



ADIRONDACK  
CHAPTER

*North American Rock Garden Society*

# Green Dragon Tales

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[www.acnargs.org](http://www.acnargs.org)

November 2007

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## November 10 – Annual meeting and dish-to-pass

Because November 10 is home football game at Cornell University, our Annual Meeting and dish-to-pass will be held in Room A at Tompkins County Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. (Where Dey St., Willow Ave. and Rte. 13 meet). Note this is the **second Saturday** of the month, not our usual third.

Carol Eichler will treat us to a slide presentation, **A Stroll through Sansho-En Garden of Three Islands and other Highlights from the Chicago Botanic Garden.** Designed in the Japanese stroll-style, Carol made particular note of the use of stone in the garden's design. Of course, she won't be able to resist sharing photos of some other interests at the CBG as well. (Unfortunately the maples hadn't yet turned during her visit in mid-October.)

If you need directions, visit: [counties.cce.cornell.edu/Tompkins](http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/Tompkins) or call the CCE office during regular business hours: (607) 272-2292. Set up starts at 11 a.m. with dish-to-pass at noon. (Note there will be no microwave or oven available but plenty of electrical outlets.) Drinks will be provided. The program will begin at 1 p.m.

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## How is your tufa?

How are your tufa plantings doing? It's been a curiosity of mine for all of you who took Harvey Wrightman's workshop last spring. Would you please take a moment to drop me an email and let me know? We'll include your comments in a future newsletter. Thanks! [carol\\_eichler@excite.com](mailto:carol_eichler@excite.com)

## Letter from the Chair

I always feel a little guilty calling our meetings to order each month. I see so many lively conversations going on that I hate to interrupt – even if it is so that we can get on with our program for the day. With our November meeting you'll have a chance to chat at greater length with fellow members and enjoy someone else's cooking. (Doesn't it seem to always taste better than your own?) We'll even spare you the annual "year in review" reports. Instead they are included in this newsletter. So do take a moment to read them at your leisure and congratulate yourself on the completion of another successful year.

And don't miss the details for our meeting in this newsletter. (See page 1.) Note there are two significant changes. First, **this meeting is being held at Cooperative Extension**. Secondly, it will be held on **November 10** – the second Saturday of November instead of our usual third Saturday.

After this meeting we'll be taking our winter break until February – the traditional time when members share noteworthy garden information and photos from their gardens, trips, etc. The Board meets during this break to map out the year ahead. You can anticipate that 2008 will be another stimulating and inspiring year.

There's still a little time left for us to wrap up the garden season and then move on to dreaming about the next. I know I'm anxious to see my newly-planted *Corydalis solida* emerge and bloom. It will forever remind me of Janis Ruksans and his native Latvia – and the lovely slide he showed of the field of blooming *Corydalis* with all its color variations in his nursery.

See you at the November meeting!

**Carol Eichler, chair**

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## NARGS seed exchange

The NARGS annual seed exchange is coming! The good news is that the exchange offers approximately 5,000 species. The bad news is that the exchange offers 5,000 species. With so many plants listed, where does one begin to assemble a seed order? (Note you must be a member of NARGS National to participate.)

For me, I've found that making my choices is a process. Perhaps I take the task far too seriously. Not only do you have to pick 25 first choices, but any number of alternative choices. The latter is definitely advisable because seed quantities are limited and often first choice seeds are not available.

Here are some of my thoughts on selection methods – some tried, some merely ideas:

- **Keep a wish list.** Throughout the year keep a wish list of plants that you've either admired from our program talks, *Rock Garden Quarterly* articles, catalogs, etc. In theory this makes a lot of sense, in practice, less so. Don't expect a lot of these plants to be offered. Furthermore, it assumes more organization than I've been able to pull off. Every year I vow to do this, but it doesn't happen. I suppose there's no time like the present to start.
- **Ask someone else to order for you.** Know someone who is organized? They may love the opportunity to place a second order with their 'first string' choices. If **you** are one of those people, let's talk!
- **Pick plants from a genera that you like.** What are your favorite plants? *Dianthus*? *Campanula*? *Saxifraga*? Can't get enough of them? Why not explore other species in your favorite genera to your heart's content? By concentrating on a few genera, you can set up informal evaluation trials. This seems like a good learning model. I've done this in the past with some success.
- **Identify known seed collectors and choose from their contributions.** This sounds like a great idea but has proved to me to be laborious since contributors are only listed by number. This year, I'll try using the online catalog at the NARGS website and the search function on my computer to see if this works to simplify the process of identifying contributors.
- **Order only wild-gathered seed.** If you like this idea, be sure to order early as seed is distributed on a first-come, first-served basis and the wild-gathered seed is not only more limited but seems

to be more in demand. This may be one instance where it pays to be among the seed contributors, as they get priority consideration.

