



Primroses

THE QUARTERLY OF THE AMERICAN PRIMROSE SOCIETY

SPRING 2006

VOL. 64

No. 2



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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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About the Cover

Front Cover: This illustration of *Primula acaulis* showcases the fine talent of botanical artist Jonathan Piers Tyler whose work is featured throughout this issue.

Back Cover: A seed raised *P. acaulis* in a Massachusetts garden braves the threat of a late spring snow.

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Question: How many *Primula* can you fit in a car? The answer? As many as will fit plus about a wheelbarrow more. New England APS members Matt Mattus (left) and Joe Philip help a friend relocate a collection of Primroses during a brief break in the rainy spring weather of the Northeast. Spring is one of the best times to move a large quantity primroses, since they are in bloom and one can identify them better.

PRIMROSES • The Quarterly of the American Primrose Society

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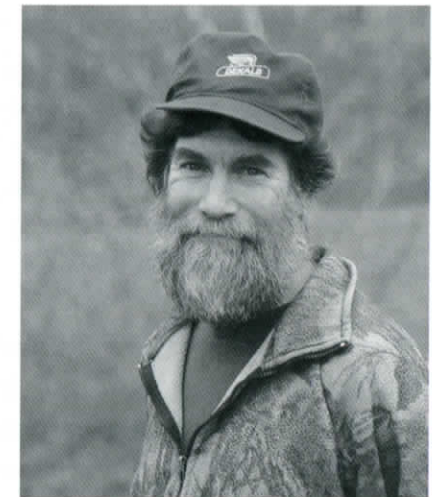
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President's Message

ED BUYARSKI

The National Show near Boston in May was another success; thanks to the New England Chapter for their hard work and primrose growing skills to make it happen. The weather was better than last year and the garden tours and garden tourists benefited from it with magnificent wildflowers and more domesticated varieties. We got to judge a fine selection of plants and enjoyed some educational lectures in between talking to friends and admiring primroses.



Our Quarterly Editor, Matt Mattus, has agreed to stay on as long as we the Board and membership support him in providing more content-articles and photos- in a timely fashion so he can do his work of assembling them into a quality publication. Our Web Master, Susan Gray, will be changing service providers and more changes will be happening on the APS website. Future Seed Exchanges will be mailing the Seed Lists out in December so that members can receive the seeds and get them planted to grow into healthy plants before winter. Of course that means that all our members must be pollinating and collecting seed now for this year's Seed Exchange to be successful.

The Juneau Chapter is in the early stages of planning for the 2007 National Show and suggestions for programs are welcomed.

The gardening season in Juneau is still several weeks late and my *Denticulatas* are just now finishing their blooming. A number of local gardeners lost clumps of them due to the severe March freeze with no snow cover. There are even some *P. rosea* still in bloom in early June as I write this. The auriculas are in full flower and *P. japonica* is late also. Plants of *P. chungensis* are looking very colorful. These need to be promoted more as the first Candelabra to bloom for us in the spring.

Now if I can just keep the deer out of my garden and the slugs under control life would be good!

Primula denticulata can be full of surprises

RON DRISKILL

I felt like a giant looking down upon an unfolding, miniature horror movie. About to burst forth like some man-eating plant on a Lilliputian scale were the enfolded, serrated leaves of *Primula denticulata* (the drumstick primrose) emerging from beneath a sector of mud next to a ditch.

With the tips of their leaves still pointed inward, they looked all the world like something ready to explode and spring outward to capture their prey. But these were primroses, and the chances of some poor insect being snatched up by some monstrous, genetic variation of nature was highly unlikely.

Instead, the leaves were just the forefront of the largest primrose "heads" I had ever seen. I had planted the drumsticks in a swampy part of my yard next to a ditch that ran alongside a road as an experiment the year before. Unlike all the other articles that said *denticulatas* should only be grown in well-drained soil, a maverick publication said that drumsticks could thrive in swampy situations as well. "Reeeally?" I said out loud, with my eyebrows raised, as I scanned the page. Well, then, I knew just the place I was going to try them.

The "Bog", as I call it, up until two years ago was a wild and untamed vista that afflicted the eyes as people drove up and down the road or walked their dogs. It consisted of tangled alders, weeds, ferns, swamp grasses, spruce, and Japanese barberry - generally speaking, a mess. In 2004 I decided to do something about it. Hustling with nothing but back muscles, spades and determination, I began to uproot all the wild growth, straighten out the edges of the ditch, and rim the ditch with a rock wall. Then I hauled in a homemade

mixture of clay, peat moss, and sand to fill in the gaps between the wall and the bog, as well as to raise certain portions of the bog, in order to begin landscaping and turning the place into a showpiece (I hoped).

Colonies of denticulatas grew everywhere in the yard, some to a good size, others to a smaller size, depending upon the environmental factors of each location. Unwilling to disturb the healthiest and most beautiful ones, I concentrated on digging up smaller denticulatas of the same size (about ½ inch in circumference). By the time I was done, I had dug up around 20 different ones, each representing colors that this variety is famous for—purples, white and blues. Using a garden trowel, I dug holes in a spot next to the ditch, made sure that the roots were spread out properly, covered them with the soil mix that was already there as the substrate, and watered and fertilized.

Again, all of the books tell you to do things like this in the spring--and this was late summer--so I knew there was an element of risk involved. But I also knew that each of these plants would have a chance to establish a good root system even that far into the year because (1) they had until the late fall to keep establishing their roots, and (2) I had clipped off the ends of the roots to force them to grow adventitiously—or to send out new roots in all directions.

It wasn't until the following spring that I saw how monstrously they had fared. Their heads emerged from the ground the size of brussel sprouts, looking all the world like miniature, flesh-eating plants ready to pounce on their prey, as noted before. The leaves and the emerging stalks were twice the size of any other drumsticks I had grown in the yard and they were a car-stopping sight when they finally bloomed. People were talking and taking pictures, asking me what they were. I was so impressed with their performance, that I planted another row of them along one of the paths going through the bog. They too performed brilliantly.

The upshot of all this is: not everything about a species or variety is in the books. A little experimentation here and there is liable to yield wonders both in enlightenment and joy.

