

The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF READER ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Reader Rock Ramblings

Welcome Back Old Friend

By Diane Dalkin



Spring 2019! ... We've been patiently waiting

your arrival ... We're almost out of the depths of Winter ... Warmer days are surely expected ... *A season of becoming* is around the corner ... with Daylight Saving Time starting on Sunday, March 10, 2019 and the Spring equinox officially reaching us on March 20, 2019 ... New beginnings and renewal, filled with such promise all around. Time to think about seeds! These little bundles of incredible stored energy just have to be awakened for their potential. Daniel, the Head Gardener, and his team have been carefully tending to many seedlings for the garden and for this year's plant sale. More about "seeds" in the featured article.

Also, time to consider our planned 2019 events (below) and check-out our website for what's coming ahead:

- ◇ **March 16th - Seedy Saturday** - see page 3 for more info.
- ◇ **May 4 & 5** - We'll be at the **Calgary Horticultural Society's Garden Show** at the new venue, *Max Bell Centre*. Free parking and conveniently located close to the LRT.
- ◇ **May 4th** - (Saturday) **Jane's Walk**, 11:00 am—noon, at the Garden, in conjunction with the Calgary Foundation.
- ◇ **May 26th** - (Sunday) **Annual General Meeting**, held at Reader's Garden Café, lower classroom a.k.a. Potato Room, 10:00 AM—noon. This year, we're trying an early start to the meeting, with the hopes that more members could attend. All welcomed!
- ◇ **June 22nd** - (Saturday) **Plant Sale & Annual Garden Stroll**. This will be our biggest plant sale ever! Plus, our tour guides will be stationed throughout the Garden to answer all your questions and provide insights, 10:00AM-1:00 pm. Expect to have fun and pick-up some unique treasures for your garden.
- ◇ **June 5 or 6 afternoon** - (*considered tentative dates*) Official public unveiling of the National Historic Plaque at Reader's. More details will follow, closer to June.
- ◇ ~End of July/August - (*possible plans*) Participation in Historic Calgary Week, *pending confirmation*. We'll keep you posted about this budding potential.

Besides the above, please note that **Reader's Garden Café** is re-opening **April 24th**.

Just like an old dear friend, Spring brings joy back into our days. Welcome back! 🌱 Bienvenue cher ami ! 🌱



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Reader's Seeds

By Marilyn Mayall

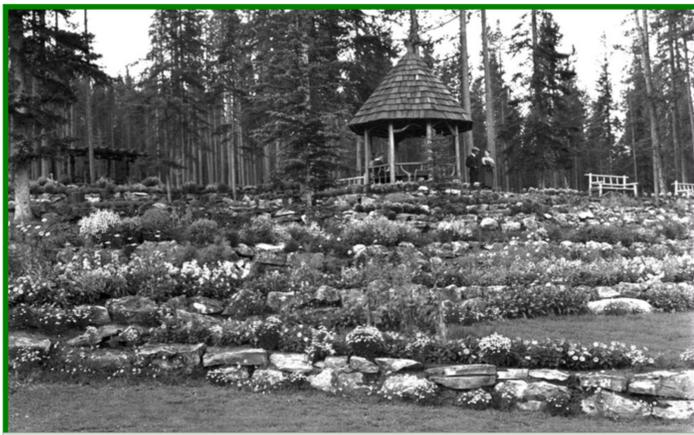
In April 1935 seeds for propagation at the *Cascades of Time Gardens* in Banff were received from many countries around the world. In addition to seeds from destinations such as Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, England and New Zealand there were 50 species of seeds sent from William Roland Reader in Calgary. The designer of the Cascades of Time Gardens, an Ontario architect named Harold C. Beckett corresponded with Reader seeking advice on the selection of species for the monumental buildings and rock garden which he had designed for Parks Canada.

By 1935, Reader Rock Garden was considered to be one of the few significant gardens in Western Canada. Reader was an acknowledged horticultural leader who collected and exchanged seeds and plants with some of the leading horticultural institutions of the day, such as Kew Gardens in England, the Botanical Gardens at Harvard and the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Beckett's dual aims for the design of the Cascades of Time Gardens are summed up in his following statement;

"It is the intention of the architect that part of this development depict the geological history of the Rockies, and also contain a comprehensive exhibit of the numerous wild flowers typical of this portion of the continent."

Beckett was instructed by the Commissioner of Parks to focus on species indigenous to the area and Beckett stated that it was his intent that "plantings adjacent to the cascades should be primarily representative of the flora of the Rockies", but it is clear from Reader's selection of seeds and the international sources of other seeds that there would be a significant proportion of non-native



Historic view of the original plantings reflective of a rock garden aesthetic [Whyte Museum, V469-241. George Noble, photographer, no date]

plant material within the Garden.

