

Plants in Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden

- by Karen Unruh -

We were pleased to see so many of you at our 5-Year Anniversary Open House at Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden at the end of April. We had over 175 visitors that day, amid the early cool temperatures and a few sprinkles of rain but then the sun came out and made the day a pleasure for us and hopefully for you too. Some visitors came to the garden for the first time while others noted how they keep checking on the garden as their frequent walks take them in this direction. Certain plants seemed to catch attention and here are three that we chatted about with many of the visitors that day.

We have a few deciduous shrubs in the garden and their dappled shade provides a cooler spot for plants that may need this protection. The lilac planted in the lower front part of the garden is one of these. The name of this species lilac is *Syringa microphylla superba* (below). June Strandberg, one of our alpine mentors, bought it at Fraser's Thimble Farm in 2003. It did not flower right away and so June bought another one in 2005. Then she had two, both flowering, and so donated one to the garden. Planted against the garden rocks that separate the lower and upper portions of the garden, it makes a strong architectural statement. We have pruned this shrub to eliminate the bottom branches and provide space for a shade-loving plant. We also have removed any branches crossing the centre so that the lilac has an open vase shape. After the fragrant blooms fade, we will remove the faded blooms to encourage bloom for the following year.



An ornamental alpine strawberry, *Fragaria* 'Pink Panda' (left), was commented upon by many of our visitors. It is growing in the 'valley' part of the Crevice Garden. Did you notice that the Crevice Garden has various heights? Just as in the mountains, the peaks and valleys give a range of planting conditions. The bright, deep pink flowers last from spring to fall. It will send out a few runners, not many, to establish new plants, but the main plants continue to grow. We were able to pot a few of the baby plants last fall which sold quickly sold in our small plant sale. AGCVI member, Barbara Kulla, donated this plant.



The third plant which captured our visitors' interest was an orange-red- blossoming specimen in the crevice garden. *Anthyllis vulneraria* var. *coccinea*, (left) commonly known as Red Lady Fingers was donated last year to the garden by one of our caretakers, Elaine Bohm. Elaine says that her plant re-seeds readily with the main plant dying off each year. The new plants can then be placed in choice locations. The low mound of downy silver-green leaves combines with the claw-shaped clusters of orange-red pea-like flowers. It likes the full sun and provides flowers that draw interest all summer.