Note: Ron's property lies at the easternmost tip of zone 5B, which ends at the Atlantic Ocean in Hubbards, Nova Scotia, where he lives. The springs are long and cool, the summer cool in the early part of the season, and warm to hot from mid-July to September 7th on the average. Falls are cool. Winters are extremely variable, with heavy snowfall in some winters and hardly any at other times.

APS Website Improvements

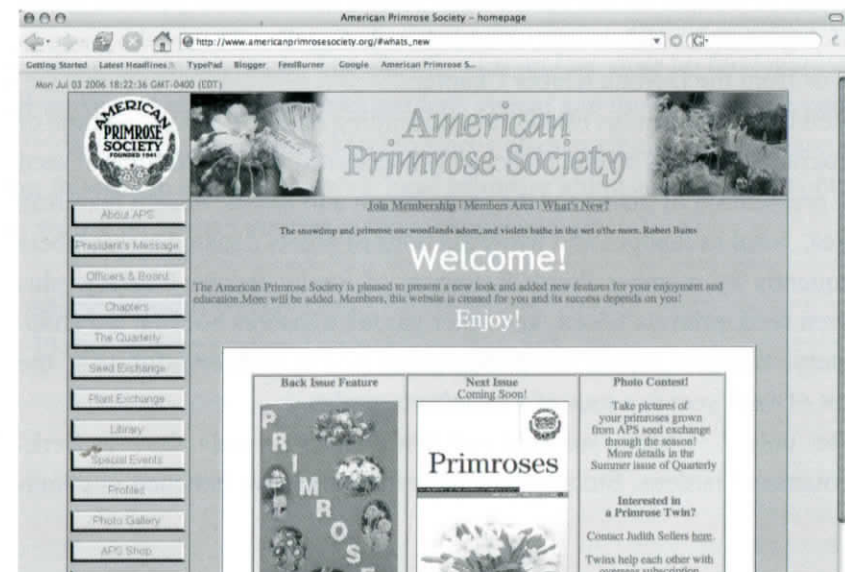
SUSAN GRAY

I am your new webmaster. I will do my best to enhance the official website created by the late Duane Buell in 1999. The webmaster duties were passed over to Pam Eveleigh of Calgary, Alberta and then to Joseph Philip of Worcester, Massachusetts. I am from Nova Scotia, Canada.

I only have previous experience through my website and not much else but this work has become very valuable as a learning tool. It is a lot of work which I hope the members will appreciate.

I plan on some changes with the addition of several pages including the chapter news, online round robin (blog style), a page devoted to highlighting a special primrose place, a primrose person and of course, a primula in a series format, plant exchange to go along with our esteemed seed exchange and more... Some pages will be restricted to members only access. Usernames and passwords will be provided in the near future.

It will be relaunched by mid-July. I would appreciate receiving photos, articles and chapter news by mid-June. Please email me any inquiries and suggestions.



Sharing a Passion: Starting a Local APS Chapter

MARY IRWIN and ELAINE MALLOY

Starting a chapter of the American Primrose Society close to home is enjoyable and rewarding if you have enthusiasm and can put forth a little effort. You have a chance to share and maintain your love and passion for primula with others who are 'bitten by the bug'. Wonderful fellowship is found in sharing plants and the experiences we have had in growing them.

We jump started our own primula histories by attending National Primrose Shows in Washington State, Juneau, Alaska and Vancouver, B.C.. President Ed Buyarski encouraged us to get a chapter going here. With the use of the APS and NARGS membership lists, prospective members were invited to the first meeting. We probably sent seventy-five meeting announcements covering 7 New England states. In order to build a treasury, we sought free use of nurseries or homes for our gatherings. Twelve enthusiastic primula growers, both experienced and novice, attended, including Dot Plyler who came to support us from the Doretta Klaber Chapter.

Attendance at meetings often grew, depending on the location and time of year. Programs included primula talks and slide shows, demonstrations of seed sowing, preparation of plants for the show bench and artistic design featuring primroses. Seed exchanges and lively auctions of plants donated by members and frequently by member Pierre Bennerup of Sunny Border Nursery, plus Barnhaven seed, primula books, and other garden treasures boosted the chapter treasury. Since an initial, wonderful spring tour of Sydney Eddison's, the highlight of each year is a tour of a member's garden.

After only 2 ½ years, we held our first chapter primula show at Berkshire Botanical Gardens, Stockbridge, Massachusetts. We benched one hun-



dred thirty-five entries! It was a beautiful happening with everyone amazed at the variety of plants shown. With our consistent core of members, and as the chapter grew with ever increasing participation, we now have, after only 6 ½ years, hosted both the 2005 and 2006 National Primrose Shows at Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, Massachusetts. There is a great weekend draw with gardeners and families enjoying the grounds and taking in our interesting display of primula.

For all chapter members, such a happening is looked forward to with great anticipation. The show is a joy and we store up fond memories of all we shared with dear people, gardens visited and the appreciative public.

We want to encourage YOU to start a chapter right where you are, building fellowship and sharing with local primrose enthusiasts. Please contact us, as we are more than willing to help you get started.

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PLANT PORTRAIT

Primula capitata

PAM EVELEIGH

One of the most endearing features of primulas is the “fairy dust” or more accurately, the farina, which frequently coats the plant’s stems, leaves and flowers. This dusting in combination with the moody, deep purple flowers of *Primula capitata* is a garden show-stopper.

I first saw a picture of *P. capitata* in “*A Plantsman’s Guide to Primulas*” by Philip Swindells and was immediately attracted to this unusual looking primula. The bulk of garden grown plants are variety *P. capitata* spp. *mooreana* which is a more robust version of ssp *capitata*. This species forms attractive tufts of erect, light green leaves, irregularly dentate at the margins and coated in farina. The flowers heads have a “squished ball” appearance and are held on farina coated stems from 4-18 inches. Flower color can vary from deep purple (almost black), to blue-purple with a yellow eye.

Primula capitata is a variable species with 6 subspecies described: *capitata*, *craibeana*, *crispata*, *lacteocapitata*, *mooreana* and *sphaerocephala*. It is found over a large range from Eastern Nepal through Sikkim to SE Tibet, Bhutan, N Burma and Yunnan at elevations from 3300-5000m. The original introduction was by Hooker in 1849 from Sikkim. *P. capitata* was considered the lone member of Section *Capitatae* until recent genetic studies proved that *P. glomerata* is closely related to *P. capitata*. *P. glomerata* had previously been placed in Section *Denticulata*. Both Sections have flowers that form spherical heads, but in the *Capitatae* the heads are flattened with open flowers around the edge and unopened buds on the flat top. These unopened buds never mature. In *P. capitata* the head is held with the flat top up, while in *P. glomerata* the flat top is held to one side.