As happens, the time came when parts of the Banff garden were in need of renovation and a document (*Cascades of Time Gardens Flower Demonstration Plan 2015-2016*) was prepared for the Banff Field Unit, Parks Canada to guide the renovations. Included in the document is the list of seed species sent from Reader in 1935... a list which gives some insight into the gardening principles and species then in use.

I have included the list as it appears in the Parks Canada document, though I realize there is some archaic nomenclature as well as some misspellings of species. Both *Dianthus* and *Campanula*

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Alyssum saxatile</i> | <i>Campanula linifolia</i> | <i>Dianthus speciosus</i> | <i>Myosotis</i> mixed |
| <i>Anchus italica</i> | <i>Campanula mar-chesiana</i> | <i>Dianthus strictus</i> | <i>Papaver alpinum</i> |
| <i>Anchusa italica opal</i> | <i>Campanula rapunculooides</i> | <i>Dianthus strictus albus</i> | <i>Papaver pilosum</i> |
| <i>Anemone pulsatilla</i> | <i>Campanula spicata</i> | <i>Dianthus superbus nanus</i> | <i>Potentilla cimicifuga</i> |
| <i>Anemone pulsatilla rubra</i> | <i>Campanula turbanate alba</i> | <i>Dianthus sylvestris</i> | <i>Potentilla hookeriana</i> |
| <i>Aquilegia transylvanica</i> | <i>Centurea montana</i> | <i>Gentiana cruciata</i> | <i>Potentilla 'MissWilmott'</i> |
| <i>Arabis alpina</i> | <i>Centurea phrygia</i> | <i>Gentiana depressa</i> | <i>Primula cortusoides</i> |
| <i>Armeria formosa</i> | <i>Centurea scabiosa</i> | <i>Gentiana rocheliana</i> | <i>Saxifraga aizoon</i> |
| Aster native | <i>Chrysanthemum caucasicum</i> | <i>Heuchera glabra</i> | <i>Sedum hispanicum</i> |
| <i>Campanula carpatica alba</i> | <i>Delphinium hybridum</i> | <i>Heuchera rubescens</i> | <i>Sedum spurium splendens</i> |
| <i>Campanula crevicularia</i> | <i>Dianthus barbatus</i> | <i>Leontopodium alpinum</i> | <i>Silene alpestris</i> |
| <i>Campanula latifolia</i> | <i>Dianthus deltoides</i> | <i>Myosotis dissitiflora</i> | <i>Veronica spicata</i> |
| <i>Campanula latifolia alba</i> | <i>Dianthus 'Highland Hybrids'</i> | | |

are well represented, though

I groaned inwardly to see that *C. rapunculooides* is listed amongst seeds that Reader sent to Banff. I bet every one of those seeds germinated!

Both *Campanula latifolia* and *Campanula latiloba* are taller bell-flowers.....*C.latifolia* presumably chosen for its larger flower size and *C. latiloba* for its more open, saucer shaped blooms. Both appear to be easy to grow and feature a fairly long bloom period which would have been a consideration in meeting the goal of implementing attractive, colourful and long-blooming displays.

I could not find *Campanula turbinata alba*, but it may be now known as *C. carpatica* var. *turbinata* which appears to be a more compact variety of the frequently found Carpathian Bell-flower.



The Japanese *Dianthus superbus* with its finely fringed petals is a long-lived and easy-care addition to the rock garden. Reader used it extensively and it currently can be seen in Bed E.

Source: <http://seedsman.jp/gardenblog/d/>

Dianthus barbatus (Sweet William) has the distinction of being the only perennial/biennial species common to all three Cascades of Time plant lists (1935, 1945 and 1968). This hard working and hardy biennial can be encouraged to provide a steady succession of blooms by allowing some self-seeding to take place.

The gentians are an obvious rock garden choice. Their compelling colours are a magnet for garden visitors. Reader's choices



Gentiana depressa [Scottish Rock Garden Club Forum, Topic: *Gentiana depressa*. Lesley Cox, photographer, Dec 2007]

did not include *G. acaulis* (which is the species most seen locally) but three less well-known gentians.... *G. cruciata*, *G. depressa* and *G. rocheliiana*. The disappointing *G. cruciata* can be forgotten (too sprawling and never opened its flowers for me) but *G. depressa* may be a worthwhile, if challenging, addition to a rock garden. Somewhat similar to *G. acaulis* in its leaf structure and mat-forming habit, *G. depressa* sports a much lighter blue (described by one seed vendor as kingfisher blue) trumpet with rounded points on the petals. The challenge arises in providing an acidic medium which most sources indicate as being essential. Possibly a good candidate for a specially designed acidic trough. Listed as present (i.e. reintroduced) in 2006 at Reader Rock Garden, I will be interested to see if it can be found (Beds 21 and 23) in the upcoming season.

