhibition in the Main Hall opens at noon on Saturday, but there is plenty to do at Tower Hill. Visit the APS Welcome Table for information and memberships, and to purchase seeds, books, plants, and primulabilia during Tower Hill open hours, and check out the primroses and other plants that may not generally be available in nurseries offered by vendors from around New England.

The English alpine enthusiast Jim Almond will present ‘Sowing, Growing and Showing Primulas’ on Saturday from 2 to 4:00. Jim Almond is a seasoned speaker noted for his inspirational presentations geared for all, from novices to experienced growers, and will be pleased to answer questions at the end of his talk.

On Sunday, May 6th, the Judged Primula Exhibition in the Main Hall will be open from 9 to 4:00. You are also encouraged to participate in the Primula Round Table Discussion, led by Jim Almond, with G.K. Fenderson, Matt Mattus and Richard May from 1:00 to 3:00.

The New England Chapter’s annual Primrose Show is one of the flower shows and educational programs hosted by Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Worcester County Horticultural Society HQ. An added delight is the Seven State Daffodil Show also held on Saturday and open to all visitors. It is always a pleasure to visit Tower Hill with its many and various gardens, including the sweeping daffodil field, Pond & Woodland Trails, Orangerie, and Belvedere. This is the third oldest active horticultural society in the USA, and a non-profit with the goal of advancing the science, and encouraging and improving the practice of horticulture.

Tower Hill is in the process of implementing a fifty-year master plan, so every year we can look forward to new features. Last spring The Limonaia and Winter Garden were new to the scene.

Access to the Events Schedule and Registration Form are on the APS website home page as ‘2012 New England Show’, and ‘Showing Primula’ under the Main Menu leads to Classes for entering and Guidelines for Judging Primulas at APS Shows.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2012 New England Primrose Show on May 5th & 6th.

Perennial Seed. Beautiful.
Useful. Native...
To the Planet.

Merrill Jensen’s P. alpicola var alba
Riho Teras’ Primula juliae
Photos above are
from Tower Hill
and earlier APS Shows

Primula Vendors include:
Van Berkum Nursery
Evermay Nursery
Mountain Brook Primroses
Primrose Hill Woodlanders
Benjamin Fay’s Plants
Tower Hill Botanic Garden
11 French Drive, Boylston
Massachusetts 01540
508.869.6111 X110 for information
Map and Directions at
www.towerhillbg.org/

There just aren’t enough
to go around!
Here are a few of the more
dramatic entries in the
APS Photo contest.

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Jelitto: a long-time APS supporter

The American Primrose Society and the seed and plant merchant Jelitto have had a long relationship. Jelitto Perennial Seeds has supported the APS with advertisements for decades. Looking through old quarterlies to find information about the early years of the APS, we found this article written by Mr. Jelitto himself, from the January 1954 quarterly. At that time he was the APS regional editor in Germany. We are reproducing this article for your interest and to acknowledge the support of Jelitto through the years.

Dear Editor and Members of the A.P.S.

Many thanks for your letter of the 26th of October requesting me to write about my type of work. Enclosed you will find a picture of myself, as you wished to have it.

My interest in Primulas was awakened when starting my apprenticeship as a gardener in 1913 under the guidance of the then well known Primula author, Dr. Ferdinand Pax, director of the Botanical Institute and Botanical Garden in Breslau. Even at that time, the Botanical Garden in Breslau could boast of quite a collection of Primulas. I was particularly impressed by the then new Primula Juliae, the “carpet-primula”, which was discovered in 1900 by Mrs. Julia Molossiewicz near Lagodechie in the eastern Caucasus Mountains.
As a professional gardener I take great interest in botany. The embryo for the love of the Primrose was started in me by Professor Pax, and further encouraged when working with the great nurseryman Georg Arends (the German Burbank) in Ronsdorf near Wuppertal. Mr. Arends was much occupied in creating Primula hybrids and in their culture. Therefore, in 1918, Primula x Helenae was born here. Mr. Arends has also produced P. Arendsi (obconica) as one of our best potting Primulas. (In most climates a florist or hothouse Primula.) Working with Mr. Arends fanned my love for Primulas to an intense enthusiasm. Mr. Arends passed away in March, 1952 at the age of 88 years. I had the rare fortune to write the life memories of this great gardener, and it pleases me to have retained for future generations the valuable life of this God-gifted person. I shall take the liberty to send this book to the A.P.S. library. It is titled, Georg Arends, My Life as a Gardener and Hybridizer, and I beg those of you who are interested to turn to page 98 where you will find the caption, “My hybridizing with the Genus Primula.”

