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CONTENTS:-

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MONTANA PENSTEMONS

FRANK H. ROSE, Missoula, Montana

I DON'T know insects. The mosquito, the yellow-jacket, the black gnat and the deer fly thrust their personalities upon me; but I have never learned the different groups. The estimate of a million or more species appals me.

A good many of us know flowers the same way. As long as I have been in the mountains, I have known Penstemons just as Penstemons. Not all are alike, but all recognizable as belonging to the genus without even the necessity of looking for the tell-tale fifth stamen. I've gathered bouquets of them, and felt their presence in Nature's painted landscapes. But they were still just Penstemons, and I hardly gave a thought to their individuality.

Then I became a plant collector and names became important. I learned of Dr. Pennell of Philadelphia and Dr. Keck of Palo Alto, authorities on this group of plants. When these experts proved more than kind, I began to make the acquaintance of the species around me and to recognize them in their home surroundings. I have gathered together a little group of my special favorities here. Should you already know them, you will enjoy meeting with old friends; if not, I want to introduce them to you.

First, meet our home-town *Penstemon caelestinus*. If you have driven through our "Scenic Wonderland" in June, the blue and gold of the rocky points east of Missoula is a mixture of this species and Oregon Sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) and I never hope to create a happier color combination. In the Missoula valley, but no-where else, on dull, gray, gravel slopes, or man-made earth-scars where color is most needed, this plant appears. Year after year, with scant foliage but abundant bloom, taller in moist seasons, shorter when dry but always abundant, it covers the wound until soil and vegetation are restored. Fine of feature, modest and non-aggressive by nature, yet how joyfully it carries on its alloted task, asking nothing, never intruding, content to serve for the common good. Even though it was ultimately named in reference to its brilliant blue color, instead of its native region, we are proud of our Missoula Penstemon.

Sometimes with the preceding species, but more often along an old railroad grade or bare ridge top, its stiff, narrow leaves flattened close upon the gravel, *Penstemon erianthera* waits, biding its time. Then, firmly anchored by ample long roots, a short, stiff, straight stem arises to carry a heavy load of large, mottled bells secure against the winds that blow strong across the ridge tops. Unmindful of loose, hot gravel about its leaves, blazing sun or driving rain, bumble bees crawling from bell to bell or grasshoppers jumping from stalk to stalk, it holds erect its gaudy banner defending its gravel patch against all the world until its large, black seed are safely scattered.

Somewhat higher back up the gulches where moisture is more dependable and pine and fir trees begin, we find the tall *Penstemon wilcoxi* (synonym *P. pinetorum*). Its large basal evergreen leaves are red from the cold of late spring; and as the season warms, its ample stalk appears. There seems to be no rush in the growth of this Penstemon. It appears to know that its moisture supply will last, and takes time to spread out and widely distribute its bright blue flowers. While more generally abundant than the two preceding, it is less gregarious, mingling with its surroundings rather than aggregating in a compact herd.

Penstemon procerus, if flowers are reincarnations, may have once been some gallinaceous bird. They creep out from the edge of the hills into meadows as though to feed, and raise their knot-like heads above the waving grass much as though on guard, alert, watching to give the alarm upon the approach of some tribal enemy. Could this be, do you suppose, a plant collector? However, the plants in the meadow are much more abundant than the sentimental heads, and are sure to be gathered in moderation by anyone experienced in digging into meadow sod.

BY EDGAR T. WHERRY

The Rocky Mountain subspecies of *Penstemon fruticosus* in its native haunts. The flowers are bright lavender in hue.

Penstemon polyphyllus (syn., *nitidus*) seems lazy; lazy but charming. It spreads on sunny clay banks, rests by each rock on apparently dry ridges, or lies on the sandy stream sides or gravel bars, sunning itself all day long, like a sheep herder. Its heavy blue flowers are a clear reflection of the summer sky. Even its fleshy leaves are more the blue and gray of sky and cloud than the green one would expect. Viewed closely, it seems a little clumsy perhaps, but its lax growth habit makes it exceptionally good for draping over rocks; and no one is likely to forget a patch of its bright blue clinging to a steep bank or covering a dry stream channel. In spite of its choice of hot dry sites, it really likes moisture and sends ample roots far in search of it. This plant tolerates a more alkaline soil than most Montana Penstemons. It is succulent when growing and brittle dry.

