



# News from Stonecrop Gardens

Winter 2007

## A Cure For The Winter Blues Stonecrop's Spring Under Glass

After the holidays are over, the joys of winter often pass, too. Those of us who garden eagerly await the arrival of spring, fervently reading seed catalogues, garden books and magazines. This year, Stonecrop presents our fellow gardeners with a cure for the winter blues. More colourful, more fragrant, more exotic than Fashion Week, Stonecrop's Spring Under Glass Week will transport you from the quotidian.

Stonecrop Gardens has five greenhouses containing an astonishing array of rare plants from all over the world. Many of these beauties burst into bloom when our hilltop is still covered in snow, and the garden still closed for the season. In preceding years, we have invited only Stonecrop members to enjoy this wintertime treat, but this bounty is too great not to share with one and all.

Stonecrop members will be fêted at a free, members-only preview on Saturday, March 24, 2007, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. These special guests will be offered a self-guided garden walk through the greenhouses, followed by tea and biscuits. The public is invited to come in out of the cold and stroll through paradise the following week, Monday, March 26 through Saturday March 31, when the greenhouses will be open between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Admission during this premier of Stonecrop's Spring Under Glass Week is \$5 per person.

Spring Under Glass visitors begin their excursion in the Conservatory, which is divided into several sections simulating a range of climates. The North Conservatory is sub-divided into three wings containing tropical plants, Mediterranean plants, and non-hardy evergreens such as *Camellias*. The South Conservatory houses the Australian collection where prized specimens including *Prostanthera rotundifolia* (Australian Mint Bush) and *Westringia fruticosa* (Coastal Rosemary) will be in full bloom. This South Conservatory also houses an extensive succulent collection. An abundance of flowering South African bulbs can be found throughout the entire Conservatory.

Through the nearby Potting Shed, visitors have access to the Alpine House, Tropical House, and End House. The Alpine House showcases a superb collection of choice alpine plants including *Kabschia* and encrusted saxifrages, European primulas, *Drabas*, *Lewisias*, and many other unique specimens. In addition, there is a cutting bench for propagating



A view of the Conservatory across the pond, with *Petasites japonicus var. giganteus* in the foreground.

Stonecrop's alpines. The Tropical House contains tropical potted plants, ferns, and an assortment of epiphytic orchids and bromeliads. The End House is Stonecrop's main propagation facility, where everything from seedlings to mature stock plants shares space with an enormous *Tibouchina urvilleana*.

The final greenhouse is the Pit House. This sunken treasure trove contains an array of dwarf bulbs that start to bloom in November and continue through the winter months until the end of May. The Pit House also displays collections of *Asarum*, *Cyclamen*, *Galanthus*, *Helleborus*, and *Primula* species, some of which will be blooming in late March.

Escape to springtime—if only for a few hours—at Stonecrop's Spring Under Glass Week. If you would like additional information on this event or on becoming a Stonecrop member, or would like to reserve your spot at the Members' Preview Party, please call our office at 845-265-2000. If this will be your first visit to Stonecrop, please note that winter weather can make traversing our steep driveway and irregular terrain a bit challenging.

Amy Pelletier—Staff Horticulturist

## Welcome to Stonecrop

Stonecrop Gardens, in Cold Spring, New York, occupies a rocky hilltop 1,100 ft above sea level in the picturesque highlands of the Hudson River. Now a public garden, it began in 1958 as a summer retreat when Anne and Frank Cabot built a house and started to garden.

In addition to creating a place of singular beauty, the Cabots' goal had long been to inspire fellow gardeners. With that in mind, Caroline Burgess—who trained in England at Barnsley House (the garden of Rosemary Verey), and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew—was hired as Director in 1984. Stonecrop opened to the public under her guidance in 1992. As Caroline and the Cabots share a deep commitment to education, a school of practical horticulture quickly followed, benefiting amateurs and professionals alike.

Today, Stonecrop consists of 12 acres of display gardens surrounded by over 50 acres of fields and woodlands. The extraordinary diversity of plants in the collection is matched only by the range of tone and mood created throughout the site. There are woodland and water gardens, a grass garden, raised alpine stone beds, a cliff rock garden, a systematic order bed, and an enclosed flower garden prominently featuring half-hardy plants. A conservatory and numerous specialty display houses showcase further horticultural rarities. In limited quantities, select species from the gardens are offered to the public in the form of collected seeds and propagated plants.

