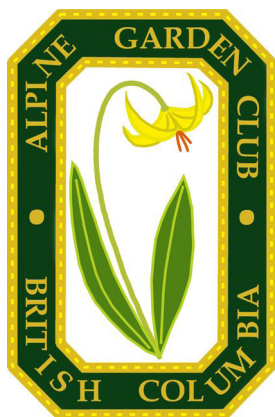


# Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia



*Epimedium pinnatum* subsp. *colchicum* at the entrance of  
UBC Botanical Garden

Volume 61, Number 2 Quarterly Bulletin, 2018



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## **AGC-BC 2018 Membership Renewals Due**

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2018, please bring a cheque for \$30 to Membership Secretary, Jane Byra, with your name and contact info. Cheques should be made out to the Alpine Garden Club of BC.

Or renew online using your credit card through PayPal on our website [www.agc-bc.ca/membership-renewal](http://www.agc-bc.ca/membership-renewal)

**AGC-BC meetings** are held on the second Wednesday of each month except July and August in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00 p.m. and the meetings start at 7:30 p.m.

Please bring plants for the plant draw; the proceeds of which go toward paying for the hall rental. Don't forget to bring your coffee/tea mug.

## **2018 AGC-BC Upcoming Events**

- **May 9 - AGC-BC Meeting** - Jim Jermyn: Growing Alpine Plants in True Character
  - This is the first of the annual Willy Dickenson Lectures.
- **May 20 - Member Garden Tour: Byra Garden**
  - A two acre garden with a mixture of plantings, a tufa bed and several other rock garden areas. Built on a hillside at an elevation of approximately 250 m above sea level, it is a little cooler than most of the lower mainland.
- **June 13 - AGC-BC Meeting** - Barbara Cooper and Bella Seiden: Botanizing in Patagonia

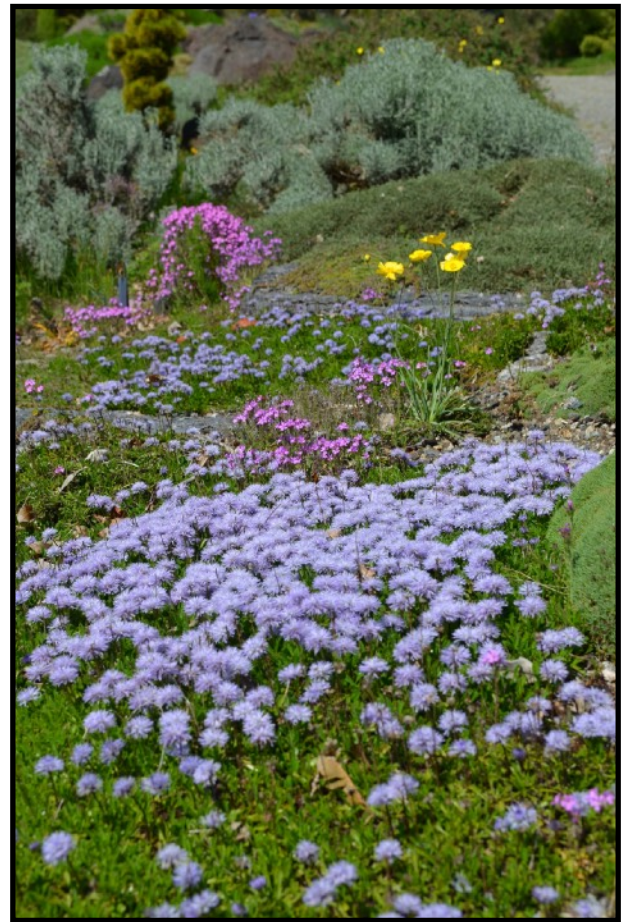
For more information, visit <http://www.agc-bc.ca/events>



## From the Editor

Spring is in full swing in the UBC Alpine Garden here in Vancouver. It is my favourite gardening season, as I love the first weed through and clean up of a garden. Every year there seems to be twice as much work as time, but the spring flush makes the strain of the seemingly impossible task of trying to keep up worthwhile.

Needless to say, it's a time when travel is out of the question for me. Although I did have the immense pleasure of a very quick visit to Kew and RHS Wisley in March, April and May are all about being on hand for managing the garden. This can be tough for a curator, because it's the best time to visit other gardens! Therefore, I'm thrilled to once again travel through the generous Bulletin contributions of our friends down in Colorado, home of some truly wonderful rock gardens, as well as a report on a speaker I'm ashamed to say I had to miss, and his travels to the gardens of some Czech gardening masters.



*Globularia* spp., *Erinus alpinus* and *Ranunculus graminifolius* in the UBC Alpine Garden.

The other spring task I adore is planting out. I'm sure I'm not alone in that! So for everyone flipping through catalogues, surfing plant nursery sites, or getting out to your local greenhouse or gardening centre, maybe you'll be inspired to look for a plant featured in one of the articles in this issue. A report on the AGC-BC Spring Show and Sale will no doubt draw your attention to some of the gems that were present, the second part of "*Epimedium* – Grace Incarnate" is all about selecting and growing these lovely plants, and there are some very entertaining words of wisdom on which plants to skip, in "Plants I Should Have Never Let Loose in the Garden".

If you're like me, and need to be forced to take a break from your garden, perhaps you can use this issue of the Bulletin as your excuse. Put your feet up, have a cold drink and enjoy!



## Club News: AGC-BC Sale Report

Linda Verbeek

The day of the sale arrived with pelting rain and even a loud clap of thunder while we were still carting in plants and setting up. Luckily the weather gods relented by noon and the afternoon was quite usable, so we had a steady stream of visitors.

I always love the moment when the sale is basically ready to go, but no one has actually bought anything yet. The tables are loaded with greenery and flowers, to the point that you can't see any table surface, and people are milling around, or taking up strategic positions to get the one plant they have to have when the pre-sale starts. I think one could come to the sale just to look. It is just about as interesting as our pot show, although perhaps not as colourful.

Most know that we have participated as sellers for a very long time (38 times in all, we just figured out) and we are efficient at getting organized and setting up. Nevertheless, it does take time, and since the pre-sale now starts at 11 am, there isn't much time for going around and making notes for an article – even less when you stop and chat; and isn't that one of the reasons to be at the sale in the first place? So this article is going to be very incomplete and biased, and I hope no one is offended if they don't get mentioned or their favorite plant is left out (apart from the fact that people differ about favorite plants). One thing that hasn't been mentioned often is the difference in style among the various sellers: from David Sellars, who comes with two or three flats of very special stuff (e.g. *Cypripedium formosanum*, *Saxifraga* cultivar cuttings), to Fearing's Farm who has a complete shrubbery of splendid rhododendrons, to Dan Sierzega who has an extensive collection of dormant bulbs, largely rare ones from South America, with great colourful sheets of explanations spread out. The only trouble with his plants is that almost none of them are hardy.

One plant that somehow popped up repeatedly was the double *Sanguinaria canadensis*. I can't actually remember when we had it in the sale before. But this time there were 3 or 4 places where you could have bought it, if not in large numbers. It was just at its peak too, showing the white in the bud, but not quite open – an ideal time to buy something.