Penstemon fruticosus is a small evergreen shrub. It was first noted by Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, high on a windy hill in Idaho. As he lay aside his rifle and sat, no doubt, on a sedge cushion watching the sun's last streaks fade from the sky and the multiple blues deepen into night, a hard days climb behind, the boundless untrod wilderness ahead,—were his thoughts a bit wistful and of the friends back east, or did the *Penstemon fruticosus* on the cliff at his side, a pioneer like himself, give reassurance and courage to press on toward an unknown future? I have assigned this Penstemon guard-duty on a point at the front of a rockery and if not entirely happy, at least it seems to feel that it has in some measure a purpose for which to live. The decorator who wrote "Don't crowd too many blooms into one vase" was not familiar with *Penstemon fruticosus.*

Penstemon florescens (Kirkwood's Yellow Penstemon) is wild; so wild that only recently has it become definitely known. Almost mythical, like a white elk, it lives far back in a distant high valley where deer, elk and moose are much more common than men or domestic stock. Not a large plant, yet, like the elk, of a somewhat clumsy build. Is it the large, clear, creamy flowers in close abundant clusters that hold the strong and permanent appeal that makes me wish to return each July, or is it just the wilderness of the area where it grows? Snow comes early and stays late where the Kirkwood's Penstemon grows and like all plants here, it crowds its annual life processes into a few short months, seemingly enjoying every single day.

Penstemon lyallii (syn., *linearifolius*), as I know it, occupies an equally wild valley, but at a lower elevation. It holds precarious footing in loose rock and gravel on a very steep hillside above a long narrow lake,—reputedly, I believe, an old skid trail used by the mythical Paul Bunyan, that has now filled with water. Either by nature or as a result of the insecure footing, the plant presents a somewhat straggly appearance, a woody base and long herbaceous stems; but the purple-red flowers are strikingly unusual among Montana's Penstemons. Long stems, long leaves, long flowers above, a long lake and I'll take again the long trail back there some long summer day.

There are more, many more. Rydberg found nearly a hundred when he roamed the Rocky Mountains over twenty-five years ago and while I cannot treat them all here, I must include one more, *Penstemon aridus.* Civic pride should prompt me to entirely ignore this one, for it has held aloof from our "Garden City", Missoula, and shown a marked preference for the mining city of Butte. Inured to substandard living, it clings to bare granite boulders or carpets the gravel slopes of the old vigilante trail, defying wind and snow, sun and drought; with cacti and junipers for neighbors, where sheep graze by day and coyotes hunt by night, it finds its place in life. The smallest of the lot, but cheerful, energetic and brave, beyond even the understanding of its more robust relatives. I brought it into my garden and it stays apparently perfectly happy. Surely, if it were lonesome it would give some sign. Can it be that it just had never heard of Missoula?

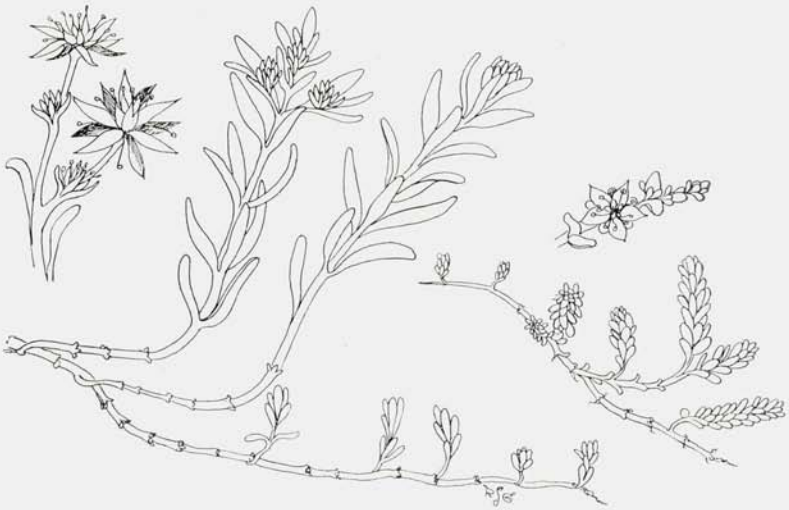
Which Penstemons do I recommend? I don't. Select the species which gives you satisfaction, with tolerance toward rock-plant enthusiasts who choose differently. You may have definite assurance that no Penstemon is more charming than the one you like.