Typically, *P. capitata* is found on moist slopes above the tree-line, though it also grows in alpine meadows, yak pastures, open forest clearings, along



streams, in moist screes, and scrub areas. In the garden, it seems to adapt well to almost any open soil in shade or in sun if given continual moisture. The only disadvantage with this species is that it is a short-lived perennial. In my garden, it rarely lasts a third year. Apparently this species is deciduous, and lacks a winter resting bud, but my plants seem to have a better chance at surviving when the leaves persist through the winter. Fortunately it is easy to propagate from seed and is regularly available through the seed exchanges. I have never been able to collect seed from my plants because they usually bloom during the first week of September and this can coincide with the first frost in Calgary. There is no chance for seed to develop before the plant becomes frozen. Other ssp can bloom slightly earlier – in mid summer. If you are able to start seed early in the year, young plants may bloom in their first Autumn.

If you are looking for a distinctive primula and wish to enjoy primulas beyond spring, do give *P. capitata* a try.

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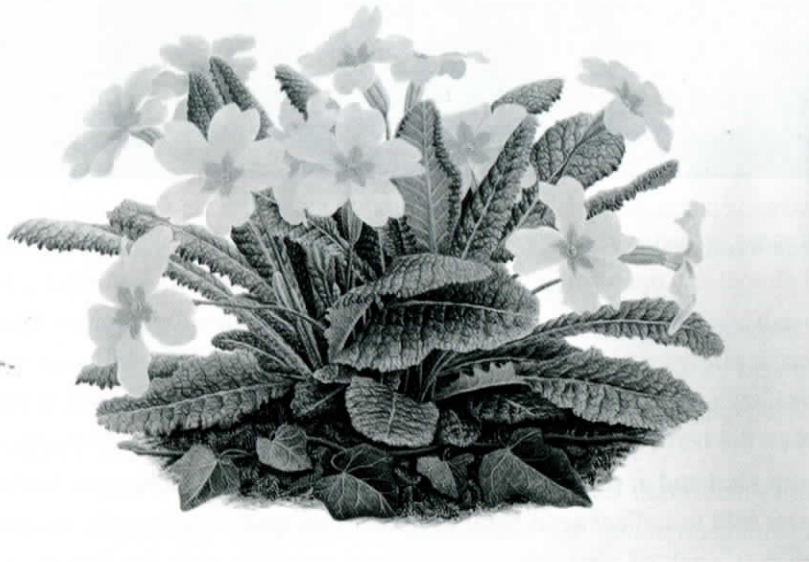
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, UK and Royal Government of Bhutan

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An Interview with Botanical Artist Jonathan Piers Tyler

MATT MATTUS



In our modern world of computer generated graphics, special effects, and digital photography, the human eye still finds the exquisite beauty of botanical painting - by hand, on paper, with real paint - magical. This, thankfully, reminds many of us that the human experience continues on some level to be unaffected by such advances as convergence and technology.

Interest in fine botanical painting continues today. Of course it has a deep and respected history, especially in England, where names like Francis Bauer, who painted for Kew Gardens in the late eighteenth century lead all the way to the twentieth century artists like Margaret Stones and Stella-Ross-Craig. Botanical artists originally were hired by explorers and institutions to document

botanical specimens in a more life-like way. These commissions were primarily for scientific purposes, to enhance the herbarium collection of pressed plants.

Today, very few botanical artists practice their art for the sake of science, but many are finding their art being collected for decorative purposes. Many create highly detailed and botanically correct studies for their scientific clients, and then sell prints and reproductions of these originals to plant enthusiasts and to collectors.

Jonathan Piers Tyler, a highly respected botanical artist from England, has been able to make a fine living through his many commissions for Curtis' Botanical Magazine, Kew Gardens and the Royal Horticultural Society. In a recent interview for Primroses, Jonathan shares with us how he found himself in this career.

MATT MATTUS Jonathan, as a creative person myself I am always asked this question: "Were you always creative? Or did you discover and develop this talent later in life?" I would imagine that the answer was that you knew that you had a talent?

JONATHAN PIERS TYLER You would be right in thinking I was always creative. I remember when, as a young child, I was always making things, building my own models etc. But not many days passed without my drawing or painting something. I once exhibited paintings of fish which I had painted from fish that were in my aquarium. The exhibit was a children's art exhibition at the National Gallery in London, and that was when I was nine years old. I received a 'Highly Commended' award. I guess I should have known then!

(MM) Did you study Art at an art school or university or did you start right out as an artist?

(JPT) After school I found myself in catering, but still painted in the background, and an important moment was when I sold two surf paintings in the mid-eighties. But it wasn't until 1991 that I finally left catering and went back to college to study art 'A' level, ending up taking the Master of Arts course in Natural History Illustration at the Royal College of Art in London in 1995. A fractured skull in 1996 put an end to that, and thus it was that I turned to botanical illustration full time

(MM) Jonathan, I've seen many of your finely detailed paintings on line,

and the species, which you selected as subjects, are so diverse. You must have a favorite genus to paint, right? I am assuming that it isn't Primula, since you've only painted three or four species!

(JPT) Well, as soon as I started painting plants, I quickly developed a fascination for orchids, those exotic, mysterious, sexy plants which seem to get so many of us hot and bothered. Even in Britain! We have 54 species, and I started by painting 8 of them for my Higher National Diploma 'Illustrated Essay', going on to paint one for the front cover of a local flora. Since the college days I have attempted to make a career from my work, but have had to take part-time jobs in care-work here and there to support myself.

(MM) Your final pieces are incredibly detailed; I can't imagine that you paint these in the field. Do you paint "en plen air", out in the open or do you use photographs and paint back in the studio?

(JPT) I do both, but I really use photography as a vital support, taking any field notes that may be necessary, and then copy the photo by hand in the studio. If there is to be a background, I 'mask off' the orchid (or if it isn't an orchid, whatever the main subject may be) with a special water-based fluid, which dries like rubber and can then simply be peeled off. This makes it much easier to paint the habitat, rather than painting round the plant.

