

18 August. *Growing New Zealand Alpine Plants* - Dr David Lyttle,

Otago Alpine Garden Group.

Reviewed by Allison Knight

Alpine enthusiast David Lyttle informed and entertained an appreciative audience on the finer points of growing alpine plants. Here is my version of some of his tips, which were superbly illustrated by dazzling images of New Zealand alpine plants in the wild. **Seed** should be dry and clean and is best sown fresh. Otherwise store in the fridge in a paper envelope or bag. Sow into commercial seed-raising mix, on the top of potting mix containing fertilizer. Cover with seed-raising mix and top off with a layer of fine chip of the size used as grit on icy roads. This is available from Blackhead Quarry. Be aware that some seeds take up to 2 years to germinate. *Clematis* can take at least a year.

Cuttings. Semi-hardwood cuttings are best taken late summer – early autumn. Cut below a node, remove flowers and pinch out the growing tip. Make scrapes along the base, moisten, dip into hormone rooting powder, then place firmly in horticultural sand or sharp sand. Keep moist and be patient – rooting may take over a year.

***Celmisia*.** These striking mountain daisies do best on a windy, south-facing slope. They are prone to water stress and fungal attack. Don't let the ground get too dry, nor water overhead on a sunny day, and use Trichopel fungicide. *Celmisia* can be grown from rosettes or seed, but most of the seed is not viable – just pick out the healthiest ones.

Pots. Growing in pots allows the plants to be moved to suit conditions. Mulch with gravel to suppress weeds and top dress with bonedust and Hypertufa pots made of sand, cement and peat are good.

Labels. A 6B pencil, pressed hard on plastic gives a lasting label.

Cats. Cultivating *Acaena* is not very compatible with Persian cats. (Sorry, Kelvin)

Dogs. *Aciphylla* on the front verge is a good dog repellent that doesn't need mowing.

Slugs and Liverworts. Question time brought forth some interesting remedies from the audience as well as from Dave. A thick mulch of stone chip helps repel liverworts, as does painting them with vinegar. For slugs Belinda suggested a saucer of fresh beer – not flat, and Robyn offered circles of ash or crushed eggshell.

The advice was admirable, but the photography was breathtaking. The challenging monocarpic (flowers once then dies) penwiper, *Notothlaspi rosulatum*, growing amidst the scree on Mt St Patrick, was one a sight to remember. Thank you, David, for a many-splendoured evening.

Tavora Reserve (Bobby's Head), 25 July 2004

Theresa Downs

Another Otago Botanical Society trip graced with stunning weather; if not a tad crisp, with frost on the sand dunes and ice in the stream! A group of about twenty headed to Tavora Reserve, purchased in 1993 by the Yellow-Eyed Penguin Trust. While some of the area is still grazed, the Trust has made excellent progress over the past decade in restoration plantings. To date these are concentrated along the stream and on the sand dunes and hill slopes. Plants characteristic of the area have been carefully selected, locally sourced and propagated at the Trust's nursery.