

Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia



Edraianthus horvatii

P. Minjarik pic

A Balkan species from seed collected by ZZ and Josef Jurasek in the Galacica Mtns of Slavic E. Macedonia. The plant pictured here is grown in a dry, brick crevice wall created by Pavel Minjarik of S. Moravia.

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EVENTS

May 13, 2015 7:30 Floral Hall VDBG ANNA LEGGATT: SPRING WILDFLOWERS OF PERSIA- THE ZAGROS MOUNTAINS of IRAN

This talk is based on Anna's trip to the Zagros in April 2010. Anna is a long time stalwart of the Ontario Rock Garden Society and has spent the better part of 25 years gardening with alpines. We'll see many gems that are top notch alpines but not often seen in rock gardens. See more on the Zagros in the **Links** section.

May 31, 2015 Dart's Hill 1680 168th St., Surrey. Picnic and Workshop. Noon to 2 PM? Bring your own lunch and hang out with members of the club. Ann Jolliffe will do a seed sowing/starting workshop and David Sellars will show you how to get a handle on planting with tufa/in tufa, so that a whole range of alpines can flourish in your garden. Should be a fun day.

June 10th 7:30 Floral Hall VDBGH

David Sellars Picos De Europa- The Alpine Garden of the Cantabrian Mountains.

This presentation is based on his and wife Wendy's trip with the Saxifrage Society to the Picos. The AGCBC's Past President is active in rock gardening circles worldwide with a special interest in photography, rock garden construction and teaching. David maintains a good web: http://www.mountainflora.ca/Site/Mountainflora_Home.html

See more about David here: <http://www.agc-bc.ca/events/David-Sellars-Picos-de-Europa-The-Alpine-Garden-of-the-Cantabrian-Mountains>

ROCK ON!



Editor at work- longhand still works but penmanship deteriorating!

I'm sure that everyone in the alpine club that gardens here on the coast must be shaking their heads in disbelief at the amazing California Spring that we're having. Everything is early and strong with the possible exception of those plants that really need a good vernalization like tulips. The Narcissus, however, especially the doubles and split corolla types, have been outstanding. (More on Narcissus in the next Bulletin.)

It was with some trepidation that I began to prepare for the Spring plant sale that was scheduled for the Saturday on the Easter weekend. But, boy oh boy, did that day come up trumps despite the prognostications of the **Johanna Wagstaffe's** of the world. The plant sale with the accompanying pot show (our only one in the calendar year), turned into a very high energy affair. I saw our Sales Chairman, **Chris Byra**, flying around all day. Before the sale, he was up the ladder hanging the banner, and after the sale, he was hauling tables back and walking out onto Oak St. to gather our new signs. Great work Chris (and Jane too). In fact, there was a lot of the usual club spirit that carried the day but Chris was- in the parlance of televised hockey games- the first star of the game.

The Meditative Allure of Dwarf Conifers- Gaze On



Pinus mugo var. pumilio 'VanDusen's Mini'

G. Ware pic

In developing any rock garden area, one of the keys is to build in spots for repose- a bench or a chair that allows you to just sit there and take it all in. I can't begin to tally the number of times in the 'taking-a-break-and-catching-my-breath' mode, that I have simply spent hours gazing at individuals in my collection of dwarf conifers. I believe that it is in those moments of gazing- somewhere in that moment- that in the beholding of beauty that our love-spark of plants is ignited. It is a divination of a natural variety not supernatural at all! In these unhurried moments of appreciation, when the spell of my gazing has spent its energy, that a little needle clean-up and finger pruning unfolds. These joyful little chores and interaction draws you closer to plants- not just dwarf conifers- and opens up your appreciation of them so much more. Now you are *seeing* instead of *looking*, an active instead of merely passive estimation. It is so satisfying to see the evolution of these plants.

I see this kind of curatorial activity of these living sculptures as a kind of active meditation that require the same artistic needs of discipline and imagination. With young plants and seedlings, it is amazing how they respond not just to the elements but to sensitive and practical understanding of their needs. Their intrinsic form and spirit often takes years to "come out". But it is in those moments after the appreciation of their beauty that real shaping of their beauty takes place.

That is, I suppose, the joy of gardening- those private moments in our floral sanctum where we have some imaginative control in a world that we know we have very little if any.