Stonecrop's plant collections and display gardens not only demonstrate what can be achieved by horticultural enthusiasts, but also serve as an educational resource which, together with its professional staff, constitute the foundation upon which is based the developing Stonecrop School of Professional Horticulture. Offering one and two-year courses and shorter internships that are arguably unique in the United States, the school aims to train passionate, technically adept horticulturists who understand the work of garden-making within its broad cultural context.

## Director's Notes

Dear Members and Friends,

I am delighted to welcome old friends and hopefully introduce many new friends to Stonecrop Gardens and our first newsletter.

Stonecrop Gardens began as a labour of love almost fifty years ago. It has grown from a rather simple family affair into quite an elaborate operation. Our passions for plants and gardening remain unchanged, and our goal is to share those passions with you.

Whilst we hope that all of you—near and far—can come to visit Stonecrop, our newsletter will provide a window on our ever-changing gardens, our wide-ranging plant collections, and our educational efforts, as well as offering a glimpse of what life is like on our hilltop.

Stonecrop is fortunate to have an extended family of devoted members who share and support our mission. As we aim to delight, inspire and educate more people, I would like to thank our current members for their continued support, and invite those new to our work to become a part of Stonecrop, too.

Stonecrop continues to be an exciting project for me and the times ahead look even more promising. I look forward to welcoming you to the garden.

Thank you,  
Caroline Burgess  
*Director*

## Stonecrop Gardens

### Board Of Directors Staff

Antonia F. Adezio	Caroline Burgess, <i>Director</i>
Anne P. Cabot	Steve Johnson, <i>Superintendent</i>
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Barbara Paul Robinson	Amy Pelletier, <i>Staff Horticulturist</i>
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Stonecrop Gardens	Roger Blanchard, <i>Part-time Grounds Maintenance</i>
81 Stonecrop Lane	Joanne Murphy, <i>Part-time Horticultural Assistant</i>
Cold Spring, New York 10516	Alex Prusi, <i>Part-time Horticultural Assistant</i>
845-265-2000	John Towers, <i>Part-time Horticultural Assistant</i>
www.stonecrop.org	Debbie Cashara, <i>Horticultural Volunteer</i>
garden@stonecrop.org	Katherine H. Kerin, <i>Newsletter Editor</i>

Stonecrop's mission is to uphold and demonstrate the highest standards of horticultural practice and to promote the use of such standards among amateur and professional gardeners through aesthetic displays and educational programs.



## Stonecrop School of Practical Horticulture

The Stonecrop School of Practical Horticulture is perhaps our most visionary undertaking. The structure and character of the internship—the core of our school—is modeled after Stonecrop Director Caroline Burgess's horticultural education and experiences in England. Stonecrop offers one and two-year courses as well as shorter internships. The aim is to improve the calibre of horticultural professionals, and thus the calibre of gardens both public and private, by providing an intensive horticultural training program.

The primary emphasis of the Stonecrop Internship is on practical horticulture: to know, grow, and use plants. To develop the specialized skills necessary to a professional in the field, interns work in all areas of the garden throughout the year, tending diverse collections alongside professional horticultural staff. To facilitate a broad understanding of both the art and science of garden making, hands-on work is supplemented with extensive independent study, regular field trips, and wide-ranging discourse.

Stonecrop Interns come to the school from diverse backgrounds including amateur gardening, academic horticulture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, geology, and social work. Many former Stonecrop Interns have become professional gardeners and administrators in the public and private garden sectors. Others work in commercial nurseries, or have started their own businesses incorporating garden design, installation, and maintenance. Several Interns have gone on to further their training at various universities and professional programs, including Cornell University, Longwood Gardens and the Garden Conservancy Fellowship. Still others have found careers in garden writing. The Stonecrop newsletter will feature occasional profiles on both current Interns and Stonecrop alumni, so you can look forward to meeting the Stonecrop family.

