

Potty about Primroses

Anne Webster

At Ashbrook Nursery we are just 'Potty about Primroses'. We don't claim to be 'experts', but we are certainly enthusiastic about these lovely plants which delight us from autumn through to summer.

I suppose it all started years ago when my husband Joe & I started selling surplus plants and cut flowers from our garden to local florists. The first plants we ever sold that weren't 'bedding plants' were some beautiful, nameless, double white Primulas- successive division of these over the years had given us quite a collection of what we now know are Primula 'Petticoat'. They were so popular that we started collecting differing varieties, one of which was a lilac sport of 'Petticoat' which must have arisen in our garden but which we have since seen elsewhere listed under the remarkable name of 'Quaker's Bonnet'!

P. 'Petticoat'



P. 'Quaker's Bonnet'



In recent years, these lovely old double Primulas have perhaps been superseded by the 'Belarina' double Primroses which are very vigorous and flower for months on end.

Primula Belarina 'Valentine'



Primula Belarina 'Blue Sapphire'



Primula 'Primlet'

As the reproductive parts of double flowered varieties have become petaloid, and therefore non-functional, they must be propagated by division or tissue culture. However 'semi-double' Primulas can now be raised from seed – the first of these were the Primlets, but in recent years there has been quite a development of varieties, Romance, Cupid, Sweetheart, Passion, Amore.... Hmmm, I think the people who named these varieties have seen a marketing opportunity – they are generally in full bloom around and about Valentine's Day!



Romance



Cupid



Passion



The double varieties are certainly 'showy' but nothing can be more beautiful than a simple bank of *Primula vulgaris* or a meadow of cowslips – *Primula veris*.

P. vulgaris



P.veris



There are many species of Primula and they do are quite 'promiscuous' giving rise to innumerable variations.

There ought to be a name for people who collect Primulas just as Snowdrop enthusiasts are called Galanthophiles. As with Postage stamps, the breadth and scope of one's collection would be boundless!

We love the little creeping ones, many of which have evolved from *P. juliae* or *P. wanda*

P. 'Snow White' (*juliae*)



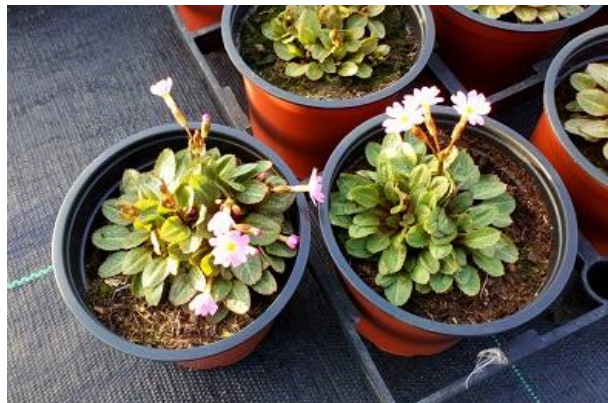
P. 'Hall Barn Blue' (*wanda*)



P. juliae



P. 'Johanna' (*P. rosea* x *P. warschenewskiana*)



***P. x pubescens* 'Clarence Elliot' (*allionii* x *marginata*)**



***P. x pubescens* Mrs J.H. Wilson**



In contrast to these are the tall flowering 'Candelabra Primulas' – *beesiana*, *bulleyana*, *florindae* many of which are happy in moist soil and look well in a woodland setting or adjacent to a pond, *P. florindae* being beautifully fragrant. These also hybridise readily, and it can be quite difficult to maintain distinct colours when drifts are planted.

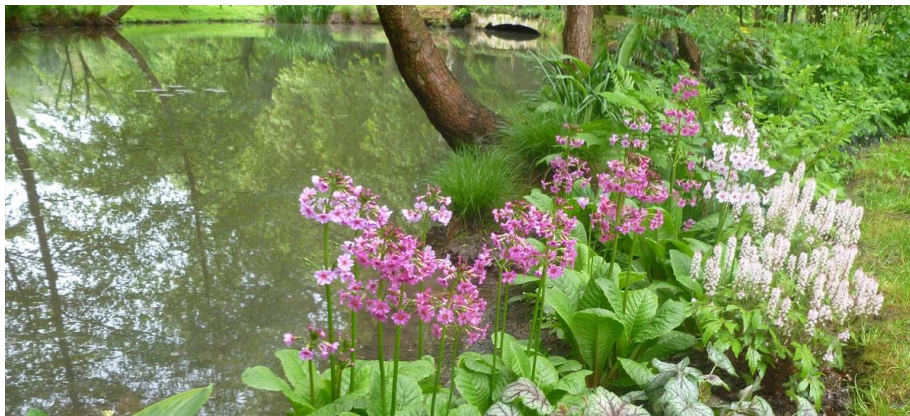
P. beesiana



P. florindae



P. bulleyana



P. denticulata

I could enthuse forever about 'species Primroses'

P. denticulata, the 'Drumstick Primulas' (I wonder if these are known as 'Kirrie Dumplings' beyond Angus?) the fragrant Auriculas (commonly known as 'Dusty Millers' as in many varieties the foliage is 'dusted' with farina) and the ever-popular *P. viallii*



P.auricula



P.vialii



However, at Ashbrook we are not 'snobby' about our Primroses. As well as the Species beloved by purists we love all the hybrids produced by commercial breeders. I personally have always preferred the taller growing Polyanthus over the Primroses and am delighted that the breeders seem now to have turned their attention to them. For years the bright colours of the classic 'Crescendo' Polyanthus were all that was available but now we have the startling 'Fire Dragon' and the subtle range of the 'Stella' polyanthus series.

Polyanthus 'Crescendo'



Polyanthus 'Stella'



Polanthus 'Fire Dragon'

The breeders have given us Primroses which flower just about all year round – at Ashbrook we use them in planters from Harvest Festival to Christmas, for Valentines Day , for Mother’s Day and Easter – however early or late they may be. There is such a range of colour and form among the Primroses that there will always be one ‘just right’ to bring a splash of colour to any planting combination.

If you too are interested in Primulas, then why not join the Scottish Auricula & Primula Society - <https://www.scotaps.com/>



