# BULLETIN

*of the*

# AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Vol. 2 January-February 1944 No. 1

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## PLANTED WALLS

FLORENS DEBEVOISE, Greens Farms, Conn.

PLANTED walls have so much to recommend them that it seems odd one so seldom sees them in this country. They may be built to serve a great variety of purposes and certainly no type of gardening gives more beauty for so little care. Where terraces are to be laid, or an embankment held in place, the retaining wall achieves a practical purpose and when planted may be beautiful as well.

In the rock garden a planted dry wall may serve to separate one section from another, giving a new interest and causing the general effect to be more diversified. A grassy slope or hillside is always difficult to mow, but when the lower part is removed and a retaining wall built, the upper portion, as a more or less flat surface, is easily cared for; your gardener will bless you for saving him and his feet considerable exertion.

In climates where heavy frosts and thaws are prevalent in early spring, the wall should have a base of concrete, the soil being taken out to frost line which is usually to a depth of two feet or more. The width at the base should be from 2½ to 3 feet for either a retaining wall or an open wall. The concrete may be poured in to the surface level and the first layer of stones placed on it. After this, no more concrete need be used. Under no circumstances should cement be used above the ground level as it is practically impossible to force plants into a cemented wall and have them live. All stones should be slightly tilted downward from the face of the wall as they are laid. A large pile of soil is sifted and mixed with well aged cow manure, peat, chopped sphagnum moss, and sand. This should be brought conveniently near the work, to save time. Have a level and a builder's line at hand to keep the edge of each layer of stone at an even height. A mason's hammer is needed to break off sharp points or protruding parts which prevent the stones from being properly set in place. A slope-indicator will also be found helpful; it can be made by sawing a board 4 feet long and 6 inches wide into two long-triangular pieces.

When constructing a retaining wall, the stones must extend well into the soil at the back, and all spaces between the stones are thoroughly filled with soil which is rammed down in order that there may be no air pockets left around the roots of the plants. A round blunt-end stick is good for this purpose. After the first layer of stone is set, trailing plants are laid on, the roots flattened and more soil placed over them. There need not be more than two inches of soil except at points where plants with larger root systems may be placed. See that the collar of the plant is placed just a little back of the edge upon which it is resting. The roots and layer of soil extend back toward the embankment. When the plants are all laid on, the next layer of rock is set firmly on top and just to the edge of the crown of the plant. Interstices are staggered throughout.

When the wall is about one foot high, use the slope-indicator, point down, holding the straight side erect and letting the wall recede in line with the slanting side. From the base the wall will then recede between one and two inches for each foot in height. At intervals large "tie-stones" are set across the wall into the soil at the rear. A wall of this type allows moisture to reach the plants and, if the stones are firmly set, there will be no casualties due to planting. Weathered stone is always used in preference to cut stone as it will produce a more informal effect, the irregularities among the edges of the stones making an interesting background for the plants. When the wall is finished, it is carefully "chinked," a process which consists of forcing small flat stones *under* the plants where necessary, and particularly at open joints. These stones are hammered in, so there will be no possibility of the plants becoming loosened, or slipping out.

If an open dry wall is being built, the procedure is the same, except that a core of soil is laid through the center where the plants will find a root run, and more "tie-stones" are necessary.

In choosing plants for a wall, the habit of growth must be considered. Keep those of diminutive size in the upper sections where they may be easily viewed. Trailers, or mat forming plants are placed at intervals, care being taken that their more luxuriant foliage does not submerge those plants which are compact in growth and require sun.

It is important that all plants be put in as the wall goes up, otherwise it will be very difficult to make them secure. An old dry wall may be planted with some success, however, if a moist ball of soil mixture is rammed into the back of each hole or crevice, and very small pot grown plants are then put in and well chinked. As the plant grows and expands, it becomes firmly fixed in position if its roots are embedded in the ball of soil at the rear.

A retaining wall in full sun, if planted with sun loving plants, seldom if ever needs artificial watering, but if shade loving plants are used the wall should not be allowed to dry out for any length of time. Two-faced or open walls must always be watered during dry weather. A good soaking once a week is sufficient.

In climates where the winters are severe, the wall should be covered after the first really hard freeze. For a retaining wall a single covering of burlap hanging from the top is sufficient. This is put on merely to shade the frozen plants from the rays of the sun, which have a devastating effect on frozen foliage. An open wall may be protected with evergreen boughs, or a light covering of salt hay held in place by wire netting. If such protection is given, it is seldom that any plants are lost. Open walls may also be covered with burlap which is tacked on to a wooden frame surrounding the top and ends of the wall about four inches above and away from the plants.

It is amazing how plants thrive in a wall. Many which are difficult to grow in a rock garden flourish when planted here. If a careful selection of plant material is used, walls present a picture of beauty during the entire season.

