



*Eriogonum jamesii*, var. *jamesii* in garden of Bob and Jeni Pennington  
in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

# ERIOGONUM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, NO. 4      JULY 2009

## ERIOGONUM JAMESII, VARIETY JAMESII

**Bob Pennington**

Owner and operator of Agua Fria Nursery in Santa Fe and noted propagator and expert on growing *Eriogonums*.

Whether the Antelope Buckwheat is my favorite *Eriogonum* or just the one that has had the greatest impact upon my *Eriogoniphilia* is debatable. Certainly there are others of the illustrious genera for which I also have great affection, but I guess that I would have to say that *Eriogonum jamesii* Benth. Var. *jamesii* holds a special spot all of its own.

Way back when, at least twenty six, maybe thirty years ago my father collected seed of an *Eriogonum* from the Tres Piedras area in northern New Mexico. He was never much for

identifying plants beyond genera and location, but he could certainly locate worthy plants. We planted the seed and it grew, and actually thrived, so when I first began to plant my garden, later to be the testing grounds for numerous instances of plant abuse, the “Tres Piedras” *Eriogonum* went in as one of the very first victims.

Because it exceeded expectations, and lived, thrived and bloomed, I decided that I really did need to figure out what this plant was. Hauling out the trusty Hutchins and Martin,” Flora of New Mexico” I began my first attempt at keying out an *Eriogonum*. More by the process of elimination, than by taxonomic excellence I arrived at *E. jamesii jamesii*. I have hopes that after next summer’s able tutelage by Dr Reveal, my skills will improve, but anyway, this is the beginning of my affection and fascination with the genus *Eriogonum*.

In basic appearance *E. jamesii Benth. Var jamesii* (henceforth known as ‘E j j’) is very much like many of the *Eriogonum umbellatum* varieties. It is another of those sub-shrub type plants with the quickest distinction from the umbellatums is the color of its bloom. Rather than being a bright sulphur-yellow, the flowers are more of a creamy white to yellow. For the casual observer, this is the only obvious distinction. In fall the very hirsute leaves change from a healthy green to a beautiful mahogany-red which persists throughout the winter.

Besides the connection between this plant and my father, what makes this one of my favorite *Eriogonums* has been its ease of propagation and the ability of it to survive. The same plant which I originally installed in my garden in ’84 or ’85 is still thriving. When it was installed it pretty much stood alone and was exposed to all day sun, and a very lean silt soil. Over the years, an Apache Plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*) has grown to large size just to the southeast of my plant and Buffalo Grass (*Buchloe dactyloides*) has encroached on all sides. In spite of this partial shading and competition for space and water, or because of it, ‘E j j’ is still growing robustly, while a nearby *Eriogonum umbellatum polyanthum* has struggled to just remain alive.

It may be that ‘E j j’ may not be suited for all environments, but besides its native location in far northern New Mexico where the wind, bitter winter cold, and sun rule, and moisture occurs as blankets of snow in winter and early spring, relieved by the occasional summer thunderstorms, ‘E j j’ has also done very well in Santa Fe, which is both warmer and dryer than Tres Peidras, and in many gardens in the Denver area.

Perhaps one of its best attributes has been that in spite of its being in cultivation and the nursery trade for many years, to my knowledge, nobody has bothered to “improve” the species by patenting or trade-marking special selections. May this long lived and useful *Eriogonum* long be ignored by the specialty breeders constantly intent on improving what nature has created over thousands of years.



*Eriogonum hookeri*. Craters of the Moon National Park, Idaho  
Photo by James L. Reveal

### NOTES ON *ERIOGONUM*. III.

**James L. Reveal**

L. H. Bailey Hortorium. Department of Plant Biology,  
412 Mann Library Building, Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853-4301

In the second and third issue of the *Newsletter* some of the general morphological features were discussed that defines the subg. *Eriogonoideae*, as traditionally circumscribed, and the habit, duration, stems and leaves of *Eriogonum*. This time **involucre**s will be discussed. Individual terms are defined in the [glossary](http://erigonum.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=78) at [http://erigonum.org/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=78](http://erigonum.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=78)

The one feature that requires immediate attention when identifying *Eriogoneae* is the involucre. The involucre is a highly evolved structure consisting of a series of **bracts** derived by the reduction of an elongated branch system. From an evolutionary point-of-view think of a long **branch** with a series of flowers arranged singularly along its length and then collapse the branch so that the flowers end up at a single **node**. An example of this type of elongated inflorescence may be seen in [Triplaris cumingiana](#), one of the tropical *Eriogonoideae* species. With the collapse of the branch to a single point, the bractlets subtending each flower of a *Triplaris*-like ancestor became the tiny, paired **bractlets** of *Eriogonum* while the subtending foliaceous bracts of the ancestor became the individual bracts that make up the **involucral structure**.