There were a number of natives available, though not large numbers of *Trilliums*, except at Gary Lewis' Phoenix Perennials table, who had both the plain and the double form of I think *Trillium ovatum*. Somewhere I saw *T. hibbersonii*, we had some *T. rivale*, and Free Spirit Nursery (represented by club members) had a few pots of *T. sessile*. Other natives (of North America in general) included *Dicentra cucullaria* (also from Free Spirit), *Uvularia grandiflora* from Phoenix, *Stylophorum diphyllum* (in at least 2 places), *Oxalis violacea* (from Phoenix), and one or two pots of *Gillenia trifoliata* on the Club table.



One of a few *Trillium hibbersonii* pots at the sale.

*Dicentra cucullaria* is called Dutchman's breeches in English, because the double spurred white flowers look like pants upside down. It is a very pretty flower, and a typical eastern woodland plant, coming up before the trees leaf out, then going dormant before midsummer. *Uvularia grandiflora* is also an eastern woodlander, growing leafy stems with yellow bells at the tips. The petals are fairly narrow and somewhat twisted. It used to belong in the Liliaceae, but has now been housed in the family Colchicaceae. It is less



*Stylophorum diphyllum*

ephemeral than the *Dicentra* and remains green for the summer. *Stylophorum diphyllum* is a plant in the poppy family. It has deeply dissected leaves and bright yellow poppy flowers. It will eventually spread to make a good-sized clump, and the flower stems can be up to 30 to 40 cm. It goes to town in the spring, and keeps putting out the odd flower for a long time after. I bought *Oxalis violacea* in the pre-sale. It is an odd-ball among *Oxalis* from the more temperate woodlands, in that it grows from a bulb, not a

rootstock. It is quite dainty, with small, greyish green leaves and lavender flowers. I hope with its bulbous habit, it won't be as invasive as *O. montana* and *O. oregona*, which I grow, but have to fight to keep under control. *Gillenia trifoliata* is a tall perennial for shade or semi-shade, with wiry stems, the trifoliolate leaves it's named for, and a profusion of smallish, starry white flowers. I had it for many years, but it eventually disappeared – probably outcompeted by something – so this is one of the things I bought for myself.

*Podophyllum* (also known as *Dysosma*) are in at the moment, and there were some neat ones in the show, and a number for sale. I saw *P.* 'Spotty Dotty' – a hybrid between *P. delavayi* and *P. pleianthum* or *P. versipelle*. There was also a hybrid between *P. delavayi* and *P. pleianthum* with dark-coloured, but not quite so spotty leaves, as well as the species *P. pleianthum* and the native *P. peltatum*. I slandered Dan Sierzega a little earlier, saying none of his plants were hardy, because he also had a whole collection of *Podophyllum*, which I think were mostly hybrids and they are hardy enough. He also explained to me the difference between *P. pleianthum* and *P. versipelle*, which I had never been able to figure out. *P. pleianthum* carries the flowers, as all the others do, where the two leaves of a flowering stem diverge. *P. versipelle* carries them at the base of the individual leaves, i.e., much higher up the stem. It actually looks rather strange in the pictures.

There were also various hardy orchids: David had *Dactylorhiza foliosa*, the lushest and most richly coloured of them all, and remarkably hardy, seeing that it is native to Madeira; *Cypripedium formosanum*, not as many as a few years ago, but still present in two or three places; the native *Epipactis gigantea*, which actually occurs in BC (and as far south as Utah), a fairly tall stemmed orchid with green, pink and yellow flowers, maybe a little over a centimetre across, in lax racemes, and *Pleione bulbocodioides* from Anna Oguz, a stemless orchid which needs some care to survive outdoors. It has large, rather narrow-petalled, rich magenta flowers. The breeders have been at this genus, and there are a number of forms in various colours etc., but this was the original type, I believe.

There were many different shrubs. Among the *Rhododendrons* (which I mentioned earlier), I singled out *R. rupicola*, a small alpine species from China with purple flowers, *R. thymifolium*, not unlike the previous one, but the flowers are paler, and *R. floccigerum*, a larger plant with larger leaves, and deep scarlet bells that look almost leathery. I did really like that one. The Club had agreed with a wholesale nursery, called Pacific Northwest



Conifer selection at Spring Show and Sale



Propagators, to sell some of their plants, and so we had a diverse collection of dwarf conifers (which I know nothing about), as well as a few other dwarf shrubs, like *Cotoneaster microphyllus* var. *thymifolius*. This must surely be the smallest *Cotoneaster* ever, and I think it could look very pretty in a rock garden.

Someone complained to us that there weren't very many alpines – which is generally true at our sales. It has to be said that our climate is abominable for growing alpines in the open garden. They just hate the wet winter; they can stand cold temperatures all right, but in the wild they are usually either snow covered (which moderates the cold quite a bit) or they grow on exposed ridges. In either case, the soil is reasonably dry or dryish, and so the roots and crowns are not in frozen slush. Nevertheless, there were some around. I already mentioned David's saxifrages, and Philip McDougal had at least one



*Globularia repens*.

pot of *Saxifraga burseriana* in flower. This is a true alpine species from the eastern Alps, with large, clear white flowers. Ann Jolliffe had *Polygala chamaebuxus*, which, if not alpine, is at least subalpine. Also from the Alps, it is a small shrub with leathery, evergreen leaves, and small clusters of purple flowers with yellow tips. And I saw a few pots of *Globularia repens*, which is another alpine subshrub, with narrow leaves, and in summer pompoms of powder blue flowers. This one comes from the mountains of south-western Europe, at least from the Dolomites to the Pyrenees. It probably likes lime; I grow it in a tufa trough, where it has been happy for decades, and extends its reach yearly (if I don't cut it back), rooting as it goes, but it doesn't flower as abundantly as I'd like.

Not unexpectedly in a rainforest, there were a lot of shade plants. Two of which were big *Disporum* spp. from eastern Asia: *D. uniflorum* with 2 or 3 large yellow bells (in spite of the species name), and *D. cantoniense* with larger clusters of creamy-green bells. They look quite a bit like the native *Uvularia* on steroids. *Arisaema ringens* from Ann, one of the earliest of the species come up, has a large, tripartite leaf and a short, wide, very dark spathe. When it gets old enough it will fruit, and the bright red berries will take

until Christmas or so to ripen. Maybe in its native Japan the winters are milder. Peter Klapwijk and his wife had a large collection of hostas, many in blue hues, which are of course the quintessential shade plant. *Asarum* species are definitely shade plants, but apart from the North American natives, they are difficult in the garden because the slugs love them. Jason Nehring had *A. asaroides*, which comes from Japan, and has leaves very much like *Cyclamen hederifolium*, with beautiful silvery markings. We have a couple of nicely marked *Asarums* native to California, *A. marmorata* and *A. hartwegii*, but none of the natives have the large, sometimes spectacularly marked flowers of the Asian species.

