American Primrose Society Summer 2017

The View from Here

THE EDITORIAL GROUP

Each year, the summer issue of the quarterly has a lot of show reports. Why, you might ask? First, it is a permanent record of what plants won at the National Show. This historical record can be very useful if one looks back over the years.

Second, the reports tell us what plants are currently being grown. Fashions change over time, and also the grower’s interest and abilities change, so in one decade a particular plant may be grown, and in another decade, it is not to be found. The reports in the quarterly reflect this, but for those on social media, there is a more current and possibly wider scope on what is being grown in the US and around the world.

Many of the reports included here mention what a treat it was to talk to other Primula growers at the National Show. There can be few chances in the spring to talk to like-minded people about your current interest.

E-mail correspondence and the exchange of pictures and thoughts may fill the gap throughout the year, but sometimes face-to-face chats are much more satisfactory.
Auricula Theatre in Japan
KOJI TAKENAKA

The APS, through the website, got a request in April 2017 for some information on auricula theatres from someone in Japan. This is a bit unusual, but upon replying we found that a Botanical Garden in Sapporo City was putting on a display of auriculas along with the more traditional display of Sakuraso, know to us in North America as P. sieboldii. The pictures of the display revealed a very charming if not typical auricula theatre that Koji Takenaka had put together. And the Sakuraso display was most impressive.

Here is some of the information that Koji Takenaka sent in subsequent emails. It seems they had a very successful exhibition.

We are a park management company in Japan named Sapporo Parks and Greenery Association. And my name is Koji Takenaka in charge of public information in this company.

We'll hold both European and Japanese traditional exhibition of Primula named ‘Sakurasou-Museum’ from April 18. In which, we'll show the European traditional exhibition called ‘Theater’ made from Primula auricula and the Japanese traditional exhibition called ‘Sakurasou-Kadan’ made from Primula siboldii and some explanation panel of Primula with pictures. We have a lot of pictures of ‘Sakurasou-Kadan’ but don’t have pictures of ‘Theater’ at all.

I've been seeking someone all of the world who is the specialist of Primula and may have pictures of Primula. Now, I've finally found you. I need to ask an favor of you. Would you mind if you send me several pictures of ‘Theater’ by e-mail? Please contact me at your early convenience. Reference materials which are our exhibition last year are attached.

Auriculas and even any information about them is seldom obtainable in Japan.

Sakurasou-Kadan is one of traditional ways to display Sakurasou as Primul sieboldii. It originated in Edo city sometime between 1830 to 1843 in the Tempoh period. Florists of P. sieboldii – mostly samurais – tried to display their collections beautifully. First, they used ‘Magohando dish’ as a flowerpot. It has evolved into a ‘Sakurason-Bachi’ the more customary pot for P. sieboldii. Second, they displayed P. sieboldii with ‘Sakurason-Bachi’ according to color rules. The traditional theatre has five steps, three walls made of reed and roof made of waterproof paper. Finally, it became known as ‘Sakurason-Kadan.’ It brings out all the attractiveness of P. sieboldii.

The varieties of P. sieboldii in the individual photos are Appare, Asahi and Botanyuki. Appare is the word for maximum praise. Asahi is sunrise. Botanyuki is a kind of snow with moisture.

Our exhibition ‘Sakurasou Museum’ is held until today. Thanks to you, more than 6,000 people have visited us. I'm grateful to you for the references to photos of auricula theatres in Europe. The attached photos provide more atmosphere of the exhibition.

Koji Takenaka
working department, Yurigahara-Park management office
Sapporo Parks and Greenery Association
210 Yurigahara-Park Kita-ku Sapporo-city Japan

Photos provided by Koji Takenaka
Why go to a Primrose Show?

ELIZABETH LAWSON, ITHACA, NY

Matt Mattus captures the romance of attending the National Show of the American Primula Society sponsored by the New England Chapter held May 5-6, 2017 at the Tower Hill Botanic Garden, in a post titled “Primula, Parties and Prizes - The 2017 National Primrose Show Delights Many” on his blog Growing with Plants. His commentary and photographs of beautiful primroses and candlelit dinner tables with wonderful food tell the story of a lovely time.