In *Eriogonum*, the involucre is a tube-like structure composed of four or more fused bracts. Its purpose seemingly is to protect developing flowers. Most have involucre are composed of five bracts that are fused together (**connate**) nearly their entire length. Each bract has a central, obscure **midvein** that runs the length of the structure that provides thickness and rigidity to the involucral bract. The edges of the bracts are usually filled in with cells that are not different from cells of the bract itself so that outwardly the involucral tube appears to be a uniform structure.

Near the **distal** end of the tube, one may find cells that are distinctly less thickly arranged resulting in an **opaque, membranous** margin especially in the gap between the bracts.

The exterior of the tube may be variously **pubescent, glandular** or **glabrous**, and may be **gray, green** or **reddish** in color; tubes are nearly always glabrous on the interior surface. Their overall shape varies from **cylindric** to **turbinate, campanulate** or **hemispheric** with the two extremes rare. Most species of *Eriogonum* have involucre composed of five fused bracts, with some reduced to just four or rarely to as many as six. However, in the subg. *Oligogonum*, with such species as *E. umbellatum*, the number of bracts varies from five to ten. Here too one will not only find involucre that are **toothed**, but several species (like *E. umbellatum*) with involucre adorned with reflexed **lobes** as long or even longer than the fused portion of the involucre.

The degree to which the tube of the involucre in *Eriogonum* is divided varies. In some the tube can be deeply divided but much more common is a slightly toothed tube with the teeth themselves **acute, rounded** to **obtuse** or even **truncate**. Also the teeth are mostly erect but sometimes flare outwardly. The lobes, when present, are most **lanceolate** or **oblanceolate** in outline.

Involucre may be positioned singly at a node on a branch or grouped into clusters of two or eight at a node. In these cases, the combination of the branch and involucre at a node is subtended by bracts that vary in number from two to ten or more, with three the common condition; when there are three the bracts are said to be **ternate**. Atop a **peduncle** there is only a single involucre. An involucre at the tip of a peduncle is never subtended by bracts. While the term “peduncle” is usually defined as a structure supporting a single flower, in *Eriogoneae* this term applies to a structure terminated by a single involucre. In some species of *Eriogonum* the uppermost branchlet is a branch-like segment that is markedly different in terms of its length, diameter, flexibility, and even color compared with the remaining branches. When present, a branchlet is also terminated by a single involucre subtended by (typically three) bracts; branchlets are seen in several species of subg. *Oregonium*.

Flowers originate inside the involucre tube. In *Eriogonum* they are on a short stalk termed a **pedicel**. A pedicel is a long, slender structure with an enlarged, flat-topped tip upon which the flower is attached. Under high magnification, one can see a single **vascular bundle** running from the pedicel into the flower; the **phloem** portion of the bundle carries nutrients and other resources from the roots, leaves and stems to the flowers. The pedicel may be variously pubescent, glandular or glabrous. Attached to the base of the pedicel in *Eriogonum* are two, usually **linear** bractlets. Under a compound microscope, the margins may be seen to have long, hair-like projections or glands of various kinds.

The involucre of the related *Eriogoneae* genera differ from the tubular, toothed or lobed involucre of four to ten fused bracts that characterize *Eriogonum*. Other genera have teeth with **mucros** or **awns** (e.g., *Oxytheca*, *Chorizanthe*). In *Dodecahema* there are twelve awns, six terminating the teeth and six more at the base of the involucre tube. In *Acanthoscyphus* a single involucre tube can have as many as 30 bracts with as many terminal awns. In *Stenogonum* the involucre structure is composed of two whorls of three, deeply divided bracts. The involucre tube in *Chorizanthe* varies from **cylindric** to **urceolate** or from turbinate to campanulate, with the tube nearly always distinctly 3-6-ribbed so that in cross-section the tube has three to six distinct angles. In *Centrostegia* the involucre is 3-angled in cross-section but has three basal awns (one of each angle) and five short mucros terminating the five connate involucre bracts. The involucre is not tube-like in *Dedeckera* (in two whorls of three then two awnless bracts) or