The typical internship starts in early February, and continues until just before Christmas. Interested and exceptional interns are invited to continue their studies at Stonecrop for a second year. In addition to a weekly stipend, Stonecrop Interns are provided with on-site housing in the purpose-built Gatehouse. If you or someone you know is passionate about gardening, and might be interested in applying to the Stonecrop School of Practical Horticulture, please contact our office at 845-265-2000 for more information. We welcome your inquiries.



## Frank Cabot's Stonecrop Reminiscences: The Beginnings

A gift from Anne's grandmother, Evelina Ball Perkins, in the late 1950's, Stonecrop has grown from its original 40 acres to just under 70 acres, roughly divided between rocky woodlands and open fields. It was part of a 3,000-acre tract acquired by Evelina Perkins in the 1920's that included a dairy farm originating in the 1750's, that had supplied dairy products to West Point, across the Hudson, over the years. During the Perkins tenure the property was known as Glynwood Farm. Today all but the 250-acre core has become a part of Fahnestock Park while the core, in turn, is leased to Glynwood Center, a philanthropic enterprise devoted to the preservation of farmland and open space, notably in the Hudson Valley.

After our marriage in 1949, and a stint in Boston where Anne started her first garden and acquired some alpine plants, we returned to New York and spent our weekends at Glynwood Farm, staying at her parents' house. Anne had brought her alpinines down from Boston and we made a small herb garden and a rock garden which are no longer extant. It was during this period that we became devotees of The New York Botanical Garden and were introduced to the American Rock Garden Society by Elizabeth Hall, NYBG's all-knowing and marvelous librarian. This in turn led to involvement in the Society and exposure to the aficionados and legendary horticulturists who dominated it and, slowly but surely, to a thorough exposure to alpine and rock garden plants.

As chronicled in *The Greater Perfection* (Cabot, 2001) our interest in alpinines had followed the planting of *Armeria juniperifolia* 'Bevan's Variety', a choice, sessile form of the sea thrift that is ubiquitous on the coasts of Europe and the U.K. In the first garden at Glynwood we were able to try a number of equally charming alpinines which were available from Walter Kolaga's Mayfair Nurseries in New Jersey, at the time the only source of alpinines in the Greater New York vicinity. The first plant acquired from Mayfair was *Aethionema iberideum* and it has prospered at Stonecrop to this day, some fifty years on, as a consequence holding a special place in our affections. Of course many alpinines didn't survive since we were beginners starting out on the long journey of learning how to satisfy their requirements. Fortunately there were sufficient survivors to keep us going.

In 1957, construction began on a house designed by George Hickey of Polhemus & Coffin. George Hickey designed houses with a French flavor, many of them modeled on sketches from Polhemus & Coffin's



**Clockwise from left: Frank Cabot with *Saxifraga* 'Tumbling Waters.' The Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) being planted. The tool shed and first fence where the Flower Garden now blooms.**

1926 publication—*Small French Buildings*. We had seen photographs of his houses in *House & Garden* and asked him to come up with one for our hilltop site.

The house was completed in the summer of 1958, somewhat shrunk from George Hickey's original suggestions which included a tower, embodying a servants' wing, over the garage (ultimately reappearing as the Potting Shed in 1960) and we moved in that September with a Pin Oak, given us by Anne's mother, planted in the entrance courtyard a month later, our first planting in that empty field. The next spring two Sugar Maples were planted flanking the southern end of the house and apple trees were planted around the entrance court. (The maples, alas, declined in recent years and were removed in 2005—the Pin Oak is hale and hearty.)

At the outset the house was very much a bump on a log in its hilltop field and it wasn't until June, 1959 that a roughly 100' square area to the south of the house was enclosed by an eight-foot open fence with a widely-spaced diagonal lattice for a garden with two little corner houses in the French style to anchor the space.

With Montagu Free's *All About The Perennial Garden* in hand we established three parallel linear beds for perennials along with a vegetable garden enclosed by a low fence within the enclosed area, choosing to emulate the diagonal cross-hatching of the perimeter fence for the pattern of the vegetable beds and the paths between them. As all these beds were being dug we found that the soil was so rocky that after the painstaking work of screening the rocks there was very little soil left. As a consequence we elected to remove everything in the beds for a depth of at least two feet and replace it with truckloads of good quality top soil. At the time we were searching for a name for the place and, inevitably, 'Stonecrop' came to mind.

