



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY CENTRAL SUSSEX GROUP



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2008

HOME AND AWAY – A LOVE OF ALPINES Mr. MIKE BRETT

Mike's love of alpinism began on a family camper van holiday to Italy in the 1980s and since joining the AGS, has become a keen grower, propagator and a world wide traveller. Why alpinism? They are beautiful, have relatively large flowers for their size, many can be grown in a small area and they can be grown in many different ways, in his own garden jointly with his wife Hazel, in sinks, raised beds, rock gardens and scree. Travels began in Austria's Obergurgl where chair lifts gave access to easy walks and plants such as *Geranium pratense*, *Gentiana verna*, *G. acaulis* and in contrast the tall *G. lutea* and the very attractive *Gentianella amarella*, very sticky *Primula glutinosa* and tiny *P. minima* on a wet bank, *Linaria alpina* and *Silene acaulis* on a stony cliff, *Androsace alpina* and *Lilium martagon* in shadier parts, *Dianthus superbus*, *Campanula cochlearifolia* in crevices, *Soldanella pusilla* in snow melt and *Ranunculus glacialis* in profusion above the snow line. Travels then spread to the Dolomites with views of *Primula auricula* in a cliff face niche, the cable car above the Pordoi Pass emphasising the scale and a white flowered *Soldanella pusilla*. In Slovenia *Campanula zeyheri* on Triglav. In the the Rockies of Colorado and Wyoming, krumholz, fragrant *Phlox pulvinata*, *P. condensata* in different colour forms, *Erythronium grandiflorum*, *Lewisia pygmaea*, *Pulsatilla patens*, *Pentstemon eriantherus*, *Eriogonum jamesii* and although the track side on Pike's Peak was devoid of plants, a little way off, was *Primula angustifolia* and at the top, 1/2" high succulent *Claytonia megarhiza* (248/149) with red-edged foliage (although more cabbage-like lower down), Elsewhere the ground hugging Orchid *Calypso bulbosa*, *Pulmonaria delicatula*, and tiny pale to dark blue and white *Eritrichium nanum*.

In New Zealand looking towards Mount Cook above Peter's Lookout with introduced roses in the foreground and to stabilise sheep erosion *Hieracium* planting, the very photogenic *Ranunculus lyallii* with its 3 to 4" wide white flowers, the vegetable sheep *Haastia pulvinaris* (283/44) on steep, rocky slopes, hard cushions of *Donatia novae-zealandiae* on Mt. Evans, *Wahlengeria cartilaginea* in the Upper Clarence valley, *Notothlaspi rotundifolium* (283/44), alas not long lived, the yellow flowers of *Ranunculus crithmifolius* (261/235) chewed by grasshoppers, *Caltha obtusa* and well above the tree line, huge spreads of *Raolia eximia*, *R. bryoides* and *R. grandiflora*.. In the Kosciusko National Park of Australia, there is still snow on the summits in mid-summer. Here *Celmisia sericophylla*, *Ewartia nubigena*, *Stackhousia pulvinaris*, *Leucophyllum (Helichrysum) albicans*, *Euphrasia collina* and *E. brachyphylla*. In two visits to Tasmania, around Dove Lake, the endemic Cheese Plant *Cyathodes straminea* and white flowered *Gentianella diemensis* (208/127). A very contorted road with near vertical rock strata around Ben Lomond and not a single dwelling to be seen in a 25-40 mile view. Looking towards Cradle Mountain, *Astelia* in the wettest of conditions, - impossible to emulate in gardens, *Richea scoparia*, an *Ewartia* with almost variegated foliage and *Chionohebe ciliolata*.

Visited five times, South Africa has a fascinating flora and especially loved are the 700 miles crescent of the Drakensburgs, especially the northern and southern ends; winters are dry (with snow),



Kniphofia caulescens (opvallendeplanten)



Zaluzianskya ovata (Dave's Garden)