One planted wall at Cronamere is now thirteen years old and the original plants are still in excellent condition. Views of two walls built as above described are shown on subsequent pages. Lists of species which have been grown successfully in them are also given.

BY FLORENS DE BEVOISE

Planted wall at Cronamere

# SOME WALL-PLANTS AND THEIR FAVORED POSITIONS*

## 1. In full sun

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Acaena glauca Hort. | B | Dianthus, cushion spp. | F |
| microphylla inermis | B | Draba, spp. & vars. | F |
| Achillea clavennae | F,T | Erigeron multiradiatus roseus | F |
| clusiana | T | Eriophyllum caespitosum | F,T |
| grisebachii Hort. | F,T | Erodium absinthioides amanum | F,T |
| tomentosa | B | Genista sagittalis | T |
| —aurea | B,T | tinctoria | T |
| Actinea fastigiata | F,T | Geranium sanguineum lancastr. | F,T |
| herbacea | F,T | Gypsophila repens | F,T |
| Aethionema, spp. & vars. | F,T | —rosea | F,T |
| Alyssum, spp. & vars. | F,T | struthium | F,T |
| Androsace lanuginosa | F | transsylvanica | F |
| —leichtlinii | F | Hieracium bombycinum | F,T |
| Arabis albida floreplena | F,T | Hypericum repens | F,T |
| —rosea | F,T | tomentosum | F,T |
| Arenaria montana | F | Iberis jordanii | F |
| Armeria juniperifolia (caesp.) | F | tenoreana | F |
| maritima laucheana | F | Jasione jankae | F |
| Artemisia scoparia (gracilis) | F | Linum alpinum | F |
| Aster alpinus | T | Malvastrum coccineum | F,T |
| meritus | F | Oenothera (Meriolix) serrulata | F,T |
| Callirhoe involucrata | B,T | Phlox subulata, vars. | B |
| Campanula poscharskyana | F | Potentilla argentea calabra | F,T |
| sarmatica | F | Saponaria ocymoides | F |
| Cerastium arvense compactum | B | Satureja montana (pygmaea) | B,F |
| grandiflorum (arg.) | B | Scutellaria indica japonica | F |
| Chrysopsis villosa prostrata | T | Sedum, spp. & vars. | B,F |
| Convolvulus cantabrica | T | Sempervivum, spp. & vars. | B,F |
| Coronilla cappadocica | F,T | Tunica saxifraga flore-pl. | F,T |
| Cotoneaster dammeri radicans | T | Veronica incana | F |
| Crepis occidentalis | F | pectinata rosea | B |
| Cytisus (Genista) beanii | F | spicata nana | F |
| kewensis | T | —rosea | F |

## 2. In partial shade

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ajuga, spp. & vars. | B | Ceratostigma plumbaginoides | B |
| Anacyclus depressus | F | Chrysanthemum alpinum | F,T |
| Aquilegia canadensis | F | Clematis (Viorna) Scottii | F |
| flabellata nana | F,T | Corydalis lutea | B,F |
| Arabis procurrens | B,T | Cymbalaria aequitriloba | B,T |
| Arenaria balearica | F | Dianthus superbus | F,T |
| verna aurea | F | viscidus grisebachi | B,T |
| Bellium bellidioides minutum | F | Dicentra formosa | B,T |
| Campanula cochlearifolia | F | oregana (glauca) | B,T |
| elatines garganica | F | Dryas japonica Hort. | F,T |
| —istriaca | F | octopetala | F,T |
| portenschlagiana | F | Edraianthus dalmaticus | F |
| pulloides | F | Erodium chamaedryoides ros. | F |
| Ceanothus prostratus | F,T | Fragaria daltoniana Hort. | B |

*Names chiefly according to Hortus II. B=base, F=Face, and T=top of wall.

2. In partial shade, continued*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gentiana acaulis | F | Oxytropis campestris | F |
| purdomi Hort. | F | lambertii | F |
| septemfida | F | Paronychia serpyllifolia | B |
| Geum montanum | F | Petrophytum caespitosum | F |
| triflorum | F | Phlox nivalis | F,T |
| Globularia cordifolia | F | stolonifera, vars. | F,T |
| Gypsophila cerastioides | F | Polemonium reptans | B,T |
| Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgi | F | Polygonum affine | B |
| Hedera helix conglomerata | F | Potentilla cinerea | F,T |
| Herniaria glabra | B | reptans | B,T |
| Hypericum coris | F | Prunella grandiflora rosea | F |
| olympicum | F,T | Saxifraga, encrusted spp. | F |
| Lamium maculatum | B,T | Silene alpestris | F |
| —album | B,T | schafta | F |
| Lotus corniculatus fl.-pl. | F,T | Spiraea lucida | F |
| Matricaria tchihatchevii | B | Synthyris rotundifolia | F |
| Mentha requienii | F | Thymus serpyllum albus | B |
| Mitchella repens | F | Tiarella cordifolia | F |
| Oenothera (Meg.) missouriensis | B | Wulfenia carinthiaca | F |

*Names chiefly according to Hortus II. B=base, F=face, and T=top of wall.


