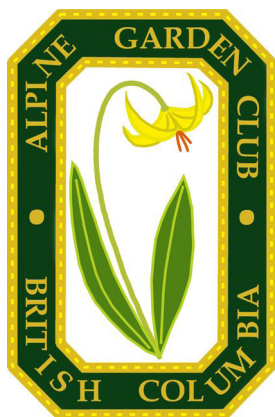


Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia



Dendrosenecio brassica with Mount Kenya in the background.



AGC-BC 2019

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Membership Renewals Due

Membership fees are now due for 2020. Please bring a cheque for \$30 to the next meeting, or contact Membership Secretary, Jane Byra, at membership@agc-bc.ca. 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

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

- Nov 13 - **AGC-BC AGM and Meeting**
 - Plant Ideas from the Seed Exchange
- Dec 11 - **AGC-BC Meeting**
 - Potluck and Plant Auction
 - **NOTE LOCATION CHANGE:** UBC Botanical Garden
- Jan 8 - **AGC-BC Meeting**
 - Ron Long: The Flora from Five Deserts
- Feb 12 - **AGC-BC Meeting**
 - Margaret Cadwaladr: A Secret Garden: The Story of the Darts Hill Garden Park

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

From the Editor

Laura Caddy

I hope everyone is having a lovely autumn. We've been blessed here in Vancouver with what I think is the best fall colour I've seen here (I moved here 3 years ago).

I find this time of the year is always deceptively busy. I try to have my fall plant out done by mid September, to give roots a good head start before winter hits and reduce frost heave. September is also seed collecting time, and this year I had the opportunity to get out of the garden to do some collecting in the wild. This was made possible by funds donated E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden by the AGC-BC, which I greatly appreciate. I find it can be hard to carve out the time to get out into the alpine environment, but always so very rewarding. Never underestimate the value of what you can learn by observing plants in their natural habitat, whether you know you are doing it or not. The changes in flora as you climb in elevation, who's growing beside whom, and the subtle microclimates they thrive in can all be applied to the garden - not only to successfully grow them, but to represent the natural environment in your garden space. But, the primary focus of the trip was collecting seed for three groups: the Alpine Garden, especially subalpine meadow species, *Index Seminum* (an international seed exchange between botanic gardens worldwide), and of course for the AGC-BC exchange. I hope some of you find some treasures on the list from my trip.

By the end of September, I'm knee deep in seed that needs to be cleaned. Some species are quick, some, not so much. It's a good task for those rainy days, and we sure had a few of them in the last month. Now that cleaning is all wrapped up, and the club seeds are safely off to Linda, I've been taking advantage of the clear (and crisp!) days, tidying up the garden for winter, shuffling plants around, and generally checking tasks off the list I've been trying to get to all summer.

Soon, the seed lists (including the AGC-BC) will come pouring in. Thank you to all who have contributed to the seed list, it's what makes it great. I hope you can take a break from scouring it for the treasures it undoubtedly holds, to check

out our fall issue. In it Ken Gillanders recounts a trip to East Africa and fills us in on the interesting plants he saw there. Former editor Grahame Ware also looks back at a trip to China and provides an update to a *Cotoneaster* he collected and has distributed. Perhaps you have it in your garden, like I have it at UBC. We also have a few musings on the gems of fall from members and in the Garden's Rock feature. I myself was tempted by a favourite fall flowering plant, and decided to make it the Editor's ID Challenge. As usual, the answer to it is on the final page.

Enjoy!

Editor's ID Challenge



Too easy? Too hard? Let me know at bulletin@agc-bc.ca

Club News

Fall Plant Sale

Chris Byra

The fall plant sale held at the UBC Botanical Garden this year was an unconditional success, both in terms of participation of our club members and financially. It appears also to have been a success for the Friends of The Garden Treasured Bulb sale. Weather was perfect and we had many drop in customers. Our club table had more plants than ever with a great selection. It goes to show that participation by many members makes for a better sale. Our members shopped quite enthusiastically at the bulb sale and appeared to appreciate the variety. As always, the alpines on the club table sold quite quickly, and the different clientele at UBC really seem to appreciate succulents and other tender, interesting plants.



I would encourage our members to continue propagating for our sales, auction and raffle. Participation is what makes the club stimulating and a lot of fun!

Photos courtesey of Jay Akerley.