in *Hollisteria* (one whorl of three or four, awned bracts). In *Johanneshowellia* the involucre bracts are three to seven (with four the most common) arranged in a spiral. In *Lastarriaea* there is a single whorl of three, awn-tipped bracts, while in *Nemacaulis* there are numerous awnless bracts all arranged in a tight spiral. Images of these involucre structures in the non-*Eriogonum* genera can be seen by visiting <http://www.plantsystematics.org/reveal/pbio/eriog/key.html>.

The most complex involucre arrangement is that found in *Harfordia* and *Pterostegia*, the only two genera of what is now known as the tribe *Pterostegieae*. Their single bract is 2-winged and as this bract matures it invaginates, becomes sac-like, and eventually encloses the **achene**. The sacs may become **bilobed**, and extremely large and colorful in *Harfordia*. In *Pterostegia*, the bract is much smaller and rather hyaline. Seed dispersal seemingly is augmented as the entire involucre structure, once it falls from the parental plant, is easily moved by the wind and will even float on water. *Harfordia* is found only in Baja California, Mexico (see [http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img\\_query?stat=BROWSE&query\\_src=photos\\_flora\\_sci&where-genre=Plant&where-taxon=Harfordia+macroptera&title\\_tag=Harfordia+macroptera](http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img_query?stat=BROWSE&query_src=photos_flora_sci&where-genre=Plant&where-taxon=Harfordia+macroptera&title_tag=Harfordia+macroptera)) for images of the remarkable, sac-like involucre structure.



*Eriogonum compositum*, Tom McCall Preserve, Oregon. Photo by Ginny Maffitt

# NOTES ON PROPAGATION OF ERIOGONUM

Stephen L. Love, Thomas Salaiz  
University of Idaho

*Eriogonum* species have been a staple of the native plant domestication project initiated at the University of Idaho in 2005. To date, seed of 300 accessions, representing 41 species have been collected or purchased. Thirty species have been successfully established in the field. Due to our location in a cold (zone 4), dry climate, emphasis has been placed on hardy species commonly found in the interior Intermountain West.

No effort has been made to conduct empirical studies on seed, germination, transplanting, nor establishment procedures. However, there are some general observations that can be made based on experience. These notes include comments on what has been learned to date.

Along with *Eriogonum* species, we are actively evaluating many other Western US native plants. The list includes species of the Poaceae family, *Sphaeralcea*, *Agastache*, *Penstemon*, *Aquilegia*, *Aster*, *Erigeron*, *Townsendia*, *Gaillardia*, *Lupinus*, *Castilleja*, *Clematis*, *Papaver*, *Heuchera*, many related perennial species, and several species of native shrubs and trees. We have found, that among the 500 plus species we have evaluated, as a general rule the *Eriogonums* are among the easiest to germinate and establish from seed. The only groups of species we have found to be simpler to propagate from seed, from the standpoint of ease of germination, transplanting, establishment, and healthy growth, are the species from the genera *Aquilegia*, *Sphaeralcea*, and some of the mint and hyssop species, and a few of the fleabanes and daisies.

## General Comments on Propagating Eriogonum:

*Collecting Seed:* As a rule across species, we have found that seed collected any time after the perianth has developed a papery texture (no longer moist and pliable) are fully viable. This may be a few weeks to a month before the flower umbels break down and the seed is disseminated. We have also found that viable seed can be harvested from slightly moist, immature flowers if the entire umbel is harvested intact and allowed to dry under cool conditions for several weeks before the seed is extracted.

*Vegetative Propagation:* Although our work in this area is limited, we have attempted to root cuttings of several species (in the greenhouse in moist, sandy potting soil). Success has been limited and seemingly species dependent. We have had some success growing healthy plants of *E. heracleoides*, *E. arcuatum*, *E. caespitosum*, *E. jamesii*, and *E. wrightii*, but little success with the other species we have tried.