Asked to answer the question “Why go to a primrose show?” I have come up with a few general thoughts. A show offers many benefits: it gives the general public a venue to look at individual plants; it encourages amateur growers through the awarding of prizes to share outstanding plants; it brings experts from overseas to share their horticultural secrets; and it reinforces spiritual connections between plants and people.

At shows you are forced to look at plants as individuals. There they are in pots almost at eye level, no kneeling or crouching required. Plants are usually seen by participants in a general garden scene, or as part of the process of gardening, so it’s illuminating to single out individuals for scrutiny. While the goal of commercial growers is uniformity, the plants that appear at shows, having been grown by a number of different individuals in varying conditions, all display unique characteristics. Even for those who are used to looking at primroses, there is always something new to notice, some variation that this particular plant was able to embody. I saw a large oxlip (Primula elatior) that changed my view of what an oxlip could look like. Its flower scapes were long and wavy, its leaves large and bountiful. It was huge. I have only ever encountered undersized specimens. It’s important to know the upper and lower limits of variation.

I have planted many primroses without noticing whether they were pin or thrum because I was thinking more about where I was going to put them or where I left my trowel. I have always thought, heretically, that I preferred pin flowers (where the pistil is at the top of the corolla like a moon), but at this show there was a thrum auricula grown by Judith Sellers that caught my attention. I realized that the array of stamen tips truly enhanced the overall impression of the flower.

Susan Schnare’s stunning self-sown Juliana hybrid, which appeared all on its own in her garden, stopped the foot traffic and won Best in Show. Matt Mattus’ photograph on his blog post shows what a hugely charming plant it is, with sturdy reddish flower scapes holding alert, shining white flowers well above compact bright-green foliage. I heard Susan describe it as part elatior, part jack-in-the-green, part …., part …. Viewers were extremely lucky to have the chance to see it “in the flesh” so to speak. Clearly, one of the best things you can do is to let primroses of different kinds fraternize in your garden and watch for promising progeny.

Jodie Mitchell and Lynne Lawson of Barnhaven Primroses in Brittany, France, gave a wonderful talk, first, on candelabra primroses, which is a large group with 40 species and 60 different hybrids, followed by a foray into the belled primroses (P. alpicola, P. florindae, P. secundiflora, and P. sikkimensis) and Sieboldii primroses, a particular favorite of Jodie’s. They shared revelatory information about their seed sowing methods. I realized that my process has been way too fussy, and I can cut my time on that front in half.

The spiritual value of shows has been noted by a modern “florist” (the traditional term for one who raises specialty plants like the auricula or the gold-laced polyanthus) in the UK, who wrote:

Some years ago Richard Critt editor of the American Primrose Society quarterly, persuaded me to pen a piece on an English show day. At that time I felt fairly confident that I fully grasped and could analyze the florist mores, in particular the motivation that drives us to seek solace, acclaim or even obscurity in a congregation such as assembles annually at Brompton. Time, experience, call it what you will, now indicates that the nuances, even the raison d’etre, of the florist cannot easily be interpreted or evaluated in clinical journalese. In fact, our annual ritual at Brompton may fulfill, sustain and nourish in a way one does not fully understand, but clearly the experience has a spiritual connotation.

I have always felt that primroses have a positive aura, and a gathering of people and primroses is as the florist above says “sustaining” and “nourishing,” especially if accompanied by food prepared by Matt Mattus.

(Endnotes)

a Jack Wemyss-Cooke, National Auricula and Primula Society (Southern Section), Year Book 1991.
Judging Results from the APS 2017 National Show

Judges: Kris Fenderson, Mary Malloy, Lynne Lawson, Jodie Mitchell
Clerks: Deborah Wheeler, Marion Stafford, Judith Sellers

There were 70 plants on the bench, from nine entrants. Usually there are upwards of 130, and though there were fewer this year, the plants were all very nicely grown and presented. Several awards were not given, as either there were not enough eligible plants or the ones displayed were not considered worthy of an APS National award.

Best in Show, Best of Section, and winner of the Richard Redfield Trophy for Best Plant and Elaine Malloy Trophy for Best Garden Grown Plant ~ Susan Schnare, for a small flowered yellow Jack-in-the-Green.

Best Acaulis, Best of Section, and winner of the Novice Award ~ Dean Wiegert for ‘Blue Sapphire’.