I'll round this off with a few bits and pieces for dessert. I personally rather like the genus *Muscari*, and Anna Oguz had a wonderful pot of *M. latifolium*, which not only has the widest leaves in the genus, but also the darkest flowers. So far it hasn't been a nuisance in my garden, and I have to say that they aren't all as invasive as they are made out to be. Ann Jolliffe had some *Fritillaria meleagris*, as well as *F. bucharica*. The latter is part of the *Rhinopetalum* section, a somewhat unusual group that has the flowers much more open than the usual kind, and also carries them outward facing. On the club table I picked up a nice deep pink-to-purple, fuzzy *Primula* labeled *P. jesoana*. Checking it out on the web, I think it is more likely to be *P. polyneura*, but I am quite okay with that. It is not that unusual that seeds come with the wrong name, and heck, it is a very pretty plant.



The dark flowers of *Muscari latifolium*.

All in all, it was a very good sale. Splendid as it is to see the tables groaning at the start of the sale, it is just as satisfying to see them rather bare-looking at the end, and knowing that a lot of people have gone home with a new pleasure in their lives.

*Photos provided by Laura Caddy.*



## Club News: AGC-BC Show Report and Winners

Bob Tuckey

This year we had 63 entries in 29 categories. The category with the most entries was 'Rock Garden Plant Native to Asia'.

Thank you to the judges, and all who submitted your wonderful plants. I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their help with the show: Karen Thirkell, Jay Akerley, Jenni Parkinson, Mark Demers, Peter & Waita Klapwyk, and Wendy Smith. I apologize if I didn't include your name, as I really do appreciate your help.



Clockwise from top left: *Primula allionii* 'Broadwell Milkmaid', *Asarum splendens*, bulbous class and bonsai table, and saxifrage and *Lewisia* table.  
Photos provided by David Sellars.



# AGC-BC Spring Show Report and Winners

Bob Tuckey

BC Native Plant

David Sellars - *Fritillaria affinis*

Rock Garden Plant Native to North America

Jay Akerley - *Echinocereus viridiflorus*

Jason Nehring - *Dicentra cucullaria*

Rock Garden Plant Native to Asia

David Sellars - *Androsace muscoidea*

David Sellars - *Saxifraga dinnikii*

Jason Nehring - *Iris magnifica*

*Erythronium*

Jason Nehring - *Erythronium oregonum*

*Fritillaria* Suitable for the Rock Garden

David Sellars - *Fritillaria messanensis* subsp. *gracilis*

*Lewisia*

David Sellars - *Lewisia cotyledon*

*Narcissus* Suitable for the Rock Garden

Jason Nehring - *Narcissus watieri* - **Best Bulb or Corm**

Species *Primula*

David Sellars - *Primula allionii* 'Broadwell Milkmaid' - **Best in Show**

Saxifrage

David Sellars - *Saxifraga* 'Christian Huygens'

David Sellars - *Saxifraga* 'Allendale Beau'

*Sedum*

Paul Krystof - *Sedum pilosum*

*Trillium*

Bruce McConnell - *Trillium chloropetalum* - **Best Woodland, Best Native Bulb or Corm**

Dwarf *Iris* Suitable for the Rock Garden

Paul Krystof - *Iris bucharica*

Hybrid *Primula*

Bob Tuckey – *Primula* [Belarina Pink Champagne]

Any Other Hardy Crassulaceae Genus

Jason Nehring - *Sempervivum ciliosum*

Fern

Philip MacDougall - *Davallia mariesii* - **Best Fern**

Bonsai

Pam Yokome - *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Tsukumo' – **Best Bonsai**

Corm or Bulb Suitable for the Rock Garden

Paul Krystof - *Ornithogalum schmalhausenii*

Cushion Plant Other Than Saxifrage

Paul Krystof - *Minuartia* sp. - **Best cushion, Best Alpine**

Miniature Garden

Peter & Waita Klapwijk - *Sempervivum* and *Sedum* - **Best Miniature Garden**

Rock Garden Plant Out of Bloom to be

Judged for Foliage Effect

David Sellars - *Saxifraga cespitosa*

Rock Garden Plant Raised From Seed

Ann Jolliffe - *Paeonia tenuifolia* - **Best Plant from Seed**

Woodland Plant

Ann Jolliffe - *Asarum splendens*

Rarity

Jay Akerley - *Pediocactus knowltonii*

## Rock Gardens of Colorado

*Bryan Fischer and Mike Kintgen*

Located 60 miles north of Denver, Fort Collins boasts one of the best kept secrets of the Colorado rock gardening scene. Already featuring 12 acres of regionally adapted plantings and developing plant collections, the Gardens on Spring Creek is midway through its five acre garden expansion, to be finished by late summer of 2018. Included in the expansion are a number of specialty gardens, like foothills and prairie gardens, as well as a 1,500 person capacity outdoor performance venue. Perhaps most exciting for this site is the creation of “The Undaunted Garden”, to be designed, installed, and maintained by Lauren Springer Ogden based off plants and ideas from her book by the same name.

The crown jewel of the Gardens on Spring Creek is the Rock Garden. Situated on a half acre adjacent to the future “Undaunted Garden”, the Rock Garden sits at the centre of the botanic garden’s site. Not only do carefully crafted berm and path work combine with locally quarried stone to create the largest public rock garden in northern Colorado, but the thoughtful arrangement of these elements helps to slow visitors traveling through the space and emphasize a regional sense of place for this one-of-a-kind western rock garden.

Horticulturally, the Rock Garden at the Gardens on Spring Creek represents a unique approach to regional rock gardening. One of the first observations a garden savvy visitor might make is the tidy and deceptively naturalistic feel of the garden, with plants permitted to shuffle themselves about into preferred locations in a sort of slow-motion ballet on each berm. This is possible thanks to the impeccable maintenance of this space by horticulturist Dillon Hancock and a dedicated team of long-term volunteers. Paramount to the garden’s signature look is a slight space maintained between important taxa, a style mastered by Dillon.



Gardens on Spring Creek

Not only does the space provide a frame for the plants natural architecture, but it prevents choice alpine specimens from being out-competed by more vigorous neighbours. Much of the Rock Garden's origin, both in idea and in implementation, is owed to the exceptional folks at Laporte Avenue Nursery. Co-owner Kirk Fiesler was instrumental in the garden's initial rock work and has since contributed a notable collection of regionally



Rock Garden at the Gardens of Spring Creek

adapted, grafted dwarf conifers which are his specialization at the nursery. Karen Lehrer, the other half of the Laporte Ave Nursery equation, has also contributed hundreds of rare and choice rock and alpine perennials to the garden over the years. Together with the work of garden staff, this modest garden has an impact well beyond its size in northern Colorado, thanks to its exceptional plant palette and unique style. Since it's opening in 2011, the Rock Garden has garnered glowing praise, including a post by the North American Rock Garden Society's Facebook page in December of 2017 as "one of the most amazing we've seen anywhere". Needless to say, is well worth the extra day needed to make a a visit from Denver.