*Seed Germination:* As a general rule, we have found the *Eriogonums* to grow relatively easily from seed. Most of the species we have grown will germinate to some degree with no seed treatments, but most will germinate at a higher percentage (sometimes much higher) with 4-8 weeks of cold treatment. We have had very good luck with controlled stratification in a refrigerator. In our experience, seed that does not germinate fairly quickly (within 10 days to 2 weeks) after a minimal cold treatment are not viable and will not germinate with additional work or patience. We have seen only small differences among species with respect to emergence time.

I personally do not think there is a light requirement for the species I have grown because the seed can be buried fairly deeply (up to ½ inch) without any impact on germination. As for germination media, we have used peat-based potting soils, various mixes of sand and peat moss, and mixes high in perlite to germinate seeds. We have seen no obvious differences in the amount of emergence. However, once emerged, the soil does seem to impact seedling survival.

Expectations of germination percentages will always be hard to define. Seed lots within a single species, sometimes collected from the same location, vary year-to-year from near 100% to virtually none. In our experience, climatic conditions and other variables within a site during the spring and summer of collection are more important to seed viability than is the species (although some species definitely germinate better than others).

*Managing Seedlings:* In our experience, the single most important factor in maintaining seedling health is prevention of damping-off. Species vary in susceptibility and some will experience near 100% mortality if the soil is completely saturated even once (even briefly), during the first two weeks following emergence. We have found three practices that help control damping off. First, never completely saturate the soil. Water sufficiently to keep the plants healthy, but do not apply water in amounts that keep the soil surface wet for more than a few hours at a time (on a warm sunny day). Second, allow the soil in the pots to dry to a depth of at least ¼ inch between irrigations. Make sure the lower stem of the seedlings dry out between irrigations. Third, after the seedlings emerge, apply a layer of vermiculite or builders sand to the surface of the soil (1/8 to ¼ inches deep). This provides a drying layer that will allow the lower stems to remain dry much of the time. In 2008, we followed these principles and did not lose a single seedling to damping off.

Timing of transplanting to individual pots is also important. Seedlings transplanted at the cotyledon stage do not survive very well and often succumb to root rots. Seedlings at the 2-3 leaf stage do much better. We have not transplanted large seedlings, so have no opinion on what stage of growth is considered too large. Species definitely vary in their ability to survive and thrive through the transplanting process. See Table 1 for more details.

Although the commonly held opinion is that *Eriogonums* like fairly lean soils, we have found that some fertilizer applied to young plants helps them develop faster and more quickly reach a size suitable for transplanting. Our usual practice is to rely on the fertilizer in our potting soil product through emergence and transplanting into individual pots. About a week after transplanting we add some soluble fertilizer during watering, follow up with a second application about a month later. A third fertilizer application made during the last watering in preparation for taking the plants outside has also proven effective for getting the plants off to a good start in the field. We have not done experiments to see if optimal fertilization is similar for all species, but we have not run into any obvious problems with any species when using these practices.

*Transplanting outdoors:* We have had very good success establishing *Eriogonums* in the field, if the plants have developed a good root ball prior to planting. When transplanted from small pots, most species produce sufficient roots to stabilize the root ball after about 6-8 weeks. At this point the plants have 5-12 true leaves, but this varies considerably by species. If the root ball is disturbed during planting, potential for survival may be reduced.

*Growing in the Garden:* In Aberdeen, Idaho we are lucky to have climate and soil conditions that are near ideal for *Eriogonums*. Consequently, we have found virtually no value in

trying to supply artificial soil conditions. We grow all *Eriogonums* on silt loam soils, pH 8.4, with no sloped aspect. In a climate with natural precipitation of about 8” per year (mostly snow in the winter) it actually takes about 6 inches of supplemental irrigation during the summer to keep most species looking their best in the garden. With very few exceptions, *Eriogonums* do very well under these conditions.

There are definitely differences among species for longevity. See Table 2. We have found some species that tend to die out after 2-3 years, while others are just getting a good start in that timeframe. We have had plants in the ground for only 5 years, but most look very healthy and are growing actively.

Most species grow relatively slowly and do not bloom the first year in the field. There are exceptions and these are identified in the following tables. If provided proper conditions, nearly all species bloomed by the end of the second summer.

Table 1. Individual species propagation notes based on experience at the University of Idaho’s Aberdeen R & E Center.