Best in Auricula Section, First Runner Up for Best in Show ~ Judith Sellers for a lilac semi-double.

Ellen Page Haydon Award for Best Double Auricula ~ Judith Sellers for ‘Powder Puff’ (unofficial name).

Mary Zach Award for Best Show Self Auricula and Best of Section ~ Judith Sellers for a blue self.

John Schuman Award for Best Show Alpine Auricula and C.F. Hill/John Haddock Award for Best Seedling and Best Alpine Auricula Seedling ~ Judith Sellers, for a Gold Centered Red.

Rae Berry Award for Best Species Primula, Best of Section and Third Runner Up for Best in Show ~ Deborah Wheeler for a white denticulata.

John Kerridge Award for Most Species in Bloom ~ Amy Olmsted.

Grower’s Exhibit of Five Plants in One Container and Second Runner Up for Best in Show – Judith Sellers for plants of the double auricula ‘Forest Lemon’.

Best of Section for Other Primula Hybrids ~ Mary Malloy for a very light pink P. sieboldii.

Sweepstakes Award for Most Points in Show ~ Judith Sellers

Primrose Roundtable

NOTES BY DOROTHY SWIFT

This is a summary of our primrose roundtable discussion at the American Primrose Society National Show at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston MA on May 7, 2017.

Attendees welcomed our special guests, Lynne Lawson and Jodie Mitchell from Barnhaven Primroses in France. A question was asked of them about growing primroses in pots, and Lynne and Jodie explained that P. denticulata is the most difficult one for them.

Alan Lawrence explained that he has problems with most asiatics except for P. denticulata. He keeps them inside to avoid summer heat and then plants them out in the fall, and then they die. He particularly has problems with P. ioessa. If the plants are even kept inside for their first winter, they die when planted out.

Judy Sellers added that hers die also, even in July and August in pots under cover. She thinks that heat, humidity, and hot nights are the problem. Pierre Bennerup added that the asiatics grow in water in the wild in Yunnan and Jodie suggested that P. ioessa should be grown quite wet at all times. Alan added that he now has a wet spot in which to situate some primroses, and P. secundiflora does well there.

Pierre brought up another problem: Several years ago he had a large collection of P. x pubescens in pots. They began dying. Cheryl Bennerup added that they found that the plants were full of root aphids. This had never been a problem before, according to Pierre. Judith mentioned that she had had a problem with root aphids spreading into multiple pots when she had plants set on water-wicking mats. She now keeps no more than 20 pots in a tray, so, if there should be root aphids, and they spread pot-to-pot, the losses will be limited.

Others added: to avoid problems, divide plants yearly. Do not re-use the pot mix for new plants. You can add it to your compost pile or use it in the garden, but not for your potted primroses. Alan mentioned microwaving his potting mix for 8 minutes. Kris Fenderson has 50
large containers that he plants and empties yearly. He adds the used mix to his compost piles, and it will not be used again for about 3 years. Pierre added that commercial nurseries steam and reuse soil, but that the process is not practical for the home gardener. There was a question about potting mix for primroses. Pierre said that they use a peat-based mix with some coconut fiber and some gravel.

Debby Wheeler brought up the question of “What is a *P. sieboldii* species and what is a hybrid?” Kris stated that he believes crosses within one species are not correctly called “hybrids,” (although that term is probably used with the many *P. sieboldii* named cultivars). He pointed out that many plants within the Vernales are definitely hybrids, with features that can be traced back to several different species. Judith stated that she considers the named *P. sieboldii* selections to all belong to the species *P. sieboldii*. Debbie pointed out that they bloom too late relative to our Primrose Show for it to be an issue now. Kris said that we should see if the International Codes of Nomenclature for Horticulture address this issue. Judith said that last year, in judging the show, there was an issue with a *P. veris*, of a color other than yellow as to whether it was a *P. veris* or a *P. veris* hybrid. Judith and Alan agreed that a pink cowslip is a desirable plant (in spite of the difficulty of placing it in the correct show class). Lynne and Jodie expressed their ambition to grow pink cowslips at Barnhaven.