Sliding back from philosophical musings, with miniatures (dwarf dwarfs if you will), this (to shape or not to shape) is even more true. Miniatures need biomass to get to a point where they have enough form to become distinctive. One such mini in my garden is *Pinus* 'VanDusen Mini' (my appellation mind you! It was contract propagated by PNW Propagators only to have VDBG shrug their shoulders and walk away. Thus, it is a nameless refugee cv). In addition, after you purchase one, dwarf conifers and miniatures are quite often in recovery from PGT (post-grafting trauma) They take a few years to get happy.

Ahhhh, but one's patience is truly rewarded because once they're happy they become like a favourite pet that you can gaze on endlessly in in any season.

However, in Spring, with their new growth and the colours and contrasts with the old growth, their allure is more enhanced in this first season.

My fave pet at the moment is *Pinus parviflora* 'Regenhold Broom', a witches broom selection from the US that was discovered on a *Pinus parviflora* 'Glauca' by Ron and June Regenhold. It is simply stunning. I would go far as to say though, that the aureovariegates are really hard to beat at this time of year with their new golden growth. Cultivars such as *Juniperus* 'Daub's Frosted" and *J.* 'Gold Cone' are at the top of my list. This is just one cylinder in the engine that drives the alpines vehicle.



Pinus parviflora 'Regenhold Broom'

Owl's Nest- A Little Hoot from Yellow Pt.



Living in relative isolation from the rest of the club here at Yellow Pt. on Vancouver Island, I sometimes reflect wistfully on what it would be like to “pop around” to see things in members gardens or have someone “pop over” to mine. But as long as I live here on Van Isle that is never going to happen. This leads me an announcement prefaced by the comment that I have never self-promoted in my capacity as your Editor. I am opening a B & B- the **Owl's Nest**. It will be a self-contained, private entrance ground floor apartment of over 700 ft² with kitchen, ensuite, etc. The self-contained style will allow people to take an hour to wake up if they feel like it, unhindered by the spectre of socializing whilst still in the semi-astral state; and, make their breakfast when they want, the way they want. We are located on the corner acreage of two dead end roads. It is very quiet. If you'd like to come to the Van Isle for a brief vacation but don't want to spend a lot of time driving hither and yon (yawn?), then this is the spot. Just 15 minutes from the Duke Pt. terminal this is a woodland jewel far from the madding crowd with swimming beaches just 2 kms away, a variety of uncluttered hiking trails abound. Oh, and don't forget that my gardens are a destination too at almost any time of the year. They are really starting to be what I wanted them to be now after 5-6 years of garden making. Hopefully this will inspire you to “pop over” and see my gardens at the Owl's Nest.

Stumped

As an added personal note, I am no longer doing a nursery. Quite simply, the **Owl & Stump** is not a going concern. It was a case of the energy expended was not worth the 'return'. However, I am still propagating (almost always from seed) and doing a little hybridizing. I will sell those plants exclusively at the AGCBC plant sales with some on-site sales of “feature” plants- boutique quality, ready-to-go potted alpines, bulbs and dwarf conifers in lovely ceramic pots.

Links

From the Wednesday, March 25th, 2015 edition of the **Telegraph** comes this list from **Crûg Farms** on their fave plants:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/plants/10709287/Weird-and-wonderful-exotic-plants-to-grow-in-your-garden.html>

The Zagros Mountains have been visited several times by botanists/ecologist **John and Hilary Birks**. This is the latest edition of a tradition begun by **Per Wendelbo** at Bergen U. Here's a taste of what you might see at Anna Leggat's talk. http://www.eecrg.uib.no/Calendars/2012_Iran_calendar.pdf.

In addition, here is a detailed overview of ecology and the top three genera of Iran by the Birks. http://www.eecrg.uib.no/projects/AGS_BotanyExp/Iran/Iran.pdf

Here is a topographical map of the Zagros courtesy of Wikipedia. [Iran topo en.jpg \(1400×1291\)](#)

The importing of plants is an important activity to raise the level of diversity and (hopefully) excellence in garden performance. The government of Canada has just come out with a list of plants that may be imported with an import permit, a phytosanitary certificate and be free of soil and, finally, require an inspection (for a fee of course) by the CFIA upon arrival.