In 1925 I was offered the proposition to establish a botanical garden in Essen. It was here that I had the opportunity to devote myself to the Primulas, and had possibly at that time the best Primula collection in Germany. I received many seeds from Professor William Wright Smith of Edinburgh, and simultaneously much seed was exchanged with all botanical gardens. My experiences in germination and culture of Primulas, written down in notes and small gardening publications, were published in 1937 in my book The Garden Primulas.

Also in 1937 I received an offer from Stuttgart to prepare a big garden exhibition, which opened in 1939. I was very much concerned to grasp the opportunity in creating on the 125 acre area a Primrose Garden which would comprise 2 ½ acres and show a complete collection of all the available true species and garden forms. It is deplorable that the war has destroyed all this beauty. Six bomb craters were in this garden. Only in 1948 and 1949 was I able to start over again in the rebuilding of a Primula garden. Naturally it was very difficult because all plants were lost. I was able to increase the collection from year to year, so our Primula garden has become the mecca for enthusiasts today, and is again something to truly admire. The planting has been done with a natural point of view in relation with rhododendron, lilies and perennials, but Primulas are predominant. Many species and hybrids are still missing, in particular the more recent introductions from the Far East. This big exhibition park belongs to the city of Stuttgart. It is my duty as garden superintendent to provide for the complete planting and botanical supervision of this park, for the welfare of the people and also for nature study.

Large plantings of perennials, annuals, roses, dahlias, tulips, etc., give the visitor the opportunity to make the acquaintance with new introductions, also giving the professional the possibility to make comparisons. We maintain a constant list of the more particular plants. It is also here that new roses and dahlias and other perennials are undergoing trials. This is my special work.

I am Editor of the weekly magazine The South German Commercial Gardener too, published by Eugen Ulmer, in Ludwigsburg.

This is proof to you that I am a busy man. But I shall strive, time permitting, to act as your Regional Editor for Germany. I received your Quarterly volumes for 1953, for which you have my thanks. I was astounded at the careful and serious work you produce in the “Quarterly,” and feel great pride to be included in this circle of workers. I will be glad to send you the illustrations from my book, The Garden Primula. I regret that I cannot send you the engraver’s plates and thus save you the expense, but they were made in 1938, and were destroyed in September 1944 during a bomb raid. I also am glad to give you permission to copy the distribution maps on pages 14, 15, and 17, in the same book. These photographs I give the Quarterly without cost or obligation and hope in doing so to contribute towards this valuable work.

Sincerely yours, Leo Jelitto
Our latest Vintage Bit was requested by member Sue Wallbank: “I noticed in Primroses Autumn 2011 a reference to the Herb Dickson article on hand pollinating of primulas (Winter 1968, p. 8-12). Is there a chance this could be reprinted in a forthcoming Primroses?” We are happy to reprint articles of interest to our members. This is for you, Sue!

Hand Pollinating of Primulas

HERBERT DICKSON, VICE PRESIDENT

Hand pollinating is very simple. You merely take pollen from the male part (usually called anther or stamen) of a flower and place the pollen on the female part (usually called stigma or pistil) of a flower where the pollen grains will grow and fertilize the egg cells, which then grow into seeds.

There are a few things you should do to insure harvesting a crop of seed and that the seed are the result of your hand pollinating.

FIRST: Select your parent plants both for seed and pollen. Pot these up in extra large pots or plant them in a raised bench that will hold dirt six to eight inches deep. The reason for this is to get your plants to a level where you can see and easily work with them. CAUTION! If planting in a bench leave 12 inches or more between plants, provide good protection from the rain, some shade, and good ventilation.

SECOND: Mark your parent plants to identify them for future reference.

THIRD: Mark each plant to show what cross you make on it. If you number your crosses, record complete information in a notebook.

FOURTH: Strip each seed parent plant of all spent or old flowers that have ripe pollen. You are now ready to start your hand pollinating.