Kris said that the correct name and place in taxonomy for *P. abschasica* has been under discussion for the last 20 years. In any event, that is a plant that should be spread more widely in cultivation, as it is a very durable plant and an early bloomer in the eastern US. Alan said that it seems to be earlier than *P. sibthorpii*. Kris noted that the pale pink *P. sibthorpii* in cultivation has never had seeds on it that he has seen. Jodie said that she will try her method of hand pollination of *P. sibthorpii* to see if that might help with seed production. That brought up the definition of sterile: usually it refers to a sterile hybrid, in which the majority of pollen is defective. (It might be possible to use the plant as a female parent). Alan did a cross of yellow *P. veris* × yellow *P. elatior* that yielded plants with a large pink flower.

Pierre asked if there was any experience with *Primula* that don’t self-pollinate. Judy answered that Susan Schnare had a plant that seemed to be *P. elatior* × *P. veris* × *P. polyanthus*. If you have these all in a garden area, there are going to be many hybrids self-sown, with many variations, especially in the second generation. It was suggested that Susan should name and propagate her prize-winning plant, which was Best in Show.

Rodney Barker said he had never seen a seed pod on his *P. elatior*. Judith said caterpillars often eat the seeds on *Primula* before they ripen. Dorothy Swift said that she rarely gets seed pods on primroses and attributes it to the fact that the weather turns hot and humid when the seeds would be developing, and often there are just moldy flowers followed by no pods.

A question about *P. elatior* producing seed resulted in a few people saying no and others saying yes. Kris said that of the *P. elatior* ssp. meyeri in cultivation, many are not the true plant.

Alan shared that *P. beesiana* and *P. bulleyana* are now all *P. bulleyana*.

At this point the discussion was concluded.

Save the Date!

Next year’s National Show has now been set to occur in Juneau, Alaska, May 4-6, 2018. Pam Eveleigh will be the keynote speaker. See you there!
At the National Show, 2017

DEAN WIEGERT

The 2017 National Show of the American Primrose Society hosted by the New England Chapter was held at Tower Hill Botanic Gardens in Boylston, MA. This is the very first show I have attended and I would like to share my experience with others, especially those who have never attended a national show. I brought two plants with me on a plane from Wisconsin and I was planning on attending Friday and Saturday. Due to travel delays and rainy weather, I missed Friday’s activities.

Final registration and benching of plants was scheduled for 7:30-8:30 a.m. Saturday and that was my first order of business. I started out bright and early driving from my hotel with directions to Tower Hill. Walking into the main building at Tower Hill, I was greeted with the APS table showing various *Primula* books, cards and other merchandise.

I started recognizing faces of people I had only seen on Facebook. Judith Sellers and G. K. Fenderson gave me instruction in filling out my plant registration. Once that was completed, I sized up the other plants on the bench. The wide range of plant types and well-grown plants impressed me. Although the gardens outside the main building at Tower Hill looked inviting, the lingering rain showers were an excuse to stay inside and visit with the other APS members, watch the judging, admire plants, visit the APS table, and view the plant vendors’ tables. I exercised restraint in not buying any plants because I wanted to avoid any extra trouble and effort in getting back home. That was difficult to do, since there were so many beautiful plants on offer and I saw lots of people shopping for treasures.

In addition to G.K. and Judith, I met some of the other active members of the New England Chapter, names which I’d seen on Facebook, in the *Primroses* Quarterly, and the APS website: Mary Malloy, Susan Schnare, Amy Olmsted, Deborah Wheeler, Jacques Mommens, Dorothy Swift, Elizabeth Lawson. I was not the only visitor from the Midwest. Alan Lawrence, APS president, and his wife Ann had driven to the show.

Pictures from the National Show

Right: the welcoming banner for the show

Below: Lynne Lawson, featured with Jody Lawson as guest speakers at the National Show, shown here thrilled to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Primrose Society.

Photos courtesy of Barnhven’s Facebook page
Top: Matt Mattus’s photo of Susan Schnare’s Show-winning unnamed Juliana hybrid seedling

Center, left: A huge pot of polyanthus from Kris Fenderson he calls ‘Grout Hill Apricot’, taken by Amy Olmsted

Center, right: Judith Sellers takes a lovely photo of a group of *P. sieboldii* with a display of primrose greeting cards.

