VANCOUVER ISLAND ROCK & ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

The Oldest Rock and Alpine Gardening club in North America
103rd Year, Newsletter, Number 6

Next VIRAGS Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 10 7:30 PM

Dr. Patrick von Aderkas

Growing Ferns From Spores to Plants

VIRAGS is a club for plant lovers with special interest in alpine, bog and woodland plants.

VIRAGS in-person/Teams meetings are at 7:30 on the second Tuesday of the month from March to November at Lambrick Park Church, 1780 Feltham Rd. Victoria, BC. Meetings in December-February are on-line only.

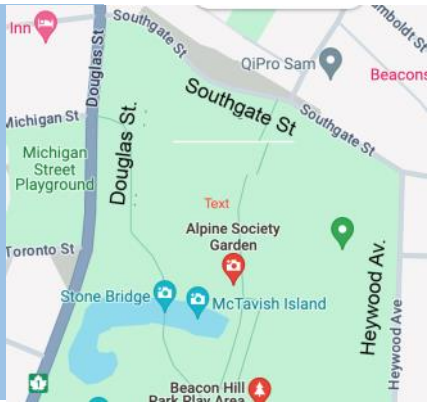
Notes from the Executive

- September means there will be a **Member's Plant Sale** at our Monthly meeting. Bring along all those extra cuttings, seedlings and divisions that you potted up. This is a chance to sell or trade them to other members. There will be VIRAGS plants for sale as well, so you should be able to take home something special.
- We are going to try not have coffee, tea and goodies for our monthly meetings and see if members are happy with that arrangement. Let someone on the Executive know what you think.
- We are working on a **workshop on planting and maintaining troughs** for this fall. We will let you know once dates, times, and places have been confirmed.
- We have a large number of back issues of the **Alpine Garden Society journal** that are available. If you have a few missing numbers, or want to start a collection of this excellent publication, please let someone on the Executive know.

Garden in the Park

Volunteers meet every Friday from 10:00 to Noon at GITP. New volunteers are always welcome

Contact Donna Humphries (donna.humphries@virags.com)



VANCOUVER ISLAND ROCK AND ALPINE
GARDEN SOCIETY PRESENTS

GROWING FERNS FROM SPORES TO PLANTS

WITH PATRICK VON ADERKAS

Patrick von Aderkas first got interested in trees when he was a Junior Forest Ranger in Northern Ontario. Botany degrees followed in both Guelph and Manchester, he then worked for the National Research Council and Canadian Forestry Service before landing his current job in UVic's Centre for Forest Biology in 1989. Patrick has been interested in the evolution of gymnosperm reproduction, especially conifers. His bag of tricks include proteomics, metabolomics, microscopy and tissue culture. The best part of his job has been the many wonderful undergraduate and graduate students that he has trained.

SEPTEMBER 10
7:30 @LAMBRICK PARK CHURCH
1780 FELTHAM ROAD
VICTORIA, BC
ZOOM LINK VIA EMAIL

For info visit www.virags.com
Facebook- @vancouver island rock and alpine garden society
Instagram- @virags_pics

VIRAGS, 3930 St. Peter's Road, Victoria, BC V8P 2J8

@VIRAGS – President's Blog

Summers seem always to pass too quickly. Already all the harbingers of autumn have made an appearance and most of us are thinking about another change in the season. Although VIRAGS meetings and activities slow during the summer, they do not stop. We had a very successful day exploring the plants of Obstruction Point in Olympic National Park and a couple of projects kept the Executive busy. VIRAGS received a gift from the family of long-time members, **Michael** and **Lydia Lambert**. The Lamberts had amassed a collection of about 70 hypertufa troughs, that they have donated to VIRAGS. The family have asked that the troughs be sold to members, so that they can see continued use, and that the Society benefits from the sale. This fall there will be an opportunity for members to purchase one of these very handsome empty troughs. As alpine plants are not readily available through garden centers, it falls to VIRAGS to propagate and sell plants. Thus, the **Propagation Group** was busy with seedlings that needed potting up and cuttings to be taken and potted on after they had rooted. The September meeting includes a **Member's Plant Sale**, so you should see some of the Propagation Groups plants on offer alongside the surplus plants that members bring in to sell or trade.

Plant Profile - *Dianthus*

- *Paul Spriggs*

The name translates into 'divine flower', and although this applies to all of the roughly 300 species, it is the alpine or rock pinks that arguably are the most charming, fascinating and divine! From the classic cheddar pinks of olde, to some invaluable dwarfs, most species of interest to the rock gardener bear little resemblance in form to their relatives the border carnations, or sweet Williams of the perennial bed.

Other than providing us with a huge range of species and cultivars to choose from, alpine *Dianthus* have three other attributes for which they get top marks. Firstly, they're evergreen, and their various forms look just as good when frozen solid in the depths of winter as they do when covered in blossoms. Secondly, they bloom after the main spring flower flush has finished, allowing for a continuation of bloom well into summer. And lastly, their white to pink flowers are so fragrant, with their spicy-sweet carnation scent that perfumes the garden in still air of the morning and evening. Very easy to grow from seed and cuttings and a great beginner plant. As they grow relatively quickly, usually producing a decent flowering plant within one year of sowing. That said, they are highly promiscuous, so garden collected seed often does not come true to name. *Dianthus* are also reasonably long lived, and require a neutral to alkaline soil. Though there are a multitude of choices even amongst the rock *Dianthus*, some favourites include: *Dianthus webbianus*: boasts tight domes of spiky, hedgehog-like rosettes under starry light pink flowers held just above the bun (image below). *D. monspessulanus* from Montpellier, France forms a course-leaved mat and has frilly, lavender flowers on 6 in stems, *D. microlepis* a classic diminutive pink form rarely exceeding 3 inches across. *Dianthus ardpanianus* var. *pumilus*, one of the tightest of them all, and the beautiful *D. hymatocalyx* (meaning blood red calyx), with glaucus leaves and large bright pink flowers. All form the characteristic "tight buns" of varying shapes and sizes.