(MM) How long does it take you to complete a work?

(JPT) An A4 size painting can take up to 6-8 weeks. An A2 size painting (23.5 x 16.5 inches) can take 3 or 4 months, depending on the complexity of the habitat/orchid/main subject. If sky or sea is involved, then weak washes will be applied to set the base color. All other areas (landscape, foreground of plants, subject) are painted meticulously using a variety of techniques, e.g. a succession of washes, dry brush, and 'rigger' brushes for long, fine lines (i.e. leaf veins).

(MM) Is there a particular brand of watercolor that you use? As a painter myself, I know we all have our favorite brands of paper, paint and even brushes.

(JPT) I really prefer German Schmincke 'Horodam' watercolors and 'da Vinci' sable brushes, on Italian Fabriano 300 lb. hot-press mold-made fine art paper.

(MM) I know that we can get both hot pressed and cold pressed Fabriano paper here in North America, but I am not sure if I have ever seen Schmincke watercolors for sale. I may look for them in New York City.

I hope that you won't think this is too personal, but who buys or commis-





ABOVE: Jonathan prefers to take detailed sketches in the field, along with many photos. BELOW: In his studio, he uses this reference as he paints his works.

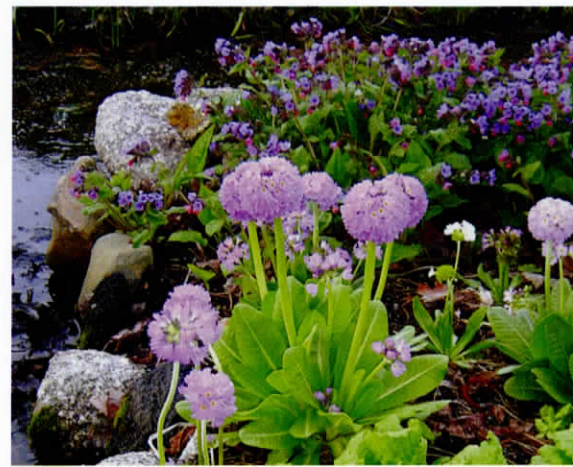
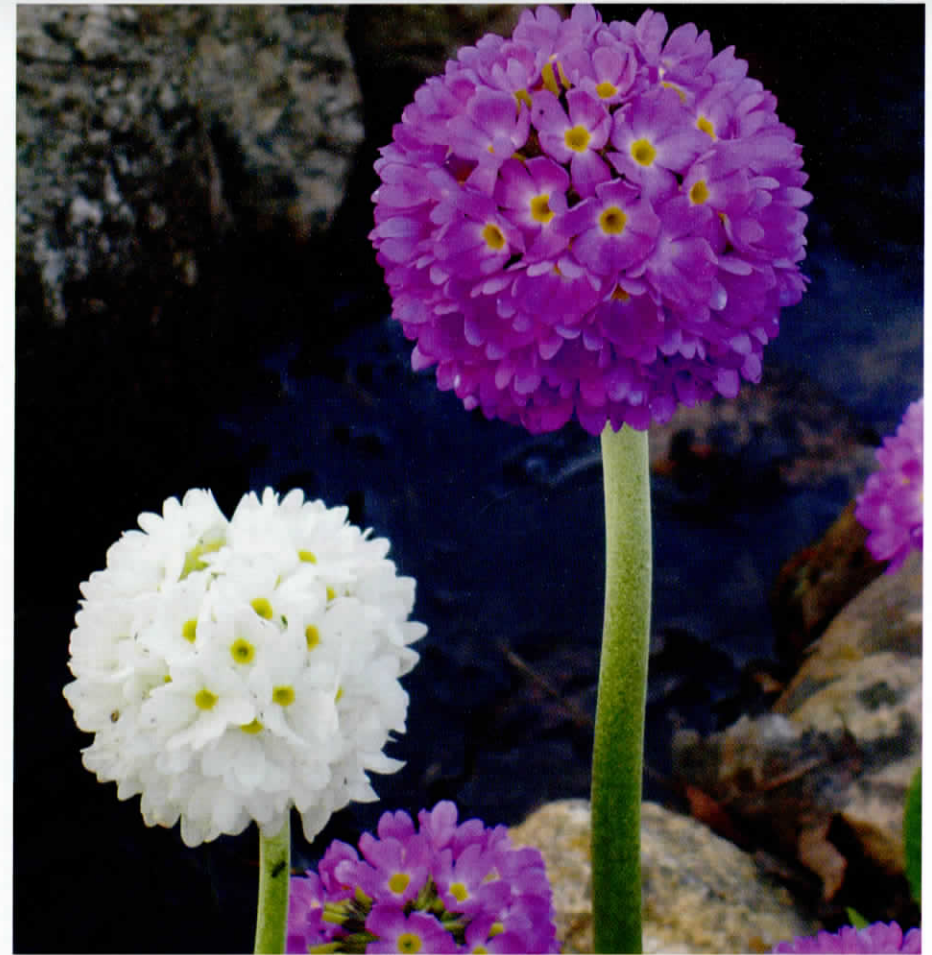
sions your artwork originals? Don't worry, I am certain that I can't afford the originals, but I am thinking of buying some of your beautiful prints available on your website once I can choose which one I like best!

(JPT) Well, my main work is from commissions. I have exhibited at Kew and the RHS (where I was awarded a silver-gilt medal), and I have been commissioned for Curtis' Botanical Magazine, as well as a number of commissions for the BBC Wildlife Magazine. My work appears on the front cover of a paperback just out in America called *'The Deadly Slipper'*, by Michelle Wan, published by Random House. I continue to paint

Jonathan Piers Tyler has had his work commissioned by the BBC, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, and he was elected as a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London. He continues to paint orchids as well as other plants and accepts both corporate and private commissions. His web site offers sales of his prints, as well as more information. Visit www.jonathantylers.co.uk



Photos and illustration : Jonathan Piers Tylers, All Rights Reserved



Primula denticulata in the Nova Scotia garden of Ron Driskill. Ron has found that he gets the best result planting his *P. denticulata* near water, as here, close to a roadside ditch on his property which he calls 'the swamp'. A mixture of white, violet and pinkish lavender forms thrive in the moist soil where some of the plants have grown to monstrous sizes in this eastern Canadian garden near the Atlantic coast.

