

TRANSMUTIUM – or why seed from exchanges does not come up true

My account of the suspected presence of a previously unknown element may interest readers as its discovery arose directly from my involvement in Alpine growing.

Let me explain - I have found that on occasions the seeds of delicate alpiners are affected so that they spontaneously give rise to mutations - my only explanation is that some common factor in the sowings must be the cause. Particular examples so far are *Polemonium viscosum* and *P. brandegii* transmuting to *P. caeruleum* and *P. pauciflorum* respectively. *Draba paysonii* & *Draba leasii* produced *D. aeizoeides*, *Aquilegia saximontana* changed into *A. flabellata*, *Townsendia rothrockii* transmogrified into .. , well something and *Viola pedata* decided life would be much easier as *V. pedatifida*. As a result of these observations I have suggested the existence of a new element and have tentatively named it "Transmutium" on the basis of its effects. As yet I have not been able to positively identify the source of Transmutium - I have eliminated its existence within composts (various have been tried), seed sowing containers, chippings and water. It is likely therefore, that Transmutium is present in the West Berkshire air (possibly as a result from leaks from Greenham Common or Aldermaston.)

Interestingly, some plant families seem more immune to the effects of Transmutium - eg Primulaceae, *Androsaces vandellii* and *ciliata*, *Douglasia laevigata* and *Primula forrestii* (thank you to who ever sent that in!) were unaffected*. So too were *Campanula lasiacoarpa* (very nice), *Corydalis wilsonii*, *Rupicapnos africanus* and several others.

The townsendias present a problem - whereas *T. rothrockii* regressed to something like an aster, *T. mensana* stubbornly refused to produce anything other than a very small mat of silver leaves just topped by enormous pale lilac daisies (as you can imagine I am much disappointed that this disproves any theory involving correlation with plant families.)

Much work needs to be done before I will be able to share my discovery fully with the scientific world. Some gardeners I have spoken to regarding my research has expressed doubts on the validity of naming of some AGS seed. Shame on them! However, this feeble theory would be relatively easy to check. If all those generous members who donate seed are ruthlessly scrupulous in the naming of seed then the effect would disappear. If members are not absolutely sure they should still send their seed but introduce a ? into their naming eg. *Draba mollissima*(?) or if less certain *Draba* sp. or *Draba* ? (sp.) if you are really floundering.

However, I doubt the validity of this ridiculous hypothesis from these cynical gardeners and look forward to the flowering of my *Polemonium pauciflorum* (really a nice plant) and to receive

ing my Nobel Prize for chemistry.

* Post script - several *Primula vulgaris* have now flowered as red polyanthus.

Written a long time ago – published eventually in the Alpine garden Society Journal