—Francis H. Cabot



# 2007

# SCHEDULE



The *Poughkeepsie Journal* directed readers to “drop everything you are doing and make plans to visit this place!”

## March 24

Members' Preview Party: Spring Under Glass, 12 p.m.–4 p.m.\*

Seed-Sowing Seminar  
9 a.m.–12 p.m., \$40/\$30 member

## March 26–31

Spring Under Glass Week—open to the public

## April 2

Stonecrop Opens for the Season

## April 7 & 21

Open Saturdays

## April 17

Lecture by Francis H. Cabot, “*Les Quatres Vents: The Maturation of a Garden.*” 10:30 a.m., Cunneen–Hackett Arts Center Theater, 12 Vassar Street, Poughkeepsie, NY. Sponsored by the Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties. Proceeds will be shared with Stonecrop Gardens. Tickets available at the door for \$10.

## April 20

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## April 21

Remington's 21st Birthday. Celebrate with our American Quarter Horse.

## April 28

Plant Sale with Alpines Mont Echo and Wrightman Alpines

## April 29

Garden Conservancy Open Day

## May 5 & 19

Open Saturdays

## May 12

Spring Bulb Walk, Wine & Cheese, 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., \$25/\$20 member

## May 13

Garden Conservancy Open Day

## May 18

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## June 2 & 16

Open Saturdays

## June 10

Garden Conservancy Open Day

## June 15

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## July 7 & 21

Open Saturdays

## July 15

Garden Conservancy Open Day

## July 20

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## July 21

Terrarium Workshop and Fern Walk, 9 a.m.–12 p.m., \$40/\$30 member

# OF EVENTS

Visit [www.stonecrop.org](http://www.stonecrop.org) for a Bloom Calendar at Stonecrop Gardens



## **August 4 & 18**

Open Saturdays

## **August 12**

Garden Conservancy Open Day

## **August 17**

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## **September 1 & 15**

Open Saturdays

## **September 8**

Annual Members' Garden Party,  
1 p.m.–5 p.m.\*

## **September 21**

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## **September 23**

Garden Conservancy Open Day

## **October 6 & 20**

Open Saturdays

## **October 19**

Evening Garden Walk, 5 p.m.–dusk

## **October 20 & 21**

Trough-Making Workshop,  
9 a.m.–12 p.m. each day,  
\$80/\$60 member

## **October 31**

Stonecrop Closes for the Season

*\* denotes events open only to  
Stonecrop members.*

Please call our office at 845-265-2000 for additional information or to make a reservation for a workshop or event. Unless otherwise noted, admission is \$5 with no charge to Stonecrop members.



# Stonecrop Gardens

Regular hours are Monday–Friday, and the first and third Saturdays of the month, from 10 a.m.–5 p.m. • [www.stonecrop.org](http://www.stonecrop.org)

# GARDEN NOTES



## Record Number of Garden Visitors

2006 saw a record 22% increase in the number of visitors who came to Stonecrop. Overall visitation surged, even with a slight decline in the number of organized groups who toured the gardens. While careful plans are underway to further increase visitation in 2007, the successes in 2006 can be credited to a steadily growing public awareness of the gardens. As this awareness grows, media coverage is increasing. Last year, Stonecrop was included several times in *Garden Design Magazine*, as well as the *Garden Club of America Bulletin*, and a critically acclaimed new book, the *Oxford Companion to the Garden*, edited by Patrick Taylor. The local and regional press seemed to have discovered Stonecrop in 2006, with magazine and newspaper features up and down the Hudson Valley. The *Poughkeepsie Journal* directed readers to “drop everything you are doing and make plans to visit this place!” We hope you will take their advice.

**The gardens are open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, and the first and third Saturdays of the month, from April through October. Admission is \$5 per person with no charge to Stonecrop members.**

## 2006 Members' Garden Party

On September 9, 2006—a glorious fall day—Stonecrop was flooded with a record number of 215 guests for the annual Members' Garden Party. In true Stonecrop fashion, the afternoon commenced with a variety of playful contests. Guests were asked to determine the combined weight of several squashes; the number of seeds in a jar; and the identity of several mysterious items concealed in a box. New contests included “Spot the Gnome,” and a matching game based on a vintage garden book. Prizes ranged from Caroline Burgess's acclaimed *Cornus mas* jam, to books, and a guided group tour of Stonecrop.