Photos this page: Ron Driskill



Photos: Matt Mattus

LEFT: *Primula capitata* displays its abundance of farina which extends to the backs of its blossoms. ABOVE: Another drumstick type of Primula is this *Primula denticulata* 'alba', one of the first primula to burst forth from damp ground, soon after the snow of winter is gone. These are one year old seedlings blooming in thier first spring after being grown through the previous summer from APS seed. Next year, the plants will be much larger.



Photo: Judith Sellers

An Unexpected Hazard with *P. viallii* Seedlings

Several years ago I obtained some *Primula vialii* seed from the APS Seed Exchange. This is a strange-looking and delightful species of the section *Muscarioides*, with cylindrical spikes of purple-blue flowers capped with cones of bright crimson immature flowers, making the scapes look like small, red-hot poker.

Fully-grown plants of this species are often difficult to obtain here in Vancouver, British Columbia, and accordingly expensive. In addition, they do not seem to last for more than two or three years in our garden.

The APS seed was to be my solution to the problem of obtaining and keeping this superb species. My hopes rose further when I obtained nearly 100% germination. I carefully pricked out the tiny seedlings and grew them on in four-inch pots.

The plants remained strong and

healthy, and the long, lush leaves draped themselves over the thin plastic sides of the pots. Little did I know that this vegetative exuberance was to be the cause of coming disaster!

Fall arrived, and the leaves, still draped over the thin sides of the pots, began to wilt and shrivel. I worried about this until I read that *P. vialii* is herbaceous, dying down completely for the winter.

My collection of twenty or so darlings was going successfully to sleep in preparation for their first flowering season the next year, when I would put them in the ground. Thinking there was nothing else to do, I left the plants for a number of weeks.

Alas! Too late I realized that as they shrank, the leaves, now fastened to the sharp edges of their pots, were slowly pulling the crowns out of the soil. The roots, themselves diminished for the winter, were unable to resist this upward pull. When I discovered my error, the entire collection was already lost.

Of course, I have learned a few lessons from my carelessness. I don't leave more than a quarter of an inch between the soil level and the top of the pots: I try to plant my seedlings out in the garden much sooner, preferably in the fall; I check my seedlings more often; and I find out whether a *Primula* species is herbaceous, so I know what to expect. I intend to try growing this spectacular species again soon, and of course, I will use APS seed.

Michael Plumb



Photo: Pam Eveleigh ©2006

ABOVE: *Primula Viallii*

Primula in Folklore

ANGELA BRADFORD

One day, someone tried to sneak into heaven by the back gate. St. Peter was so agitated that he dropped his keys. At the very instant the keys touched earth the first cowslip sprang, full blown, into existence. Or so the story goes in Germany.

Even now there are various German names for cowslip – Schlüsselblumen (Key bloom), Himmelschlüssel (Keys of heaven), and Peter's Schlüssel (Peter's keys). In Britain the cowslip, (*primula veris*) one of the ancestors of the modern *Polyanthus*, was known by such names as Palsiewort, Arthritica, Petty Mullein, Culverkeys, Our Lady's Keys, Lady's Fingers, Fairy Caps and Paigles - the last said to have its roots in an old Scottish word of Icelandic origin "paigles" meaning drooping with fatigue.

Although the word cowslip now has rather romantic associations, the modern English name derives from less heavenly circumstances. The word dates from the 15th century and is from the Old English word *Cu-slyppe*, or cow droppings. You may have noticed, while walking in pastures, that there is a fringe of uncropped vegetation round the cowpat. Cows are very particular in their eating habits. People evidently took note of the way Cowslips grew close to cowpats because the cows left them alone while they were cropped off elsewhere.

Cowslips seem to be often compared with keys. There are various versions of another legend, in which a child is enticed by cowslips to a doorway overgrown with flowers. This is the door to an enchanted castle. When the keyflower touches it, the door gently opens and the child finds a room filled with flower-covered vessels containing gold and jewels. The child may take as much as she likes, but the key-flower must be replaced when she leaves, other-



PRIMULA VERIS

wise she will always be followed by a black dog. In Germany, it is the primrose that is said to open hidden treasure boxes while some believe that the way to fairyland can be opened by touching a fairy rock with the proper number of primroses in a posy – but the wrong number opens the door to doom.

Another use for Cowslips was as a protection against evil and especially warding off witches who became especially bothersome at certain times including May Eve – that's today! Witches would try to steal the milk from the cows or bewitch them by such curses as "The cheese to me, the lard to me, the milk to me, the butter to me, but the cowhide to thee!" But this could be prevented by strewing the threshold of the animal's shelter with cowslips and placing a sod of fresh turf from the meadow there, because witches couldn't bring themselves to enter without first counting every blade of grass and every petal so they'd still be counting at dawn when their power would disappear with the night. However, while they keep away witches, a posy of primroses will encourage fairies to cross the threshold as you sleep and bless your home.

Primroses make the invisible visible and to eat them is said to be a sure way to see the fairies. According to folklore you should count the number you first see each springtime, and if there are thirteen or more, you will be lucky all year. If a nosegay holds less than thirteen, it must be protected by violets, or it is risky to take into church, or even into a house.

Shakespeare was well aware of the cowslip's association with fairies. At the end of the *Tempest*, Ariel sings:

Where the bee sucks, there suck I
In a cowslip's bell I lie
There I couch when owls do cry
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.

Shakespeare was brought up in the country and he was also a keen observer of the natural world. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck questions a fairy about where she is going and she replies:

Over hill, over dale
Thorough bush, thorough briar,

Over park, over pale
Thorough flood, thorough fire
I do wander everywhere
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats, spots you see;
These be rubies, fairy favours,
In these freckles live their savours.
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

The "rubies" are, of course the red pollen guides at the base of each of the five petals, but it probably took a Shakespeare to notice them. He obviously believed that they were also the source of the cowslip's delicate scent.

Children also made cowslips into cowslip balls as described in the 1830s in *Our Village* by Mary Russell Mitford:

I challenged Lizzie to a cowslip gathering: a trial of skill and speed to see which should soonest fill her basket.... At last the baskets were filled, and Lizzy declared victor: and down we sat, on the brink of the stream, under a spreading hawthorn, just disclosing its own pearly buds, and surrounded with the rich and enamelled flowers of the wild hyacinth, blue and white, to make our cowslip ball. Everyone knows the process: to nip off the tufts of the flowerets just below the top of the stalk, and hang each cluster nicely balanced across a riband, till you have a long string like a garland: then to press them closely together, and tie them tightly up.

