From the President

With some surprise I find myself installed as president of the Pacific Bulb Society; I thought I was volunteering to be a director on the Board. But I’ll try to do my best to serve this unusual, fascinating group. The PBS is very nearly a “virtual” organization now, existing in the non-digital world as a bank account for the dues, a quarterly print newsletter, and the Bulb Exchange (BX). The Internet has allowed it to become international and well-populated quite quickly, and this may be the direction that all avocational societies will eventually take.

Yet all of us are here, if there is a “here” here, because we grow material plants and travel in the geographical world to study and photograph them. We’re sharing our plants currently through the BX, and we’ll be discussing its structure, particularly as it is affected by recently tightened regulations governing the importation of plant material into the United States. In dealing with this we have the benefit of the experience of the North American Rock Garden Society, which already has procedures in place to conform to USDA/APHIS requirements. We also have to be ready for the possible imposition of a “white list” (a list of species permitted to be imported, to which additions must be made through a difficult bureaucratic process) in the USA; again, other societies and botanic gardens are preparing to deal with this new constraint by assembling lists of species already present in the country. Let us trust that the federal government will have more serious things to do in the next few years than forbidding the entrance of Placea seeds.

In what other ways should the PBS step from the virtual to the traditional world of plant societies? Small and widely diffused, our membership is not going to form local chapters, nor is it likely that we will hold annual meetings. We would like to see whom we’re corresponding with, though. One way to do this would be to hold parasessions at meetings hosted by larger groups such as NARGS, the Hardy Plant Society, or one of the bigger geophyte-oriented societies such as the Iris or Daffodil society. I’ve made room in the schedule of the NARGS Western Winter Study Weekend for a social gathering of PBS members in attendance, and a bulb lecture is included in the program, but we could do something more formal in future years.

Another step would involve group travel. I plan trips to see my favorite kinds of plants in the wild, and so do many of you. Some professional nature tour companies, such as Greentours in the UK, already offer bulb-heavy itineraries such as the ones I described in my article on fall bulbs in Greece and Turkey in a recent Bulb Garden issue. Greentours now handles the Alpine Gar-
A Daffy Case of Triskaidekaphobia* (Part 2)

Art Wolk

This is an excerpt from Art’s book Bulb Forcing for Beginners and the Seriously Smitten, which will be published in 2009. Part 1 appeared in the winter edition, ending with the realization that a first-ever fire on the Benjamin Franklin Bridge would make the trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show much longer than Art had planned as his deadline loomed ominously close. — Ed.

But then I noticed something: the typists hadn’t included division designations on our placard. Not surprisingly, the judges’ comments were, “A brilliant floricultural achievement. This display would have been more educational if daffodil division information had been included.”

I was livid! But there was nothing to be done; the judges’ decisions were final. Then something incredible happened: I saw world-renowned bulb expert Brent Heath taking photographs of our display. When we met, he told me that it was the best potted-daffodil display of the thirteen divisions he’d ever seen.

His remarks were worth twenty blue ribbons, and I was instantly cured of triskaidekaphobia. Looking back now, I have no reason to be disappointed. Simply put, I could not have done a better job of forcing bulbs.

After exhibiting for twenty years, I was finally starting to take a broader view. I had won many awards that gave me feelings of accomplishment, but I realized there was something else just as important going on. While everyone else endures winter’s wrath, bulb forcers surround themselves with gorgeous flowers. All the beauty and aroma, exploding at us in an ever-increasing sensual display, is too much for one person to hoard. So we bring our entries to the Philadelphia Flower Show and share our stolen spring with you.

Just a few words of warning: when you visit competitive flower shows, be sure to keep your distance from exhibitors like me moving around like hummingbirds with potted bulbs under our wings. And, if it is me you spot, please move away. You don’t want to be a victim of my odd-year, horrific-horticultural disasters.

Just stand back and laugh from afar.

* Triskaidekaphobia is fear of the number thirteen.
Penstemons Need Parasols

Ginny Moffitt

This article is reprinted from the American Penstemon Society newsletter with permission of the author. Ginny grows Penstemons and other interesting plants in rainy Sherwood, Oregon, zone 8b. Her technique for protecting troughs and containers from winter rains will be useful for some PBS members who want to control moisture for dry-land bulbs that are planted outside. —Ed.

