

CREVICE GARDENS – IN DEFENSE OF ROCK ZDENEK ZVOLANEK



AFTER the great manifestations of the inner power of our planet, when beautiful mountains and rocks are raised, we can see a long process of erosion trying to wash down our rocks to flat lands and oceans. Growing population pressure has been helping Nature to destroy rock formations for thousands of years, but some gardeners in China, Japan and the western countries have done the opposite. They reclaim rocks and create more or less natural rock formations. This blessed movement of friends and lovers of rock has its own erosion: there are more and more reformists, revisionists and agent provocateurs in our societies who try to weaken our belief and exchange our adorable and holy Rock for holy Grit. For example, in the Special Millenium Issue of the AGS you can read the following opinion about rock in a rock garden: "it is expensive, can be unsightly, is often inappropriate, wastes precious space, rarely provides good growing sites and its removal from nature is often environmentally disastrous". It is interesting that these people do not attack the aesthetic qualities of rocks, they target the value of classic horizontally stratified rock structures for growing true alpines in some winter-wet islands. In this article I would like to support the plea for rock gardens which was written for this journal by the late great Reginald Kaye.

DURING THE LAST TWENTY YEARS in the heart of Europe, where the love of natural rock gardens is most intense, a new design of rock formation has emerged. It is correct geologically, aesthetically acceptable, and suitable for growing true alpines. This kind of formation offers plenty of comfortable crevices and is known, among English-speaking growers, as a crevice garden. After years of careful observation of crevice gardens on the continent and abroad, there is a feeling that crevice gardening is the "best modern practice" for the outdoor cultivation of alpines.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

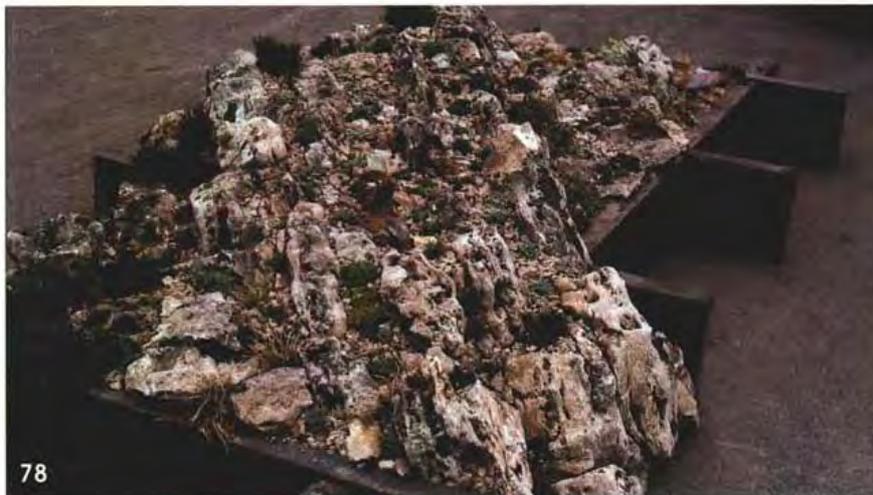
The origins of this growing technique are more than a hundred years old and I must admit that the idea of the superior function of vertical crevices has a British origin. William Robinson in *Alpine Flowers for English Gardens* (1870) included the observations of a rock-garden designer, James Backhouse: "comparatively few alpines prefer or succeed well in horizontal fissures . . . vertical fissures suit many rare alpines best of all . . . in the superficial arrangement of rock there is no rock for roots to feel". James Backhouse published his successful method of



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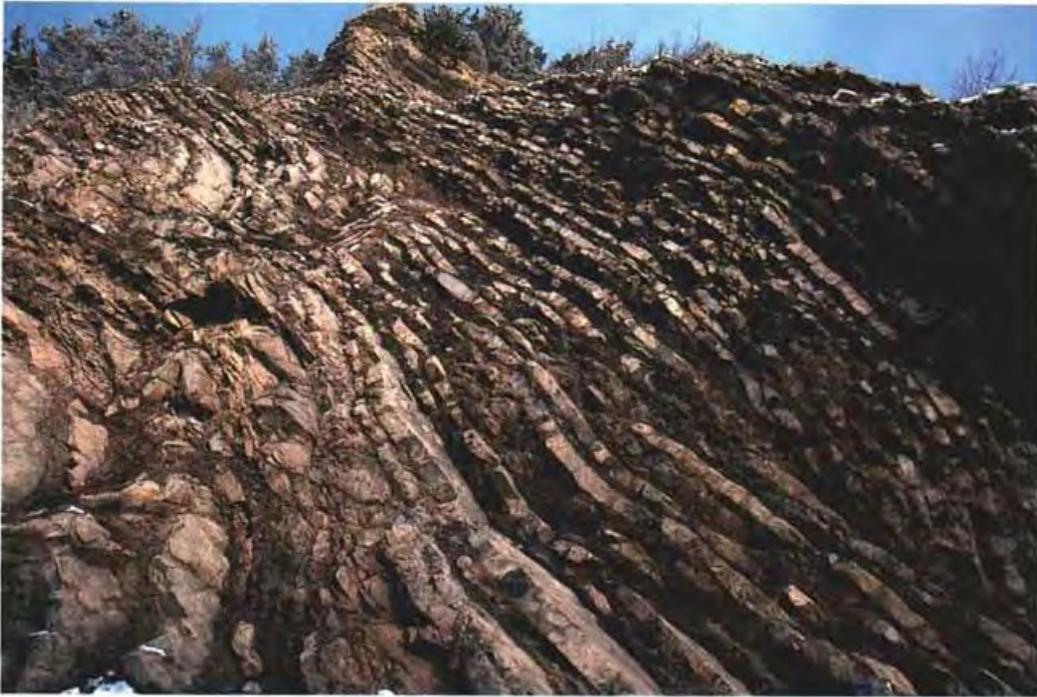
77. Faces of layers in limestone crevice garden in Wuppertal (Zdenek Zvolanek)
78. Ota Vlasák's skill shown in this garden at Erfurt Show (Vojtech Holubec)



79. Milan Halada's limestone crevice garden (Zdenek Zvolanek)

80. granite crevice garden at the Prague Show (Joyce Carruthers)





81. Uptilted strata in the Czech Karst (Joyce Carruthers)

82. Igneous rock garden showing northern exposure (Zdenek Zvolanek)