Right: Seen on Barnhaven’s Facebook page - “We liked this *P. kisoana* alba with a pronounced green center”

Top, left: Dean Wiegert’s gorgeous ‘Sapphire Blue’ won a best in division and he won an award for best novice entrant, by Amy Olmsted. Top, right: ‘Powder Puff’, a double auricle grown by Judith Sellers, taken by Matt Mattus. Center, left: *P. kisoana*, a nice garden primrose that can run (in a good way) was a surprise entry since we rarely see this species in bloom for this show. Grown and entered by Amy Olmsted, taken by Matt Mattus. Bottom: Judith Sellers’ photo of visitors already beginning to fill the hall, Saturday, 10:00am.
Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Society Show

Clockwise from top left:
Winning the Christiansen Trophy for Rarest Plant in show, Maedythe Martin’s *Primula simensis*; *Primula vulgaris* ssp. *sibthorpii*; Darling *Primula x Juliana ‘Schneesturm’*; *Marginata ‘Drakes Form’* won best *Primula* in Show; Sweet little yellow *Primula vulgaris* of the supermarket variety, now in its third season of blooming (demonstrating that the supermarket doesn’t always have throw-away plants); another harbinger of spring, *Primula vulgaris*, the common primrose of the English countryside.

Photos: Maedythe Martin
Primula Theatres in Japan
Facing page: Japanese representation of traditional European Auricula Theatre
Above: The display in Sapporo, see page 5
Below: Japanese traditional exhibition called ‘Sakurasou-Kadan’
from Wisconsin.

I met Paul Held who came with potted *Primula sieboldii* plants that he had imported from Japan. He staged these rare beauties at the APS table and visitors were drawn in by their exotic allure. Standing there admiring the plants, Alan, Paul and Jacques discussed hard to find or lost varieties of *Primulas* and special plants they had gotten from other growers like Mary Kordes or Linc Foster.

After the judging was done, I met judges Jodie Mitchell and Lynne Lawson from Barnhaven who were also able to promote their recent book, *The Plant Lovers Guide to Primulas.* (Timber Press, 2016) We talked briefly about what Brexit may mean for them. Later, I had a conversation with Alan and he mentioned how he hoped to stop on his way back to the Midwest and check on some wild populations of *P. mistassinica* that he knew of on the shores of Lake Michigan. And we talked about the growing conditions for that Midwestern species.

I was lucky enough to get the seat next to Jodie Mitchell at lunch and listen to her answer questions about growing at Barnhaven. I also had the chance to talk with Mary Malloy at lunch about her part in founding the New England chapter. There were several conversations going on at one time and lots to listen to.

After lunch, Jodie Mitchell and Lynne Lawson gave a presentation on Asiatic *Primulas*. Jodie began with showing slides and listing the species that can be grouped into several flower types: Candelabras, Belled, and Others. Lynne then took over with an explanation of the hand pollinating process that Barnhaven uses to keep their species and varieties true. Jodie then spoke about *P. sieboldii*, giving us a brief background of their place in Japanese culture and comparing it to the auricula’s place in British culture. She explained how Jared Sinclair, who took over Barnhaven from Florence Bellis, had worked to develop varieties of *P. sieboldii*. Although these varieties had not all been maintained, Jodie is working with the existing stock to re-introduce the
diversity. Her efforts have shown that much of the past diversity had been consolidated into the existing stock.

A discussion of the cultural problems, pests, and diseases rounded out the informative session and the applause demonstrated how much we all enjoyed the talk. Wouldn’t Florence Bellis have been pleased to see that not only is Barnhaven still flourishing but that the current owners were giving the keynote speech to this National Show of the American Primrose Society!

A group dinner and social hour was held at the home of Matt Mattus and Joseph Philip. I was able to get a garden and greenhouse tour along with several other attendees and everyone admired plants familiar and strange. There was lots of time over cocktails to discuss plants and gardening. I learned that Judith Sellers has an unexpected Primula nursery around her house. The 8” of gravel that was installed to help with water drainage has turned into a great place to grow auriculas. At dinner I heard more stories of germination aids (liquid smoke anyone?) and anecdotes from G. K. Fenderson about legendary Primula people like nurseryman Herb Dickson who seemed reluctant to sell any of his plants. After dinner the chapter held an auction of Primula-related items and then Elizabeth Lawson discussed her forthcoming book on the cultural significance of the primrose. This lead to other discussions with Jodie Mitchell, Lynne Lawson and G.K. Fenderson about their experiences in writing their books. With the end of the night, my time at the show was over. I had to catch a plane early the next morning.