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/plants/horticulture/imports/horticulture-plant-list/eng/1419017863407/1419017907742#listn>

This list is *not applicable to the USA*. Note the bulbous and woodland species. *Bellevalia*, *Brimeura*, *Brodiaea*, *Chionodoxa*, *Cyrtanthus*, *Disporum*, *Eranthis*, *Eremurus*, *Gagea*, *Helleborus*, *Mukdenia*, *Roscoea*, *Scilla*, *Shortia*, *Stenomesson*, *Zephyranthes*.

James Cobb loves *Meconopsis* just like our Bill Terry. He has an excellent web (which we have referenced and provided a link to before in our Bulletin) and that we are going to provide again as a result of Bill Terry's review of the Grey-Wilson monograph on that genus. <http://meconopsisworld.blogspot.ca>

Peter Korn Talk- Learning From The Wild- February 20th 2015

Reviewed by Jo Turner



Peter just loves his compost

The title of Peter Korn's presentation in the Floral Hall at VanDusen Garden in February was 'Learning from the Wild'. Korn, a superb grower of, and advocate for, alpine plants, gave us a glimpse into the life of a master plantsman, who finds continual inspiration in the world of plants. As evidenced by the stunning success of his plantings, he is someone who has definitely learned to replicate the often subtle cultural and habitat requirements of the plants he grows so well. Based near Gothenberg in south-western Sweden, Korn has been a avid grower of alpine plants for over 20 years, despite being only in his forties. On this evening, he shared his love of plants, his highly specialized growing techniques, and his general passion for rock-gardening with a rapt audience.

Throughout his talk, Korn emphasized the importance of meeting the cultural requirements of each plant. He notes in the introduction to his excellent book, *'Peter Korn's Garden: Giving Plants What They Want'*, *'Put a plant where it wants to be, not where you want it.'* This would seem obvious, but any serious gardener knows this to be sometimes, and *often*, (in the case of more difficult plants), a highly problematic goal. Learning the optimum growing conditions for each plant, in relation to heat/ cold, moisture/dryness, sun/shade, are foundations for mimicking it's cultural requirements, but additional elements, such as drainage, wind, and

other factors are also taken into account by Korn. As an example of the extent he goes to meet a plant's cultural preferences, he states in his book, *"These plants are really hard to grow...They want strong sunlight but they do not tolerate it getting too hot. The roots must have constant access to moisture but it must not be wet. The most difficult thing to recreate is the strong wind which quickly dries up the downy foliage after the daily shower of rain...To grow these plants I have laid out north sloping rockeries over my bog and it is the closest I can get to the high alpine environment. It is sunny on the bog and the water cools the beds during the summer, while the gravel bed is perfectly drained so that the plants dry up quickly."*

In Korn's own garden he has developed many specific micro-habitats, constructing an impressive series of rockeries. Even more stunning were the photos showing him moving large boulders by hand. He is definitely a hands-on gardener, and seems to have boundless energy for the task. Natural habitats have been re-created not only to please the plants but people too. Korn has a highly developed design sense, evidenced in how well his hand-made walls and plantings achieve a very natural look, and therefore are aesthetically gratifying.

Korn propagates most of his plants from seed, chosen from an array of international specialist catalogues. He also benefits from having a botanist brother, who sends wild seed, that he has collected on extended cycling trips across Europe, Australia and Asia. One slide showed a pile of paper envelopes that had contained seed sent by his brother, each containing specifics of botanical name, collection and habitat data, including GPS...

It was particularly fascinating to hear how Korn grows-on the seedlings he has propagated. Most of his plants are planted out in coarse sand and grit. The ones that are started in pots have every spot of soil washed off their roots, then the small plant is planted into pure sand. Korn waters immediately, actually soaking the area, then often doesn't water again. He subscribes to a 'tough-love' philosophy of plant-rearing, and although admitting to serious losses at times, has found much success in this approach. He says that the plants grow deeper roots as they are forced to seek it at lower depths, and the low-nutrient soil encourages them to grow smaller, but more strongly. With such a huge planted area to maintain, Korn noted that a lower fertility soil also results in less weeding, a major concern with limited human resources.