You must prepare each flower for pollinating. If the flower is a pin eye (pistol extending through the tube beyond the anthers - at right) take hold of both sides of the flower between the thumb and forefinger of each hand. Pull out and back toward the base of the flower. The tube will split and detach at the base (see above). Since the anthers are attached to the tube, they will be removed with the flower. If this is done the same day the flower opens, the pollen is usually not developed; so there is little or no chance of self-pollinating the flower. Bees are not attracted to the pistil after the tube and anthers are removed.

If the flower is a thrum eye (pistil in the tube below the anthers - at right) take the petals and lower part of the tube between thumb and forefinger of one hand and the calyx at the base of the flower with the other hand and pull. With a little practice, the entire tube can be detached without harm to the rest of the flower. If the calyx is long, it may have to be split in two or more pieces and pulled down or cut off to expose the pistil for pollinating.

With your seed parent flowers ready for pollen, strip flowers from the pollen parent plant in the same way you removed the pin-eyed flowers. This gives you a pollen flower in two or more pieces. Fold the base of one of these pieces back against the underside of the petals and hold between the thumb and finger of one hand so that the anthers with the ripe pollen protrude. Hold the flower to be pollinated with the other hand. Brush the anthers across the tip of the pistil (at left). Some of the pollen will stay on the pistil. A small amount
is enough and several flowers can be pollinated with the pollen from one flower. This is a daily procedure until all the flowers on the seed parent have opened and been pollinated.

You could use a magnifying glass and be sure each pistil is receptive before you pollinate it; but I find it easier to pollinate every pistil every day until it is withered or I can plainly see pollen on the pistil from the previous days work.

This is the procedure when your seed and pollen parent plants are both in bloom at the same time. By varying the amount of light and heat the blooming time of some plants can be changed. You may store pollen from early bloomers to use on late bloomers. Collect ripe pollen from the anthers (do not take the anther) into a small container and store this in a smaller container unsealed in a larger sealed jar that contains a desiccant. Keep the large jar in the refrigerator but DO NOT FREEZE. With care in this process, pollen can be stored and kept viable from one season to the next.

After all of the flowers are pollinated, some people prefer to return the plants to the growing bed or plunge the pots in a shady place. I prefer to leave mine on the bench until the seed is harvested. The important thing is to provide good growing conditions so the plants never wants for water but avoid excessive dampness, this encourages disease and fungus, which cause the stem to rot or wilt and you lose your seed crop. GOOD AIR CIRCULATION WITHOUT CROWDING OF PLANTS IS A MUST.

Seeds ripen in the same succession as the flowers opened. The seed must be collected daily as the seed pod starts to split. During this period have a container for each cross and label it with the correct identifying information. This seems an unnecessary reminder, but more crosses are mixed up during this seed picking time than any other time.

The method I have described is not acceptable for accurate scientific experiments. Scientific experiments require positive protecting against chance pollination from other sources. You can be as meticulous and scientific as you wish depending on the degree of accuracy you require in your results. My method is good enough for all practical purposes and 99% accurate.

In hand pollinating when you put the pollen back on the same flower it came from or on another flower on the same plant it is called SELFING. When you put the pollen on a flower of a different plant of the same species it is called CROSSING. When you put the pollen from one species on a flower of a different species it is called HYBRIDIZING. When you cross pollinate closely related plants with the same color or characteristics it is called LINE BREEDING.

Since hybridizing and cross pollinating have become popular with the amateur, the term hybridizing has been loosely used so that now it is used to mean any cross pollinating.

Why do we go to all this bother when primulas usually set plenty of seed if we just leave them alone? There are many good reasons. The most important one is that it gives us control over the parentage of the plants we grow instead of depending upon the random chance of nature. This control allows us to develop plants to better suit our tastes and desires.

It has been a relative few years that the knowledge of how plant characteristics are inherited has been known to man and fewer yet that this knowledge has been available to the ordinary layman. Because of their greater economic value Governments have sponsored scientific experiments that have tailored our food crops to meet regional climatic conditions and farming methods, as well as, a greatly increased yield. In this same period the amateur, hobbyist, and backyard gardener have greatly changed our ornamental plants. We have produced new colors, larger flowers, longer blooming season and original plant habits from miniature to enormous size.

Some people call these changes improvements. It is a matter of opinion that I will leave to the future to decide.

Growing plants from your own hand pollinated seed helps satisfy your natural curiosity and your creative instinct. When compared with growing plants from purchased seed it is the same difference as putting up with the neighbors terrible offspring or caring for your own sweet children. Anyway it is a lot of fun and I wish you success in your pollinating.