If you’ve read this far, you’ll see that I’ve focused a lot on the conversations I took part in or listened to as much as any other of the day’s events. This is because for me, these conversations were the real reason I went. It was a luxury to spend a day with people who share a love of the genus, Primula. Discussing Primula wild populations, species differences, favorite named varieties, methods of cultivation, legendary growers, pest control methods and other topics, is not something I usually get to do. And isn’t this the real reason that plant societies exist? I would recommend attending a national show for anyone who has not yet done so. No matter your level of experience or knowledge, there will be lots to learn and share and you will meet lots of friendly welcoming people who will accept you as part of the group.

Victoria Spring Show, the
Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Society Show
MARCH 17 – 18, 2017
MAEDYTHE MARTIN

This was a very early show (they alternate: early in the season and later in spring) and it came just after a long cold winter, for us at the West Coast, who are usually spoiled with temperate weather. But, despite trepidations, the show, as always, had some stunning exhibits. Many of the spring classics were there: *P. vulgaris, P. veris* and also *P. vulgarus ssp sibthorpii*. All the harbingers of spring. There was even a supermarket primrose blooming away in its third season.

There are two trophies for *Primula* and the one for Best Polyanthus was won by a Cowichan hybrid. The Best *Primula* in Show went to a very floriferous and large *P. marginata ‘Drake’s Form’*. This also took first in the class for *P. marginata*.

A very pretty *P. x pruhoniciana* (also known as *P. x Juliana*) ‘Schneesturm’ filled its pot with creamy-buff flowers over small, round dark leaves. ‘Julianas’ seem to me to be the essence of the spring *Primula*.

The surprise in the show this time was the trophy for Rarest Plant in Show, which was awarded to *Primula simensis*, entered by Maedythe Martin. A young plant, it had only a few flowers showing, but the leaves, ribbed and covered in grey meal, are the stunning feature. This was grown from seed from an auricula friend in England who also happens to grow *P. simensis*.

A very pretty *P. x pruhoniciana* (also known as *P. x Juliana*) ‘Schneesturm’ filled its pot with creamy-buff flowers over small, round dark leaves. ‘Julianas’ seem to me to be the essence of the spring *Primula*.

The early season was just at the right time for a fine showing of *Primula marginata*. The colors ranged from blue-violet through pale violet to pinky-mauve. And next to these in the same class was a fresh, clean white *P. x pabesens alba* – the old Victorian garden classic. A deep blue-violet *P. denticulata* punctuated the end of the *Primula* bench.
A Few Questions For Simon Crawford

INTERVIEW BY DEAN WIEGERT

A quick web search for information on Simon Crawford will tell you that he is one of the UK’s leading plant breeders. His work has resulted in, among other things, “Gigantomo” aka “SteakHouse”, the world’s largest tomato and “Crimson Crush” aka “Cloudy Day”, the world’s first blight resistant tomato. You’ll also find he is a member of the Royal Horticultural Society’s Herbaceous Plant Committee and that he lives in Yorkshire. I was referred to Mr. Crawford when I contacted Dr. Margaret Webster for seed of the oak leaf strain of polyanthus, which she developed. He was able to connect me with a source for the seeds I was interested in through Owls Acre Seed in the UK. Owls Acre Seed grew out of Laughing Owl Sweet Peas, a company started by Mark Rowland and Maggie Goodsell at their Lincolnshire nursery. In addition to Sweet Pea (Lathyrus) seed, Owls Acre Seed also offers a selection of other garden flowers seed including Primula, Ixia, and Digitalis. Owls Acre currently has four different seed strains of Primula from specialist breeders: Jackanapes, Hose-in-Hose, Gold Laced Polyanthus and a Gold Laced Hose-in-Hose.

I decided to ask Mr. Crawford about his connection with the seed company and his interest in these Primula varieties.

When did you become involved with Owls Acre Seed? I met Mark and Maggie about 20 years ago when they were actively breeding sweet peas and also had a number of other crops for use in their cut flower nursery. As the years passed we have become firm friends and established the specialist tomato and pepper seed business Gourmet Genetics. My involvement with that business ended in 2012 when I started to work full time for the W. Atlee Burpee & Co., reintroducing the brand to the European market after a break of nearly 20 years. When Mark and Maggie decided to retire from the Owls Acre business back in 2014 it created an opportunity for my family (see below).