BY KATHLEEN MARRIAGE

## AQUILEGIA SAXIMONTANA

OF ALL the Rock Garden Columbines, *Aquilegia saximontana* has the most graceful charm and greatest appeal—yes, for me, even surpassing the smug little *Aquilegia jonesii*. "Rock Garden" here is an intentional limitation, for we consider unsuitable in any rock garden such columbines as the stodgy short-spurred old ladies, along with such prolific reproducers as *Aquilegia chrysantha*.

*Aquilegia saximontana* rarely exceeds six inches in height. Its thrice ternate foliage is adequate and neat but not remarkable; the flowers have all they can do to peep out over it but they do, and successfully too, most desirable little lavender blue saucers holding tiny cups of marble whiteness. The spurs have their tails tucked up short for all the world like the skirts of those good nuns we saw one day directing irrigating ditches over their hayfields in northern Colorado. Bloom time here is May with occasional flowers till frost.

This seems to be a person of discrimination or perhaps too fastidious for the treatment it meets in the wilds of the Rockies. On one bare looking gravel slide at timberline they hang on happily where few other plants can survive the slither of disintegrated granite. Then not a sign of one for miles and a colony of them in a boulder field, tipped almost vertical, where the snow covers them till June.

Our Pike's Peak form seems botanically identical with that found farther north in Colorado, but its blue is cleaner and clearer than in any others we have seen. I still get a thrill at recalling my introduction to it; a good big wad of it met me at eye level on a steep bit of the climb up Pike's Peak by that best of all approaches via Beaver Creek and the once-busy gold mining town of Gillette, now one deserted house.

In their high mountain home we find these plants growing usually in fluffy peaty soil on deep coarse rubble, sometimes with roots a foot long, curling their toes around under the base of a rock.

They seem happy and contented in our garden (at 6000 ft. elevation) in a soil which imitates their home conditions in a shady rock garden where snow lingers. Possibly in a climate of greater humidity than ours shade made be unnecessary. After all this is one of the easy fellows.

Young and youngish plants move accommodatingly; healthy big clumps divide and respond to severe root pruning. Seeds germinate at long last, usually after at least one winter's freezing. They are among those contrary things most stubborn when regimented in a row in a meticulously prepared seed frame, and willingly popping up where (and when) self-sown. One such healthy brat thumbs his nose at me from the lee of a privet hedge in stiff clay and full sunshine. Now is that any place for a choice rock garden plant! But hope springs eternal, and the seeds we have sown may decide to produce plants two years late, in the company of a super-imposed row of regal lilies.

Conies, marmots and other mountain inhabitants find the seed palatable, for almost every plant is cleared when it begins to ripen. The only thing left for other varmints, such as collectors, is a stray pod from late bloom.

Seed collected in cultivation so far has produced plants true to type. It looks as if this aloof little mountain species holds to the conventional moral code more rigidly than others of the genus.—KATHLEEN MARRIAGE, Colorado Springs, Colo.

## AQUILEGIA DISCOLOR

THE smaller one's rock garden, the more attention has to be paid to the size of the plants used. While the Columbines as a group are excellent rock plants, some of them are decidedly out of scale with a small garden. Such is not the case, however, with the charming little *Aquilegia discolor*. Its delicate foliage is pale blue-gray, and forms a mound four inches or so high and nearly as much across. The flowers are bi-colored, with silvery blue sepals and white petals. A native of the higher mountains of Spain, it is said to grow in Europe best in the moister parts of a scree. In some American rock gardens in which it has been tried, it flourishes in lean garden loam in full sun. While it will seed itself, the seedlings develop but slowly, and while still small are easily lost.—E. M. F.

# TEN AMERICAN POLEMONIUMS FOR THE ROCK GARDEN

EDGAR T. WHERRY, Philadelphia, Penna.

A REVIEW of the American members of the genus *Polemonium*[1] has shown the existence of some forty species, uncertainty as to the exact number being merely due to difference of opinion as to how unlike entities must be in order to be assigned species independence. From this list ten have been selected as specially worthy of attention from rock gardeners. These are here briefly characterized; except when otherwise noted, they have openly campanulate flowers of a hue which is often termed "blue" but is more correctly classed as violet.

BY EDGAR T. WHERRY

*Polemonium brandegeei* has pale yellow flowers
On a cliff of igneous rock at Wagon Wheel Gap, Colorado

The foliage of the Polemoniums is somewhat fern-like, and the plants are sometimes called "Fernleaf Bluebells." Common names given in the books comprise "Jacobs-ladder" and "Greek-valerian," while certain species are known locally as "Sky-pilot" and "Skunkweed." The last refers to the presence on the herbage of glands exhaling an intense musky odor. This odor unfortunately attracts slugs and snails from afar, often resulting in destruction of the plants. Certain species lack this feature, however, so can be selected for growing in gardens where such pests are abundant.