Club News In Memoriam

Rex Murfitt

It is with sadness that we share the news that Rex Murfitt passed away peacefully on August 17, 2019 at the age of 92 years. Rex was predeceased by his loving wife Ruth in 2011 and his son Peter in 2006. Rex is survived by his son Fred (Jolanda), his daughter Wendy, his grandson Brian (Blanca), and 4 great-grandchildren.

Rex was born in England. He trained as a nurseryman and later specialized in alpine plants. Throughout his career, he developed and worked in numerous gardens. Rex was a co-author/author of two books on alpine gardening. He also wrote articles and lectured on the same subject. Rex was considered one of Canada's renowned rock gardeners. Rex had many varied interests including music, art, photography and travel. He enjoyed spending time with his family and good friends. In retirement, Rex spent many hours maintaining his beautiful alpine garden in Victoria BC. He was always willing to share his knowledge and love of gardening with the many visitors who came to see his garden.

Special thanks to the staff at Birchview Residence and to Dr. Hagen in Prince George BC for their kind and compassionate care in Rex's final months.

Please celebrate Rex's life by remembering him when spending time in the garden.

Published in The Times Colonist from Aug. 31 to Sept. 1, 2019



Above: Alleyne Cook, left, and Rex Murfitt, right, at the 2014 Alpine Garden Club of BC Spring Show. Rex was a judge for the 2014 Spring Show.

Right: *Saxifraga* 'Bohemian Karst', one of the saxifrages in Rex's collection.



Club News In Memoriam

Contributed by Charles Sale, with thanks to John Weagle

Alleyne Rex Cook

Canada and the world lost one of its foremost plantsmen and a last link to the greats of the past when Alleyne Rex Cook, ARS Gold Medalist, slipped peacefully away at home on Sunday October 20, 2019, two weeks short of his 95th birthday. Our beloved member Cookie, tough as nails, had previously survived three bypass operations with a total of ten bypasses, and survived three cardiologists.

Cookie was born in Kaponga in rural New Zealand on November 8, 1924. His Aunt Mavis became his horticultural inspiration and as a young man he apprenticed at New Zealand's world class nursery, Duncan and Davies. He then did military duty during the occupation of Japan where his world of flowers was much expanded.

In 1950, rather than work in New Zealand, he moved to Britain with letters of recommendation from Duncan and Davies in hand. He soon had work at the legendary Sunningdale Nursery in Surrey under the late Jim Russell where he helped move the magnificent collection of *Rhododendron* from Roza Stevenson's Towercourt Garden to Windsor Great Park. At Towercourt he was offered the chance to dine with Kingdon-Ward. He tells of moving a ten metre bed of *Rhododendron forrestii* by rolling it up like a carpet and placing it atop a raised bed liberally enriched with organic matter and coarse sand and grit. The plants flourished. Alongside his very best friend, the late Rex Murffitt of saxifrage fame, he worked briefly at Constance Spry's. Jim Russell had Cookie design the deciduous azalea plantings at Castle Howard.

In 1954 he moved to Vancouver and soon was at work doing garden installations part time for the City of Vancouver Parks Board (VPB). He almost single-handedly promoted rhododendrons in those early days. Barbara, whom he had met onboard the Rangitata while sailing to England years before, became his wife. He befriended the greats of the garden world - luminaries such as Ray Berry, James Barto, Halfdan Lem, Ray and Del James, and particularly Ted and Mary Greig. During this time he was a frequent visitor to the Greig's at Royston on Vancouver Island. The Greig's operated one of North America's best *Rhododendron* nurseries.

When in 1966 the aging Greigs felt it was time to close the nursery Cookie enticed the VPB to purchase their amazing collection. Little did he know that Mary Greig had stipulated that Cook, and only Cook, should handle the move and planting. Consequently the VPB hired Cook the day of the purchase.

The Stanley Park Pitch n' Putt planting would, under his guidance and hard work, become the 'Ted & Mary Greig Garden'. Craftily, he saw to it that the garden contained the Greig's hybrid rhodos, and later Cookie's own magnolia hybrids, while all the Greig's *Rhododendron* species were moved, under the cover of darkness, to Van Dusen Botanical Garden to form the basis of their famous species collection. Cookie was largely responsible for the planting of many of the magnolias on city property, mischievously accomplished this by adding two "0"s to an order for 10 magnolias. He was a great believer in "tis better to ask for forgiveness than permission".

