

# SAXIFLORA

PLATE 15

**Gentiana septemfida**  
(*Gentianaceae*)

*Published by*

THE AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY  
1270 SIXTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK CITY

December 31, 1940

Price, 10 cents postpaid  
United States and Canada



*Gentiana septemfida*

## Gentiana septemfida

So many new gentian species and hybrids have been introduced to the gardening world during the past ten or fifteen years that it would be quite possible to plant a whole rock garden solely with that genus without lack of variety or form. Their heights range from an inch to five feet and their colors through every shade of blue, yellow and white; their blooming season extends from April to November and there are species for every situation from a sun-baked moraine to a shady leafmold bed. A serious limiting factor in parts of the United States is that of climate; so many of the gentians demand cool, equable conditions that it may be difficult to coax some of them through the hot summers.

Nevertheless, there are many that can be grown without any difficulty and it is fortunate that one of the showiest and most dependable should chance to bloom in midsummer when there is apt to be such a dearth of color in the rock garden. *Gentiana septemfida* would rank as a first-class plant whenever it bloomed, but with its ability to brighten that arid season it becomes an almost indispensable inhabitant of any rock garden.

During the winter, *Gentiana septemfida* retires below ground and its presence can only be detected by scratching an inch or so below the soil where a group of small white shoots will be found clustering round the crown. With the coming of warm weather, their length increases until in a month or two they are a foot or more long and clothed with opposite, oval leaves. The outside stems lie along the ground with their tips turned up and the inner ones will stand more or less upright. The buds, carried in clusters of six or more at the tops of the stems, may be well-formed early in June; but they develop slowly and in New York it is not until the first or second week in July that they expand to their full glory. When they do finally open, they are a most gladdening sight; two-inch trumpets of a clear sky-blue, delicately spotted on the inside and with the throats handsomely striped in blue and gray. With a strong plant carrying sixty or more flower stalks, the blooming period is long and after the first spate, a small second crop of flowers often appears in September.

Cuttings made from the young shoots in spring root easily; but if fear is felt about bringing young rooted cuttings through the summer heat, a few unflowered shoots can usually be found in the fall. Shoots which have bloomed are useless as cuttings and no side shoots are made from the main stems. Seed is also set freely and is easy to raise. In common with other gentians, it is best sown as soon as it is gathered. Pricked out into flats of

good loam as soon as they are large enough in the spring, the young seedlings can be planted out in the fall and will make strong flowering plants by the following year. Their final destination should be an open sunny spot, where their roots can ramble in a well-drained and lightly manured soil; but they will stand a considerable variation of this treatment and still give of their best.

*Gentiana septemfida* has a wide natural distribution in southeastern Europe and within this area several different forms occur, all of which are apt to occur in cultivation under the name of *G. septemfida*. The best-known is *G. s. lagodechiana*, and it was from a specimen of this variety that the accompanying drawing was made. In constitution and general habit, there is little to choose between the two, so that only the botanist needs to be disappointed if he gets one for the other. *G. s. lagodechiana* differs from the type mainly in having a rather smaller, more prostrate and frailer habit; and instead of clustered heads of flowers, it has a single flower at the stem tip with supplementary flowers borne in axils of the first two or three pairs of leaves.

The true *Gentiana septemfida* is a semi-decumbent herb, reaching a height of about twelve inches. In spring, the many unbranched stems rise from a central crown and are clothed at intervals of about an inch with smooth, opposite, pointed-ovate leaves which are usually five-nerved. They measure from an inch to an inch and a half in length and half an inch in width, decreasing in size near the base of the stems.

The flowers, borne in clustered heads of six or more at the extremities of the stems, are funnel-shaped, an inch and a half to two inches long, broadening at the mouth into five pointed corolla lobes half an inch long. Between each lobe, there is a finely-cut fold. The throats of the flowers are gray-green, striped on the outside with darker color and faintly spotted on the inside with small greenish spots which extend onto the clear, luminous blue of the corolla lobes and folds. The filaments are united to the corolla tube for half their length. The mature ovary is an inch long, pointed at both ends and slightly flattened lengthways.

JOSEPH J. ELLIOTT.

*Gentiana septemfida* Pallas, Fl. Ross. 1<sup>o</sup>: 101, t. 92, fig. 3. 1788.

*Gentiana septemfida* var *Lagodechiana* Kusnezow, Fl. Cauc. crit. 4<sup>1</sup>: 325. 1903.

*Gentiana Lagodechiana* (Kusnezow) Grossheim ex Möllers Deutsch. Gärtner-zeit. 46: 14. 1931.