Korn's garden is a sort of the embodiment of every alpine gardener's fantasy - hundreds of plants, specifically tailored for each one's particular niche habitat. He is living the dream...which of course, involves masses of knowledge, determination, grit, (literally and figuratively), and, of course, prolonged physical labour. He gardens on about two acres, which includes a small nursery, (he joked that he is his own best customer), in what had originally been a Spruce forest. This site initially contained a range of conditions, from dry sunny areas, to low boggy ones, but Korn showed us how, over several years, he constructed alpine areas, with tons of grit and sand, as well as towering rock faces, intensely planted with choice alpinists. Korn's passion for plants is very inspiring. His determination in attempting to grow

the most difficult species is no doubt shared by fellow alpine enthusiasts yet he doesn't give up...sometimes waiting decades for a particular plant to flower, which if it is monotropic sometimes dies shortly after.

Along with his affinity for alpines, Korn shared his enthusiasm for wild spaces. He showed photos of many remote locations he has visited in Armenia (a favourite destination), Kryrgyzstan and Turkey. He noted the kindness and hospitality of the Kurdistan people and their unfailing generosity, despite having little themselves. Some of the plants Korn has grown, that he shared photos of with us include: *Cassiope lycopodioides*, *Iris sari*, *Tulipa vvdenskyi*, *Corydalis alpestris*, *Dicentra peregrina* (red flowers), *Eritrichum aretioides* (hard to grow!), *Gunnera manicata*, *Erythronium japonicum*, *Lillium mackliniae*, *Corydalis cashmeriana* (VERY blue flower), *Trollius* 'Prichard's Giant', and many, many others. He offered tips on growing several plants, and also brought along for purchase copies of his recently published first book, 'Peter Korn's Garden: Giving Plants What They Want'. A copy was purchased for the AGCBC library, but it is one of those books that is worth owning for one's personal library, for a number of reasons. It will appeal to a broad range of gardeners, from those who are new to the principles of alpine growing, to more experienced rock garden enthusiasts. It contains, (in its almost 400 pages), specific cultural notes, habitat descriptions, detailed seed-growing advice, and many stellar photographs of individual plants and habitats, as well as telling the story of how Korn developed his own garden over time. He concludes the book by writing, '*So by utilising the pre-existing conditions that are already on the property, and amplifying them with different types of beds, you can grow an incredible variations of plants. You just have to start thinking*'.

Peter Korn's talk, and his book, will definitely inspire us to do just that....

Link to ordering his book: www.peterkornstradgard.se/book.html



Photo of a sample page from Peter Korn's book.

Spring Plant Sale Report

by Linda Verbeek



2015 AGCBC Spring plant sale was well attended

David Sellars pic

The day of the sale started with a bang- quite nice weather after a downpour the night before, and a line-up of kids (with parents) waiting to hunt for Easter eggs in VanDusen Gardens. I don't know how many of those came by later, and there were several different Easter egg hunts at different times, I think, but I saw a lot of kids come through. Not all of them were particularly charmed by plants, but what can you expect?

We didn't have all the sellers from previous years, but the Floral Hall looked quite stuffed by the time all the plants were in. And colourful too. I must say that I always enjoy the look of the Sale when everything is set up, all the plants presented with their best foot forward, and all the people milling about. I try to tell my friends it is worth coming to the sale even if you leave your wallet behind and even more so now that we have the Show at the same time.

There isn't usually much time for the club members to enjoy the spectacle, however, especially nowadays when we let the public in at noon, and consequently

have to have the pre-sale by 11 or so. There was also little time to run around making notes, obviously, so I just flitted about and almost certainly missed more than I saw, but for what it is worth, these are my impressions.

In at least one aspect the sale actually outdid the show. I think there were more than 40 *Cypripedium formosanum* for sale, many of them in full bloom, and nobody had thought of putting any in the Show. The Club, whose tables are always along the long south window, had quite a little garden of them.

There were other orchids available: **Ann Jolliffe** had a spotted *Dactylorhiza*, and we had *Dactylorhiza foliosa*, **Gary Lewis** of Phoenix Perennials had a *Cypripedium* hybrid, which was if possible even showier, and also some *Calanthes*.