More than anyone in the Vancouver area he has stimulated interest in rhododendrons, doing so as an accomplished and gifted speaker, by his leadership in the hands-on efforts to preserve important material which was at risk, and by his years of work in the great public garden at Stanley Park in Vancouver. Cookie was an accomplished historian. The discoveries by the great plant hunters, and the introduction and breeding of their findings by early *Rhododendron* nurserymen, were the subject of innumerable talks and articles by him.

Cookie always had time for people, be they distinguished gardeners or home gardeners; always digging, dividing, layering and the like he shared everything with everyone. His own garden was resplendent with *Galanthus*, *Erythronium*, *Hamamelis*, *Cyclamen*, hellebores, and his beloved magnolias – a marvellous one named for his dear wife, ‘Barbara Cook’ – and of course many rhodos, chiefly species. The latter were recently donated and moved to the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden.

Cookie was an Honorary Life Member of the Atlantic Chapter of the ARS. He was responsible for donating and shipping his entire collection of deciduous azaleas for the now Cook Azalea Walk at Pinegrove Park on Nova Scotia’s south coast. Alleyne did much for the growth of the ARS in District 1. His knowledge, wit, and beautiful photographs have enthralled many an audience and done much to build membership. His willingness to share his knowledge attracted many keen young gardeners to the *Rhododendron* scene, and these in turn, infected by his enthusiasm, gave our District 1 chapters remarkable vigour. Alleyne felt a great duty to chronicle his experiences working at some of the fabled nurseries and gardens in Great Britain, as well as the stories of many of the early nurserymen of the Pacific Northwest that he had loved to visit. Much of his material has appeared in the Journal.

Cookie was a bold but modest man, an unusual combination, which is no doubt why he was one of the best *pied pipers* we have ever had in our organization. He made rhododendrons irresistible.

Alleyne is survived by his wife Barbara, daughter Briar (NZ), son Nigel (BC) and thousands of friends worldwide.

Introductions: *Camellia* ‘Aunt Mavis’, *Magnolia* ‘Barbara Cook’, *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta* ‘Briar’, *Rhododendron* ‘Sir Nigel’ (*R. cinnabarinum* subsp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group x *R.* ‘Lady Chamberlain’)

Fall Favourites

Two late summer plants

Margaret Charlton

This year summer has persisted right up to the present (late October) and has continued to bless us with plants in flower. A winner is *Lewisia cotyledon* 'Regenbogen' (syn. Rainbow mix). The individual heads have either red, pink, orange, yellow, or white flowers. Some are striped. New stems with buds are poking up to flower as you trim off the old flowers. These lewisias give me a great deal of pleasure in their pots outside under cover for rain protection. My plants came from two different suppliers on Vancouver Island earlier this year.

Another long flowering plant that also needs rain protection is *Verbascum x letitia*. It's dwarf grey foliage is low (10") and mounding. Flowers are yellow and bloom over a long period provided old stocks are trimmed. New plants come easily from cutting. This cultivar will thrive if not over-watered.

Cyclamen confusum

Carla Bischoff

Cyclamen confusum is a relative of *C. hederifolium*, but larger and has shinier leaves. It is a Mediterranean plant native to northwestern Crete, and was recognized as a species in 2009. Scented flowerers appear mid October. A very outstanding plant.



Alpines on Mt Kenya and Mt Kilimanjaro

Ken Gillanders

This is an account of an Alpine Garden Society trip to Mt Kenya and Mt Kilimanjaro in 1999. My wife Lesley and I were part of a group of about ten, led by John Grimshaw.

I was particularly interested in any *Helichrysum* as there are many on these mountains. Mt Kenya is the country's highest mountain at 5,199 m, and Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania is the highest mountain in Africa, at 5,896 m.

We were not going to the top of these as most flora ceases to exist at 4500 metres. On both mountains, we had porters to carry our luggage and only had to take a few personal items with us, including our cameras of course.

Our ascent of Mt Kenya, which has several tracks through its 715 sq kilometres of National Park, was from the Naro Moru gate. From there, we hiked 10 kms on our first day to the meteorological station at 3,000 m where we spent the night.