<i>Eriogonum</i> species	Germination	Ease of Transplanting	Ease of Establishment Outdoors
<i>E. arcuatum (jamesii)</i>	Poor	Easy	Easy
<i>E. breedlovei</i>	Very good	Difficult	Difficult
<i>E. brevicaulis</i>	Variable	Easy	Easy
<i>E. capistratum</i>	Good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. caespitosum</i>	Good	Easy (damps-off)	Easy
<i>E. coloradense</i>	Good	Moderate	Moderate
<i>E. compositum</i>	Moderate	Moderate (damp-off)	Easy
<i>E. corymbosum</i>	Very good	Difficult (damp-off)	Moderate
<i>E. douglasii</i>	Very good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. flavum</i>	Poor	Difficult	Moderate
<i>E. gracilipes</i>	Good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. heracleoides</i>	Moderate	Easy	Easy
<i>E. jamesii</i>	Very good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. kennedyi</i>	Very good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. lobbii</i>	Poor	Easy	Easy
<i>E. microthecum</i>	Very good	Moderate (damp-off)	Moderate
<i>E. niveum</i>	Poor	Difficult	Difficult
<i>E. ovalifolium</i>	Good	Difficult (damp-off)	Easy
<i>E. racemosum</i>	Very good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. robustum</i>	Good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. saxatile</i>	Good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. sphaerocephalum</i>	Variable	Moderate	Easy
<i>E. strictum</i>	Good	Moderate	Easy
<i>E. subalpinum</i>	Poor	Easy	Easy
<i>E. ternatum</i>	Very good	Difficult	Difficult



<i>E. thymoides</i>	Poor	Moderate (damp-off)	Moderate
<i>E. tripodum</i>	Good	Difficult	Moderate
<i>E. umbellatum</i>	Good	Easy	Easy
<i>E. ursinum</i>	Poor	Moderate	Easy
<i>E. wrightii</i>	Very good	Easy	Easy

In some cases categorization of species is derived from limited evaluations and the future may bring some change in this table. Seed of several species not included in the table were stratified and planted, but did not emerge in numbers sufficient to evaluate. It is not clear if these results represent species trends or are due to poor seed quality. The species that did not germinate well include *E. acaule*, *E. bicolor*, *E. parishii*, *E. pauciflorum*, *E. pharnaceoides*, *E. pulchellum*, *E. pyrolifolium*, and *E. siskiyouense*.

Table 2. Individual species outdoor performance notes based on experience at the University of Idaho's Aberdeen R & E Center.

<b><i>Eriogonum</i> species</b>	<b>Rate of Growth/ Bloom</b>	<b>Hardiness/Longevity</b>	<b>Appearance and Value</b>
<i>E. arcuatum (jamesii)</i>	Moderate/ Blooms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Very hardy/ Somewhat short-lived under hot conditions	Very attractive, moderately long bloom period
<i>E. breedlovei</i>	Moderate/ Some bloom the 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Moderately hardy/ Long-lived	Moderately attractive, long fall bloom period
<i>E. brevicaule</i>	Rapid/ Consistent bloom 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Hardy/ Long-lived	Very attractive, long fall bloom period
<i>E. capistratum</i>	Slow/ Some bloom 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Hardy/ Moderately long- lived	Moderately attractive, short bloom period
<i>E. caespitosum</i>	Very slow/ Bloom 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Very hardy/ Very long-lived	Very attractive, short early bloom, pretty foliage
<i>E. coloradense</i>	Moderately rapid/ Full bloom the 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Hardy/ Long-lived	Attractive, very long summer/fall bloom period
<i>E. compositum</i>	Moderately fast/ Blooms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Moderately hardy/ Long-lived	Moderately attractive, moderately short summer bloom period
<i>E. corymbosum</i>	Moderately fast/ Some 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Moderately hardy/ Moderately long- lived	Attractive, blooms late fall, long bloom period, weedy
<i>E. douglasii</i>	Slow/ Blooms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Very hardy/ Long-lived	Attractive, moderately short summer bloom period
<i>E. flavum</i>	Slow/	Hardy/	Attractive, relative