Long considered one of the great rock and alpine gardens of North America, the Rock/Alpine Garden at Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG) continues to advance both its collections and horticulture. One of the most taxa-rich gardens on DBG's York street grounds, the one acre site is home to more than 3,000 species of plants, accounting for almost 1/3 of DBG's taxa, in only 1/24 of the area. The collection is encompassed in a range of environments, such as berms, cliffs, hillsides, dryland areas, crevice gardens, woodlands, and meadows.



*Corydalis malkensis*, *C.* 'George Baker' , and *Draba hispanica* in DBG's Rock Alpine Garden



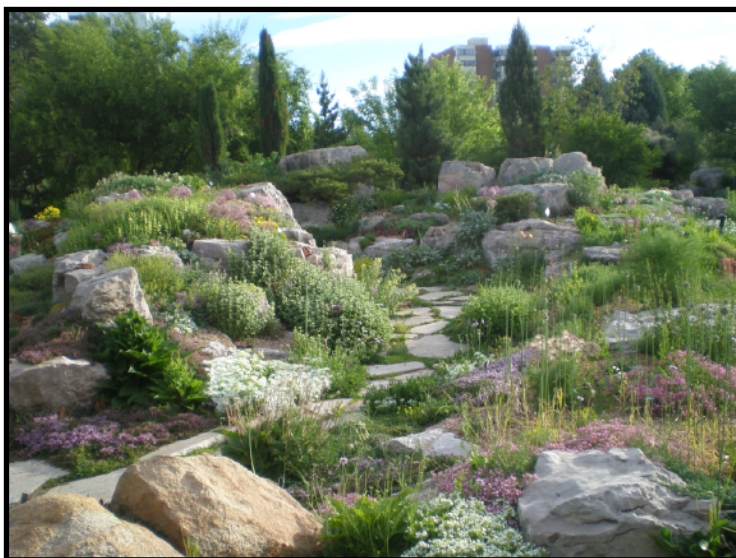
This plant diversity is possible due to exceptional knowledge bases and years of hard work trialling new species, subspecies, origins, and forms in the garden by horticulturists like Panayoti Kelaidis (now head curator at DBG), and Mike Kintgen (Curator of Alpine Collections at DBG). Panayoti and Mike, along with other curators from Denver Botanic Gardens, have been instrumental in plant scouting across the West and the world's steppe regions, and have been key figures in the establishment of a new plant palette for Western gardens.

Visitors will find many of these plants, such as *Delosperma*, *Diascia*, *Acantholimon*, *Helichrysum*, *Ephedra* and *Michauxia* showcased in the Rock/Alpine Garden, as well as a massive collection of western natives not otherwise found in gardens. Among them are numerous unusual species of *Yucca*, *Oenothera*, *Penstemon*, and *Eriogonum*.



*Delosperma* [Fire Spinner].

A regional sense of place also informed the creation of the Rock/Alpine Garden at DBG over 50 years ago. Dozens of massive, pale gray limestone boulders quarried from a canyon just north of Fort Collins, CO, adorn the garden, giving it an unforgettable look and some of the strongest “bone” structure of any public garden in the western US. Even in winter the space is interesting with numerous cushion and mat plants colouring and softening spaces between boulders. These cushions, long considered a specialty of this garden, originate from alpine and steppe regions around the world and include



Limestone cliffs at DBG.

dozens of taxa like *Astragalus angustifolius* and *Convolvulus boissieri* subsp. *compactus*, as well as a mentionable collection of *Acantholimon*. Alpine classics, like *Phyteuma*, *Edrianthus*, and numerous *Campanula* species, including a 3' x 4' mat of the scree-loving *C. cochlearifolia*, can be found throughout the garden. The garden has a particularly large collection of *Draba*, *Saxifraga*, *Primula* and *Dianthus*.

In contrast to the style at the Gardens on Spring Creek, plants in the Rock/Alpine Garden at DBG interact in a highly complex, plastic web of microclimates and competition between individual plants. Many of the plantings in this garden operate much like miniature ecosystems, with constant turnover in quick succession and rarely a bare spot of ground to be found. This complex style of planting is being championed more and more by plants-people like Kelly Norris, Claudia West, and Thomas Rainier, making the Rock/Alpine garden an interesting case study in an early form of this discipline.



DBG Rock Alpine Garden meadow.

Given Colorado's unpredictable spring weather and potentially alpine-frying summer heat, the best time for seeing alpine plants on Front Range gardens tends to be April, with blooms tapering off before summer heat arrives. Any earlier, and temperatures are often too cold to allow for much significant growth and development of buds and leaves. Any later may find many alpinines in "survival mode" due to high temperatures. Alpine sites near roads on the Front Range, like DBG's Mount Goliath field site offer good alpine plant viewing with little hiking required. A visit may be worthwhile, especially if you would already be driving by the site on your way to visiting either of our state's exceptional public mountain gardens: Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in Vail, or the Yampa River Botanic Park, in Steamboat Springs. Regardless, a plant-centric trip to the Centennial State won't disappoint - we hope to see you here!

*Bryan Fischer is a horticulturist in Fort Collins, Colorado. He holds a B.S. in horticulture from Colorado State University (CSU) and has work experience with CSU, The Gardens on Spring Creek, and Denver Botanic Gardens.*

*Mike Kintgen is Curator of Alpine Plant Collections at Denver Botanic Gardens. He holds a B.S. in horticulture from CSU and is completing a M.S. in Alpine Ecology from Regis University this spring. Mike gardens in both Denver and Steamboat Springs, Colorado.*

*All photos provided by the authors. Panayoti Kelaidis, Curator of Denver Botanic Gardens, has a blog post with numerous photos of the Rock Garden at the Gardens on Spring Creek:*

<http://prairiebreak.blogspot.com/2014/07/a-best-in-class-rock-garden-comes-of.html>

# Plants I Should Never Have Let Loose in the Garden

Linda Verbeek

When you grow plants from seed, you can have surprises, particularly if it doesn't produce the plant you expected to get. But it is more surprising when a plant that you have actually seen in the wild misbehaves when it gets in the garden. One of the worst offenders of this was *Hypericum formosum*. We saw that first in Kokanee Provincial Park in BC and a few years later at one of the Oregon Cascade lakes. Both times it was a modest little plant, maybe 15 or 20 cm high, forming clumps of about the same diameter, and completely charming, with bright yellow flowers and buds dipped in bright red. The second time we found it, it had seed, and so I gleefully brought that home and was already relishing the idea of having this gem in our own garden. Well, it came up nicely, and when it was a year old, I planted it in one of the small, gravelly patches I created to approximate a scree. At which point it turned into a monster. By the end of the summer it was 50 or 60 cm tall and had covered half the scree area. So out it came, and the only thing I can say in its favour is that it left no trace.

The second one we met on a trip along the Yellowhead Highway, somewhere between Prince George and the Rocky Mountain Trench. It was perhaps not quite an alpine, but it was a nice, rather low aster, which I eventually identified as *Canadanthus modestus* (syn: *Aster modestus*). Boy, was that ever a misnomer. I had not realized, when we saw it in the wild, that it was stoloniferous, and once it was let loose, it promptly proceeded to run everywhere. Although we picked the seed in 2001, and I probably started pulling it out on sight in 2004, it still occasionally crops up.