Right: the first stages of a ‘take’ in polination, showing the enlarging seed pod at the base of the pistil.

Original photos from Herb Dickson reproduced from Winter 1968 Quarterly.
American Primrose Society
Minutes of the Board Meeting held on January 29th, 2012

The meeting was held online. It opened at 6:02 pm, Eastern Time.

Board members present: Marianne Kuchel (APS Vice-President), Alan Lawrence (APS President), Amy Olmsted (APS Secretary and Webmaster), Susan Schnare (Director), Rhondda Porter (Director)

Regrets: Rodney Barker (Director, New England Chapter Co-Chair), Ed Buyarski (President, Juneau Chapter), Cheri Fluck (Director), Julia Haldorson (Director, Membership Secretary), Jon Kawaguchi (Treasurer), Maedythe Martin (Editor, President of BC Group), Michael Plumb (APS Secretary and Webmaster), Susan Board members present: Kawaguchi (Treasurer), Maedythe Martin (Editor, President of BC Group), Juneau Chapter), Cheri Fluck (Director), Julia Haldorson (Director, Membership Secretary), Jon Kawaguchi (Treasurer), Maedythe Martin (Editor, President of BC Group)

A. Approval of the Agenda (Michael / Marianne), with the addition of life membership for Maedythe Martin under AOB.

B. The Minutes of November 2011 – Accepted as presented (Michael / Marianne)

C. Treasurer's Report (Emailed before the meeting)
1. The new printing arrangements introduced in 2011 have reduced printing and mailing costs for the quarterly by 27.2% compared with 2010.
2. Income less expenses January 1st, 2011 to December 31st, 2011: ($1,339.07)
3. Income less expenses October 1st, 2011 to December 31st, 2011: ($599.57)
4. Total liabilities and equity as of December 31st, 2011: $25,328.54
5. With reduced costs, membership dues still barely cover the production and mailing of the quarterly. Four issues (one year’s membership) currently cost the society $23.40 on average.

6. MOTION (Rhondda / Susan): to accept the report - carried.

D. Committee Reports

1. Seed Exchange:
   a) Amy reported that the exchange was already in the black and proceeding well, with more orders now than at this time last year. NARGS and SRGC have been notified of the coming ‘Lucky Dip’ stage for non-members, which will begin on March 1st.
   b) MOTION (Michael / Rhondda) to accept the SE report. Carried.

2. Editorial Committee:
   a) Technical problems with the new printing firm seem to have been resolved. Great savings in costs continue.
   b) MOTION (Susan / Amy) to accept the editorial report. Carried.

3. Website:
   a) Michael had sent the report to the board by email.
   b) Nearly a quarter of a million people have visited the website since August 2010.
   c) Over 100 members are now registered for access to the members-only areas.
   d) The Forum categories have been reduced to four for simplicity, preserving most of the previous submissions. Michael appealed for more Forum contributions, no matter how short.
   e) PayPal is now one of the normal ways for members to pay dues. Michael will investigate its use for advertising and for the next Seed Exchange.
   f) All four quarterlies for 2011 are now on line, which is a major benefit for new members.
   g) MOTION (Rhondda / Amy): to accept website report. Carried.

4. Membership:
   a) Membership numbers show a slight decline at this point, though some more renewals are expected. Julia has sent reminders by email.
   b) PayPal has started to bring in new members.

5. Motions:
   a) Rhondda suggested that membership run for one year from the time of payment, rather than from November to the following November.
   b) Marianne suggested there be a more certain way to notify new and renewing members that their dues had been received and appreciated. Michael pointed out that this happens automatically when people use PayPal to pay dues.
   c) MOTION (Rhondda / Susan): to accept the Membership Report. Carried.

6. Chapters
1. The board expressed thanks to the New England Chapter for their offer to donate $200 to help with quarterly costs.
2. The BC Group reported on their preparations for the National Show in Portland. In view of much local interest, there seems to be a good chance of forming an Oregon chapter.

7. Business Arising

   Nominations:
   - Michael reported that Rhondda Porter has offered to stand for VP, and Ed Buyarski has agreed to stand for director. Jon Kawaguchi, Susan Schnare and Amy Olmsted have already agreed to stand again. We therefore now have a full slate of candidates. All are subject to approval by the membership, and the ballot will be inserted in the Winter Quarterly.
   - ACTION: Michael will send Alan a revised ballot for insertion in the Winter Quarterly.