A good part of the centre of the room was occupied by Rhododendrons and splendid they were, too! **Sue Klapwijk**, a long-time seller with us, had mostly hybrids, including 'Yellow Hammer', one of my favourites, with upright growth and abundant clusters of small yellow, sun-proof flowers. But she also had *R. saluenense*, a species from SW China, with small leaves and rather large, rich purple flowers.

The other large collection of Rhodies belonged to **Fearing Farm**, and they specialize in species. *R. proteoides* is a tiny shrub, but with reasonably large flowers. It will grow to 1 ft in 10 years - mind you, it doesn't tell you how wide it gets in the same time. My husband fell in love with *R. reticulatum*, a deciduous shrub, which normally has pink-purple flowers, but this one was pure white. It looked quite a bit like a white *R. schlippenbachii*, although in our garden *schlippenbachii* already had leaves with the flowers. I am not really sure whether it always does that. We did of course have to buy the *R. reticulatum*, and I can report that by now it has finished flowering, and the leaf buds are only barely breaking. But they would surely look lovely together. I spotted at least one other Rhododendron, *nitidulum*, another small one, which reminded me of *R. impeditum*, but the leaves are much rounder. This was brought in by **Mark Stephens**.

As usual, and not surprising in a city that was built in what was originally rain forest, there were many shade or shade-tolerant plants. A variety of *Trillium*, including *T. rivale* on our own table, *T. erectum*, again from Mark Stephens, and *T. kamtschaticum* from Phoenix Perennials. It has always puzzled me where the species name 'erectum' comes from, because the plant definitely has nodding flowers, dark red on longish pedicels, for a *Trillium*, anyway. The buds do start out erect, but have bent over beneath the leaves before they open. And I thought *T. kamtschaticum* didn't look all that different from our native *T. ovatum* (neither does *T. grandiflorum* from the east, for that matter).

Anemone x lipsiensis (*A. ranunculoides* x *A. nemorosa*) is a small wood anemone with pale yellow flowers. *Phlox divaricata* is a creeping woodlander from eastern forests, quite similar to the western *Phlox adsurgens*, but the flowers are more in the bluish range, from pale blue to lavender to reddish purple, and there is even more variety of colour in cultivation. Both of these plants came from Ann Jolliffe, and her Phlox was a beautiful deep purple. The plant is sweetly scented, too.

Syneilesis aconitifolia from Phoenix Perennials is a woodlander too. It was just coming up, and the young buds look like fuzzy mushrooms with grooves in them. They turn into quite huge leaves, so you need a lot of room to grow them, and for me personally it seems too much for the short time that they look so

magical. But they are spectacular foliage plants, with finely divided palmate leaves that look like umbrellas with cloth only along the spokes, not in between. A couple of other woodlanders from Phoenix: *Hacquetia epipactis*, surely one of the oddest members of the carrot family, with leaves like somewhat elaborated *Hepatica* leaves, and inflorescences like small yellow buttons in green ruffs in mid-spring. I've talked about this plant before, but I do love it, and it is unassuming and doesn't bother anything else. The other one was Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis*. I thought at first that Gary Lewis had the wild-type single form, but on closer inspection it turned out to be pink mostly on the reverse of the petals, I think. And it probably had about twice as many petals as the wild form in my garden. But it definitely still had the cluster of yellow stamens in the centre. I think the pink form is very, very rare.

Another woodlander was *Disporopsis perneyi*, which came from Dartshill gardens, but Sue Klapwijk was taking care of it. This is a *Polygonatum* look-alike closely related to *Disporum*, as the flowers occur at every node along the stem. The plant is also evergreen, a good addition in the shade garden, where most things disappear for the winter.

My final woodlander comes from **Jason Nehring**. This was *Nomocharis aperta*, a lily relative (if the taxonomists haven't turned it into a lily yet!) with nodding, but wide-open, pink flowers spotted with purple. It is a beauty and should be hardy, though I've never dared to risk it yet. So I bought another one, maybe then I can try it in the garden.

I don't know Jason's garden, but I do know his skills. He always has the most unusual plants. This spring he had several species of *Calochortus*, the California answer to tulips, I suppose, and for all they grow relatively close by, they are quite tricky to grow. I noticed *C. superbus*, a very variable mariposa lily, and *C. albus*, a fairy lantern with nodding flowers.