1. *Elaeagnus commutata* leaves.

One plant that definitely isn't an alpine, but which I always greatly enjoy when we meet it in the Interior is *Elaeagnus commutata*, or silverberry, a 1-2 m shrub. We saw it all the way from Alaska to southern BC, and quite likely it is more widespread than that. It grows in fragile-looking thickets, and has small silvery leaves, almost an ethereal accent in the landscape. The flowers are insignificant, and the berries the same silver



as the leaves. There aren't that many truly silver-leaved shrubs, so I was pleased to find some berries one year. Again, I managed to raise them and plant them in the garden, and although this time they didn't grow bigger or taller than in the wild, they did spread like wildfire, so that in one or two seasons they basically occupied the whole bed where I had wanted them to be an accent. I should have realized from its growth habit that it was also stoloniferous. We did not have as hard a time getting rid of them as with the aster, but it still took a few years.

*Anagallis arvensis* (in England they call it scarlet pimpernel) is a European cornfield annual. It normally is a small plant, with small oval leaves, and salmon coloured flowers, which are not much more than ½ cm across, but produced in profusion. Its blue relative, *Anagallis monelli*, is regularly available as an annual, and I've even bought the salmon coloured one once. That must have been a selection, though, because it never set a single seed. The wild type, which we planted a couple of decades ago, does, and



2. *Anagallis arvensis* in the author's garden.

with a vengeance. The first couple of years we were very happy, as it added an unusual accent and bloomed all summer. But, then it popped up somewhere else, and then it popped up everywhere, and continued popping. Since then we've pulled it out every time we see the slightest hint of colour, and we're hardly winning the war. Last spring when we were away for a month, we came home to find one of the beds completely covered in the flowers! And although it is a fragile-looking annual, it actually weakened the *Alstroemeria* selection I had put it amongst because I liked the combination. It is not easy to discourage an *Alstroemeria*.

We both are very fond of chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), which is another European weed that grows along the roadsides in the drier parts of our province. It has blue flowers of a colour that you don't see very often. That one also grew to several times its wild size and we made sure it didn't last more than one season in the garden.

At this point I want to say that it isn't a matter of overfeeding. We garden essentially on glacial till, and the soil is so poor and sandy, that even after 60 years, the vegetable garden, which has had compost and manure since the house was built, doesn't produce anything if we don't fertilize every two or three weeks. The rest of the garden gets far less than that.

Sometimes a plant isn't so much a spreader as a hogger. We always have borage (*Borago officinalis*) in the garden, where it self-seeds, and can be kept under control easily. It grows upright and fills in where the *Primulas* and the columbines leave holes, and I like to put the flowers in a salad. Therefore, *Borago pygmaea*, which presumably would be compact and show the sky-blue flowers to much more effect, sounded very desirable. Well, it stayed low, but it threw out branches that reached nearly a meter in every direction, and did not cover itself in flowers. Even if it had, I probably would have thrown it out. It took a few years' weeding to get rid of the last seedlings, but nothing horrendous.

And then there are the plants that you should not let loose, but that for some reason you don't quite want to get rid of. Every year I weed out buckets full of oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), but I have never thrown them all away, because both of us grew up with oxeye daisies in the wild, and I keep it for sentimental reasons. One of which is that it was the first flower my Dad taught me the name of, when I was three or so.



3. *Dicentra formosa* making itself at home in a Rhododendron planting.

Among the natives, both *Dicentra formosa* (bleeding heart) and *Maianthemum dilatatum* (false lily-of-the-valley) are species we planted very early on. We have a lot of shaded areas in the garden, and here were two pretty natives that could flourish in that setting. And flourish they did, and still do, but I have to restrict them severely and pull them out rigorously where they aren't wanted. In that respect the *Maianthemum* is the worse offender, because the rootstocks run



more deeply and they break easily, so some bits usually get left behind and have to be dealt with a second time. I have noticed that they (*Maianthemum* especially) flower much more abundantly in the garden than in the woods just down the road. They do look very pretty in the spring.

Another prolific native, but for sunny sites, is *Brodiaea coronaria*. For years it would make spindly leaves and then more spindly leaves, and when you try to dig it up, it turns out to have thousands of tiny bulbils that you can't get rid of. Only in the last 4 or 5 years has it produced a reasonable number of flower stems – which are very pretty umbels of large, deep violet-blue trumpets on short stalks. Perhaps it needs to be really crowded. And I have to say that a friend with much heavier, clay soil doesn't find it as much of a nuisance. But, I still don't think it is any better than *B. elegans* or *B.* (now *Triteleia*) *laxa*. Both of those are somewhat taller, but neither of them is invasive. And carrying the flowers a little higher means the slugs don't get them as easily. *Triteleia hyacinthina* is at least as bad, but it flowers better.



4. A mass of spindly *Triteleia hyacinthina*, leaves, taking over a garden area.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of plants that are unexpected nuisances, but I think I've made my point, and to keep going might get repetitious.

*Linda Verbeek has been a member of AGC-BC since 1978, and served as Bulletin Editor in the 80's and 90's. She is a regular contributor to the Bulletin, and often brings her interesting plants to the monthly meeting pot shows.*

Photo credits:

1. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elaeagnus\\_commutata\\_USDA1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elaeagnus_commutata_USDA1.jpg)

2. Linda Verbeek

3. and 4. Laura Caddy

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## ***Epimedium* – Grace Incarnate: Part 2**

*Ben Stormes*

While the genus as a whole is touted as shade and drought tolerant, tolerating something is very different from thriving in it. While some species (*E. pinnatum*, *E. x rubrum*, *E. alpinum*, and *E. pauciflorum*) are indeed quite drought tolerant, most *Epimedium* species prefer rather even moisture. I've had particular challenges with *E. lishihchenii*, *E. franchetii*, and *E. diphyllum* in excessively droughty conditions, particularly when combined with root competition from larger, more aggressive woody plants. As with most horticultural care, balance is everything, and heavy, waterlogged soil may induce root rot and a slow, painful decline over time. Constantly moist soil seem to be tolerated so long as the texture is light and sandy, or with plenty of coarse organic matter incorporated. Best bloom is achieved in lightly filtered shade, or even direct morning sun. Dense shade results in plants still producing respectable foliar mounds, but often less than impressive flowering displays. A situation where low-angle morning or evening sun backlighting the emerging foliage and airy floral display can be quite striking indeed.



*Epimedium pinnatum* subsp. *colchicum*.

*Epimedium* species are self-sterile, and as such seed propagation of true to type individuals is very rare. Given this, plant material in the trade is nearly exclusively produced through division, resulting in limited supply and subsequent higher price points than some other plant groups. Division is best done in early fall, following the formation of the following season's buds while still allowing plenty of time with warm soil for new roots to settle in. Spreading (leptomorph) species are quite easy to lift and tease apart, while clumping (pachymorph) types may prove to be more difficult. Regardless of the growth habit, whenever possible I prefer to do most division by hand, allowing crowns

of congested rhizomes to break apart along natural weak points as opposed to arbitrarily cutting through them. Established clumps can quickly give rise to dozens of divisions, allow the creation of masses or drifts of these gorgeous plants to great effect.