G. rocheliiana was not found, but *G. rochellii* (syn. *G. clusii* var. *rochellii*) does exist and may be a less challenging candidate for local rock gardens in that it does not require an acidic medium. It also has similarities in leaf shape and mat-forming habit to *G. acaulis*, but is an ultramarine or dark azure in colour and disappointingly (for me) lacks the spots within the throat of the trumpet which are such a delightful characteristic of gentians. Also reintroduced at Reader Rock Garden in 2006 (Beds 12, 15 and 20)

The two *Heuchera* on Reader's list, if not endemic to the Rockies are North American natives... *Heuchera glabra* and *Heuchera rubescens*. *Heuchera glabra* seems a good choice for planting by a pond as it favours moist rocky cliffs. The small white sprays of flowers would contrast well with surrounding rock work. *Heuchera rubescens* is a less obvious choice. Endemic to California and Northern Mexico, it may not withstand the rigours of the Rocky Mountain climate. But this may be another example of Reader pushing the zonal limits. He was certainly successful growing plants in Calgary that shouldn't survive here.

It is not surprising to find another representative of the Saxifrage family on



Saxifraga aizoon [USDA Forest Service, Topic: *Saxifraga aizoon*. Jerzy Opiola, photographer, no date]

Reader's seed list. *Saxifraga aizoon* (syn. *Saxifraga paniculata*) is a tough but attractive example of the encrusted saxifrages. It occurs not only in North America, but in Europe and Asia as well. The narrow grey-green leaves appear to have serrated edges and the five petalled white flowers are a spring/early summer bonus on the evergreen mat forming rosettes of leaves. Well-drained soil is preferred, but otherwise this is an undemanding specimen. Reader lists four *aizoon* cultivars as being present in Reader Rock Garden and they were listed as re-introduced into their original Bed E in 2006.

If some of Reader's seed choices (Centurea, Delphinium hybrids, Veronica) are surprising to crevice and rock garden aficionados, this may be the result of the competing visions in the design and implementation of the Cascades of Time Garden. Perhaps chief amongst these is the goal to enhance the site as a tourist attraction. The emphasis on 'vistas' becomes a primary concern and consequently the plant specimens serve in a supporting role. The planting guideline for tall plants with striking colours at the back of beds and "the extensive use of annual plantings to ensure a strong pallet of seasonal colour" both serve to dilute the intent of a display of alpine plants.

Towards the end of the Flower Demonstration Plan I came across what I consider to be the most intriguing information of the document. In 1936, Beckett acquired 2000 'very fine' alpine and rock garden plants from Reader. These specimens were planted around the Cascade and Reflecting Pool areas. It would be fascinating to see that list of plants, but sadly it has not been found. Looking through the 1936 Annual Report that Reader made to City Council, there is no specific entry outlining this significant collection of plants, though it is interesting to speculate whether the 200 *Dodecatheon meadia* or the 20 *Dracocephalum* listed as "Sold & Exchanged" may have been bound for Banff.

But that will have to remain a speculation and a mystery perhaps to be solved at a later date.....

My thanks for this article go to Ranald Gault (Editor, CRAGS newsletter) and Barb Portlock (CRAGS member with a particular interest in the Cascades of Time Gardens) who generously shared reference material with me regarding Reader's involvement with the Cascades of Time Gardens.



For those of you interested in propagating your own seeds....

Seedy Saturday Happens in March.....

For a modest donation a great selection of unique and unusual seeds collected at Reader Rock Garden will be available on Seedy Saturday.

When: **Saturday, March 16, 2019**

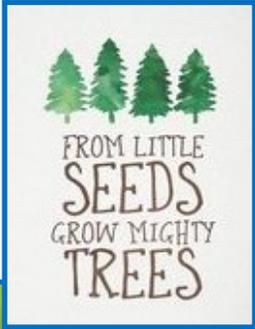
10:00 am -3:00 pm

Where: **Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Centre**

1320 5th Ave., NW



More info at www.calgaryseedysaturday.ca



“While it is still February one can taste the full joys of anticipation. Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch.”
- Patience Strong

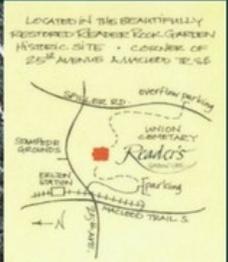


- * *Did you know that we offer private garden tours?*
- * *We can also give your group a presentation, if you can't make it to the actual site or prior to your planned visit.*
- * *There's so much to learn about this National Historic Site! We're keen to share this with you.*
- * *Contact us at info@ReaderRock.com for more info.*

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Monday, Tuesday Closed
.....
Weddings & Functions

*Reader's
Garden Cafe*
☺

The **Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)**
2019 Monthly Talks:

- ◆ **Thursday, Feb 14** - Speaker Series on ♥ *Reader Rock Garden* ♥
- ◆ **Thursday, Mar 14** - Speaker Series Central Asian Plants

Many more details on their website
www.crag.ca/events
Lakeview Community Association Hall
6110 - 34 Street SW