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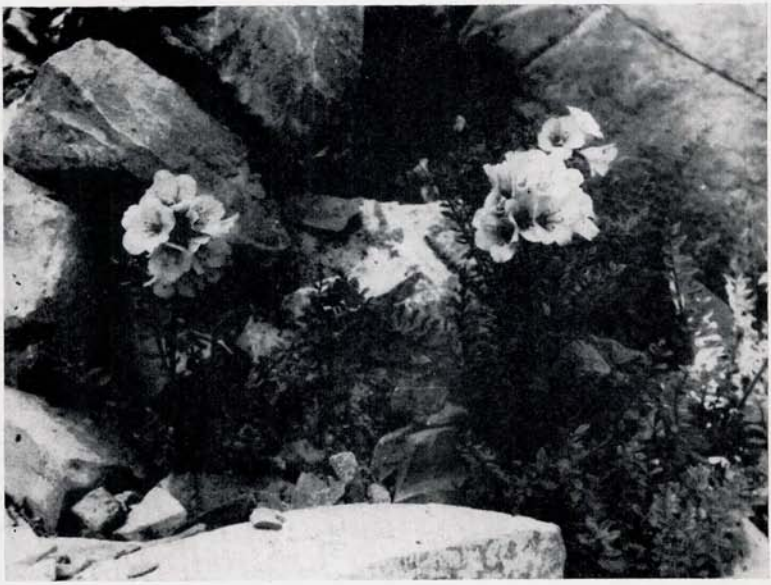
[1]This review, entitled "The genus *Polemonium* in America," was published by the writer in the American Midland Naturalist, vol. 27, p. 741, 1942. A reprint will be gladly sent to anyone requesting it.

## SELECTED LIST OF SPECIES

1. *brandegeei* (Gray) Greene. (including "*mellitum*"). A lovely species with whorled leaflets and pale yellow trumpet flowers, from the Rocky Mountains, illustrated on the opposite page.

2. *californicum* Eastwood. The widespread species of the Sierras, often distributed as "*pulcherrimum*," but differing from that in having larger, stalked leaflets.

3. *carneum* Gray. A large species from the west coast region with huge flowers of most charming salmon to pink hues. Its foliage lacks musky glands, so does not attract slugs.



BY EDGAR T. WHERRY

A Sky-pilot, *Polemonium confertum*
In limestone talus, alpine zone, Queen Basin, Colorado

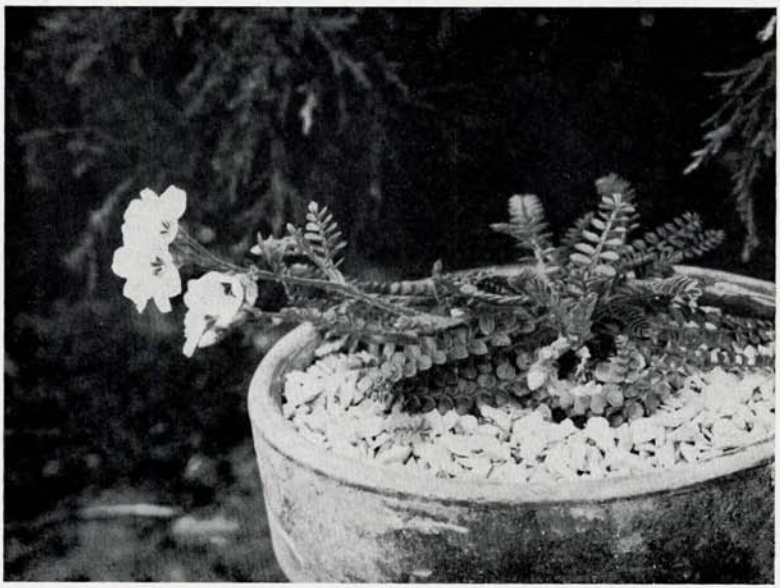
4. *confertum* Gray ex Rydberg. One of the "Sky-pilots," so named because of growing well up toward the sky, above tree-line in the Rocky Mountains. As shown in the accompanying photograph it has whorled leaflets half an inch long and large trumpet shaped flowers.

5. *delicatum* Rydberg. The common Rocky Mountain species often distributed as "*pulcherrimum*." Its leaflets and flowers are medium sized. It differs from *californicum* in having a more slender rootstock, sessile leaflets, and included styles.

6. *elegans* Greene. A gem from the higher levels of the Cascade Mountains. Its habit is compact and its short trumpet flowers are deep violet with brilliant golden throats.

7. *haydeni* Nelson. Though like several others confused with "*pulcherrimum*," this northwestern mountain species has a more massive rootstock and upstanding habit; the leaflets and flowers are medium-sized.