While pest and disease are rather uncommon among the barrenworts, care must be taken to ensure tobacco rattle virus (of the pathogenic genus *Tobravirus*) does not become established in your collection. Symptoms of infection include irregular or circular yellow mottling of the leaves, disfiguration of the leaf blade, and reduced vigor. This pathogen has a broad host range, and may originate from other garden plants, or worse yet spread to them. With this in mind, and as difficult as it may be to do, infected plants should be dug and discarded, with care taken to sterilize tools and equipment before moving on to other garden maintenance.

## Select Species Profiles

### *Epimedium acuminatum*

One of the evergreen Chinese species that has been in cultivation for a long time, this plant is relatively easy to come by, and does not disappoint. This clumping plant produces neat mounds of reliably evergreen foliage to a foot or so in height, often times with decent mottling in the spring and displaying deep red veining in the cooler winter months. The spring flush of flowers are most welcome, with clear white to light pink broad lanceolate inner sepals, and petals with long spurs of deep purple. A number of named selections exist, with *E. acuminatum* 'Night Mistress' displaying the darkest of purple spurs, and on the opposite end of the spectrum *E. acuminatum* 'Guiding Light' producing spurs of the palest creamy yellow. A reliable plant that can be planted and left to impress year after year with little to no intervention.



*Epimedium acuminatum*.

### ***Epimedium brevicornu***

Small spurs (brevi = small, cornu = horn) of clear yellow held against lanceolate white inner sepals, this one stands out like a beacon when in bloom with panicles held well above the low mound of near-chartreuse green new growth in early spring. What is more, the bright spring growth of leaves is often speckled with mahogany, giving a unique appearance indeed. Modest in size, with the inflorescence reaching about one to two feet (more sun results in shorter stature plants), this tight clumper works well in the foreground, where the small flowers can be appreciated up close. One of the features I appreciate with this one is that the foliage forms a low mound, and the inflorescence is held strictly vertical, displaying the profusion of blooms unobscured. A welcome change to a number of other species in which the flowers are held within the emerging foliage, sometimes concealing them from full appreciation.



*Epimedium brevicornu.*

### ***Epimedium diphyllum***

As the name suggests (*di* = two, *phyllum* = leaf), this species produces but two leaflets, a trait unique in the genus. Endemic to Japan, *E. diphyllum* is one of the few species that does not produce nectar spurs, but rather has flat, ovate petals of pure white. The flowers are small, but perfectly in scale with this diminutive clumping plant. The deciduous foliage may be tinged red/purple in spring, and produces tight mounds over time. Well suited to the alpine or rock garden, I can't recommend this plant enough. Appearing to appreciate consistent moisture and protection from hot sun, this one could easily be tucked next to a north-facing rock face to great effect. Readily available in the trade, it is a great starter plant to acquaint yourself with the genus. A variegated form is available (*E. diphyllum* 'Variegatum'), with leaflets irregularly flecked with white. However, I'm not terribly fond of it, and I feel the pure white flowers display much better against the solid green leaf of the typical form. A dwarf form (*E. diphyllum* 'Nanum') is also available, and is cute beyond belief!



## ***Epimedium dolichostemon***

This rarely offered plant is a personal favourite, producing flowers that abandon long spurs in favour of large, clear white inner sepals as the main floral show. And while the individual flowers may be small, they are formed in great quantity on well-spaced, airy panicles early in the season. The stamens are long, and exerted beyond the rim of small spurred petals, giving the effect of *Dodecatheon* (err...*Primula*). To me, this plant represents one of the most refined of the genus, and together with the similar looking *E. fargesii* and *E. dewuense*, offer hours of gazing pleasure.



*Epimedium dolichostemon*.

Clumping in habit and reliably evergreen, a dense mound of deep green, medium sized foliage slowly develops over time. *E. dolichostemon* is worth the effort to find, though *E. fargesii* may be more easily obtained in the horticultural trade. Personal communications indicate that there might be but two clones in circulation, one of which is infected with tobacco rattle virus. Be diligent in your scrutiny should you be lucky enough to acquire this one to ensure you're not unwittingly introducing this pathogen into your collection.

## ***Epimedium franchetii***

Arching racemes of translucent, long-spurred, spidery yellow flowers on big, robust plants are capable of eliciting a “wow” reaction when well grown and well sited. Named selections are worth seeking out (*E. franchetii* ‘Suntan’, *E. franchetii* ‘Brimstone Butterfly’, and others) that exhibit particularly vibrant peach/bronze new growth, which in combination with the translucent flowers, produce a glowing spectacle when backlit by low spring evening light. This is one I wouldn't be without.



*E. franchetii* ‘Brimstone Butterfly’.

The gorgeous spring show gives way to coarse, bold clumps of large deep green leaves that are reliably evergreen and can be used in mass to fill sizeable areas in shady corners. A similar species, *E. lishihchenii*, is very similar in almost every respect, and also comes highly recommended.

### ***Epimedium grandiflorum***

This deciduous species is quite variable in flower colour and foliage effect, and has been in cultivation for decades. As such, a number of named selections exist, all worthy of attention. *Epimedium grandiflorum* var. *higoense* selections are a personal favourite, forming small, compact cushions of foliage and clear white flowers held well above the foliage, arising to four or five inches. I hesitate to use the word cushion in an alpine publication, as this is not a true “cushion” plant in the way you may understand it, but the overall effect is a rather tight mound of delicate, small leaves with good bounce-back to the touch. A second flush of foliage following flowering brings this diminutive plant to about ten inches in height by mid-summer. Larger selections of *E. grandiflorum*, such as *E. grandiflorum* ‘Red Queen’ or *E. grandiflorum* ‘Bicolor Giant’ produce striking deep pink flowers that may be slightly obscured in the first flush of growth, later growing to upward of two feet with the second flush of foliage. These larger forms provide a great foil for messy bulb foliage as it dies back in late spring.



*Epimedium grandiflorum* 'La Rocaille'.



### ***Epimedium pauciflorum***

While this diminutive plant isn't likely to turn heads on a grand scale, I really do love it, and thus wanted to draw attention to this often overlooked species. A good spreader, this one can be used as a well behaved groundcover in heavy shade situations or otherwise difficult sites. I've grown it for years in the dense shade and very dry conditions under *Thuja occidentalis*, where it settled in well after a bit of extra water during establishment, and has required literally no maintenance for years. Other plants situated with a bit more water and better sun certainly flower better, but this plant seems to be very versatile. What is more, its small size (about three inches) and small rhizomes mean it won't overcrowd others as it moves and mingles in the garden.

The small round leaflets are edged with tiny spines, and hold a dark green colour year round. Few flowered racemes (hence the specific epithet) are directly upon the foliage mat in mid spring, displaying flowers of modest size of the palest pink. Delicate looking, surprisingly hardy, and of a scale that is easy it fit in to almost any garden situation. What's not to love?