If your species penstemons aren’t surviving the winter, don’t blame the cold and snow. It is often because of frequent rain and humidity, especially for areas of the western edge of the Pacific Northwest and the southern states. I’ve found that by supplying Plexiglass (clear, semi-rigid plastic) covers over either troughs or in-ground plants from November to April, the survival rate really climbs. Another advantage is that the heat-sink effect in spring brings on buds in a hurry.

A member of our Columbia-Willamette chapter of NARGS, Rick Wagner, showed this effective way of stabilizing the covers during a talk about troughs. No more wire, bamboo or wooden stakes to hold my covers now! The initial purchase averages about $10 per trough, but will last many years, looking neat and staying put through windstorms.

You’ll need four ‘threaded’ rods (used for electrical work), which come in 1’, 2’ and 3’ lengths. I use the 2’ and push them as deeply as possible into the soil. Buy the plexiglass where glass and plastic pieces are sold. A plastics company might have the best prices. An 18” x 24” piece sells for $6.79 at Home Depot, with larger sizes available…the best price I’ve found. If you’ve grouped dry-land plants in the ground, a bigger piece might cover the lot. Now just add eight washers and eight nuts. Four of the nuts could be the rounded end nuts that look nicer. To make the holes, you’ll need a drill that won’t break plastic. A wood-burning tool, often found at craft stores, also works.

Installation: Push the four rods into the corners of the pot or trough. Place the plastic sheet on top of them and draw circles where they touch. Drill or burn the four holes a bit larger than the rod. Screw on four nuts about ½” (1.5cm) down the rod; add four washers which will protect the plastic from stress-cracks. Seat the plastic; add washers, then the last four nuts and you are done!

I cover all penstemons from the Rocky Mountains, and the south-western U.S. with the exception of P. pinifolius and barbatus, which are more rain tolerant. These species and many others are also found in Mexico, where winter must rarely bring snow. Thus, they’ve survived by tolerating a damp winter. Other rain-tolerant Mexican pents are P. kunthii, campanulatus and hidalgensis. My lovely, lavender-violet P. hidalgensis is still blooming on a chilly, rainy, foggy November 25 as I write this! More importantly, I can expect to see it hale and hearty in the spring and it sometimes reseeds itself in the beds. Using this method, I successfully grow some cacti, Raoulia australis (vegetable sheep) from New Zealand, and hardy succulents.

From the President (cont’d)

(continued from page one) den Society’s tours, and probably would be happy to arrange a special itinerary somewhere for PBS members. Chileflora arranges special-interest natural history tours in South America. Smaller groups of PBS members might also want to make private arrangements to fly somewhere great, rent a car, and see what there is to see.

In the meantime, our Membership Directory lists many gardens that are open to visitors. Take it with you when you travel, and arrange to visit your on-line colleagues face to face – if you can tear your gaze away from the flowers.
—Jane McGary janemcgary@earthlink.net
On the Hunt: *Calochortus* and Wildflowers in Central Mexico

Mary E. Gerritsen

Mary E. Gerritsen, Ph.D., a cell biologist and pharmacologist, works in the biotechnology industry in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has many publications in medical journals and textbooks, but in recent years her interest in gardening, orchids, and wildflower photography has taken over the rest of her life! *With Ron Parsons, Mary has written two books: Calochortus: Mariposa Lilies and their Relatives (2007, Timber Press), and Masdevallias: Gems of the Orchid World (2005, Timber Press). Mary and Ron are currently working on a third book on miniature orchids.*

A few years ago, my friend and co-author, Ron Parsons, convinced me that we should write a book on his favorite genus of wildflowers, *Calochortus*. Ron has thousands of incredible photographs that he has taken over the last twenty years, and he is very knowledgeable about the taxonomy (including species variation) and the habitat of the U.S. species. After several evenings of slide shows I was hooked! So enchanted was I with these wild beauties of western North America that I joined Ron in his mission to photograph all of the species, subspecies and varieties *in situ*.

For the last few years, we have spent at least one day, often two or three, of nearly every week from mid-March until late-July photographing the species that occur in the US, and thus far I have accompanied him on trips to innumerable sites in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Arizona.

