

Hughie Jones - March 2015

***Mukdenia rossii* (Saxifragaceae)**

Mukdenia used to have a much more pleasant sounding name (*Aceriphyllum rossii*) and a more helpful one too since 'aceriphyllum' describes its maple leaf foliage. A native of Korea and China, Mukdenia is named from the former name for Shenyang, Mukden, the capital of Liaoning Province. The species name honours John Ross (1842-1915) a Presbyterian missionary in Manchuria from 1872-1910.

This unusual perennial adds a lot to a moist area in partial shade. Mukdenia has cymes of starry white flowers that appear as false umbels on 30-45 cm (12-18 in) branched stems. They curl up from the ground in early spring followed by bold and beautiful deeply lobed leaves with blades 20 cm (8 in) across. In July if the leaves are getting tattered, they can be cut back to encourage fresh new leaves. By late summer the leaves turn a orangey red. I have had this plant in my garden for years and it is a no fuss plant - hardy and pest and disease free. I like the different forms it takes but most of all appreciate its early flowering, curling up like ferns from the ground. It is also one of the first plants in my garden to attract pollination insects.

Daniel Hinkley mentions in his book 'The Explorer's Garden - Rare and Unusual Perennials' that *Mukdenia rossii* was the plant that taught him how important it was to observe plants in their native habitat. His first attempt to grow this plant failed. He placed it in a sunny location. The soil was coarse rock and sand. It dwindled.

Then during a trip to Korea, he saw first hand how it grew. It had colonized the cracks in weathered granite along swiftly moving streams. Not only were the plants receiving plenty of water during the growing season but they were probably submerged during spring runoff.



Moisture is key for this perennial and it is well placed in bed 121A below the waterfall in the Sino-Himalayan section of VanDusen Gardens. This is an always moist area and sometimes flooded when the stream overflows.

Research is being done in Korea using a leaf extract from *Mukdenia rossii* to treat air filters along with an emission of positive or negative unipolar ions. The experimental results show that the natural extract has an antimicrobial effect and the unipolar ion emission enhances the antimicrobial performance of the natural extract.

Perennials Volume 1 - Phillips & Rix; The Explorer's Garden - Daniel Hinkley  
[http://aaqr.org/VOL13\\_No2\\_April2013/33\\_AAQR\\_12-08-TN-0211\\_771-776.pdf](http://aaqr.org/VOL13_No2_April2013/33_AAQR_12-08-TN-0211_771-776.pdf)  
<https://davisla.wordpress.com/2014/05/28/mukdenia-rossii/>