### ***Epimedium x rubrum***

A somewhat standard selection, this taxon originated in 1854 as a deliberate hybrid of *E. alpinum* and *E. grandiflorum*. A good starter plant for those looking to take the plunge into the genus, this plant is one of the easiest to find in cultivation. But don't let its prevalence relegate it to the back burner. Its steady use in horticulture for well over a century speaks to its merits: an easy to grow, forgiving plant producing small but numerous, showy flowers in combination with great foliage effect all season. This one is what we in the horticulture industry affectionately call a "do-er". While the flowers of this plant are interesting, I find the foliage to be of great beauty. The newly emerging leaves are often solid bronze with the network of reticulate veins of bright green, combining for a striking effect. This colour lasts for a couple of weeks, depending on spring temperatures and subsequent rate of leaf development. A fast growing and forgiving plant, this one can be used equally well as a focal point or a filler in the garden. Thankfully it clumps up quickly despite being a pachymorph, so you will have plenty of opportunity to dig, divide, and use it in both situations.



*Epimedium x rubrum*



### ***Epimedium rhizomatosum***

While most species in the genus *Epimedium* are restricted to spring bloom, *E. rhizomatosum* extends this charm all summer long. The glossy evergreen leaflets form a spreading carpet which give rise to tall arching stems of long-spurred yellow flowers from late May through to August. While the flower show is never as heavy as some of its contemporaries, the duration of bloom more than makes up for this. The closely related *Epimedium membranaceum* is very similar in all respects, save that it is a clumping plant as opposed to a spreader. Both are highly recommended for the continuing joy of these plants over a long season, and should be considered by anyone interested in breeding their own unique plants within this genus.

### ***Epimedium wushanense***

A fabled plant in certain horticultural circles, *Epimedium wushanense* is the one that really breaks the mold of what you may think of when you envision this genus. Bold, large plants up to a few feet tall can make quite an impression in the garden. The large, leathery leaflets are reliably evergreen in Vancouver's climate, and panicles of dozens of creamy white flowers in spring are the icing on the cake. Great confusion exists around plants of this species in cultivation, as a number of Mikinori Ogisu's collections starkly differ from those of Darrel Probst and others. Many of Ogisu's introductions produce upright, open, and airy panicles of clear yellow or even orange rimmed flowers (as in *E. wushanense* 'Caramel'), while those of other collectors produce more horizontally oriented panicles, densely packed with waxy flowers of creamy yellow. I'd not be surprised to see taxonomic work separate these two types out at some point. Seeing these plants side-by-side, you can't help but think something is askew.

Particular fanfare around this species was had when Tony Avent, of Plant Delights Nursery, introduced one of Probst's collections as *E. wushanense* 'Sandy Claws', noted for producing deep burgundy spring flush leaves with dense clusters of creamy yellow flowers on compact plants. Further confusion around the nomenclature of this species in cultivation ensued, as the plant released by Plant Delights was but one clone (CC.014633) of a handful collected and cultivated by Probst as *E. wushanense* (Spiny Leaf Forms), selected for their low growth habit, and impressively spiny leaf margins. Growers and gardeners that had received any number of clones from this named group of plants weren't sure if they had 'Sandy Claws' or not, and

without tracking the initial collections number supplied by Probst, there was little way to tell. Moral of this story: track your plants as best you can, with the most complete data as possible. Regardless of the plant in question, I'd suggest all forms of *E. wushanense* are "buy on sight" plants. You simply can't have enough of these clumping beauties.

## Plant Sourcing

### Canada

- Fraser Thimble Farms - <http://www.thimblefarms.com/>
- Free Spirit - <http://www.freespiritnursery.ca/>
- Lost Horizons - <http://losthorizons.ca/>

### United States

- Arbutus Garden Arts - <http://www.arbutusgarden.com/>
- Far Reaches Farm - <https://www.farreachesfarm.com/>
- Garden Vision, Edelweiss - <https://www.edelweissperennials.com/>
- Garden Vision Epimedium - <http://www.epimediums.com/>
- Plant Delights - <https://www.plantdelights.com/>
- Sebright Gardens - <http://www.sebrightgardens.com/index.aspx>

*Ben Stormes is Curator and Horticulturist for the North American Gardens at The University of British Columbia Botanical Garden, a position he has held since the summer of 2016. Prior to his current position, Ben worked with a number of public and private horticulture organizations, as well as completing academic pursuits in ornamental horticulture, landscape architecture, and public garden leadership*

All photos provided by the author.

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# Report On March Speaker

*Jay Akerley*

## Paul Spriggs: A Grand Tour – The Rock Gardens of the Czech Republic

On May 10, 2017, Victoria's Paul Spriggs and his Colorado-based partner in crevice garden construction, Kenton Seth, returned to Prague for the 3rd Czech International Rock Garden Conference in Prague. However, the highlight of their trip would turn out to be a private tour of Czech rock gardens not often seen because they are outside of Prague. More on that later.

Paul's presentation to a large AGC-BC audience began with a historical overview. During the Age of Enlightenment, European interest in plants and gardens grew. One of the first botanical gardens that sprung up was in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1840. The cities of Lindal and Munich, Germany, also had early botanical gardens, in fact pre-dating both those at Kew and Edinburgh. A culture of rock gardening was born with plants coming out of the species-rich Dolomites of northeastern Italy. In the 1860s, another botanical garden was built in Vienna. Like Vienna, the contemporary Czech Republic lay within the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time, so the Alps were technically within the same country as Czech gardeners, inspiring an early interest in rock gardening. Arnošt Emanuel Silva-Tarouca developed Pruhonice Park and Gardens, now a Unesco World Heritage Site and the site of last year's conference. The gardens and huge natural cliff side have been cultivated since 1885 – surely one of the oldest rock gardens in the world!