8. *lindleyi* Wherry. A remarkable species from Alaska and British Columbia, once distributed as "*humile*." It has a spreading habit, medium-sized leaflets, and showy flowers. Material brought into cultivation by Mrs. J. Norman Henry has proved in spite of its northern origin to withstand the summer heat and drought of southeastern Pennsylvania better than any other species. It is also free from slug-attracting glands. A photograph of one of Mrs. Henry's seedlings is here reproduced to bring out its features. In the rock garden it will grow much larger.



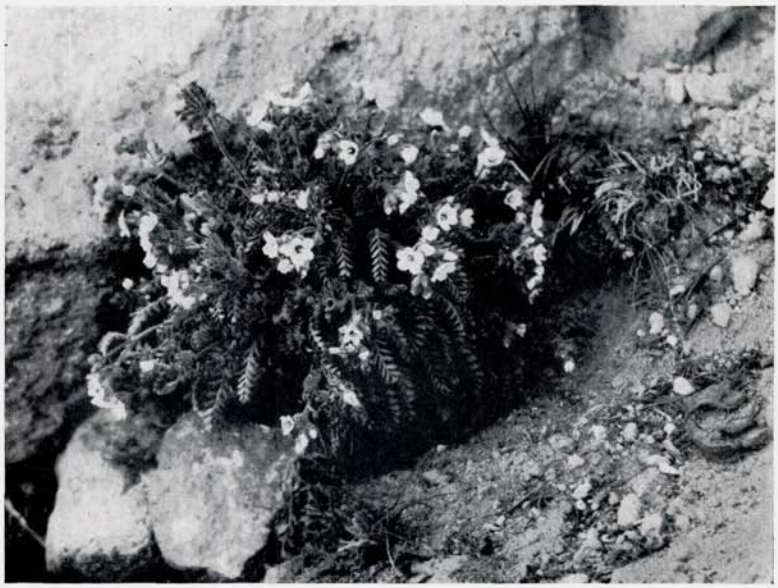
BY EDGAR T. WHERRY

A seedling of the Alaskan *Polemonium lindleyi*
Unexpectedly thriving in the hot, dry Penna. summer climate

9. *pulcherrimum* Hooker. A number of different Polemoniums are being grown and distributed under this name, but the rules of nomenclature require a name to be restricted to the species to which it was first applied. The true *pulcherrimum*, then, is a cute little plant with leaflets only ¼ inch long and tiny but charming flowers, as shown in the photograph on the opposite page.

10. *reptans* Linnaeus. The only widespread eastern species. It has rather large leaves, free from scent-glands, and good-sized flowers. A most adaptable plant, it will thrive not only in the rock garden, but also in the border, in woodland, or even in a swamp.

Several other species deserve brief comment. *P. caeruleum*, the widespread European species, is too heavy for the rock garden, although dwarf forms of it such as that offered (erroneously) as "*richardsoni*" are useful, their flowers being especially large. The Rocky Mountain *P. foliosissimum*, with subspecies *archibaldae*, *robustum*, etc. is likewise rather coarse. The name *P. humile*, under which many of the smaller species may be offered, is not valid for any species under present-day rules of nomenclature. The Mexican *P. pauciflorum* is interesting in having tubular flowers, but they are borne only sparsely and their greenish color is unattractive. The sky-pilot *P. viscosum* is a small edition of *P. confertum*.



BY EDGAR T. WHERRY

The cute little *Polemonium pulcherrimum*
On lava, summit of Mt. Scott, Crater Lake National Park

Polemoniums are readily raised from seed, blooming the second year. Many species, especially those from the higher altitudes, are short-lived in lowland rock gardens, so seed should be collected and sown every year or two to keep them going. Once established they seem able to withstand considerable extremes of temperature. Their ferny foliage makes them attractive in the rock garden throughout the growing season; their charming flowers, produced most profusely in spring, but in some cases appearing sparingly also in summer and fall, add to their value as rock garden subjects. Every collection of rock plants should include one or more of them.

## EPILOBIUM OBCORDATUM

THE NAME Epilobium will at once bring to mind, with most people, a picture of the brilliant magenta-colored Fireweed; but nothing could be more different from this lovely high-Sierran species. It makes a low mound, not over four inches in height, of bluish green foliage; and in late summer, even into September, it is a mass of large rosy pink flowers. It spreads by underground runners, and a patch a couple of feet across is one of the prettiest sights to be found among the rock plants of California. The species is rare even in the Sierras, being found on occasional rocks almost up to the summits of 9000 foot peaks, and also at the bases of volcanic cliffs in finely comminuted rock material. The soil in these situations is moist well into the summer, and fairly rich.