According to the website for Owls Acre Seed, the online business is now managed by Elizabeth Crawford. Is Elizabeth a relative of yours? When the Owls Acre business became available through Mark and Maggie’s retirement I persuaded my daughter Elizabeth, a herbalist and botanical artist, to buy it. After 2 years the business is expanding and she is excited at the prospect of introducing new Primulas and sweet peas in the future.

The Sylvan series of Jackanapes and the ‘You and Me’ series of Hose-in-Hose come from Czech plant breeder Otka Plavcova, the Gold Laced Polyanthus and Gold Laced Hose-in-Hose are from Margaret Webster of the UK. Can you discuss your role in working with these people and bringing us this specialty seed? I met Otka through the famous Dutch seedsman and intellectual Kees Sahin. She was working on the ‘You and Me’ series for about fifteen years thanks to inspiration from Kees and she used the Barnhaven hose-in-hose selections to develop a new hardy series of hose-in-hose polyanthus colors which became ‘You and Me’ and were launched at the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) spring flower show in 2005. I met Margaret through her National Collection of Primulas and realized that she is an incredible person whose knowledge of Primula flower variants was second to none. I continue to work with...
Margaret as a mentor and source of new varieties.

Do you have a personal interest in growing Primula and do you feature any of these strains in your own garden? My first involvement with Primulas began almost forty years ago and my interest continues as an amateur breeder and collector of material. Much of my current interest is fueled by Dr Webster's enthusiasm and her National Collection (Dr. Webster holds the UK National Collection of Primula -British Floral Variants), I have much to thank her for. I try to grow everything myself and I am building a collection as we settle into our new home in Yorkshire.

The Owls Acre website mentions that Elizabeth Crawford is building a program of seed production in Devon and Yorkshire. Is that where the seeds for all these varieties are coming from? Elizabeth is producing more of her own sweet pea seeds and has just initiated a project to produce organic seed (see the website blog for more info). With regard to Primulas most of the seed is currently brought in from the Czech Republic or comes direct from Margaret Webster. In-house production is planned for the future and hopefully some new varieties will be available for next year.

Will these seed strains be more widely available in the future or are there factors limiting its availability? As with all seed production, an element of uncertainty is always present but Elizabeth hopes that more of our own produced seed will become available in the coming years.

Can you tell me if Owls Acre Seed has plans to offer any other different Primula varieties in the future? It is hoped that seed of a new Hose in Hose cowslip (Primula veris) will be available later this summer if production goes as planned. Breeding and selection will continue and with some luck will provide new varieties for the future and will give me something to concentrate on in my retirement!

IN LIEU OF THE MINUTES

MICHAEL PLUMB, APS SECRETARY/WEBSITE MANAGER

Normally, the minutes of the last board meeting would be found here. However, due to a number of circumstances, there has been no board meeting. Here is why:

Website Issues

What follows may seem like gobbledegook to many of you, and I’m not sure that I myself understand it all that well either.

You may know that your board meets four times a year using the online chat room attached to the APS website. This spring, however, website browsers such as Firefox and Chrome ceased to support the Java plug-in which we use for the chat. This chat problem only became apparent when the board was about to meet. The new types of chat application are based on HTML and are well supported, but we don’t have one yet.

In any case, our website is beginning to look a bit old-fashioned and needs a total overhaul. Apart from the limited fonts and rather complex layout, contributions to the Forum have dried up because it is almost impossible to post photos with members’ submissions. The Gallery is also in need of improvement, with better captions.

For these reasons I have asked our friendly technician to upgrade the website to the latest version and help me deal with these problems. SO WATCH OUT FOR A NEW WEBSITE LOOK!

This year’s Annual General Meeting

At recent AGMs in Portland and Boylston, we have found Wi-Fi service is often awkward or unavailable. And it is difficult to gather many members to attend. This year the board agreed to a suggestion from the organizer of the National Show in Boylston: an ‘AGM Stage One’ was held just for members attending the show, without contacting the board online. At this meeting members were presented with reports emailed to the show by board officers, and asked to put forward suggestions for improving
the society. Here are some of the members’ suggestions:


Contact the PBS documentary program “Nature” to encourage them to make a documentary on “The Primroses of N. America”. A number of the 20 or so species are under threat from climate change, and so there is a need to document them before it is too late. APS would provide species information and location/timing support to the “Nature” filmmakers.