All of this area was forest, but there were some interesting plants: *Podocarpus latifolius* one of the trees, *Lobelia bambuseti* in flower, several *Impatiens*, including *I. hoehnelii* with colourful flowers, *Lobelia minutula* a prostrate ground cover with sessile lilac flowers and *Helichrysum formosissimum* a shrub with clusters of pure white flowers with a yellow boss of stamens.



Impatiens hoehnelii

The next day, after climbing for a short period, we came out of the forest into the open moorland. There is an area here known as the vertical bog which is rather steep with seeping water.

Here we saw our first plant of *Lobelia keniensis* and there were many more larger plants of this further on. The flowering stem was just over 1 m, tightly covered with bracts and purple flowers. Also growing here was *Disa stairsii*, which was just starting to open its deep rose-pink flowers and *Swertia crassiuscula* clumps with white five-petaled flowers. *Gladiolus watsonioides* with its bright red flowers put some colour into the landscape. The most common woody plants were *Erica trimera* and these disappeared as we entered the alpine zone, where botanising unfortunately had to stop as it started to rain.



Lobelia keniensis and *Erica excelsa*.

The walk up to Mackinders hut at 4,200m was rather uncomfortable as it rained for the five hours it took to get there, the track turning into mud. The hut is named after Halford Mackinder who was the first European to climb to the peak of Mt Kenya in 1899. There is a large rock formation near the hut, in which a population of hyrax also known as 'rock dassies' have their home. Surprisingly, these little vegetarians are a distant relative of the elephant.

The largest plant in the alpine zone was *Dendrosenecio keniodendron*, which grew up to 5m, in some cases higher. The trunks become bare with age, but a lot of dead leaves are still attached from halfway up the trunk and then topped by a crown of green leaves. The flowering stem rises up to a metre and the inflorescence is densely covered in yellow flowers. These take the place of trees in the landscape and environment.



Lesley Gillanders (Ken's late wife) provides scale beside *Dendrosenecio keniodendron* and *Lobelia telekii* (foreground).

The other *Dendrosenecio* here were *D. brassica*. Colonies of these presented quite a spectacular sight as they fold their leaves at night to protect the centre bud of the plant from the intense cold, revealing the reverse of the leaves that are covered with a mat of silver. It is an amazing sight in the morning after a freezing night.

Lobelia keniensis also has developed a strategy to protect itself. It produces a fluid at the base of its leaves, which covers the buds a considerable amount. Although it may freeze on the surface the buds are protected. *L. telekii* is another spectacular plant with a strategy to protect itself. Its inflorescence rises to about 1.5 m and is covered with a dense mat of hairy blue-grey bracts, which completely hide the purple flowers. The scarlet tufted malachite sunbirds however know where to locate them.

Alchemilla argyrophylla is quite common here, and on Mt Kilimanjaro they made small dense shrubs with small notched silvery leaves with their greenish flowers being insignificant.

Three *Helichrysum* of interest were seen including *H. brownei* var *brownei* which was 30 cms wide and had single large white flowers on 10 cm stems. Like most of the *Helichrysum* here its foliage was silver. *H. chionoides* was a more upright plant with silvery white flowers.

Helichrysum citrispinum var *citrispinum* formed a shrub up to 60cm with very small foliage and silvery white flowers. It has a few prickles on the stems but the form on Mt Kilimanjaro is generally free of these.



Helichrysum brownei var. *brownei*.

An ericaceous shrub which was most attractive was *Erica filago* (syn: *Blaeria filago*). Its 30 cm numerous upright stems were covered with compressed leaves and white hairs. Its pink flowers appeared in small hanging groups.



The last *Helichrysum* we saw was *H. forskahlii*. This little 30 cm shrub had whipcord like stems, which were tightly covered with densely hairy foliage and had a terminal cluster of golden-yellow flowers. This was also plentiful on Mt Kilimanjaro.

Helichrysum forskahlii.

We were to climb on Mt Meru but due to storm damage of the road, we spent the next day finding and looking at the fauna before climbing in Mt Kilimanjaro National Park.

I have always wanted to take a photo of Mt Kilimanjaro from the plains below with elephants. The elephants were there, but a photo was not possible as cloud prevented any good views of the mountain. I guess that it's a matter of luck to see the mountain clear, when we were on the mountain it was quite fine as we were above the clouds

We then botanised in an area on west Kilimanjaro near Momella Gate. Some of this had been used as farmland and several plants were of interest. A form of *Gladiolus dalenii* with lovely salmon-pink flowers which I would love to grow, and *Gloriosa superba* with its spectacular yellow and red reflexed flowers. This is a noxious weed in the warm eastern part of Australia.