	Some 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Moderately long-lived	short summer bloom period
<i>E. gracilipes</i>	Rapid/ Full bloom 1 <sup>st</sup> year	Marginally hardy/ Moderately long-lived	Attractive, very long summer/fall bloom period
<i>E. heracleoides</i>	Slow/ Bloom 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Hardy/ Moderately long-lived	Attractive, moderately long summer bloom period
<i>E. jamesii</i>	Moderately fast/ Blossoms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Very hardy/ Long-lived	Fairly attractive, very long summer/fall bloom period, weedy
<i>E. kennedyi</i>	Moderately fast/ Consistent 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Moderately hardy/ Long-lived	Attractive, moderately long summer bloom period
<i>E. lobbii</i>	Slow/ Blossoms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Moderately tender/ Short-lived	Very attractive, short spring bloom period
<i>E. microthecum</i>	Rapid/ Consistent 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Very hardy/ Long-lived	Moderately attractive, long summer/fall bloom, weedy
<i>E. niveum</i>	Rapid/ Consistent 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Very hardy/ Long-lived	Attractive, moderately long fall bloom period
<i>E. ovalifolium</i>	Slow/ Some 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Hardy/ Somewhat short-lived under hot conditions	Very attractive, short spring bloom period, some rebloom
<i>E. racemosum</i>	Slow/ Blossoms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Hardy/ Long-lived	Moderately attractive, moderate summer bloom period
<i>E. robustum</i>	Slow	Moderately tender, did not survive the first winter	No opportunity to assess value
<i>E. saxatile</i>	Rapid	Tender, did not survive the first winter	No opportunity to assess value
<i>E. sphaerocephalum</i>	Very slow/ Minimal bloom the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Somewhat tender/ Very long-lived	Attractive, long summer bloom period
<i>E. strictum</i>	Moderately rapid/ Fairly consistent 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Hardy/ Long-lived	Very attractive, long fall bloom period
<i>E. subalpinum</i>	Slow/ Blossoms 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Very hardy/ Very long-lived	Attractive, moderately long summer bloom period
<i>E. ternatum</i>	Slow	Very tender/ Plants died during the first winter	No opportunity to assess value
<i>E. tripodum</i>	Slow	Very tender/ Plants died during the	No opportunity to assess value

		first winter	
<i>E. umbellatum</i>	Slow/ Blooms 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Hardy (but depends on subspecies) Very long-lived	Attractive, long summer to fall bloom period
<i>E. ursinum</i>	Rapid/ Consistent 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Moderately hardy/ Somewhat short-lived	Attractive, very long summer/fall bloom period
<i>E. wrightii</i>	Rapid/ Consistent 1 <sup>st</sup> year bloom	Moderately tender/ Somewhat short-lived	Attractive, very long summer/fall bloom period, weedy

Each year, additional species are established and observations are kept on the species already planted. New information will become available as this process continues.



*Eriogonum acaule*, southern Wyoming. Photo by Bob Skowron

## MYSTIQUE

**Hugh MacMillan**

‘If I were a child’, I thought, ‘I would certainly think this is plastic and part of something much larger buried here a long time ago’. I ran my fingers over and over the ancient bun, mesmerized by the almost waxy texture. I had never seen such a sight – the most congested plant I had ever seen. Even more of a curiosity is how on earth it has survived all this time right

in the middle of a compacted area where vehicles frequently park and campers scamper about with their supplies.

This is harsh country; not much in the way of cover, incredibly strong winds every season of the year, sparse rain, intense heat and bitter cold. Such is life on the high Laramie plains. In this country, west of Laramie, east of the Snowy Range, I had the privilege to see *Eriogonum acaule* in its natural setting. Our intrepid group was on a seed collecting trip to the interior of Wyoming, and this to be a stop to camp before heading out the next day to our final destination.

I mused over the thought that it would be simple to mimic the conditions here - simply plant a seedling in my driveway; it has the same conditions. *E. acaule* occurs mainly in southern Wyoming in Albany, Carbon, Fremont, Lincoln, Natrona, Sublette, Sweetwater and Teton counties; it is most commonly seen in Sweetwater, Carbon and Albany counties. The species also occurs in Moffat Co., Colorado. This would be a fine specimen in the dry rock garden with proper conditions. The challenge of course, is to find seed.