BY K. W. BAASCH

SAXIFRAGA COTYLEDON

Saxifraga cotyledon is one of the largest sized saxifrages of the encrusted section. Its rosettes, when fully developed, measure from 6 to 8 inches in diameter and the flower stalk as shown in the photograph attains a height of about two feet. It has broad green leaves with slightly encrusted toothed edges. The single flowers measure up to ¾ inch across and are white with red markings. It requires perfect drainage and like the other encrusted saxifragas it prefers a deep and gritty soil. The best specimens were grown on a slope facing north, with protection from the sun during the hottest part of the day. The side rosettes forming on the parent plant pulled off carefully, root easily, and this is the simplest method of propagation.—KURT W. BAASCH, Baldwin, New York.

On this and several following pages are published articles on individual species of rock plants. Won't you please send us in more like them?



Sedum sarmentosum, with *Sedum acre* to the right; about natural size. Both produce starry yellow flowers in early summer.

LEAF-ROOTING SEDUMS

WHILE the Stonecrops—species of the genus *Sedum*—are in general valuable plants for the rock garden, some of them may become pests. Foremost in this category I would place the Stringy Stonecrop, *Sedum sarmentosum*. If one has a stone wall so bleak and dry that it seems as though nothing would grow there, start this plant on it; in a relatively short time a rich carpet of light green foliage will develop. But don't let it get into your rock garden. If the plant could be lifted without breaking off a leaf, one might hope in time to eradicate it; but almost every leaf that falls takes root and starts a new plant, soon crowding out all the delicate and desirable rock plants nearby.

Only a trifle less invasive is the Goldmoss Stonecrop, *Sedum acre*, [pronounced by botanists ā-kree]. Its short thin roots can easily be extracted by hand; but it has numerous tiny leaves which break off and take root in abundance. It too had better be kept out of the rock garden.

—ROBERT M. SENIOR, Cincinnati, Ohio.

GENTIANA ACAULIS

ONE of our successes at Tumbling Waters is the glory of May and the surprise of autumn, *Gentiana acaulis.* Farrer scorns this name for the spring gentian, but as it is almost always so offered in American catalogs, I use it for convenience.

My own experience over some years bids me believe that in this country a number of different plants are being offered under the same name, and that one of these is much more prolific, sumptuous and friendly than the others. This would confirm Farrer's statements, and suggest that the plant with which we have succeeded so celestially is *Gentiana gentianella.* I would like very much to know if, in the experience of others, one strain of so-called "*Gentiana acaulis*" has bloomed more readily than the others. Our plants, from various sources, have become too mixed to tell.

In addition to procuring in the beginning the heartiest blooming strain, other very definite conditions are necessary for bringing the spring gentian to perfection. First, as in the planting of all difficult rock plants, location is of paramount importance. Our plants have succeeded best on a high, perfectly drained plateau, the top of a cliff some six feet above a winding path. On this rocky cliff stands an ancient, twisted, leaning pine tree, which throws on the shaly ground below a delicate and shifting shade. The sun flits back and forth over the gentians most of the day but never burns upon them hotly. They have, however, much sky and air, as the pine branches are high and sparse.

The entire rock garden, centered by its cascades and pools, is built in a descending semi-circle in a wood so that the surrounding trees, very lofty, bring welcome coolness to all but the middle glen, which the tumbling waters partly cool. Another fairly large plateau lies just above a cascade and although the plants receive here more sun than on the higher cliff, the position is tempered by the waters.

I am certain that *Gentiana acaulis* and its relatives must be grown cool and damp. They will not, however, stand the spray from a waterfall, which the mossy saxifrages delight in. I always put pink or white mossies between the gentians and the water. Spring gentian likes to be grown high, and it glorious sapphire trumpets never appear of so fine a port as when peering at you over a grey cliff at eye level. So much for position.