Top right: *Gladiolus dalenii*. Above: *Gloriosa superba*.

For our ascent of Mt Kilimanjaro we entered from the Marangu gate at 1,870 m. The first day was a 8.5km walk to Marangu Hut at 2,700 m. The track was through dense mossy forest. Plants of note were *Lobelia gibberoa*, *Erica excelsa*, many impatiens, *Viola eminii* and *Begonia meyeri-johannis*.

The next day was a walk of 12 kms to Horombo Huts at 3,720 m. This was to be our base for the next few days. In a damp open area *Kniphofia thomsonii* was flowering with its bright yellow and orange flower heads, and *Anemone thomsonii* was producing its 20 petaled white flowers with reddish reverse on single stems up to 60 cm. I didn't notice the foliage due to the dense undergrowth, but I have read these are dissected and produced in 3 segments.

Just before we reached the huts there was a large *Protea caffra* subsp *kilimandscharica* in full flower. Its large creamy white flowers contrasted with the bright red young growth. This must be the highest altitude that *Protea* can be found.

Several of the party went on to climb to the Uhura peak, but as the vegetation disappears at the higher altitude, the rest of the party botanised in areas just above Horombo.

A little higher at 4,000 m above, Horombo Huts is classed as alpine desert with large areas of gravel scoria but with many plants enjoying the perfect drainage.



Many *Helichrysum* species grew here. *Helichrysum kilimanjari* was up to a metre wide and 20 cm high with silver foliage and golden flowers and there were masses of *H. citrispinum* var *hoehnelii* and *H. newii*. This is a great plant up to 45 cm with soft silver

Helichrysum newii.

leaves and 3 cm glistening white flowers produced singly on each stem. *H. meyeri-johannis*, a low growing plant had deep crimson buds opening to white flowers and in some cases are flushed crimson and the same colour on the reverse of the sepals.

Euryops dacrydioides was an abundant shrub just over 1m with tiny deep green leaves compressed along the stems creating a whipcord appearance. They had masses of bright golden flowers on them. *Dendrosenecio kilimanjari ssp kilimanjari* and *D. johnstonii* looked similar, and were abundant near the huts and just below.



Euryops dacrydioides.

Alchemilla argyrophylla was plentiful as was *A. johnstonii*. The former is a denser plant with silvery to bright green leaves often flushed red and held in dense clusters.

An occasional pink flower of *Hesperantha petitiana* was observed, and *Geranium kilimandscharicum* was an attractive clump forming plant with deep pink buds opening to soft pink flowers, the foliage turning red as it aged.



Geranium kilimandscharicum

The 17 km walk down to the park gate took us several hours, and a late lunch was much appreciated. One thing we will always remember is the mushroom soup. The food supplied was quite good on the mountain, but they must have miscalculated the quantities required, as the last few days food was getting less and the mushroom soup which we had most meals got thinner and thinner to the stage it was virtually tasteless!

The excursion was most enjoyable and it was interesting to see the plant life in this tropical environment. Botanizing on the equator with hot days and freezing nights, it was fascinating to see the strategy of the flora to adapt to their environment.



Result of freezing overnight temperatures.

Ken has been a lover and grower of plants for 70 years, and with Lesley took 32 overseas trips collecting seeds and plants, as well as photographing them. In 1998 Ken received an AOM for his contribution to horticulture in Australia. He and Lesley established and operated Woodbank Nursery in Tasmania for 27 years before retiring in 2002.

All images provided by the author.

***Cotoneaster hodjingsis* G. Klotz**
Old 'Straight Up' has finally found its home!

Grahame Ware

The contribution of apomixis, polyploidization, and hybridization to the evolution of *Cotoneaster* might have blurred species boundaries and might account for the non-monophyly of subsections/sections within *Cotoneaster*.*

In September of 2000, I was part of a botanical expedition to northwest Yunnan sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Sciences under the auspices of the Kunming Botanical Garden and its assistant director, Sun Wei Bang.