The main attraction at the Garden Party is always the garden walk. Just once each year, for a week or two, over 500 plants are labeled and keyed to a detailed plant list for guests to annotate and take home. Because the enclosed Flower Garden at Stonecrop incorporates so many half-hardy plants, early September is a dazzling moment, when many of these long-season beauties truly come into their own. A relatively new garden feature—the Systematic Order Beds, where plants are displayed by botanical family—has become another autumn highlight.

An English tea was served in the Conservatory, where staff and intern research projects, prepared over the preceding months, were displayed. Some of the topics included an A-Z of annuals; “Design Elements: Old, New, and at Stonecrop;” a dichotomous key; types of compost used at Stonecrop; carnivorous plants; and the medicinal value of weeds.

The afternoon ended with the ever-popular raffle. 75 enviable prizes ranged from choice plant collections and individual specimens, to hand-made alpine troughs. Just a few of the many plant collections raffled off—allowing winners to recreate a bit of Stonecrop at home—included a rock garden fern collection; a flower garden aster collection; an unusual alpine collection; a native shrub collection; and an indoor succulent collection. Great garden books; potting soil, bamboo stakes, and compost; as well as home-baked items from Stonecrop's staff rounded out the offerings.

The Members' Garden Party is the most highly

anticipated event of the year at Stonecrop, and we were delighted that the 2006 celebration was an unequivocal success. We look forward to seeing even more of you at the Garden Party this fall on September 8th!

## Stonecrop Intern Profile: Rob Gimpel

Rob Gimpel is a Senior Intern at Stonecrop this year. After nine years of traveling around the country in the field of environmental geology, Rob came to Stonecrop “hoping to learn the gardening trade.” With Rob's background in geology, he has an innate love and unusually deep understanding of alpinism, rock gardening, and rockwork, which are what brought him to Stonecrop and to professional horticulture. Rob

remembers being awestruck on his first visit to Cold Spring, and determined to make a career change. He also has a passion for the eccentrics of the plant world: all manner of carnivorous plants, succulents, alpinism, and dwarf conifers. Rob is the first to admit that he “sometimes has a hard time noticing plants that are more than six inches tall.” But the many other wonders at Stonecrop are having an effect. Even this confirmed alpine devotee admits to a rapidly growing appreciation for hardy perennials, trees, and shrubs.

Since coming to Stonecrop, Rob has still managed to indulge his own hobbies. He has created a carnivorous plant collection, expanded Stonecrop's succulent collection, and fashioned some rockwork, including several raised slab gardens. He has also brewed beer using Stonecrop-grown hops (*Humulus lupulus* ‘Cascade’), which his colleagues gave high marks. Aside from gardening, Rob's hobbies include politics, music, birding, photography, and homebrewing.





## Stonecrop's Index Seminum

Seed collecting is a vibrant and valuable part of our work at Stonecrop. Stonecrop staff and interns collect seeds from hundreds of the choicest plants grown in the garden. Whilst much of the seed is used at Stonecrop itself, ensuring the continuity and purity of our own plant collections, limited quantities of over 600 varieties are offered to other gardeners each year, thereby disseminating rare and interesting seeds to the public. Our seed catalogue, or *Index Seminum*, is a carefully annotated description of each item, which many long-time Stonecrop members keep and use as trusted horticultural references.

This encyclopedic list of plant names and descriptions can seem somewhat daunting. However, the *Index Seminum* is divided into sections based upon both the type of plants offered and their broad cultural requirements. The categories are:

- Annuals for Sun
- Perennials for Sun
- Bulbs
- Shrubs and Vines
- Pots/Garden (overwinter indoors)
- Ornamental Grasses
- Woodland
- Alpines and Rock Garden
- Wildflowers

There are items on the *Index Seminum* that are more difficult to start from seed, such as shrubs and vines. However, the majority of seeds can be successfully germinated by the novice grower with comparative ease by following the sowing instructions that accompany every plant description.