In a rock garden at Lake Tahoe, at 6000 feet, I planted this charming alpine with success in silty loam mixed with a meadow soil containing grass debris. Propagation is easy, a small piece cut from an underground runner being sufficient to start a new clump. At low altitudes, a cool though not heavily shaded location should be selected for it. In my opinion this fine Epilobium belongs in the list of the half dozen best western rock plants.—CARL PURDY, Ukiah, Calif.

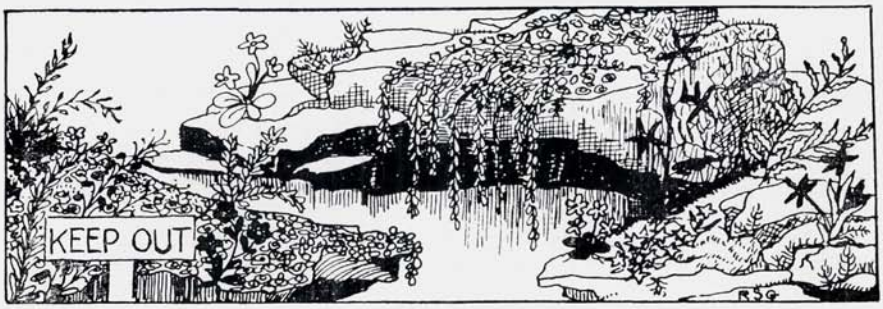
## CHRYSOPSIS FALCATA

FOUR times during the season the sunlit sandy moors of Nantucket glitter with gold,—in late spring, when the plant involved is the Gold-heather, *Hudsonia;* in early summer, when the blue-green bushes of False-indigo, *Baptisia tinctoria,* are spangled with bloom; in late summer, when the heads of the Northern Golden-aster, *Chrysopsis falcata,* open; and in fall, when the various species of Goldenrods, *Solidago* spp., bring the blooming season to a close. The cause of the third of these displays is of the greatest interest to the rock gardener.

The plants of *Chrysopsis falcata* form clumps which in the more exposed places tend to be compact but in shade or under competittion may become straggly; these vary in height from 4 to 8 inches. The stems have a rosy tone, and appear lighter than the bright green leaves, which are linear and more or less curved. The technical species name, which means scythe-shape, refers to this leaf character, and botanists who like to translate such names for common use call the species the Sickle-leaved Golden-aster, (or as inacceptably spelled in S.P.N. II, Sickleleaf Goldaster.) In Nantucket one more often hears it called the Ground Gold-flower.

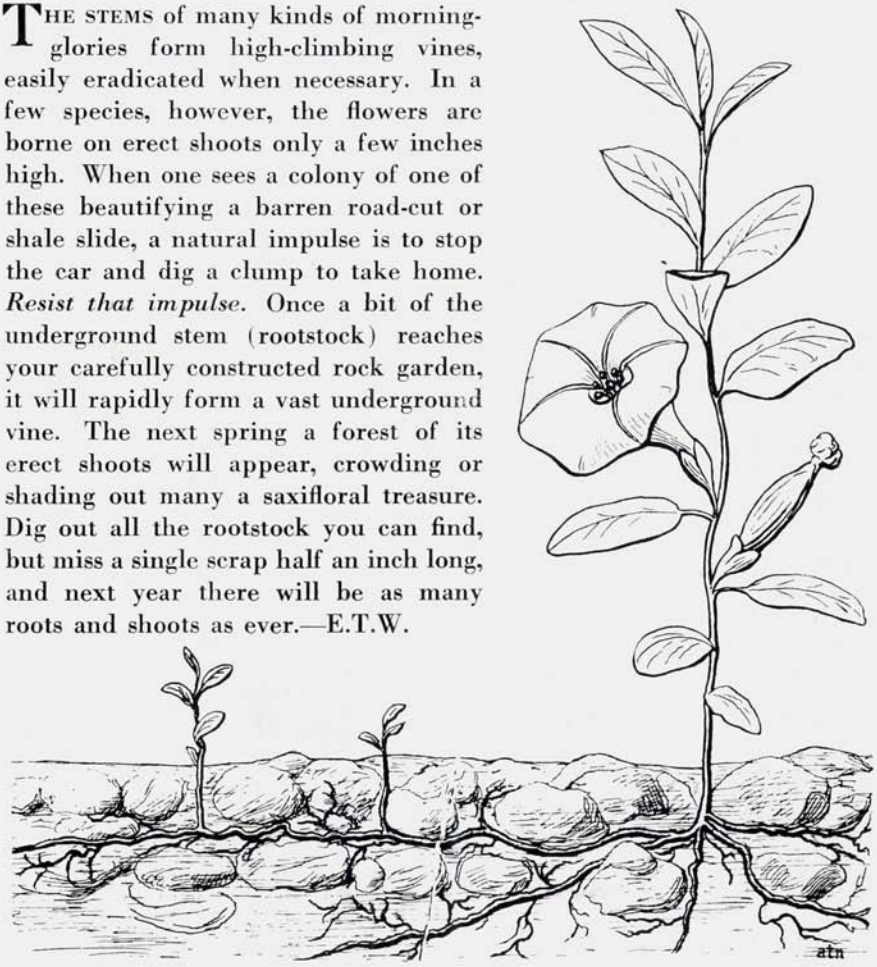
By the last week in August buds seem to develop at the tip of every branch, practically covering the plant. They soon expand into three-quarter inch flower-heads, with numerous bright yellow rays and an orange central disk,—golden stars against a background of soft verdant mist.