It was a glorious month of travelling by small coach throughout the mountains of northwest Yunnan. Unfortunately, I was the only Canadian. LOL! Not all of the people on the trip were plants people but it did include Diana Reeck of Collector's Nursery in Battle Ground, Washington, and Reuben Hatch of Seattle, the noted Sinophile and rhododendron expert. It is worth noting that there were no other tourists or tourist buses to be seen anywhere in this region. As I write/revise this (October 2019) it seems everyone and their dog has a tour trip happening! How China has changed in 20 years.



The *Cotoneaster* in question I discovered on a day trip out of Deqen [迪庆藏族自治州]. This city is located north of Dali and Lijiang and puts one very close to the Myanmar and nearly into Tibet proper. The roadways are marked by plinths indicating the distance in kilometers from Lhasa. The MeiLi Xue Shan (male/female as indicated by a narrow high peak and broad wider one) mountains are part of the Hengduan range. The *Cotoneaster* plant was a magnificently fastigate shrub growing at one end of a cable bridge in the surging waters of the Mei Li glacier river, the actual name of which I did not ever find out. I saw it at the end of a day after hiking up the forested banks of the river to the mountain glacier. It was growing in the glacial rocks and, you guessed it, growing straight up, hence the cultivar name I assigned to it.

For me it seemed to be a *species novum* (a new and/or undescribed species). Because of the small leaves, I thought that this plant belonged to the small-leaved section (Section *Mictophyllii*). For close to two decades I was unable to identify what this species was. However, upon further digging into it just this past month, I now believe that my *C.* 'Straight Up' is *C. hodjingensis*, sometimes referred to in the trade as *C. glaucophyllus* hort. (As seen here: <https://plantlust.com/plants/13672/cotoneaster-glaucophyllus-hort/>)

My main taxonomic reference has been *Cotoneasters*, Fryer & Hylmö, Timber Press, Portland, 2009. Unfortunately, they do not provide a picture, but there are ones provided by Ian Barclay on his nursery website, *The Desert Northwest*, (as part of the aggregator site, *Plant Lust*.) The information and pictures were sufficient for my EUREKA! moment and, to tell me that my plant is, indeed, the species. Finally! Obviously there will be the usual ecotypical differences that are the hallmark of Chinese Himalayan species. (See my article on altitude and isolation being the predominant factors in "speciation" as opposed to



polyploidy in *The Plantsman*, March 2006, Vol. 5, #1, *The Climbing Clan of Aconitum*, RHS Publications, London). Thus, it would appear that *Cotoneaster* 'Straight Up' is, indeed *C. hodjingsensis* or some subspecies therein. This would place it in the Section *Buxifolii*. According to the authors of the *Cotoneasters* book, the plant also had the unpublished synonym of *C. excellens* (Marquand) at some point as well.

Undoubtedly, my high altitude collection at 12,000 feet makes it more compact than some of the plants recorded as this species. The colour of the berries also shows differences from what others are saying like Richie Steffen who says red berries.



Further research has turned up some other interesting tid-bits. The verification of the author Klotz of *C. hodjingsensis* shows that the isotype of *C. hodjingsensis* was originally listed as *C. microphyllus* (Wallich ex Lindley) in the herbarium of the Arnold Arboretum from a collection made by Handel-Mazzetti in 1916 between Dali and Lijiang. This was verified as an isotype by Wayne Kittredge in 2009.

I have grown many plants from seed and sold them named as *Cotoneaster* 'Straight Up'. I am happy to say that it is not a species novum but rather *C. hodjingsensis* or an ecotypical form or, quite possibly, an ecospecies. Out of the nomenclatural wilderness, *C. 'Straight Up'* has come home. I had gifted a plant or two to Brent Hine when he was the Alpine Garden curator at UBCBG. I have also contributed seed to the AGCBC seed exchange so it has made its way around AGCBC seedex circles. Kindly alter your name tags.

Cultural Requirements

It struggled at my garden in the north Okanagan, as the winters were just too cold. It was a sad and gnarly fellow until I moved to the east coast of Vancouver Island. There it flourished. It is a beautiful *Cotoneaster* as the accompanying photos I took in 2016 will attest. It has also grown much larger than the literature states. It is not needy as to soil type but prefers good drainage. Once established, it produces a prolific amount of coral red berries. They persist until flocks of hungry birds swoop in about November or December. It is apomictic and comes true from seed which strongly indicates that it is a species or, at the very least, a stable polyploid. The information in Fryer & Hylmö's book, says on page 123 (from personal communications), two different things in their reports. One researcher says it is a tetraploid and the other says it is a diploid. Ask me if I am surprised. The high altitude collection of the plant formerly known as 'Straight Up' would make me think that it lands on the tetraploid side of things. Only molecular testing could verify this.