Soil next. When preparing a plateau or deep rift in the rock for gentians, we remove the soil for a depth of 18 inches and put in the bottom six inches or more of old barnyard manure, covering this with a rich soil of leaf mold lightened with sand and grit. Some bone meal is mixed with the soil. Farrer advises lime. We have never used much, but we finish with a layer of limestone chips covered, for appearance sake, with natural shale. The gentians should be planted very firmly in the soil and every stem should have a small area of soil to itself. Then each shoot seems more apt to develop a bud. Also in this way room is left between the shoots for more creeping stems to push outward in all directions.

Every year the oldest and most crowded plants are lifted in the spring, the soil shaken off, the spreading roots pulled gently apart, leaving four or five shoots to a plant. The plants divide easily. They do not bloom freely the first or even the second year—but the third and fourth!

Resetting new drifts of gentians every second or third year assures the rock gardener of such spreads of breath taking sapphire that they seem to split the rock strata with color.—ELIZABETH HOLLISTER FROST BLAIR,

Tarrytown, New York.

SAXIFLORA

PLATE 20

Dodecatheon amethystinum
(***Primulaceae***)

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DODECATHEON AMETHYSTINUM

DODECATHEON AMETHYSTINUM

THERE is never any difficulty in recognizing a plant as belonging to the genus *Dodecatheon* [pronounced with the a broad and accented]. All of its members are alike in having a basal rosette of fairly large leaves, from which arises a stem bearing an umbel of nodding flowers. In these, the five white to pink or purple corolla-lobes are strongly reflexed, and the anthers form a conspicuous projecting cone. The common names Shooting-star, Prairie-pointers, and the like refer to this characteristic flower-shape.

When it comes to distinguishing species, however, considerable difficulty arises. The characters used in the diagnostic keys in our floras and manuals are not easy to check; and when one tries to apply them to the plants in the field, in the western United States where the majority of the 20 or so species occur, these keys often fail to work.

BY EDGAR T. WHERRY

Jewel Shooting-star at home in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.
The moist coolness of this natural rock-garden is indicated by the moss on the limestone ledges and the abundance of the Brittle Fern, *Cystopteris fragilis*.

In the midland and eastern states there is no such problem; for there are only two well-marked species in this region, and they are decidedly different in aspect. The commoner, more widespread one, is *Dodecatheon meadia*. It was discovered in Virginia by Rev. John Banister about 1675, and named by Linnaeus in 1753. It attains its greatest abundance, however, in the prairie states, where it attracted the attention and was mentioned in the journals of the early explorers. Its flowers range from pure white to pink or purplish, and although not unattractive, it is a bit heavy for the small rock garden.

The second midland-eastern species had to wait a long time for recognition. Regarded by the earlier botanists who saw it as a mere variant of the widespread one, it was named as a variety of that by Professor Norman C. Fassett in 1929. Then, two years later, he raised it the rank of a species, and as such it is made the subject of the present study. Discovered in southwestern Wisconsin, it has since been found to grow also in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, as well as central Pennsylvania.

Dodecatheon amethystinum is well named the Jewel Shooting-star, for it is a veritable jewel among plants both in its native haunts and in the rock garden. It is more delicate than the widespread eastern species, and its petals are of a deeper hue, a lovely amethystine violet. It blooms in early May, a week or two earlier than the other. The capsules develop soon after the flowers have faded, and the seed may be collected in a few weeks, and used to increase the planting. The foliage then withers away, but vitality remains in the bulbous crown, and new leaves will appear with the first touch of the following spring.

In deciding how to plant it in the rock garden, one should bear in mind that it is a northern species. It can withstand, accordingly, severe winter conditions, but is rather intolerant of summer heat. In the wild it grows on moist, mossy, north-facing cliffs, where the soil is cool throughout the growing season. It should be planted, then, in a lean soil in a sheltered part of the garden, where the summer sunlight does not fall directly on the ground.

Dodecatheon amethystinum is an herbaceous perennial with a basal rosette of rather large elliptic-oblong leaves. In early spring it sends up to a height of 5 to 10 or rarely 15 inches a slender stem bearing a few-flowered umbel. The pedicels at first curve so that the flowers assume a nodding position, but become erect as the capsules mature. The five strongly reflexed corolla-lobes are of a brilliant amethystine hue. They hide the calyx, but when this is looked for, it is found to bear five short lobes which are tipped, as are also the bracts at the base of the umbel, with tiny red points. The golden cone of anthers projects out for about a quarter of an inch. The straw-colored cylindrical capsules are thin-walled, and produce numerous small brownish seeds.

