

# SAXIFLORA

PLATE 13

**Petrophytum Hendersoni**  
(Rosaceae)

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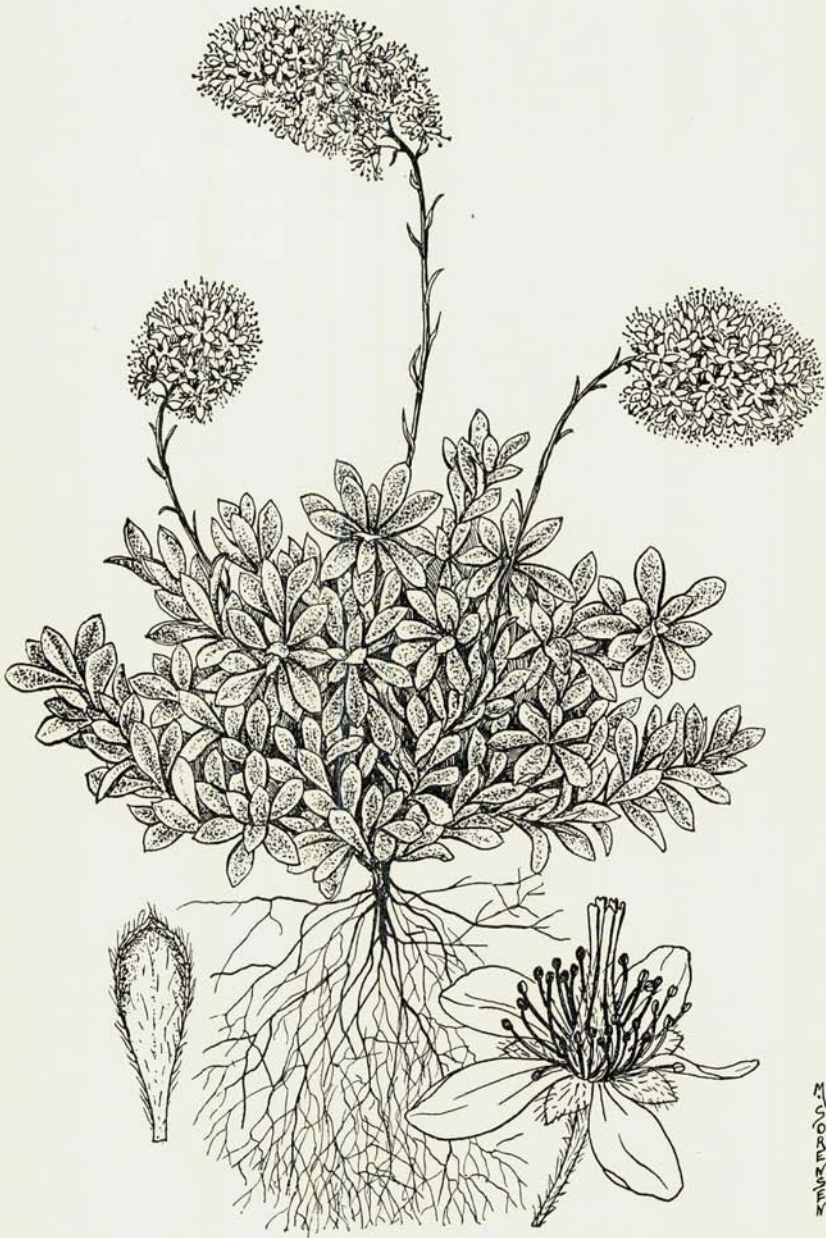
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M. S. D. B. K. S. F.

*Petrophytum Hendersoni*

## Petrophytum Hendersoni

The Olympic Mountains of Washington have, endemic to them, several plant species of very considerable rock garden value and, in my opinion, the subject of this leaflet is their outstanding contribution.

*Petrophytum Hendersoni* has no noticeable fragrance, but otherwise has all the qualities and characteristics required to rate it as an absolutely first-class rock garden plant. In addition to beauty of foliage and blossom and to ideality of habit, it has the merit of being easy to grow and to propagate and is also perfectly hardy and very long lived.

This species has been accused of being a shy bloomer in cultivation; this libel is probably due either to the very long time it takes for a collected plant to become properly established—a matter of years—or to the delusion, under which most growers appear to labor, that this species requires a southern exposure. At the present moment, one of my plants is carrying no less than forty-two racemes, which is surely adequate refutation of the accusation.

In the rock garden, this species will be found to thrive best when planted in a crevice or at the foot of a large rock on a steep slope with a northern or northeastern exposure. A cool root-run seems to be the prime essential with actual diet of quite secondary importance, since the plants will flourish in any light, well-drained, lime-free mixture moderately enriched with humus.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings. Most of the seedlings will bloom in their third year. Cuttings strike readily, if taken as the flowers commence to fade, but I have found them very reluctant to make roots if taken at any other time. Well-established specimens increase to some extent by means of underground stems but, since other methods of propagation are so simple, the removal of the little plants that appear in the lee of their parent seems rather unnecessary vandalism.

*Petrophytum Hendersoni* is a dwarf evergreen shrub which forms dense, more or less prostrate mats in its natural habitat but makes compact, dome-shaped hummocks in the garden. Plants of this species have not been in cultivation long enough to enable one to hazard a guess as to the dimensions they will eventually attain; my largest plants, which I believe to be about twelve years old, are about four inches in height and nine inches in diameter, though one which is growing in a pan in my alpine house has reached a height of six inches.

The evergreen foliage consists of oblanceolate leaves three quarters of an inch long, arranged in attractive little rosettes. These leaves are a most

unusual shade of bluish green, flushed with rosy lavender on the under sides and they assume vinous-purple tints throughout fall and winter.

The creamy white blossoms, like minute *Spiraea* flowers, are borne in dense arching racemes throughout late spring and early summer. They always remind me of woolly lamb's tails. The racemes may be from one and a half to three inches long and about one-half inch in diameter and are carried on quite sturdy stems just comfortably above the foliage. The petals persist for a very long time after the flowers have faded, turning to light tan and gradually deepening to brown, so that a plant in seed is very nearly as beautiful as it is in flower.

*Petrophytum Hendersoni* well deserves to be ranked amongst the very best of the World's alpiners; that it is also a native species should give it an additional claim to far wider recognition by American gardeners than it has yet received.

W. H. A. PREECE.

*Petrophytum Hendersoni* (Canby) Rydberg, N. Am. Flora 22: 253. 1908.

*Eriogynia Hendersoni* Canby, Bot. Gaz. 16: 236. 1891.

*Luetkea Hendersonii* Greene, Pittonia 2: 219. 1892.

*Spiraea Hendersoni* Piper, Erythea 7: 172. 1899.

FOOTNOTE: The several species of *Petrophytum* are much alike in general appearance and in leaf and flower effect. *P. Hendersoni* does not possess the utterly flat habit of growth observed in *P. caespitosum*, and its leaves are somewhat larger and more sparsely hairy. The broadly ovate, obtuse, glabrous sepals, with sparsely fringed margins, are slightly more than half as long as the oval or obovate petals.

THE COMMITTEE.