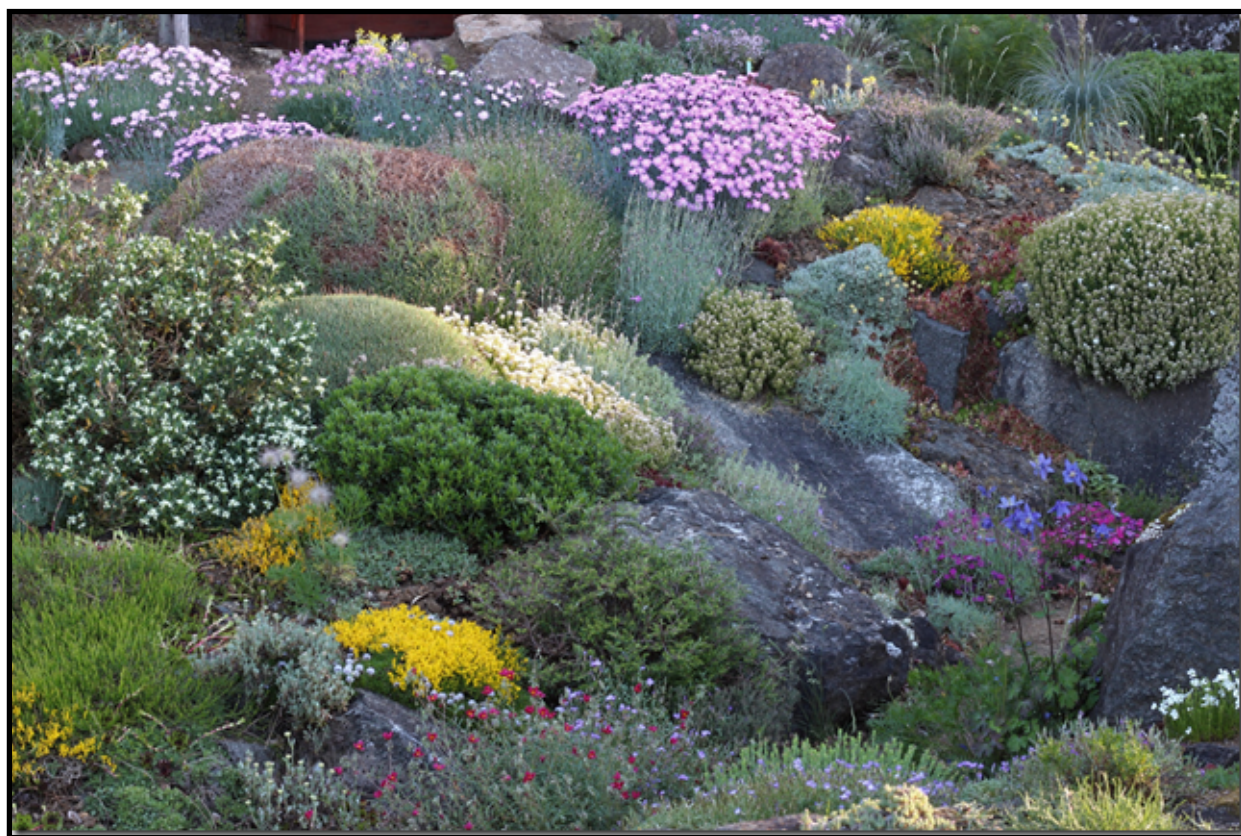
Left: Church of St. John Charles Square. Right: Plant Sale at Prague.



Paul's first stop when he arrived in Prague was Charles Square, where the local rock garden club has a demonstration garden. Show plants are brought into the garden and "planted" there for judging. As Paul arrived, a plant sale was underway. His disappointment about not being able to transport plants back to Canada evaporated when he spied one of crevice gardening's heroes, Josef Halda, perusing the sale!

The conference itself was an enormous success by Paul's account. He and Kenton made or renewed acquaintances with lots of familiar faces, including the UK's Adrian Young, Ian and Margaret Young, Denver Botanic Gardens' Senior Curator of Outreach Panayoti Kelaidis, and the Czech Republic's own Zdenek Zvolanek ("ZZ"), Vojtech Holubec and recent AGC-BC presenter Jiří Papoušek, to name just a few.

Conference-goers were treated to tours of what are surely some of the world's most spectacular private rock gardens, starting with ZZ's own – including his famed "Beauty Slope". The site of ZZ's garden was at one time a quarry that produced much of the rock for the Charles Bridge in Prague. Accordingly, ZZ's garden is a rocky site with abundant if not unlimited potential for rock gardening.



ZZ's "Beauty Slope".

Jiří Papoušek's garden has widely been described as one of the world's best private rock gardens. Paul discussed a few of the treasure trove of plants there: *Minuartia stellata* (an "easy" *Minuartia*), *Polygala calcarea*, *Edraianthus* sp. and many more. Jiří has constructed a unique "Tufa Tunnel" adjacent to his home, which houses a cliffside of tufa that is protected from the elements. Inside the tunnel, Paul noted *Daphne cneorum* 'Pygmaea Alba' and *Daphne malyana*. A theme emerged: *Daphne* and the Czech hybrid saxifrages are very much front and centre in Czech rock gardens. Moreover, Czechs are very interested in collecting witches brooms, parasitic growths on conifers. Once grafted, these growths make miniature conifer specimens for the rock garden.

Vojtech Holubec's garden has more of a boulder style, but still some visible stratification suggesting crevices on a larger scale. Paul noted various species of *Acantholimon*, *Minuartia*, and *Daphne*, *Dianthus* 'Conwy Star', *Arenaria tetraquetra*, *Asperula gussonii* and others.

Many Czechs have cottage homes outside of Prague, and tours of these properties were included as part of the conference. Paul reported that tours of these smaller properties were also fantastic.

Following the conference, Paul's mentor (and former Victoria resident) ZZ packed Paul and Kenton into his car for a tour of private gardens a little further afield in the Czech countryside. One of the stops was to see Josef Halda's garden. Halda is apparently a very private man, and to see his home and garden is something quite rare and special. Paul felt a little intimidated at first, but found Halda to be welcoming.

Josef Halda, who is regarded as the godfather of the modern crevice garden and ZZ's mentor, is still discovering gentians and other plants in China in areas that were previously inaccessible. Halda's style of crevice gardening involves slabs placed at a 45 degree angle. Most notably, there are 2000 witches brooms in Halda's garden.



*Kenton in Josef Halda's Garden.*



ZZ and the boys visited a number of other properties. Paul mentioned that Oldrich Maxiner's garden featured the largest collection of *Saxifraga* he has ever seen. Much of Oldrich's garden consists of mounds of disintegrating granite. It boasts an incredible number of daphnes. Milan Odvarka's garden was also memorable.

Three days of touring had the boys beat, but it's clear that Paul and Kenton left with a lifetime's worth of memories and inspiration. Paul is returning to the Czech Republic this Spring.



Milan Odvarka in his garden.

*Jay Akerley is a rock and alpine gardening enthusiast with gardens in both Greater Vancouver and high on the Thompson Plateau in BC's Interior. His degree in Geography from Simon Fraser University and subsequent training at the Pacific Horticulture College in Victoria nurtured an interest in the plants and landscapes of the world's montane and high steppe biomes. Over the past 10 years, he has been collecting seed in rugged environments across western North America, contributing to seed exchanges and the collections of specialized growers around the world.*



## ***Cypripedium formosanum***

David Sellars

Lady slipper orchids are notoriously difficult to grow in the garden but there is one species that is surprisingly easy. *Cypripedium formosanum* has flowers with white petals and sepals spotted with purple-pink mottling above a swollen white labellum and beautiful pleated leaves. It is endemic to high elevations in the mountains of Taiwan and despite its limited range in nature it will grow happily in the garden spreading via underground rhizomes into a large patch over the years.

*Cypripedium formosanum* needs to be kept moist and should be located in partial shade. Some early morning sun is ideal. I grow it in well-drained soil topped with bark mulch to retain moisture. It is shallow rooted and does not do well with competition so it needs to be kept away from other plants and tree roots. It can be divided in the fall by lifting the tangle of rhizomes and separating them into sections each with a new growth node. They flower in April in our garden and even the leaves, like small Japanese fans, are still attractive after flowering.