It can be told from *D. media* by the latter being coarser and taller (when fully developed 15 to 25 inches high); the more numerous flowers being paler in hue and the longer calyx-lobes and bracts not red-tipped; the anther-cone ⅓ inch long, the bright brown ovoid capsules thick-walled and the seeds dark brown. —Edgar T. Wherry

Dodecatheon meadia Keller & Brown, Handb. Flora Philadelphia and vicinity, p. 252, 1905; not *D. meadia* L.

Dodecatheon meadia Small & Carter, Flora Lancaster Co., Penna. p. 222, 1913; not *D. meadia* L.

Dodecatheon meadia var. *amethystinum* Fassett, Rhodora 31: 52, 1929.

Dodecatheon amethystinum Fassett, Rhodora 33: 224, 1931.

Dodecatheon meadia f. *stricklerae* Fernald, Rhodora 39: 319, 1937; a remarkable form with the corolla-lobes extending forward instead of being reflexed; but not a derivative of *D. meadia* L.

NOTES ON THE GENUS VIOLA

M. E. Armbruster, Pittsburgh, Penna.

One of the largest genera of plants from which rock garden material is available is *Viola*. All true species of this genus, as well as some of the horticultural varieties, are suitable for rock work; the cultivated pansy alone is out of place in this type of garden. The natural species are of two classes—the true violets, so richly represented in America; and the pansy-violets, more often called simply "violas," most abundant in Europe and Asia. The latter are often better so far as plentitude of bloom is concerned; but the American plants, with their wide range in color and leaf form, are more symbolic of the classic violet tradition; and Farrer says that, like American heiresses, they have taken to overflowing the Continent.

Some years ago I was driving thru Pacheco Pass in Central California. Between the monster gray boulders characteristic of the pass, Nature had laid out a purple and lavender carpet, designed with Birdseye Gilia and Nemophila in almost unbelievable artistry,—the most beautiful combination I had ever seen. Up to that time I was unacquainted with that other purple and lavender marvel of the flower kingdom, the eastern Birdsfoot Violet, with its upper petals of the royal color and its three others of the lighter tone. And it is amazing how many Americans have not even heard of this resplendent native plant. The foliage is slashed, so that the plant tufts are interesting even when not in flower. Both this and the rare white form, *Viola pedata alba*, have been called the world's most beautiful violet. But whether the typical bicolor form, the albino, or the lavender (known as variety *linariloba*) is grown, this species is uncomprising in three demands—sun, acid, drainage. When one sees it in its native haunts —for instance, the heather-fertilized sand dunes of the Cape Cod area,— this will be appreciated. A second crop of flowers is produced nearly every fall, making the plant doubly desirable.

There are several eastern native stemless species with tiny white flowers. The best of these is the fragrant *V. blanda*. This used to be known as the "sweet white violet," but so many others have been appropriating that name in recent years that it is preferably referred to as the Moss Violet; for it likes mossy banks, while its young foliage is almost moss-like. The flowers are borne on reddish peduncles and the plant increases rapidly. In a damp spot with dwarf ferns this violet yields an attractive effect.

Two white-flowered species belonging to the stemmed group deserve mention also. Canada Violet blooms off and on throughout the summer and even up to frost. Usually its petals have a purplish tinge, especially on the back, but forms with simply a yellow throat in the pure white flower are known. An early spring bloomer is *V. striata*, (which may be termed the Striped Violet), its large creamy flowers lightly pencilled with purple. Another notable stemmed species is the blue *V. rostrata*, or Long-spur Violet. It is characterized by the spur being half an inch or more in length. These three are woodland plants and prefer a shady spot in the rock garden.

Our common Meadow Violet, *V. papilionacea*, has large deep violet-blue flowers, but spreads too rapidly to be used in the small rock garden. Some of its horticultural forms are, however, highly desirable. One called Azurea is a beauty, its color having a sort of smoky gray tone. Then there is the striking Confederate Violet, *V. priceana*, the white of its petals overlain by silvery gray.