The custom was also practised in Wales where children string cowslip blossoms on a piece of strong thread, then tie the ends together to form a flower ball. This is tossed up and caught using only the right hand, while they chant

"Pistey, postey,
Four and forty,
How many years shall I live?
One, two, three.... "and so on, until the ball falls at a certain number, which

indicates the number of years the child tossing the ball will live. In some areas of England children say "Tistey, tostey" instead of the Welsh expression, "Pistey, postey."

As these customs show, Cowslips used to be very abundant in Britain. Old recipes for cowslip wine called for a gallon of cowslip "pips" as the flower heads without the green calyx were called. An advertisement for cowslip wine at the end of the eighteenth century ran "for Dinner, Dessert or evening. Purest, Brilliant, Slightly Sparkling, Delicious, Wholesome and Stimulating at 16s a dozen bottles, carriage paid on orders of 2 dozen". 16 shillings was worth 80 pence or just over a dollar. How times change! The wine was delicately scented and was considered to be a cure for infirmities of the head such as "phrensies", falling sickness (possibly epilepsy) palsies, convulsions and cramps. An infusion of the flowers was used in the same way and was also used as a cosmetic to remove spots, wrinkles and freckles.

Many of the British traditions associated with cowslips also apply to primroses and sometimes one or the other is associated with a festival like May Day, depending on the part of the country, partly because primroses always start to bloom before cowslips and partly because in most areas either one or the other is abundant, but rarely both. In the part of north-west France where we live, primroses grow everywhere. But we noticed when travelling eastwards to Paris for spring flower shows that there came a point where the primroses growing along the roadside were replaced by cowslips. In France, cowslips are called cou-cous after the cuckoo which arrives when the warmer weather starts and the cowslips come into flower.

The flowers have always been well-loved as another quotation from *Our Village* shows

Here we are making the best of our way between the old elms that arch so solemnly overhead, dark and sheltered even now. They say that a spirit haunts this deep pool – a white lady without a head. I cannot say that I have seen her, often as I have paced this lane at deep midnight to hear the nightingales and look at the glow-worms; but there, better and rarer than a thousand ghosts, dearer even than nightingales or glow-worms, there is a primrose, the first of the year; a tuft of primroses, springing from yonder sheltered nook, from the mossy roots of the old willow, and living again in the clear bright pool. Oh, how beauti-

ful they are – three fully blown and two bursting buds! How glad I am I came this way! They are not to be reached. Even Jack Raphey's love of the difficult and unattainable would fail him here: May herself could not stand on that steep bank. So much the better. Who would wish to disturb them? There they live in their innocent fragrant beauty, sheltered from the storms and rejoicing in the sunshine and looking as if they could feel their happiness. Who would disturb them? Oh, how glad I am I came this way home!

The Jack-in-the-green is one of a group of primulas known as anomalous because one part or another of the flower has changed its form. In the case of the Jack, the calyx has transformed into a leaf-like structure that forms a ruff around the flower. The size of the ruff is very variable, sometimes being tiny underneath the flower and sometimes relatively large with the flower nestling inside.

The name Jack-in-the-green is very old. An account of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's third voyage to North America in 1583 includes a description of the entertainments taken across the ocean. He describes the cavorting of the Morris dancers, hobby horse, and jack o' greens, which were apparently well received by the audiences. The Jack was a man inside a conical framework of wicker covered with leaves. A small gap was left in this, so that the man inside could see out. However, this image is very like some of the representations of the "Green Man" that can be found in many churches throughout Europe.

Given the church's condemnation of the old pagan gods, the last place you'd expect to find the Green Man is within the Christian places of worship. Nevertheless his face appears again and again. Typically Green Man figures are carved in stone or wood; they also may be crafted in stained glass or inked in the style of illuminated manuscripts. Over 2,000 Green Man images have been identified in England alone. They can be found on any surface that's open to ornamentation: capitals, corbels, choir stalls, fonts, screens, or roof bosses. The face takes many forms, but there are two basic styles: a realistic human face disgorging leaves from the mouth, or a face actually made of leaves. Sometimes these two images are combined.

The earliest examples of this type of design come from the 2nd century AD where they are never found in churches but on the gravestones of rich citizens in places like Trier in Germany. By the 4th century these designs were making

an appearance on Christian tombs, but it was not until the 6th century that the Green Man found his way into a place of Christian worship. In most churches now, it is unusual to find a Green Man placed prominently, but examples do exist. In Kinnerly church (Hertfordshire) the carved wooden screen behind the altar has a Green Man at the very centre. But usually he'll be found disguised as a roof-boss, hidden in a corner, or lurking under a misericord seat.

Why I am telling you all this? Because the Green Man or Jack-in-the Green is linked to many of the May Day celebrations where primroses and/or cowslips are also used.

May Day celebrations were widespread. In some areas these have dwindled to events such as Cowslip Sunday celebrated on the first Sunday in May in the village of Lambley, Nottinghamshire. In the past, people travelled out from the city of Nottingham to buy bunches of cowslips picked by local children. In modern times, they have to be content with a basket of cowslips on the altar as, in Britain at least, wild cowslips are extremely rare.

In other places cowslips were gathered for the mock battle of Summer and Winter. Very few of these old traditions are left now but the May Day 'Obby 'Oss procession in Padstow in Cornwall where cowslips are worn and the ceremonies at Clun in Shropshire near the English border with Wales, are perhaps typical of what used to occur.

The Clun festival culminates with a Battle on the bridge between the Green man – symbolising spring – and Old Frostie – symbolising winter – in which the crowd is invited to participate.

So, if you haven't made any other plans for tomorrow, here is an idea for your own May Day celebrations.

Green Man: Hear me old Frostie, stand aside I say,
For Spring breaks through this very day,
Hear my words addressed to thee,
For this my will, so mote it be,

Crowd: Hurrah!