As part of the research for the *Calochortus* book, we contacted Professor Aarón Rodríguez of the University of Guadalajara, an expert on petaloid monocots (excluding orchids), who specialized in *Tigridia* and *Echeandia* (which often are found in the same habitat as *Calochortus*). He was kind enough to send us photographs for our book of some of the Mexican species growing in their native habitat, and made the “mistake” of inviting us down there to see some of them. The rainy season in Central Mexico begins in May and ends in September-October, and the peak season for many of the wildflowers is September.

For the last three years in September, Ron and I have traveled to Mexico to set out on multi-day botanical expeditions (ranging from five to sixteen days) with our friend and colleague Aarón. The variety of plants we photographed was truly amazing... dahlias, cosmos, marigolds, zinnias, ipomaeas, terrestrial orchids, gesneriads, cacti and succulents, a few cycads, palms, and of course, many bulb species.

On our first (admittedly “Calochortocentric”) tour, we made day trips within the state of Jalisco, and were able to find *Calochortus hartwegii*, *C. spatulatus*, *C. fuscus*, *C. ownbeyi* (ined.) and *C. purpureus*, as well as a possible new species that is still being evaluated. (See next page.)

This just whetted our appetite, though, and the next year we went back for more. On this highly successful 16 day southern loop, we traveled through Jalisco, Michoacan, Estado de Mexico, Morelos, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tlazcala, Hidalgo, Queretaro (continued from page four)
San Luis Potosi, and Guanajuato — roughly 2,600 miles in total. Interestingly enough, we never found more than one species in an area except for *C. spatulatus* with *C. venustulus*, with no sign of any hybrids.

We photographed *Calochortus venustulus*, *C. spatulatus*, *C. purpureus*, *C. pringlei*, *C. cernuus*, *C. nigrescens*, *C. balsensis*, *C. mendozeae*, *C. exilis*, *C. fuscus*, and *C. barbatus*.

(continued next page)
We found several species of tigridia (Tigridia tepoxtlana, T. meleagris, T. multiflora, T. matudae and T. bicolor), several Echeandea species, a few species of Manfreda (and other Agavaceae such as Agave, Prochnyanthes, Polianthes, etc.), the stunning Cardiostigma mexicana (Iridaceae), Bomarea hirtella (Alstroemariaceae), entire hillsides of Dahlia coc-cinea (Asteraceae), meadows of Millia biflora (Amaryllidaceae), and roadside verges decorated with Nemastylis tenuis (Iridaceae), Calochortus, Tagetes, Zinnia, terrestrial orchid species (Habenaria, Bletia, Dichromanthus, Malaxis, Liparis, and even Cypripedium irapeanum!), many cacti, Pinguicula (commonly called Butterworts, carnivorous plants in the Lentibulaceae) and Ipomaea species.

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Animals in the Garden

Robin Hansen

Robin gardens in North Bend, Oregon just east of the Pacific Ocean on a property sheltered by dunes and conifers (slightly colder and hotter than USDA zone 9). She grows and sells Cyclamen and a few other Oregon native plants. To ask questions or request her plant list, send an E-mail to robin@hansennursery.com. — Ed.

As a beginning gardener, the concept of animals as a problem in the garden was non-existent. It was quite some time before I became aware, little by little, that as long as I gardened there would be stories to tell.

Each time there was an incident, it had a new twist. It began with the corn stalks that mysteriously came to be lying on the ground — that is to say, no longer upright and growing but still quite green, their demise having occurred quite recently. This happened in a garden with a six-foot tall fence, gates closed, in a small town. The perpetrator was none other than my Sheltie! One day, I discovered him in the act of pulling down a cornstalk and chewing on the corn cob.

This was followed by the very cold (12 degrees) week one winter when I had covered a 30-foot by 30-foot area of flats full of potted hardy cyclamen with floating row cloth and then plastic hours before the temperatures dropped drastically and snow fell. When I uncovered the flats and saw the state of various and random 4-inch pots, I grew more and more puzzled. Something had emptied some of them, or partially emptied them, and as I continued to investigate, I found a handful of pots full of tiny, half-eaten tubers. One bite here, two bites there, and then more tubers were piled in a pot. In one pot alone, I counted something like 40 tubers. Suddenly as I was checking more pots, a small gray mouse erupted from under a flat. Yes, my jaw actually dropped, and it has been flapping ever since.