There is a mystique to finding species in the wild. *E. acaule*, and many others have elicited a feeling of awe and appreciation of place. There is nothing in my mind, including growing the plants that is as satisfying as viewing rare plants in nature. When I think of *Penstemon acaulis*, one of my favorite species in that genera, I think of Manila on the Wyoming/Utah border and how austere the habitat and how beautiful the setting. I remember the *Eriogonum crosbyae* not too terribly far from Highway 140 on the border between Nevada and Oregon near the Sheldon National Wildlife Preserve as I was eating lunch. Once again, the view from this hilltop was expansive in all directions. One's thoughts naturally turn to the protection of such threatened or 'sensitive' plant species and the possible effects of mankind's endeavors.

Equally as satisfying is the joy of sharing the wonder with fellow travelers. In the summer of 2008, I was traveling a serpentine path to Ely, Nevada from Denver and had spent a couple of days in remote locations with no phone coverage. I turned on my phone as I was descending into Cedar City, Utah and thought that I might try contacting Bob and Phoebe McFarlane who were also headed to the same destination, albeit on a completely different path. To my amazement I found that they were within one hundred miles of my location. We met in Milford, Utah for a nice breakfast and headed west. We stopped at the Wah Wah Summit and poked around and soon found a nice *E. shockleyi*. Our faces lit up – I could see the excitement in Bob's eyes as we discussed how inadequately versed we were in the field of *Eriogonum* identification (see the newsletters for information regarding our inaugural society meeting sometime in 2010 – *Eriogonum* identification will be on the agenda).

On yet another trip to the San Rafael Swell country of Utah, along Temple Mountain road, we witnessed the full glory of *E. bicolor* in full bloom in the rich brick red dirt with postcard vistas as far as the eye could see. Once again, I saw the joy in Lorraine Yeatts and Rebecca Day-Skowron's eyes. 'What lies beyond the next rise' I thought....

If you have not experienced the joy of stalking the wily *Eriogonum*, I encourage you to give it a try. The camping, fellowship, amazement, and joy are well worth the dust and wind a sunburned skin you may take away as keepsakes of exquisite memories.

To see many fine pictures of *Eriogonum* visit our website at <http://eriogonum.org>

A photo of *Eriogonum crosbyae* may be seen at [http://eriogonum.org/gallery2/main.php?g2\\_itemId=154](http://eriogonum.org/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=154).





*Eriogonum acaule* in bloom in southern Wyoming. Photo by Bob Skowron.

## ERIOGONUM SEED EXCHANGE

**Bob McFarlane**

Please don't forget to collect *eriongonum* seed for our first seed exchange this fall. In the last newsletter we announced the program and asked for some help in chairing the exchange and giving advice on how many seeds per packet would constitute a reasonable number. So far -- no responses of any kind. Please, we do need help if we are to be successful in getting this organization up and going well.

The exchange will operate like many other similar ones you are probably familiar with. Members will collect seed, clean it and send it in to the Chairperson of the Seed Exchange. The Chairperson will package it, receive, fill and mail orders to members. A member will be able to choose one packet of seed for each packet of a different species they contribute. Other packets ordered by members will cost \$0.50 each. We will decide on the maximum number of packets one can order when we find out how much seed is contributed.

The seed exchange will accept contributions at any time and will publish an order form with seed availability on the website by the first of December each year and start filling orders in the order received immediately after that date.

By the way, my wife Phoebe and I will be out camping and seed collecting in August in several places in the west. If you have GPS waypoints of eriongonum locations that you might wish to share with us we may be able to stop and collect some seed for the exchange. Please let me know.



## MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is currently at 37 and still growing, but slower than before. Please help recruit new members to join us. Invite a friend to visit our website or print a copy of the newsletter and pass it on. Talk it over with your gardening and wildflower enthusiast acquaintances. Perhaps take a copy of the newsletter and post it in your local nursery. We are excited about having a society to study and learn more about these fabulous plants.

We will decide on the location of our first annual meeting and the dates by the time we publish the next issue of the newsletter around the first of October. So far it looks like it will either be in Vernal or Bishop. You can still influence the decision by recruiting more members and helping them decide how to vote.

### **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

**Name**\_\_\_\_\_

**Address**\_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail Address**\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone**\_\_\_\_\_

**Vote for Location of First Annual Meeting (Select one)**

- ☐ **Rancho Santa Ana, CA**
- ☐ **Bishop, CA**
- ☐ **Reno, NV**
- ☐ **Vernal, UT**

Please send annual dues (January 1 thru December 31) of \$10. to Bob McFarlane at 5609 S. Locust St., Greenwood Village, CO 80111.