Another rare plant was *Paeonia cambessedesii*. It is a Majorcan endemic, and grows on limestone, but apparently at least in England it is reasonably hardy. I have grown it myself for years, and it doesn't flourish (perhaps because I haven't given it lime), but it doesn't perish either. It got very close one winter when it somehow didn't have enough soil over it, and almost all of it rotted. I replanted the one tiny bit of healthy tuber I could find, and it grew and made roots- and even flowered the next year, the only time it has done that. It has beautiful grey-green leaves which are deep burgundy when they first come up, and a pink flower.

(Ed: Some west coast people like to grow it directly in a sunny, front corner of a cold-frame where its sensitivity to cold is ameliorated. It is one of the first species to flower.)



Paeonia cambessedesii

Real, true alpine or rock garden plants aren't actually all that plentiful in our sales. I'd reckon *Dracocephalum argunense*, from the Club table, to be in that category. It makes a mat or mound of narrow dark green leaves and spikes of the most intense blue flowers. *Linum capitatum*, with butter yellow flowers and stems clad in tidy oval leaves, also fits in the rock garden, as does *Trollius ranunculoides*, from China, where it grows in alpine meadows. In flower it is only about 10 cm tall, but the flower stalks elongate as the fruits ripen, something many grassland species do. The latter two species also came from the club table.

Phlox subulata is also a true rock garden plant, if not a real alpine. It makes shaggy mats of needle-shaped leaves and in spring covers itself (at least, if it's happy) with typical, rather starry phlox flowers. Mark Stephens had both deep pink and purple forms. *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, which we had brought, is a true alpine as well. It makes a mat, more than a cushion, and will root along the stem. The form I have, originally from Mark Demers, apparently originated on the Canadian arctic islands

and is quite floriferous. This is not true for all cultivated forms. It blooms very early in the year, by the time the show came around it was long finished.



Ornithogalum nanum

G. Ware pic

Grahame Ware also had a plant that fits beautifully in the rock garden: *Ornithogalum nanum* makes a rosette of fairly long, rather narrow leaves, which surround a cluster of large, stemless white stars. It flowers in very early Spring. It comes from NE Turkey. I think *Penstemon pinifolius*, also from Grahame Ware, might also fit, although it is definitely taller. Grahame had both red and yellow forms. It makes a small, loose mound with needle-like foliage and spikes of rather narrow, brightly coloured trumpets. It is considered easy, but I think, like so many other plants, it doesn't like our winter wet although Grahame has success with it in Yellow Pt., a more Mediterranean clime than mine.

The quintessential alpiners are the saxifrages, and **David Sellars** had a collection of tiny cultivars. I think his only other item was *Silene hookeri* in both subspecific forms. They are also very choice and temperamental, but David has them figured out, and grows them to perfection, even outside in his extensive tufa hill. That is probably the only kind of setting in which they would grow outside in our climate. They originate from Oregon and northern California, and this is one of the species that will grow on serpentine soils.

And finally **Pieter Klapwijk** and his wife had a whole collection of small hypertufa troughs, that they'd made themselves, and planted too. We ourselves have ever only made real big ones, but these little ones seemed to have a lot of promise, and I hope we'll see some of them in the Show one of these years.

The *Gaultheria* of Tasmania
text and photos by Ken Gillanders



Gaultheria tasmanica

There are four *Gaultheria* native to Tasmania. Three are endemic and were the only members of Ericaceae found here but I believe that all Epacridaceae are now included in Ericaceae. There are a lot of Tasmanian plants in Epacridaceae, so this has increased the numbers significantly.

Let's start with the one species that is not endemic to Tasmania- *Gaultheria depressa*. It is found also in New Zealand. The Tasmanian plants occur on our higher mountains forming a creeping mat. I should mention that our high mountains could be seen as hills compared to those in Canada.

The flowers are followed by conspicuous 8mm to 10mm generally red fruits in the Tasmanian population but white forms can occur. The fleshy part is actually an inflated succulent calyx. The leaves are rounded, leathery and bluntly notched around the edges with some red hairs.