summers wet with an almost daily 4 pm. thunderstorm. *Helichrysum spiralis*, *Diascia tugelensis* (supposed seed pods still holding on from the year before came up as *Nemisia*!), *Zaluzianskya ?ovata* (282/473, 305/390) with white flowers, pink or red on the reverse, *Jamesbrittenia jurassica* (284/152, 305/381) under tussock grass, among orchids *Dispersis fanniniae*, hard cushions of *Euphorbia clavarioides* draping a rock, *Romulea macowanii*, *R. oreophila*, *R. hesperantha*, *R. thodei*, white flowered aff. *Dianthus basuticus* (305/327, 328), *Wahlenbergia polystichifolia* ssp. *dracomontana* and *Disperis renibracteata* a strange looking bug-eyed orchid monster.. At the southern end, the Sani Pass, a pub and the Twelve Apostles (305/316, 318), *Protea roupelliae*, *Rhodohypoxis baurii* (305/371, 379) in many different colours, the yellow centred white 3" daisy *Hirpicum armerioides* (305/297, 323), *Helichrysum milfordiae* (305/373), a yellow flowered 4" *Sebaea*, many *Gladiolus* – *G. crassifolius*, scarlet flowered *G. flanaganii* (305/321) the Suicide Lily because of its love of photographers and treacherously slippery cliff faces, and *G. dalenii*, *G. ecklonis*, *G. microcarpa*. In the high plains around Tiffendell Lodge on the slopes of Ben Macdhui, *Dierama dracomontana* and thousands of *Kniphofia caulescens* (305/328). At the northern end from near Witseishoek there are tremendous views of an enormous amphitheatre from the Eastern Butress to the flat topped Sentinel. The drive to the top is not for the faint hearted with views to the Sentinel and a 900m. waterfall to the Tugela River. Below are grassy fields with a blue haze of *Agapanthus campulatus* (305/327) and under sheer cliffs *Nerine bowdenii* (305/328). Finally to South America and Ecuador with many Asterceae, 6-9" yellow and maroon flowered Gentians such as *G. sedifolia* widespread in tall grass and the Gentian relative *Helenia weddelliana*. with yellow-green flowers.

So back to gardens and cultivation. First a view of David Hoare's alpine house packed with *Primula allionii* and *Saxifraga* among them *S. 'Allendale Ballet'*. In Mike's own garden *Physoplexis comosa*. Some saxes in sinks can get burnt in hot summers. In



Erodium 'Spanish Eyes' (marksgarden plants)



Saxifraga 'Bohemia' (Hannelotte.Kindlund)

One favourite plant is *Polygala calcaria* 'Lillet' (249/238, 280/166) still flouriferous after 12 years in the same sink. The 'Graveyard' is beginning to fill up with *Phlox*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Tulipa*, *Androsacae* and *Viola*. There is *Brimeura amethystina alba*, *Iris 'Katherine Hodgkin'*, in

flower at the time of the talk, *Daphne jasminum*, very reliable but no fragrance. In the tufa bed set at table height (now considered too high), New Zealand *Clematis*, *Saxifraga* 'Your Success' and orange flowered *S. 'Bohemiai'* have done well. In a brick raised bed, *Cyclamen coum*, in shady parts seeding into the ground, *Corydalis* 'Highland Mist' (262/397), long flowering *Narcissus cyclamineus*, easy *N. bulbocodium* and *N. rupicola*. In Milan Halada's garden in the Czech Republic, we were shown crevices planting between vertical rocks – it is a mistake to use too large plants. An odd display in Brno Botanic Garden with planting in watered inclined chutes and a tufa wall between concrete blocks was not particularly engaging, but was home for *Daphne arbuscula*, *Ramonda* and *Haberlea*. And what of the 83 year old Czech who has an 80ft. high cliff garden with alpiners and conifers! There were views of the Edinburgh Botanic and the Kew rock garden. Back to Mike's house with a view of the rock garden with dwarf bearded white and blue flowered *Iris* 'Knick-Knack', *I 'Katie Potts'* *Allium paradoxum* and *Iris bucharica*. Gentians have been happy in the same spot for 13 years - *G. paradoxum* and *G. pneumonanthe*. We were also shown *Euphorbia corollata*, mauve flowered *Erodium* 'Spanish Eyes' which if ants find it to their liking, will drop dead. *Penstemon tolmiei* pink form and *Phlox bifida*. In the fish bed, *Iris*, *Phlox* and orange flowered *Primula elatior*, *Alyssum spinosum roseum* now 11 or 12 year old, and *Campanula* 'Dickson's Gold'. There is a 90 ft. rockery bed and a front scree with *Cytisus* and *Erodium*. The scree base had 8" soil removed and replaced by 4" of grit. Also *Phlox* 'Sarah', pink and white, *Chrysanthemum weyrichii* with flowers 2-3" across running around and semi-double *Primula vulgaris* 'Shaggy Pink'. A final view across the garden at sunrise.

We were left in little doubt that Mike (and Hazel) have a love of alpiners both at home and away! On the Drakensburgs see Mike's article in J Scottish Rock 107 p.115.

RM

MEETING March 15th 7.00
Tips and Tricks of Growing Alpines.
~ Graham Nicholls~

REMINDERS

March 29 – Tunbridge Wells Group Show
April 5 – West Sussex Group Show
May 4/5 – May Spring Bank Holiday Show at Ardingly
Show Ground