These detailed descriptions are what make the *Index Seminum* such a valuable resource. This is no mere plant directory. Each description includes flower colour, bloom time, foliage characteristics, overall height, cultural requirements, and country of origin. Botanical names are checked for accurate nomenclature and common names provided where available. Planting suggestions, interesting botanical facts and field observations are also included. Suffice to say that all this information results in quite a substantial publication; last year's *Index Seminum* ran to 43 pages!

In the past, access to Stonecrop's seeds and *Index Seminum* was a privilege reserved for members, but we have decided to open our offerings to the public. The *Index Seminum*, averaging over 40 pages long, is available upon request for \$5, and at no charge to Stonecrop members. It can also be downloaded directly from the Stonecrop website ([www.stonecrop.org](http://www.stonecrop.org)). Seed packets from the *Index Seminum* are \$2 each, and \$1 for members. Seeds from the *Index Rarium*, featuring Stonecrop's most special and elusive varieties, are \$3 per packet, and \$2 for members. Postage on all orders within the continental U.S. is \$5 via Priority Mail. Please note that Stonecrop Gardens is not in the commercial seed business. Quantities are limited, and orders are filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Whilst many of the seeds on offer are garden staples and come from well-established plantings that we harvest year after year, the *Index* itself is in constant revision. Every year new plants are added as we expand our plant collection and mature plantings begin to produce reliable seed crops. Occasionally plants fail to produce viable seed or are too ephemeral to catch ripening, and must be omitted from the list for that year. Even with the best of intentions, we often cannot get to every ripening seed in the 12 or more acres of gardens.

The *Index Seminum* is typically published in February each year and the seed orders start arriving soon afterwards. It is always best to place your order early as many seeds do go quickly or are only available in limited quantities. Orders are filled on a first come, first serve basis, so it is advantageous to list plenty of substitutions, just in case.

Although it may seem difficult to think about planning the gardening year ahead whilst still in the midst of winter, we invite all of you to Stonecrop's Spring Under Glass Week, March 26-31, 2007, with a Preview Party on March 24<sup>th</sup> for Stonecrop members. Here you will not only get an early taste of spring, but you will also find answers to any questions you might have about your seed order and advice about seed sowing in general.

We hope that you enjoy our *Index Seminum* as much as we do. The entire process is incredibly fascinating; from growing the plants, to collecting and cleaning the seed, and finally compiling the list. The ultimate reward is the thrill of growing something rare and exciting from seed, and incorporating it into your garden.

—Michael Hagen, Staff Horticulturist

## Seeding Around Scattering, Shaking and the Joys of Direct Sowing

No time for starting plants from seeds? No space for heat mats and grow lights in the home? Not to worry. There are many annual and biennial flowers that actually prefer to be sown directly into the garden. Whilst there is a small amount of soil preparation required in the garden bed when direct sowing for the first time, once established and allowed to go to seed these "self-sowers" will provide years of reliable colour in the garden and can re-appear as reliably as most perennials.

At Stonecrop, we rely heavily on these steady performers to provide blocks of colour and interest in between the early spring bulbs and the lush exuberance of high summer. Reliable self-sowing annuals such as "Tree Spinach" (*Chenopodium giganteum*), "White Himalayan Balsam" (*Impatiens glandulifera* 'Alba') and "Shiso" (*Perilla frutescens*) are all allowed to fill out areas of the Flower Garden until we are ready to plant out our annuals, tender perennials, and tropicals. The trick to ensuring a yearly display is allowing the flower heads to set ripe seed rather than dead-heading the spent flowers as soon as the bloom is over. Many of these annuals such as "Opium Poppy" (*Papaver somniferum*), "Love-in-a-Mist" (*Nigella damascena*), and "Shoo-Fly Plant" (*Nicandra physalodes*) all have attractive, persistent seed heads in their own right. Just give them a quick shake into the garden bed when dry and wait until spring. With any luck, all you will have to do is a little judicious thinning out if the seedlings have germinated too thickly.