Old Frostie: I am Old Frostie, Queen of Cold,

Clun's my throne my great stronghold,
I reign here, submit to me,
Bend the knee or turn and flee,
You'll not be in Clun woods this day,
A-conjuring the Springtime way,

Crowd: Boo!

Green Man: My hour is come with the strengthening sun!
I banish thee Frostie. Go with the snow! (She flees)

Crowd: Hurrah!

Green Man:
Hail the Queen of May!
Hail the Queen of May!
Hail the Queen of May!

Crowd: Hurrah!

May Queen: Mine is the beauty of the green earth and the
fullness thereof, For I am the bringer of all fruitfulness unto thee,
By the moonray's silver shaft of power,
By the green leaf breaking into bud,
By the seed that springeth into flower,
By the life that courses in the blood,
I invoke the power of land and tree,
And call on rain and sun:
As I do will, so let it be,
I speak the word - and it is done!

Green Man: Come people of Clun, let it be so,
For I am among thee and maketh things grow.

Crowd: Hurrah!

This article was shared with us by Angela Bradford after presenting it accompanied by slides at the 2005 National Convention of the American Primrose Society in Boylston, Massachusetts.

OBITUARIES

Caroline Jensen

1917-2006

Caroline Jensen was a Juneau, Alaska gardener and much more. She observed the natural world around her for nearly sixty years in Southeast Alaska. She was one of the founding members of a hiking club-Ship Shank and Shutter-that explored the trails and mountains around Juneau and photographed the area. Many of her photographs and slides are in the Alaska State Museum where they may be used for research.

As a proficient gardener and horticulturist, her experiments with flowers, vegetables, shrubs and trees helped increase local knowledge of the possible and the difficult to grow in our climate. She was always willing to share her knowledge, plants, and vegetables and helped teach local gardening classes for many years. Caroline's contributions to several editions of the Juneau Garden Club's book "Gardening in Southeast Alaska" are recommended to all new gardeners who seek success in beautifying their own yards.

She was a longtime member of the American Primrose Society and grew many species and varieties from the Seed Exchange which have thrived in her Pearl Harbor garden twenty three miles north of Juneau. Caroline's polyanthus border is amazing to see in May when in full bloom. There is a creamy white to pale yellow polyanthus which may have been hybridized by the bees that has been named Caroline's Dorothy in her honor.

I was fortunate to know Caroline for about

ten years through pruning some of her trees when she could no longer do it herself and got to watch and photograph her gardens through the seasons. When I admired particular plants she willingly shared divisions with me but I found it difficult to offer much in trade that was new to her. She had grown so many different plants from seed catalogs and nurseries that she could often tell me about their past successes and failures. The only advantage I had was a garden site that warmed up a little earlier in the spring and got a little less snow in the winter. Her location on a south facing beach in a cove sheltered from the harsh north winds is such a beautiful spot. It has great drainage due to the beach gravel and her continual use of seaweed and compost make fruits and berries, flowers and vegetables, and various shrubs and trees all thrive from her efforts.

Caroline had the foresight to work with the Southeast Alaska Land Trust to place a Conservation Easement on her land. She transferred it to the City of Juneau to be designated as the Jensen-Olsen Arboretum with an endowment to help maintain the property so others may enjoy it in the future.

Caroline was looking forward to another year of gardening when she passed away in February. I am going to miss her.

Ed Buyarski

Addaline Robinson

1915 - 2006

Addaline Weber Robinson died April 1, 2006, at a Beaverton, Oregon assisted living facility at the age of 90. She was born Dec. 13, 1915, in Baker, Oregon, a daughter of Ben and Sarah Weber Shold.

Addaline was raised on a homestead near Richland, Oregon in the Powder River area and graduated from Richland High School in 1933. She attended Eastern Oregon College and graduated from Portland State University in 1958. She married Thornton B. Robinson in 1936. He died in 1972.

Addaline was an elementary school teacher for more than 33 years and retired from West Union Elementary School in 1964.

She was a longtime member of the APS and was Treasurer of the Society from 1992 through 1997. Addaline was a member of the Valley-Hi Chapter and served as President of that Chapter for several years. She didn't enter many plants in primrose shows, but was keen on flower arranging and often submitted entries in the Decorative Section. A friend recalled Addaline spending a lot of money to become the successful bidder for an APS Pictorial Dictionary that was being auctioned many years ago at one of the traditional APS picnics held at the Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery.

She served as the State President of the Oregon Garden Club and President of the Irvington Women's Club. She was a member of West Union Garden Club, Portland Wom-

en's Club, President's Forum and the Retired Washington County Teachers Association. Addaline was selected one year as Queen of the Cornelius, Oregon, Blue Berry Festival. The selection of Queen was to recognize a person's contribution to the community as a volunteer.

Survivors include a daughter, Kathleen Newkirk, of Gaston, Oregon; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; a sister, Hilda Lee, of Stayton, Oregon; and a brother, Grant Shold, of Richland, Oregon. She will be remembered as a friendly, generous and classy lady by those that knew her.

Jay Lunn



Ramblings from the Editor

I know. It's already September and you have just received your spring quarterly. This has been a challenging project for me to re-volunteer to work on, but I will try to continue to deliver the issues on a more timely basis thanks to the helps of others who have stepped up to the plate to help the process. Please understand that it is not that I don't wish to take the job of editor, it's just a simple fact of time. Something we all can relate with.

Here in New England, the spring was... well, let's just say that the *Primula japonica* are very lush. After the driest March in over a hundred years, May and June broke all rainfall records with over 36 inches falling in four weeks. Today, it's mid August, and the Primula are still in foliage, something not seen for many years. Maybe I don't need to move to the Northwest after all!

Have you noticed that finer species primoses are starting to show up at places where one usually would find red geraniums. At our local Home Depot this spring, I found the hybrid primula that you see here, below. The container is an inexpensive concrete pot which I purchased at a Lowes Home Center. With very little investment, I had a presentation that looked as if I had hired a stylist. This recent "democratization of good design" trend is paying off.

This container was just something created to display near the greenhouse for a party that we hosted at our home for earlybird arrivals the night before the National Primrose Show began this past May. Since I have been looking at trends lately for my book, I couldn't help but notice that plants and gardening are growing in popularity. So quickly, in fact, that consumers are demanding horticultural excel-



lence at mass retailers like Target and Walmart as well as at their local garden centers, which, as Martha says, "is a good thing".