Among yellow violets, the eastern species are not outstanding, but the western ones comprise some of our most beautiful rock garden subjects. Probably the one likely to give the longest bloom is *V. sempervirens*, the Evergreen or Redwood Violet. Other satisfactory western ones are *V. lobata* and *V. douglasii*, the latter having maroon on the reverse of its upper petals. Practically all western violets, regardless of color, have slashed foliage; that of *V. lobata* suggests an oak leaf.

Among the pansy-violets *V. calcarata*, the Swiss Viola, is notable. Native to the Alps, it is long in bloom, in colors of blue, white, yellow, or mauve. It is doubtful whether the seeds of these European stocks can now be obtained in America. The writer obtained his via Atlantic Clipper direct from Correvon in Geneva, paying by American Express money order.

BY ARTHUR H. OSMUN

The blue *Viola rostrata* is characterized by its elongate spur. Native to upland woods, it prefers a cool, shady spot in the rock garden.

Last of all let us mention that darling of the centuries, plaything of the healths of olde England, easily adaptable, ever-entrancing, the original *V. tricolor*, the "love-in-idleness" of Shakespeare, the principal ancestor of the garden pansy. If anybody has any doubts about its mission in the world, let him read Mrs. Wilder's comments about it in one of her books and evermore repent of his sin. Its American cousin, *V. rafinesquii*, is like it in charm, although far less colorful,—white with faint bluish shading, and a pale yellow eye. Once in a lowland of Louisiana, when my spirit was heavy with the muggy weather and my body was tortured by ticks, the communicative heads of these ubiquitous Johnny-jump-ups were the only alleviation to my discomfort.

One partakes of Goethe's anguish, when, upon seeing the hapless violet crushed 'neath the foot of the thoughtless shepherdess, he penned: "Es war ein herziges Veilchen!" "It was a precious violet!"

ROCK GARDEN AND ALPINUM

Henry Teuscher, Montreal Botanical Garden

Rock garden enthusiasts usually look with scorn upon anyone who dares to introduce garden annuals into his planting scheme, declaring emphatically that only true alpine plants should find a place in the rock garden. What justification, if any, is there for this attitude? In order to clarify this controversy, it is necessary to first establish what is meant by "a rock garden". To my mind, the word signifies a garden which is built of rocks or in which rocks are prominently displayed. What kind of plants should be used in such a garden is not implied in the name itself and should be left to individual taste. This statement, I am sure, is bound to meet violent opposition but let us first consider it more closely.

The oldest known rock gardens are, undoubtedly, those of the Chinese who take a delight in rocks for the rocks themselves and who like to group them together in bizarre and fantastic combinations. Any plants found in such a rockery are purely incidental. The rocks are the main feature. Henry Inn and E. S. Lee, in their book "Chinese Houses and Gardens", reproduce some excellent pictures of such Chinese rock gardens. During the time of our grandfathers, such "chinoiserie" was much in vogue in Europe. I still remember, from my own childhood, grottos and various other rock groups which could be found in nearly every fair-sized garden. Later, this sort of thing was declared to be of bad taste and gradually disappeared. Certainly I do not mean to propose that we should now return to the building of grottos in our gardens nor do I imagine that many Americans or Europeans would derive pleasure from the type of rock work which the Chinese seem to delight in. However, I do not see why one should not assemble rocks or stones, either interesting in shape, weathered to show their strata or moss covered, and place them in the garden to enjoy their beauty. Rocks all by themselves can be very attractive, and there is a great deal of pleasure in collecting them.

Such a group might be further embellished with flowers planted near or between the rocks which, however, they must never hide. The kind of flowers or plants to be used would have to depend, in each case, upon the fancy of the owner of the rocks. To my mind, such an arrangement would be a rock garden in the truest sense of the word. I suppose that my readers will gasp at such heresy but let us now consider the other side of the argument. If our aim is to raise alpine plants because we have become captivated by their delicate beauty, that is an entirely different proposition. In such a case we must, first of all, construct, with considerable labor and expense, a suitable home for them since they are rather exacting in their requirements. In a garden of this type, rocks play a very minor role. To a certain extent, they are necessary for the well-being of the plants but they need not be conspicuous. In fact, the artificial scree or the moraine which, on the surface, would show only fine rubble, provide the most satisfactory accommodations for exacting alpine plants. Such a garden I would call an alpinum and, naturally, there would be little sense in planting therein any but the kinds of plants for which it was built.