Dianthus microlepis var. *degeni*

Dianthus arpadianus ssp *pumila*

Obstruction Point Trip

- *Robert Burke*

The fog, the early hour, and the dated passenger lounge of the Coho gave the start to our day an "other worldly" sense. All of **Donna Humphries**' intricate plans for meeting up worked perfectly and with a few introductions our little band of 11 day trippers settled in for a peaceful, fog enshrouded passage to Port Angeles. We were soon making our way up to the Olympic National Park entrance. We met up with **Ted Alway** and **Patricia Ortiz**, VIRAGS members who live in central Washington who wanted to compare the flora of the Olympics with their more familiar Wenatchee mountains. We made a stop at a widening in the road where there was a tall herbaceous scree meadow with a small stream, or as **Hans Roemer** calls it, "a trickle". With the cars pulled over, people with cameras, and excited chatter, other cars were pulling over so as not to miss out. Some of these park goers, seemed disappointed that it was plants, not a bear or a Roosevelt Elk causing us to stop. There was broken fog all the way to the parking area for Hurricane Ridge and the almost hidden junction of the Obstruction Point Road with the paved Hurricane Ridge Road caused a bit of a delay. Soon we were above the clouds and together at our first stop at a lush alpine meadow.

The plants were diverse and abundant. The exclamations of surprise and delight would bring a flurry of plant names as we tried to take in all that was there. Each discovery seemed different from the last one as everyone saw something new, or we worked out just what it was we were looking at. It was wonderful to have several knowledgeable VIRAGS members and invariably we settled on a name. No need for a plant app here! If **Janice Currie**, **Ty Danylchuck**, **Dawn Sutherland**, or **Jeff Wright** did not recognize it Hans was certain to have a name and would point out the distinguishing features and add a few points on its natural history. As we spread out over the meadow, someone would cry out with delight, and we would gather to see what had been found. Just as we were starting back towards the cars, Hans called for us to come "there is something to see here". A small depression, that must have held snow longer than the rest of the slope was filled with *Erythronium grandiflorum*, the yellow avalanche lily. A perfect exclamation point for our first stop.

The road was part of the adventure, as it is only a glorified hiking trail. It winds and follows contours and there are countless switchbacks and steep climbs. There are no guard rails, and it is mostly only a single car wide, so one is never really tempted to drive very fast. The passengers enjoy stunning views of valleys and distant peaks, but it is the ever-changing arrays of flowering plants that makes it so special. Pity the drivers ignoring the exclamations and inducements to "look at that" for the sake of keeping the car out of the ravine.

The road ends in a broad bowl falling away from a long, inclined ridge. The scree slopes are interrupted with tongues of meadow dotted with alpine spruce, their growth tortured by snow and wind. Surprisingly, the Obstruction Point parking area is 3/4 full of cars, mostly hikers on multiday backpacking trips. The full parking area seems very out of place. We collected ourselves and started down a trail that turned a corner to reveal a broad Southeast facing valley, dominated by scree slopes. One trail drops steeply toward the tree line. Thinking about where best to find plants with the minimum of effort, we decided to take a second trail on the West side of a ridge that climbs up toward Obstruction Peak. This proved an excellent choice as the scree and rock outcroppings held a wonderful array of plants that were interspersed with large areas of heathers

(*Cassiope* and *Phyllodoce*) boldly flowering. Our group fragmented, people wandering off the trail to see "what was over there" then coalescing when someone found something exciting. We slowly worked our way up to a broad windswept ridge below the peak that dropped sharply to a small tarn on one side and the scree and rubble provided a large level area in the lee of Northwest facing, windbreaking ridge. It was a perfect place for us to stop and enjoy our packed lunches. The sun was warm and the scenery breathtaking and if you looked down at your feet, there were of course alpines, thriving in their rocky refugia. After lunch we slowly made our way back to the parking area as our turn-around time approached. We had one more stop on the way down to see a steep, moist, avalanche track. Again, there were novel treasures to see – *Pinguicula*, *Parnassia*, and *Platyanthera* (Rein orchids) to make this a memorable stop. The downhill run back to the ferry terminal was easy and once the cars were in the queue, we had time for an ice cream cone before making our way onto the Coho for our return trip. The early start to the day and the slow-motion ferry ride home combined to slow us all down. But everyone seemed happily exhausted, and we all welcomed the end of our excellent day of adventure.

L to R: **Donna Humphries, Elizabeth Grant, Dawn Sutherland, Ted Alway, Patricia Ortiz, Julia Roemer, Hans Roemer, Janice Currie, Louise Potvin, Linda Cross, Jeff Wright, Ty Danylchuk**


Veronica cusickii


Castilleja miniata


Polemonium pulcherimum


Delphinium glareosum


Erythronium grandiflorum


Phyllodoce empetriformis

Garden in the Park—update:

- *Donna Humphries*

With the hot dry summer, we have been regularly watering the new crevice garden to ensure that the plants we placed in the spring make it through – we have great hopes for blossoms in the spring. We have also been concerned with the two large *Rhododendrons* and the *Cornus* on the west side of the garden as they were showing signs of stress. Mike has cleaned them up, removing dead and spindly branches, and they have responded well to a regular soaking. This latest rain has been wonderful! This fall we are planning to place several large rocks, left over from the crevice garden build, in the rock garden area, creating new planting pockets. The older crevice garden that sits above the new crevice garden, needs some renovation as areas have been overgrown and rocks have settled. And of course, soon there will be the ongoing leaf removal!