The next incident occurred in a glasshouse without a door and involved a Scilla verna in full and glorious flower. This was not, of course, the only casualty of this painful episode, only the most upsetting. I’m not sure what prompted me to empty this pot — perhaps the leaves laying lax on the surface when they should have been upright. I found the leaves and the fine roots, but there was no bulb. As to how the creature decided what was tasty and what was not, I’ll never know, but at least eight other pots suffered the same fate. The culprit was never determined, let alone caught.

Cats naturally leave deposits here and there, but we expect them, unpleasant as they may be. If those are our own cats, we shrug and acknowledge that their doings are part of having them, prevention being mostly a wasted effort. But I’m growing very tired of which-ever cat it is that will not leave my germander alone. What is it about germander (Teucrium chamaedrys)? It’s not especially fragrant that I can tell, but every year without fail, I find it mutilated, branches broken into bits and one or two viable branches left. Every year I put it up on the bench, prune it, fertilize, and get it growing again… just in time for a cat to mutilate it again.

Dogs, ah, dogs — such wonderful, loving creatures! Such excellent hiking companions, camp bed warmers, early warning systems, protectors of property — and such diggers! And general all-round rascals who will not recognize flower-beds as decorative art, not to be laid on, trod on or chewed up. Such happy innocents, trailblazers all, who make their paths on top of the newly planted Kinnikinnick, hardy geraniums, the clematis finally planted after 12 years of being carried from place to place...

The bear was the latest, but surely not the last, animal to thumb its nose at my efforts. Well, I knew bears were all around us. After all, we live on the edge of the Elliott State Forest in a sparsely populated area of the county. There are no nearby farms, just dunes and forested hills reaching into the Coast Range. He (or she) had the nerve to show up one morning about 2 a.m., and dump the garbage can (empty) which awakened the dogs who told me that I needed to “Get up! Get up! Hurry!” I rolled over in bed, told them it was nothing, please shut up. I went back to sleep. That morning as I was walking through the nursery yard on a path a foot out from the south side of the big greenhouse, I nearly stepped on a large pile of black… something.

I think I’d rather not know what the next animal incident will be.
Board of Directors Meeting, February 2009

The PBS Board of Directors convened via teleconference on February 15, 2009 with Jane McGary leading her first meeting as President. Thank you, Jane!

We are fortunate to have officers, directors and a number of members who are knowledgeable about with the small seed lot regulations of APHIS under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and can rely on numerous resources to ensure that PBS continues to comply with regulations. Our Vice President Paul Machado consulted with USDA APHIS Director Arnold Chance and was told that a Phytosanitary Certificate is not needed if rules are followed, and that if a seed lot arrives at your postal address, official protocol is to contact your regional APHIS inspection office for inspection.

Since Jane has worked closely with Joyce Fingerut, NARGS’ Government Liaison, who spearheaded their small seedlot program, we feel we have the best resource possible. As a reminder, non-U.S. donors are requested to contact the BX Director to get instructions for sending seeds to the U.S. The Board will continue to study this issue.

The board approved the annual purchase of seed as necessary to supplement the BX during the periodic winter slump in BX activity, so be on the lookout for interesting BX offerings. Any suggestion of seed sources should be sent to the Director, Dell Sherk.

If any of you has a large BX credit, here’s a deal for you. The board decided that when a member’s BX credit reaches the $20 mark, the credit can be exchanged for a membership. However, in the interest of limiting Dell’s record keeping, it will be up to you to make the request to our Membership Director, Pat Colville.

As part of our ongoing interest in luring new members, Jennifer Hildebrand suggested we include a BX Gift Coupon ($5) in the welcome packet, an idea we all embraced. Jane pointed out that plant societies not having regular in-person meetings seem to be losing members and that PBS needs to stress attracting people because we’re still relatively new. We talked about the possibility of scheduling overlapping meetings with other plant groups; an example of how this might work occurred recently at the NARGS Winter Study Weekend, where a number of us met in a special PBS get together. Suggestions for attracting new members are welcome so please contact any board member with yours.

Finally, we spent a lot of time discussing the wiki meltdown, an unfortunate situation resulting in a ton of extra effort for Mary Sue Ittner and her volunteers. With the help of a young Lithuanian named Algirdas who stepped forward seemingly out of nowhere, the wiki has been moved and converted into a vibrant, new, and permanent home. Nice look and wholehearted thanks for all who worked so faithfully on it!