I have selected these extremes for the sake of argument. What we most frequently see are various intermediate types, or, combinations of the two. One of these latter is the formal rock garden laid out in straight stone faced beds and planted with massed groups of some of the most ornamental mat-forming flowering plants—alpine or otherwise—in a brilliant display.

Should these be called rock gardens or alpinums? I believe that this should depend on whether the emphasis is placed on the rocks or the plants.

At the Montreal Botanical Garden we have provided for both an alpinum and a rock garden. The alpinum consists of a series of artificial hills carefully constructed to fulfill the requirements of alpine plants. It provides not only proper drainage and soil composition but also facilities for the production of a mist-fine spray to take the place of dew should this be lacking. As far as our climate permits, the alpine floras of the most prominent mountain ranges of the world will eventually be established, in separate units, on the various hills. The rock garden, which is located elsewhere, has been constructed along the formal lines, described above under intermediate types. It will provide a display of the best improved horticultural forms and hybrids of alpine plants, as well as of various other not truly alpine perennials which are suitable to ornament what is usually referred to as a rock garden.

THE PRAIRIE BLUE-EYED GRASS

THOUGH the scope and locale of his investigations may be outside his control, the plantsman who has become a part of the military forces of this country may still make interesting discoveries. Such a one, it seemed to me, was the prairie blue-eyed grass, *Sisyrinchium campestre* Bicknell. First sight of several patches of a hepatica-blue varying to white flower on that last refuge for prairie flowers, a railroad right-of-way, came as I was riding along an adjacent highway in southeastern Nebraska. A closer inspection showed it to be a charming plant. Flowering early, May 23, it was associated with hoary puccoon and prairie ragwort. The color variation from white to pale blue adds to its value for mass planting. It is a smaller plant than the well known Blue-eyed-grass of eastern meadows, growing not over eight inches high. I consider it a worth-while addition for a sunny area in the rock garden. Members of the genus *Sisyrinchium*, with their tufts of erect narrow-bladed leaves, make a pleasing variant to the creeping ground covers of the rock garden. It is reported to be common in Nebraska; indeed, the range given by Rydberg,—Manitoba, Wisconsin, Missouri, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Dakota—suggests Nebraska as its centre of distribution. If it is not available to rock gardeners, I should be glad to coöperate in making it available for trial.

CPL. BERNARD HARKNESS, Army Air Base, Sioux City, Iowa.

SEED EXCHANGE

Mrs. Hildegard Schneider has taken over the direction of the Society's seed exchange. Mrs. Schneider is well known to many of the members of the Society, having lectured to us at a number of our group meetings. She was for some years in charge of the Thompson Memorial Rock Garden in Bronx Park, as assistant to Mr. Everett. We bespeak for her your hearty cooperation in her task of circulating seed among the members of the Society.

If you have fresh seed of rock garden plants that you would like to donate to the Society please send them to Mrs. Schneider at 1751 Seminole Ave., Bronx, New York. We shall publish frequent lists of seeds available.

OUR SOCIETY

THE smallest details of our lives are, of necessity a parcel of the American way, part of what we are fighting to defend. They are worth fighting for. At bottom they are good.

That is no excuse, however, for taking them for granted, without thought or criticism. Indeed, no honest American pretends that all he does is good. No principle of the American Way of Life compares in importance with our universal resolve to make life better. In our own small way, The American Rock Garden Society takes its place in the effort to improve the world we live in. It is a parcel of the American way, a detail for which we have assumed responsibility in the name of the whole continent.

When all is going well, responsibility is a light burden. The trustee can afford to make a pleasure of his duties. In such times there is no harm, on condition that we do not entirely forget our job, in meeting to look at instructive pictures; to listen to entertaining lectures; to chatting with delightful people. On the other hand, there is nothing in it to make the conscientious trustee proud.