There are also many attractive biennials that can add drama and interest to the garden year after year if allowed to "seed around": "Korean Angelica" (*Angelica gigas*), "Teasel" (*Dipsacus fullonum*), and "Chinese Motherwort" (*Leonurus sibiricus*). The key is not to weed out the first year's seedlings. Give them a year to grow on in the garden and they will reach over six feet in height in the second year, forming tall and striking plants when in full bloom. You can also encourage biennials in less than ideal conditions where traditional annuals will not thrive. For the woodland garden, try "Garden Forget-me-not" (*Myosotis sylvatica*), "Foxglove" (*Digitalis purpurea*), and "Honesty" (*Lunaria annua*). Even in dry or rocky areas, such as our Gravel Garden, choice biennials such as "Sea Holly" (*Eryngium tripartitum*), "Ivory Thistle" (*Ptilostemon after*), and "Rusty Foxglove" (*Digitalis ferruginea* 'Gigantea') return reliably if not cut back after flowering.

There are some wonderful garden plants that, for a variety of reasons, are either difficult to germinate reliably under glass or do not transplant well, and are best encouraged to self-sow "in situ." These would include such great architectural plants as "Kiss-Me-Over-The-Garden-Gate" (*Polygonum orientale*), "Scotch Thistle" (*Onopordum acanthium*), and "Angel's Trumpet" (*Datura innoxia*).

If you want to fill seasonal or spatial gaps in the garden bed with reliable colour, structure and texture, head outside with seeds in hand and give these easy and economical wonders a shake.

—Michael Hagen, Staff Horticulturist



# Lachenalia aloides

COMMON NAME: Cape Cowslip  
FAMILY: Hyacinthaceae  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: South Africa

We are all familiar with the popular Paperwhites that bloom on the windowsills of many homes throughout the winter. Most, however, are unaware of a genus of plants that is just as easy to grow and even more spectacular. *Lachenalia* species can bring their exotic look to your house, and there are many to choose from.

*Lachenalia* was named in 1784 for Werner de la Chenal, a professor of botany in Basel, Switzerland. *Lachenalias* are commonly called Cape cowslips because of their superficial resemblance to certain members of the genus *Primula*. *Lachenalias* originate from the southwestern corner of South Africa, specifically the Cape Floral Kingdom, one of the richest botanical regions of the world. South African plants from this area are found in nutrient-poor, rocky soils and have adapted to the harsh climate of most of the yearly rainfall in the winter and summers of drought. For this reason, the cultivation of *Lachenalias* as winter-flowering houseplants becomes fairly easy, even though



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*Icones plantarum rariorum, editae Nicolao Josepho Jacquin. Author(s): Jacquin, Nikolaus Joseph, Freiherr von*

they appear to be a challenge due to their scarcity in the trade.

*Lachenalia aloides* is the most commonly cultivated species and can be acquired from specialty bulb growers. *L. aloides* is very colorful both in foliage and flower. The leaves are marked with dramatic brown to purple spots, and from the richly variegated 10-inch stalk hang bright yellow tubular flowers accented with red and green. The flowers appear in early winter and can last up to 4 to 6 weeks. The cultivar *Lachenalia aloides* 'Pearsonii' has larger orange flowers with a red edge. *Lachenalia viridiflora* is another popular favorite with its incredible turquoise blue/green flowers. It is the first *Lachenalia* to bloom and will appear usually around Thanksgiving.



*Lachenalia aloides* and other species should be planted in late August to early September in pots. They grow best in a well-drained, sandy medium and should be watered after potting and then not again until the leaves appear. During their flowering season, too much water will quickly rot the bulbs; however if the bulbs dry out completely, this could trigger dormancy. *Lachenalias* prefer a sunny location, at temperatures of 50°F to 60°F. As the season progresses and the temperatures rise, the leaves will begin to yellow and wilt. Water should then be slowly tapered until the leaves are completely yellow and dormant. (If there is any green in the leaves, make sure to water them.) During their dry, dormant period (our summer), the containers can be moved to a dry location. *Lachenalias* benefit from an annual repot in August. We cannot always manage to repot our indoor bulb collection, and so we feed with a liquid fertilizer, high in phosphorus during the bulb's growing season.

We encourage you to give these long-lasting, floriferous, and rewarding Cape bulbs a try.

—Amy Pelletier, Staff Horticulturist

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