A quick note about our meeting minutes: after some discussion, the board decided to continue to print this “narrative” version of the minutes out of fear that printing the full minutes would take up precious space and bore most of you to tears! However, any member who would like to read the full-length minutes should send an email request to Pamela Slate, Secretary, at pameladaz@msn.com.

Treasurer’s YEAR-END Report, 2008

BALANCE 1/1/08 $ 26,150.65

INCOME
U.S. Members $ 3,380.00
Overseas Members $ 825.00
Contributions $ 78.00
BX Receipts $ 8,561.39
TOTAL INCOME $ 12,845.19

EXPENSES
BX/SX Expense $ (2,940.84)
Operating Expenses $ (884.76)
Total Publications $ (7,657.24)
(includes printing costs, postage, and contributors’ stipends)
TOTAL EXPENSES $ (11,482.84)
Investment results $ (3,672.73)
Total Reductions $ (15,110.57)
Balance before adjustment $ 23,885.27
Adjustment $ (3.83)

BALANCE 12/31/08 $ 23,881.44

Spring is here!

As you enjoy the blooms in your garden, please don’t forget to collect extra seeds & bulbs to send to the BX so that others can enjoy them next season! Donations of CLEAN, clearly labeled seeds or bulbs/corms should be sent to:

Dell Sherk
6832 Phillips Mill Rd.
New Hope, PA, 18938
USA

Donors will receive credit on the BX for the cost of postage for their donations.

Non-US donors: please email Dell for instructions before sending seeds: dells@voicenet.com.
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The daily flower trips were intermingled with evenings rich in the culture of central Mexico. Our trip featured almost nightly celebrations (which go on for at least a week before Mexican Independence Day, September 16). The celebrations featured brass bands, costumed singing groups, dancing in the town squares, greased pole climbing, lots of tequila, and fireworks. There were parades featuring cowboys (and a few cowgirls as well) dressed in their finest and riding truly impressive horses with saddles that were ornate and highly valued. Flags, flowers, and colored lights decorated the zocalos, and the red, white, and green colors of Mexico were proudly displayed. Not to be missed were the beautiful crafts from each region.

Our third and most recent trip, a northern loop, in September of 2008, was a little shorter, at eight days, but we still managed to travel over 2,000 miles, heading north from Guadalajara, traveling through the states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Durango, Coahuila, and then heading south through Nuevo Leon, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosi, Queretaro, and Guanajuato. With this trip we have nearly completed our quest to find and photograph all of the known Mexican *Calochortus* species, including a new one as well.

Late in the afternoon at a stop in Durango we chanced upon *Calochortus barbatus* var. *chihuahuensis*, and the next morning at another location we were shown the new species (possibly to be named for the state of Durango). We hunted long and hard to see *Calochortus marcellae* in the foothills of Sierra Madre Oriental in Nuevo Leon, and lastly *Calochortus ghiessbreghtii* growing along roadside slopes in the mountains of Hidalgo. This last species is the only one in the genus that reaches Guatemala. Once again we were treated to a vast array of plant life, from the amazing cacti, gesneriads, and cosmos, to bulbous plants such as *Milla biflora*, *Tigridia pavonia*, *T. ehrenbergii* ssp. *flaviglandifera*, and several species of *Polianthes*.

We also stayed in two of Mexico’s so-called Magical towns (Pueblos magicos), small towns or cities with treasured traditional architecture, old world charm, and cobblestone streets. Entry to Real de Catorce (San Luis Potosi), a delightful old silver mining town at the end of a long, bumpy, but well-built cobblestone road, was only possible by traversing the Ogarrio tunnel, a one way 2.5 kilometer long mine-shaft. San Miguel de Allende in Guanajuato featured picturesque cobblestone streets, colonial architecture, great shopping, and a beautiful botanical garden (El Charco del Ingenio) rich with cacti and succulents as well as a natural area with native plants. Our journeys to Mexico were very rewarding, and the variety of flowering plants we encountered was astounding. We look forward to further botanical adventures in Mexico in the future!

(For more photos from our adventures, please visit Mary Gerritsen’s website, [http://picasaweb.google.com/navbo123](http://picasaweb.google.com/navbo123), and Ron Parsons website, [http://www.flowershots.net](http://www.flowershots.net).)
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