Every American is a trustee and it is in days of adversity that the trustee shows his mettle. He sets to work, forgetful of his relaxing pastimes. He examines every item of his trust to be certain of its value in a storm. He casts off what is useless as encumberment. He cherishes what proves to have merit. He thinks, which means that he works.

Such diagnosis of the good and ill is due for every organization of the country, ourselves included. As a people we are inclined to try to increase our power and speed by putting in bigger engines while we let the barnacles grow. We know it is silly, and now, in these serious times, when our own bark is held at home waiting for the storm to clear, we trustees should examine the hull and clean it, make necessary repairs, throw out the debris that comes, no one knows whence or how.

That is the reason why there are no pictures and no lectures today. This is not the moment to frivol. It is time to work to keep our ship in order. We are a Committee of the Whole. Every one of us has a personal theory about what is good in the American Rock Garden Society and what should be improved. Every one has ideas which no one else has, but which all should learn. We should overhaul our policies, our purposes, our methods of procedure, and our results. Every disagreement, whether trivial or important, should be aired, debated and in the end determined by majority opinion. Even our very existence is open to discussion, though I, for one, am convinced that it is the bounden duty of Americans who are forced to stay at home, to preserve and enhance every good thing in American life. And I believe that there is a permanently useful place for the American Rock Garden Society.—FLETCHER STEELE, Boston, Mass.

OUR QUEST FOR AN EMBLEM

May I make this contribution to the quest of an emblem plant for the Society?

Since, apparently, it must be a native species, I dare not argue against this foregone conclusion. But it appears now that this conclusion will not satisfy some of our fastidious members. What they desire is something even Americaner than merely American,—a native, attested by genealogists to be without the stain of foreign congenerics. The Rocky Mountain Columbine—even a streamlined rendering—will not do for them.

I wonder if this idea of a strictly American genus may not be a bit of purism alien to the nature of our cult? It looks, to me, more like an ideal of geo-botany than like rock garden sense, and more nearly suitable for a Mayflower society than for a rock gardening outfit. This, of course, without question of the excellence of geo-botany and of Mayflower societies in their respective fields. Only, their fields are not identical with that of rock gardening, with its notoriously undefined boundaries and inclusive scope of plant materials, limited not by oceans or meridians, but only by the misty portals of high heaven.

My idea, then, would be a North American native plant, regardless of wherever else it might occur; one of proven adaptability in large parts of the continent; American, in the sense that it might become broadly representative of American rock gardens,—not in any remote, geo-botanical or other, puristic or inhibitive sense;—not a plant that would remind most of us everlastingly of failure, but one which may earn a place in rock gardens, East and West, as well as in the yearbook. If it were to be a Western plant I should hope that it might be one which can be grown in the East,—not merely as an occasional, fleeting success, but in a more general and dependable way. I should have misgivings about alpine Dodecatheons and Western Phloxes, however righteous they might appear to geo-botanists.

For the present, then, I nominate, no particular plant, but rather, a species of sense, pertinent to American rock gardens. Do I hear a second?

P. J. VAN MELLE, Poughkeepsie, New York.

OUR FAR FLUNG FAMILY

MONTANA GROUP

At the Annual meeting of the Montana group Mrs. Warder I. Higgins gave a talk on Rock Gardens, illustrated with many slides; Dr. S. R. B. Cooke of the School of Mines exhibited his beautiful slides of Montana alpines. A new feature was introduced at this meeting: twenty-five blooms of rock garden plants were shown, and to the three members who guessed the largest number correctly prizes of rock garden plants were presented.

WASHINGTON GROUP

The April meeting of the Washington group was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Bittman; Mr. Paul L. Miller showed his colored slides of The Flora of Mt. Rainier. The Annual picnic was held at the home of Dr. Curtis Williams on July 16th; the August meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. N. Roberson on August 20th; Mrs. Roberson talked on Gentians, and a review-showing of the Society's colored slides was made before a large turnout both of members and guests.

The June meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. First Johnson, many members and visitors enjoying their new woodland garden. During our meeting, a round table discussion was had and many suggestions were made as to plants the Johnsons might add to their garden.

In regard to the new floral emblem for the society, there were several suggestions—Erythronium, Penstemon, Dwarf Iris, Androsace, and Saxifraga. The general idea being that the plant represent the United States or North America.