8. New Business
1. Advertising Proposal:
   - Rhondda had sent a proposal by email. The aim is to generate revenue.
   - MOTION (Rhondda / Michael): to offer commercial s operations selling primulas and primula seed a sponsored link on the website for $60 per year. Companies advertising regularly in the Quarterly to receive a free sponsored link. Carried. Rhondda will report to the AGM on progress.

9. Adjournment (Rhondda) at 7:45 pm Eastern Time.

   Next meeting: April 7th, time TBA. This will be the AGM at the National Show in Portland, Oregon.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Plumb, Secretary
Join the National Auricula & Primula Society
Midland & West Section
www.auriculaandprimula.org.uk

£10.00 Overseas Membership.
to: The Honorary Treasurer, Roger Woods, 44 Tansey Crescent, Stoney Stanton, Leicestershire, LE9 4BT United Kingdom.

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Rodney Barker, Co-President
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Should there ever be a question about your membership, please contact:

Julia L. Haldorson, APS Membership
P. O. Box 292
Greenbank, Washington 98253 USA
julia-haldorson@ak.net

membership@americanprimrosesociety.org

New Members
from January 1 - April, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Expiry</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Patricia K. Apgar</td>
<td>3 Howard Drive, Newton, New Jersey 07860-6017 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Jacqueline Bassett</td>
<td>8630 Palmer Road, Presque Isle, Wisconsin 54557 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Steve Carter</td>
<td>5145 Waymire Road, Dallas, Oregon 97338 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carter’s Green House &amp; Nursery</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Kat Chiba</td>
<td>3740 State Highway, Cherry Valley, New York 13320 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Aase Garstad</td>
<td>8218 Norway Toronti, Fauske</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Jeffrey Hartman</td>
<td>66 South Shaker Road, Harvard, Massachusetts 01451 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Trond Hoy</td>
<td>Dalanesvegen 110, Kalleikiv, Forresfjorden NO-5563 Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Alicia Kellick</td>
<td>3479 Hansville Road, Kingston, Washington 98346-8863 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Marjorie Kingboll</td>
<td>N4863 Sackett Drive, Medford, Wisconsin 54451 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Harold Koopowitz</td>
<td>14081 Borean Way, Santa Ana, California 92705 USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Larry Litten</td>
<td>40 School Street, Hanover, New Hampshire 03755 USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Michael Mizin</td>
<td>120 Sickler Pond Road, Jermy, Pennsylvania 18433 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Maureen Newman</td>
<td>332 Rezen Road, Roseboom, New York 13460 USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Peri Petersen</td>
<td>2339 Niles Avenue, Saint Joseph, Michigan 49085 USA</td>
</tr>
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NATIONAL AURICULA AND PRIMULA SOCIETY
SOUTHERN SECTION

The National Auricula & Primula Society - Southern Section was founded in 1876 by and for enthusiasts who raised and exhibited Auriculas, Gold-Laced polyanthas and other Primulas.

The Annual subscription is £7.00 (UK) for single or family membership, Overseas £8.00.

Members receive an Illustrated Year Book and a Newsletter - Others, containing interesting articles on growing and raising Primulas together with their history and cultivation.

Applications for membership of the N.A.P.S. Southern Section should be made to:

The Honorary Secretary, Lawrence Wigley, 67 Warnham Court Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, SM5 3ND.

NATIONAL AURICULA AND PRIMULA SOCIETY
NORTHERN SECTION

Please consider joining the National Auricula and Primula Society - Northern Section. Overseas memberships are some of the best ways to learn more about your favorite plants. Benefits include publications and more.

Write: Mr. K. Leeming, 3 Dairibank Drive, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 4JR

Overseas membership £7.50 ($10.00 US)

Please make checks payable to NAPS.
www.auriculas.org.uk

North American Rock Garden Society

Yes, I am interested in a seed exchange, discount book service, slide library, field trips, fact-filled Quarterly, garden visits, and plant sales.

Sign me up!

Membership:
USA, Canada: US$30
Overseas: US$35

Please contact:
Mr. Bobby Ward
Executive Secretary, NARGS
PO Box 18604
Raleigh, NC 27619-8604

Make checks payable to North American Rock Garden Society
https://www.nargs.org/info/smembembership.