Today, in the bark-mulched McGardens of North America, no one seems to want what their neighbors have. Let's hope that as this fact of popular culture grows, the quality of plant material continues to grow too. Of course, the education and passion for maintaining such a green culture of such high maintenance plants must keep up, but let's ask for one thing at a time. After all, we can't expect to achieve all that the British have learned in 300 years and then condense it down to a decade or two! This sort of thing takes time to settle in.

We plant society folk still need to be patient and find nice things to say when ones neighbor plants growth retardant dwarfed potted mums the size of cows around their light posts. At least the orange leaf-filled pumpkin trash bags are falling out of favor. Finding Primula next to Supertunias should be encouraged. Next spring, why not pot some up in a nice container along with a gift APS membership and a Quarterly for a curious gardening friend and surprise them with something different?

Look at it this way...If what has happened to American cuisine in the past twenty years is any indication, we very well might be headed to a bright gardening future. After all, Gardening is now Americas number one leisure time activity, and isn't it nice to be able to find fresh cilantro and white truffle oil at local supermarkets. (If only I can find orange bitters!)

OK, I'm a snob. A foody and a plant geek, not a good mix. But at least I admit it, and try not to expect the same of those that I care about. Face it, we all are plant geeks, aren't we? (You better be 'cause this is a group that is all about a tiny plant called primula, and believe me, some folks think that's a little intense!)

Plant societies need people like us to be active and to support them. Globally, such groups are suffering with decreasing membership. The reasons are as varied as fewer young people finding time with their busy jobs, life and career, competition with the internet and new media, lifestyle changes, and an ever aging member base. Please continue to join the smaller plant groups and clubs, go to meetings, get involved. It's fun to tolerate bad coffee in Styrofoam cups and waste sunny afternoons planting microscopic seeds with tweezers. Call us crazy, or call us obsessed, it's what makes life so very special to those of us who understand that it's a gift to love plants.

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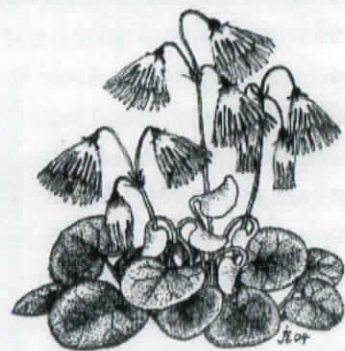
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Midland & West Section



The meeting was held online. Some of the members were present together at one computer at the National Show location in Boston. Present: Linda Bailey (Director), Rodney Barker (Director), Ed Buyarski (President), Mark Dyen (Director), Susan Gray (Director, Website), Julia Halderson (Treasurer), Mary Irwin, Elaine Malloy, Maedythe Martin (President, BC Group), Matt Mattus (Editor), Amy Olmsted (President, New England Chapter), Arlene Perkins (Director), Joe Philip, Michael Plumb (Secretary), Judith Sellers (Vice President)

Meeting opened at 12:15 ET

1. **The Minutes of November 5, 2005** (printed on page 39 of the Fall Quarterly, 2005)
Accepted as presented (Mark / Rodney)

2. **Treasurer's Report**

- Total liabilities and equity as of March 31, 2006: \$24,301.48 [March 31, 2005: \$26,461.26]
- Total income less expenses for the quarter January 1, 2006 to March 31, 2006: \$3,462.1
- Membership as of April 26, 2006: 390 [April 21, 2005: 398]

The Treasurer's report was accepted (Mark / Judith)

3. **Chapter Reports**

Accepted as presented (Amy / Mary). Special thanks to the NE Chapter and the BC Group.

4. **Committee Reports**

a. **Seed Exchange**

- All monies have not yet been submitted, as some will be coming from the National Show (50% of show seed sales), and some from the Juneau Show next month.
- After some discussion, the Board would like to suggest that the Seed Exchange Committee make every effort to send the list out in mid December and begin distribution early in the new year.
- Action: To encourage more participation in the Seed Exchange, Susan will post a gallery on the website showing plants grown from APS seed. There should be an article in the summer Quarterly on collecting seed, as well as one in the spring issue on sowing seed.
- Mark proposed a photo competition in the Quarterly of plants grown from APS seed. Action: Matt will put a notice in the spring issue to remind members to collect seed, and to take photographs of any primula blooming that were grown from Seed Exchange seed. He will also ask for feedback from members about growing this seed (Was the seed viable? Properly named? Etc.) and publish the results in the fall issue. Susan will place an announcement on the website. Julia suggested that a profile and photo of the winning grower also be included in the results.
- Another suggestion was that seed of primula which are more easily grown (rather than certain species) be made available at public events together with a display board of pictures of these plants, to encourage new growers.

b. **Judging Committee**

Rodney will contact the Judging Committee via Dorothy Springer to suggest some changes to rules.

5. **Website**

Susan Gray was congratulated on her work for the website, which will be relaunched in July under a different host, with more features and some savings. In addition, the new online chat facility is much more convenient and offers the option of copying dialog.

6. **Primroses Quarterly**

- Matt agreed to stay on as editor provided he receives more help from the Board. Motion (Maedythe / Mark): That the Editorial Committee assume responsibility for identifying and obtaining content for the Quarterly, with the support of the entire Board. Carried unanimously.
- Motion (Mark / Amy): That the production and mailing of the Quarterly be moved to a facility chosen by the Editor, who may appoint a committee to assist with mailing. Carried.
- Motion (Rodney / Amy): That the President appoint a fourth member to the Editorial Board, to be responsible for soliciting advertising with the help of a sub-committee. Carried. Rodney will take up this position. He will have sub-committee help on both sides of the continent. Some discussion followed concerning the need to obtain more timely payment from advertisers.

7. **New Business**

- Motion (Maedythe / Mary): That the BC Group be given permission by the APS to produce CD copies of the Pictorial Dictionary of the Cultivated Species of the Genus Primula. Carried. The project will be funded by the BC Group. Copies will be made available free of charge to members, and should be ready by January 2007.
- The New England Chapter withdrew its request for a loan to help with National Show expenses.
- The Juneau Chapter had sent some recommendations for constitutional changes. The President requested that all Board members send their responses to him, copied to all Board members, as soon as possible.

Meeting adjourned (Rodney / Mark) at 2:05 ET

Michael Plumb, Secretary

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