

Special plants *Pat Mansey*

Ratibida columnifera f. *pulcherrima*

This is a hardy plant from the USA, sometimes known very descriptively as 'Mexican Hat'. It grows to about 12 inches tall with stems branching from the base, long narrow grey-green leaves, and flowers, singly on a stem, with a central green cone and reflexed reddish brown petals, making quite an unusual flower shape, whilst displaying its relationship to rudbeckias. *Ratibida columnifera* flowers from June to September, is totally hardy, and thrives in dry sunny situations



Primula vialii AGM

This primula has quite startling flowers, unlike any other primula. Its common name is 'Red Hot Poker'primula, for that is what it resembles. It is a deciduous perennial, but rather short-lived. Its long slender pale green leaves, emerging late in spring, have rolled-over edges and are slightly hairy. The flower stems rise to about 12 inches in mid summer, topped by the very unusual flower, pyramid shaped, lilac at the lower end and changing to deep red at the top. The flower spike is composed of many tiny florets, opening from the bottom upwards. The calyces are brilliant red, so as the lower flowers open they show the inner lilac colour, with the unopened red flowers at the top.



These primulas come to life rather late in spring and so their position should be marked, as these plants are fairly rare and can only be propagated by seed. They need cool humid conditions in which to thrive, where they will make handsome clumps and are worth taking good care of. *Pat Mansey*