Gaultheria depressa

Our appropriately named Snow Berry, *Gaultheria hispida*, is a shrub varying in height from 30cm to 1.5m. It is found in shade in lower altitude areas and right down to sea level in the south and west of the island. It can also be found at higher altitudes up to approximately 1000m. The dark green, lance-shaped leaves are up to 8cm long. It carries terminal heads of white flowers which are followed by glistening white 10cm fruits which are actually fleshy sepals enclosing the fruiting capsule. It is a coloniser of roadsides in the higher rainfall areas where it puts on a magnificent display in early Autumn.



Gaultheria hispida

Gaultheria tasmanica was known until recently as *Pernettya tasmanica*. This is one of my favourite plants and grows easily in an acid soil in a well-lit position. It is completely prostrate, forming a tight mat with 6mm deep green, elliptic leaves. The typical, white bell-shaped flowers are followed in Autumn with 10mm fruits which are generally red but can also be white, pink or yellow (See picture below). The fruit is comprised of a fleshy inflated sepal and calyx. The berries in the red form resemble clusters of bright red apples and is the main reason that many growers want to establish this plant in their rock gardens. It is commonly found on the central plateau at an altitude of 1000m. This area is generally rather rocky and barren in most places with little or no tree cover. Temperatures here can get very low with frosts of minus 10 degrees with frequent snow falls. When it makes its way into damp areas, it will colonize mounds of *Abrotanella forsterioides*, with the fruits nesting against the dense foliage. I have grown this plant for many years and found it prefers a sunny position, as it does in its native habitat.



Gaultheria tasmanica showing fruit colour variations

Older authorities had *Gaultheria lanceolata* as *x Gaulnettya*. It is now considered a species albeit a natural hybrid of *G. tasmanica* x *G. hispida*. I agree with this, as seed I sent to a keen grower in Scotland many years ago, showed great variability in habit and leaf formation when grown out. It occurs only in a few locations, forming a low 20cm suckering shrub with foliage intermediate between the suggested

parents. It is the hardiest of the Tasmanian *Gaultheria*. The showy fruit is usually white flushed pink and has a large fleshy calyx as in *G. tasmanica*.



Gaultheria lanceolata

All of the Tasmanian *Gaultheria* grow well in the garden or containers and, like all Ericaceous plants, require an acid peaty soil and regular watering. The hardiness of the Tasmanian *Gaultheria* is generally considered about a Zone 9 with the aforementioned *G. lanceolata* being about a Zone 7.

Hardiness concerns have motivated some gardeners that like the Tasmanian *Gaultheria*, to use them as a foliage element in containers in their greenhouse or conservatory. They should do well in the milder shores of the Pacific Northwest and bring colour and cheer to the Winter garden with their showy fruits.

Endnotes: Ken has been writing about his native Tasmanian flora for over forty years. For those of you not familiar with his accomplishments, here is a Wikipedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Gillanders



Reviewed by Bill Terry

At last! Those of us obsessed with the utterly alluring Asiatic poppies have waited years for this book. I first heard of it in 2010, when release was reported to be “imminent.” Then, there were rumours that Dr. Grey-Wilson was unwell, that the book would never see print. All the more exciting therefore to feel it’s weight in

the hands (a hefty five and a half pounds), to admire Harry Jans' gorgeous cover picture, a back-lit photo of azure blue *Meconopsis horridula*, and on turning the four hundred plus pages to discover this book is well worth the wait (and the weight). The reason this work is so essential is that eighty years have passed since the publication of Sir George Taylor's definitive monograph, *An Account of the Genus Meconopsis*, (Waterstone & Co., London, 1934). Taylor (1904 - 1993) was a distinguished botanist, director of Kew Gardens, and a plant explorer- although he travelled only once in the land of the Asiatic poppies.

In 1915, Sir David Prain, an earlier director of Kew Gardens, had identified 43 species of *Meconopsis*. Taylor re-sorted the genus and reduced that number to 41. Grey-Wilson identifies almost double that- 79. Of course, several species, undiscovered in Taylor's day have since been classified, but the main reason for the large difference lies in the fact that Taylor was a "lumper." By that, I mean he was inclined, indeed overly inclined, to shovel several look-alikes into one category. For example, he dismissed the hitherto species status of *M. prainiana*, declaring: "I have been unable to find any structural character of this plant to merit for it even varietal rank, and I believe that it is merely a luxuriant state of *M. horridula*." Well, even to a botanically uneducated eye, such as mine, these two plants, observed in flower in the wild, are clearly distinct.