2. Cruise Ship Presentations

Contact the Activities Director of a Cruise Line going to Juneau to suggest a Primrose Cruise. We would need a team of about 6 to put on and support 5 or 6 presentations on board, and would include a bus trip in Juneau to visit the National Collection, and an alternative trip up Mt. Roberts to see the native P. cuneifolia. We would need 6 double cabins to support this. Date would be early May. Possible presentations would be:

- Introduction to Primulas for the Garden
- Primula auricula: The Florist Flowers
- Primula sieboldii: The Japanese Florist Flowers
- Native American Primroses
- Garden Hybrids from Primula Section Primula

3. Increase annual membership by $5.

The next Board meeting

Once the board is able to meet online again, we will discuss these ideas. We have also been considering becoming the international Cultivar Registration Authority for Primula. As you know, there has always been confusion about the naming of cultivars and hybrids, not least with Primula. For example, about two years ago in a local garden store, on reading the elegantly produced plastic label attached to the pot of a flowering primrose, I felt compelled to tell the sales clerk, “This isn’t ‘Jay-Jay’! This plant is actually ‘Kinlough Beauty’!” It made no difference to her, of course. See www.barnhaven.com/juliana/kinlough-beauty and compare with www.farreachesfarm.com/Primula-x-juliana-Jay-Jay-p/

p0608.htm

For the APS to become the registration authority we need a detailed but clear application form, which we are working on. The service would be free to applicants or entail a small charge. We would have no legal authority, but we would act as a reference. There is already a naming authority for other plants such as rhododendrons/azaleas. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Cultivar_Registration_Authority

Awards

I am able to report that at the National Show the Dorothy Dickson Award for outstanding service to the American Primrose Society was awarded to Amy Olmsted for her work in running the annual seed exchange.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Lynn Lawson of Barnhaven Primroses.

APS Election

I should also report that Mark Dyen and Cheri Fluck were re-elected to the position of APS Director. There were no other candidates. Thanks to all the members who sent in their ballots! Much appreciated. By the way, don’t forget you can save postage next year by voting on line.

Donating Seeds

The 2017-2018 APS Seed Exchange would really appreciate your donations. Maybe you pollinated some plants, or maybe you can find some self-pollinated seed pods. The APS relies on your donations to keep the seed exchange going, as well as to reduce costs incurred by ordering from commercial sources.

In the USA send seed to:
Amy Olmsted  421 Birch Road, Hubbardton, VT  05733

Send seed in Canada and outside North America to:
M. Martin  951 Joan Crescent, Victoria, BC  V8S3L3 Canada
Join the National Auricula & Primula Society

Midland & West Section

www.auriculaandprimula.org.uk

£10.00 Overseas Membership.

New Members
March 14 - June 25, 2017

Year of Expiry | Name | Address
--- | --- | ---
2017 | Marlene Boegli | 438 Branch Hill Loveland Road, Loveland, Ohio 45140 USA
2017 | Catherine Brooker | 1057 Paintbrush Drive, Sunnyvale, California 94086 USA
2017 | Rostislav Ersmont | 70 Whipple Hill Road, Richmond, New Hampshire 03470 USA
2017 | Ellen Green | 18 Frog Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02181 USA
2017 | Pat Hartman | 1706 Island View Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801 USA
2017 | Gail Read | 226 Foote Street, Barrington, Rhode Island 02806 USA
2017 | Michael Sugg | 15 Ridge Road, Lebanon, New Jersey 08833-4624 USA
2017 | Nick Ternes | 204 West Hill Road, Apt D, Rhinelander, Wisconsin 54501 USA
2017 | Jeff Tucker | 45 Spencer Street, Millis, Massachusetts 02054 USA
2017 | Fred Walker | P. O. Box 440, Marlington, West Virginia 24954-0440 USA
2017 | Miss Stone | The Glebe, North Petherwin, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 8LR UK

Should there ever be a question about your membership, please contact:

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The Presidents of the Chapters are also included on the Board