Native to the sand barrens from New Jersey to Massachusetts, this plant is winter-hardy, and growing as it does in full sun can evidently withstand considerable summer heat. It is to be expected to thrive in a well-drained lime-free part of the rock garden. Such a vigorous, compact, glowing wilding deserves to be better known.—WALTER D. BLAIR, Nantucket, Mass.




## CONVOLVULUS SPITHAMAEUS

THE STEMS of many kinds of morning-glories form high-climbing vines, easily eradicated when necessary. In a few species, however, the flowers are borne on erect shoots only a few inches high. When one sees a colony of one of these beautifying a barren road-cut or shale slide, a natural impulse is to stop the car and dig a clump to take home. *Resist that impulse.* Once a bit of the underground stem (rootstock) reaches your carefully constructed rock garden, it will rapidly form a vast underground vine. The next spring a forest of its erect shoots will appear, crowding or shading out many a saxifloral treasure. Dig out all the rootstock you can find, but miss a single scrap half an inch long, and next year there will be as many roots and shoots as ever.—E.T.W.



# THE UPPER-MIDDLE SOUTH CONSIDERS ROCK GARDENING

MR. HANLEY'S article in the July-August Bulletin, "Comments on Rock Gardening" struck me, as far as it went, as a clear, well-considered contribution to the ever-open questions of the how and why of a rock garden, particularly from the viewpoint of the small place, whether urban or country. On studying it carefully, however, I rather felt a note of discouragement, even in face of his evident wish to be encouraging. Granting that, of his two hypotheses regarding the importance of either the plant itself or the outward appearance of the plant's home, he gives preference to the former, it seems to me that he has failed to emphasize three important contributions which rock plants make to the operation and the effect of the garden proper. For he relegates rock gardening to the realms of design and of questions as to suitability of location, thus limiting instead of increasing its scope; and he fails to mention the importance of geographical or climatic influences.

The three contributions are, first, the addition of rock garden plants make to the length of the blooming season; second, the wide range of distinguished and dependable material made available, and third, the lightening of manual labor and garden care. They all open up unlooked-for possibilities in even the smallest, simplest garden design.

Considering the first, through slow experiment, we are learning that with all our providing of below-the-surface soil mixture, drainage and root-runs, we haven't begun to tap the possibilities of exotic material that will add several weeks more of color than are furnished by the herbaceous border. Many rock plants, whether bulbous or fibrous-rooted herbs, bloom at least a month (some indeed six weeks) earlier than the occupants of the garden proper. Any real gardener gets a thrill when a brilliant splash of color suddenly pops out of the apparently dead garden long before the bulk of perennials have even thought of showing.

As to the second: We know that nothing is more capricious than the average wildling when first brought into captivity, yet we are apt to overlook the mass of garden material which, though brought from widely differing surroundings in the wild, has become completely tamed to civilization. In the introduction of alpines and rock plants, then, there is no incongruity of plant personalities, only the ordinary considerations of color or size, amenability to climatic and soil conditions, and a sense of reasonable suitability. Given these, the lists of flexible plant material increase to an amazing degree—a fact which we, in the United States, whether East, West, North or South, or in-between zones, have yet to realize fully.

The third,—the lightening of manual labor,—has an especial appeal for the individual gardener, and needs little discussion. Given the beforementioned favorable conditions of climate, soil mixture, drainage and root runs, with a surface mulch of loose gravel, the majority of rock plants, no matter what their origin, ask simply to be left alone; and with actually no labor of cultivating, and a minimum of weeding, a maximum of effect can be produced throughout a long season, with only slight occasional gaps in the blooming procession.

In the matter of design, certainly Mr. Hanley is right in stressing the incongruity between the simulation of Nature's mountain boulders, screes, etc., and close-clipped, formal lawns; and if fidelity to the alpine picture

is the aim and end of working with rock plants, there is no more to be said. But there are many methods by which these exotics can be included with good taste in even the simplest garden plan, in such a way as to contribute beauty and the pleasure of using rare material. And since the true aim and end of any garden effect is to maintain a pleasing aspect for as long a period as possible, it might seem the better part of wisdom to develop to the fullest every means to that end.

Climatic influence is one of the chief factors to be kept always in view, for in no other branch of horticultural endeavor is the old saying more true that "One man's meat is another man's poison." This should be emphasized more fully by leading rock garden enthusiasts who, too often, deal only with design or material suited to their particular localities, forgetting the vast geographic differences of our country, for which there are no hard and fast general rules. It is possible to do more harm than good in offering to the novice material than can be successfully used in some particular locality, yet is wholly incompatible to his, or her, own.