In his introduction, Grey-Wilson deftly acknowledges Taylor, noting that when he started at Kew as a junior botanist in 1968, Taylor was still the director. "Unfortunately, I was never able to discuss *Meconopsis* with George Taylor, although it is clear that his interpretation of the genus is radically different from my own. Yet he was working at a very different time when resources and information on the genus were far scarcer and analysis was based almost exclusively on a detailed study of all the available herbarium material." However, Grey-Wilson does regret that Taylor never attempted to update his *Account of the Genus Meconopsis*, even though he lived for a further 59 years after its publication.

Grey-Wilson did not wait to complete his book before correcting a significant error in Taylor's publication- the classification of the most widely grown perennial blue poppy. In 1913, a British army officer, explorer and probable spy, Col. Frederick M. Bailey, found a blue poppy in southeastern Tibet, and sent a flower to David Prain at Kew. On this rather fragmentary evidence, Prain decided it was a new species. His judgment was confirmed ten years later, when Frank Kingdon Ward, plant-hunting in the same region, again found Bailey's poppy, collected complete herbarium specimens and also sent seed to Kew, thus introducing the famous Tibetan (Himalayan) blue poppy to eventual cultivation in British gardens. Kingdon Ward named it *Meconopsis baileyi*, and that name stuck until Taylor declared it was merely a geographical variation of *M. betonicifolia*, a fine, perennial blue poppy, found in N. Yunnan province of China, c.1885. So, *M. baileyi* became *M. betonicifolia*, and remained so for 75 years, until 2010, when Grey-Wilson published a paper listing nine distinct anatomical differences between the two, more than

enough to warrant different species classification. With such convincing evidence, the scientific name of the Tibetan poppy was restored to the original- *Meconopsis baileyi*.

Now, with *The Genus Meconopsis: Blue poppies and their relatives*, Christopher Grey-Wilson has given us an up-to-date, perfectly splendid reference to the Asiatic poppies. It certainly achieves the standards of scientific rigour, technical detail, and academic thoroughness expected of a scholarly monograph. However, it is also very readable and accessible to those of us who claim to be gardeners, not botanists. The author has included a very useful and practical chapter on cultivation and propagation of the genus, including the absolutely essential advice that seed, if not started fresh, must be stored in cold conditions to maintain viability. (The reason that the blue poppy is widely considered beyond the powers of the average gardener is that packaged commercial seed has usually been stored at room temperature and is accordingly Dead On Arrival. The gardener, of course, blames herself.) Grey-Wilson briefly notes parts of Canada where *Meconopsis* can be grown, including Vancouver. Oddly though, he omits any mention of what is by far the best region in North America for growing the big perennial blue poppies- coastal Alaska.

I intend no slight to the author when I say that his monograph is not only a first rate reference work, but also a fine coffee table book, gloriously, generously illustrated throughout with outstanding photographs of Asiatic poppies. Almost all the species are shown in their native habitat at elevations above 10,000 feet- in the alpine woods and meadows of the world's greatest mountain rampart, rising in the Hindu Kush, spanning northern India, the Himalayan wilderness of Nepal and Tibet, before finally falling to its easternmost knees in Sichuan and NW Yunnan.

No one can pore over this magnificent book and not appreciate the truth of Vita Sackville's observation that "*the blue poppy is the dream of every gardener.*"

Thank you, Christopher Grey-Wilson.

The book is 432 pages with 300 colour photographs, 20 colour botanical paintings, 20 distribution maps. 288 x 238mm. Hardback and costs 68£ from www.shop.kew.org

Bill Terry is the author of "[Blue Heaven: Encounters with the Blue Poppy](#)" (TouchWood Editions, 2009). The same publisher will release his latest book "The Carefree Garden: Letting Nature Play her Part," later this Spring. (Ed: **Margaret Charlton** reviewed Bill Terry's book, "[Beyond Beauty: Hunting The Wild Blue Poppy](#)", in Bulletin 56-1 pp 14-5)



Mukdenia rossii growing *in situ* in limestone rock crevices near Mukden, the sacred city of the Qing dynasty. It is a tough Saxifrage relative that needs a little light and good drainage to succeed. A few good cultivars are available that are more compact than the type and thus wonderfully suited to the woodland or rock garden.