So, like the conclusion of the Chinese taxonomists quoted at the top of this story, classifying any *Cotoneaster* is not easy and, least of all, as I was to find out, *C. hodjingsis*. What this means for us non-taxonomists, is that putting species of *Cotoneaster* into neat little boxes may well be a futile exercise. But, at least I've been able to narrow it down and take comfort in that old saying in semiotics - *the naming is the knowing*.



Grahame is a Vancouver born writer/horticulturist currently living on Gabriola island's eastern shore. He is the co-author of *Heucheras & Heucherellas* (Timber Press 2005) with Dan Heims and also the author of numerous *The Plantsman* journal (RHS) features. Grahame recently spent three years in the editor's chair of the AGCBC Quarterly Bulletin. He has been sculpting/carving for many years and is opening his studio this summer. His work can be seen at www.phantasma.ca.

All photos provided by the author.

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* Feifei Li, Qiang Fan, Qingyan Li, Sufang Chen, Wei Guo, Dafang Cui & Wenbo Liao, *Molecular phylogeny of Cotoneaster (Rosaceae) inferred from nuclear ITS and multiple chloroplast sequences*, *Plant Systems Evolution*, January 23, 2014

Gardens Rock

David Sellars

Colour in the Fall Rock Garden

Most alpines flower in the spring so we don't have much happening in the rock garden in the fall apart from a few *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Colchicum* and dwarf *Fuchsia magellanica*. Last October we were in Scotland and visited Branklyn Garden, expertly managed by Jim Jermyn who spoke to our club in May 2017. One of the many delights at Branklyn were huge drifts of blue and white fall flowering gentians. Most were cultivars of *Gentiana x macaulayi*, the famous cross of *Gentiana sino-ornata* and *Gentiana farreri*.

We used to have *Gentiana x macaulayi* 'Kingfisher' in the garden but it passed away many years ago because we were growing it in a sandy mix that dried out too easily. The British grow their fall flowering gentians in peat beds which creates moist and acidic growing conditions. I made something like a peat bed last spring using a blend of sandy loam, leaf mould and copious recycled #4 peat-based potting mix from growing tomatoes in pots the previous year. After planting out some *Gentiana* 'Kingfisher', I topped it off with some bark mulch to help maintain moisture and acidity.

Our new gentian bed is in part shade and close to a sprinkler and was kept moist throughout the dry summer. *Gentiana* 'Kingfisher' has trailing stems which easily root in the humusy mix encouraging the plant to spread. Once rooted, I snipped the trailing stems from the parent plant so the new piece could be moved to spread the gentians further.

Gentiana x macaulayi 'Kingfisher' is available locally from Free Spirit Nursery.

Gardens ROCK!



Above and below: Gentians at Branklyn Garden



Editor's ID Challenge

Do you know it? You may be puzzled by the fact I've said this is a fall bloomer. I'm not pulling your leg, this specific plant always blooms in October. However, it's parent plant (it was propagated by cuttings in 2009), and its siblings (the other props) all bloom in summer. This plant is in a slightly different part of the garden, but it doesn't seem different enough (in exposure, water, or soil) to justify this oddity. I suspect it just thinks (or maybe wishes?) that it's in its native Australia, when typically bloom time for this species is November to February (their summer). That being said, New South Wales Flora online does mention this species flowers sporadically all year.



Talking about flowers, I'm quite fond of the flowers of this group of plants. Apparently, so was Robert Brown, the botanist who named the genus, as the name translates (from Greek) to "beautiful stamens". You can see in the image above that all the show comes from the stamens, though each flower does have five inconspicuous petals. The five sepals are visible on the fruit, which I think is quite ornamental, especially in its first year when it's still pubescent. By the time the second year comes around (when seed is actually ready to be harvested) the capsules are smooth and shiny. The left image is of fruit from a plant that bloomed in summer. Also note the leaves, which inspired the epithet of this species, which comes from the Greek for pine and *oides*, meaning like, so we have "beautiful-stamen pine-like".

Callistemon ptyoides (alpine bottlebrush) is a great shrub.