It may be that I speak unduly feelingly on this subject, but it is from long and hard experience. While my first rock garden inspirations came from the study of English horticultural publications, I soon found out that the material so commonly discussed and evidently so widely used was practically unobtainable in this country, so seeds were bought from English catalogues. And when the first American books on the subject were published, they were seized upon and followed faithfully. Too faithfully, as it turned out, for in none of them was there a hint as to the part climate plays in producing a satisfactory, dependable display of rock plants for different climatic zones. Now, through long years of trial and experiment, with many failures, but with an increasing list of successes, I have learned definitely much plant-material that will succeed in this Mid-Southern climate, practically all of it ignored in the charming, but highly localized rock plant literature so far developed in America.

It may be asked why the Mid-South doesn't stand on its own feet in this respect. The answer is simple. With no dependable, specific information to go on, the average gardener of the Mid-South is still in the trial and error stage of a new horticultural adventure, not yet prepared to appear in public with what is practically revolutionary matter. It takes many years of experimenting under differing conditions to come out with a definite statement which would seem to contradict all hitherto authoritative and unchallenged procedure for general rock garden experiment. And, of course, it must be borne in mind that rock gardening is still in its infancy in this country where its greatest impetus is in Northern zones. Naturally, until the prophet with experience rises up, each new Southern gardener is a pioneer in searching for amenable rock plants that can be depended upon to survive.

They can be found! It may, in fact does, take thought and courage to ignore the printed word and to embark on a practically new and, seemingly, chartless course; yet success is assuredly at the end, if there is enough determination to carry on against the present great odds. There must be elimination of old, accepted theories and patient study of new; independence in a readjustment of the mental picture in the mater of both material and construction; and, most of all, pride in even the first steps forward along pioneer lines. No apologies are needed for the discriminating use, with proper handling, of rare material (little known to the general public) that will flourish gladly through the vicissitudes of the climatic extremes to which the Upper-Middle South is subjected.—VIOLET NILES WALKER. Woodberry Forest, Va.

# THE AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

## OUR QUEST FOR AN EMBLEM

Let's keep it American. I am not an isolationist or a geo-botanist; a universal flower has been my life's hobby. BUT, the American Rock Garden Society in name, membership, purpose and activities is strictly American. Ergo, its floral emblem should be as American as the Stars and Stripes or the American Eagle. For my choice I elect to hitch my wagon to a star and much as one might wish that they possessed a typical American name, as shooting stars or dodecatheons they are as thoroughly American and universally adaptable as any flower I know.

The question has been raised as to the dodecatheon's adaptability to various conditions and situations. There can be of course, no question as to *D. meadia;* it has proven itself in every section of the country. The weight of testimony that has come to me is that the western dodecatheons take kindly to conditions in the east. I am no great shakes as a gardener but in my garden, growing under practically identical conditions and treatment, are eleven species of dodecatheons, two from the east, one from the south, one from the middle west and seven from the far west. All, with the possible exception of the giant form of *D. meadia* classed as "*D. hugeri,*" are suitable for rock garden use. You may question *D. meadia*, but a few years ago in a rock garden exhibit at the New York Flower Show, this species was featured in a rock and pool setting, and received much favorable comment.

Clean, well behaved, tractable, beautiful and of sufficient variety to make them interesting, they seem to possess all the requisites for a typical emblem.—ARTHUR H. OSMUN.

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## BOARD MEETING

Two important measures were adopted at the regular meeting of the Board of Directors, Wednesday, October 27th, 1943.

In order that we may carry on the affairs of the Society in a business-like manner, it was voted to discontinue sending the Bulletin to those members in arrears for dues six months or more; dues are payable in advance on April first of each year.

Because our Society has grown in directions which we could not foresee when the original division of the country into group-areas was made, it has been necessary to regroup the entire country; a plan for such regrouping was presented and approved by the Board. A copy of the new arrangement is being sent to each group chairman for suggestions, after which it will be passed on by the Board, and announced in the Bulletin.

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A large attendance greeted Mr. Marcel LePiniec at the regular January luncheon of the North Atlantic group where he demonstrated the building of a rock garden; it was a splendid exhibition and much appreciated by every one present.

**Have You Sent In That New Membership?**

SLIDES—

The American Rock Garden Society owns two sets of colored slides on rock garden subjects, 100 slides to the set; these are loaned to societies or clubs thru your regional Chairman, without charge except transportation and insurance.

ASK ABOUT IT—

About plant names, plant species and varieties, plant propagation and culture, rock garden construction details, sources of supply and general information pertinent to rock gardens and rock garden materials; if we do not know the answer we probably know of some one who does and we'll be glad to pass the information along.