- **Select from someone else's plant list.** For example, last year I ordered from Gwen Kelaidis's list of the *First 100* and *Second 100 Rock Garden Plants*. Using this method last year, I had a lot of success with germination too. However I found a lot of the plants on her list were not on the NARGS list. So I went through most of her 200 plants to assemble my order. Another reasoned advantage of this method is you should get plants that are proven performers in the rock garden.
- **Use the random or 'Ouija board' method** of letting your finger wander down each page and stop where the mood strikes. This is a simple, quick, and tempting method and one that I've not been adventurous enough to try – yet.

Lastly, here are some other suggestions that I've reasoned out to facilitate the selection process. If I'm truly looking for rock garden plants (and many listed are not), then I limit myself to plants no taller than 10 inches (25 cm). Even that may be too tall for my troughs. But at least it falls within one parameter of defining a rock garden plant, that of height. The catalog lists in centimeters, so it's good to keep in mind that the conversion is roughly 2.5 centimeters per inch.

I try to avoid hybrids because they won't reliably seed true. (Some may prefer to seed hybrids because of the variability they may get.) I also get suspicious of species where there are many contributors. To me (and this is just my opinion), this widespread availability suggests the plant produces a lot of seed and may be invasive.

I also like to look up plants on the internet as time allows – if they can be found. This can be very time-consuming but rewarding. Google images (<http://images.google.com>) is a great resource, especially if you have high-speed internet connection.

OK. So I've shared my secrets of seed selection. I invite you to share yours for a future newsletter.

Just remember, when your catalog arrives early next year, have some fun! In the end, I don't allow myself to think there are bad choices. After all, someone took the time to collect, clean, and send in their seed so the contributor must think there is something worthy about the plant.

So I suggest you jump right in, place an order, start some seeds (it's a great way to begin the garden season in the winter), and bring your extra seedlings to our seedling exchange in April!

Next newsletter: Carol's easy method for starting seed and growing seedlings.

**Carol Eichler, chair**

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## FAQs about AC-NARGS Membership

It's time to renew your membership for 2008 – and recruit a friend or two to join as well. With that in mind, here are membership details:

**How much does it cost to join?** Currently, individual Memberships are \$10 per year, Family Memberships \$15, and Business Memberships \$25, which entitle the business to an additional business listing in the member directory. We also offer an Individual Lifetime Membership for \$100, and Family Lifetime Membership for \$150. (You'll never again have to ask, "Am I paid up?")

Note that any member who requests to receive a hard copy of the newsletter through the mail will pay an additional \$5 per year to cover printing and postage costs. (Note this cost may go up in the future to more accurately reflect real cost.)

**How long is a membership good for?** Memberships follow the calendar year from January 1 through December 31. The membership cost remains the same regardless of when during the calendar you pay your dues. We generally begin our membership renewal drive in November.

**What are the benefits of membership?** While our meetings have always been "open to the public" at no cost, there are some member-only benefits. Among them:

- Receiving the *Green Dragon* newsletter electronically or by mail.
- A 25 percent discount on plant purchases at our May sale.
- Purchasing plants at our August members-only plant sale.
- Eligibility for annual appreciation gifts, grants, and awards.

**What is the difference between AC-NARGS and NARGS-National?** The Adirondack Chapter is one of 36 Chapters affiliated with NARGS-National, the parent organization.

**What is the relationship between the Chapter and National?** The Chapter receives certain benefits from the affiliation in return for a few expectations. National provides its Chapters with speakers of national and international repute that we otherwise would not be able to afford on our own. When a new chapter is proposed – as was the case with the Genesee Valley Chapter recently, National must grant approval. Otherwise, we operate fairly autonomously with our own board, budget, and program each year. The Chapter does not pay anything for this affiliation.

**Why should I join NARGS National?** Your membership connects you to thousands of gardeners worldwide who have similar interests and collectively represent a wealth of rock gardening and more general gardening knowledge. Your membership also supports the mission of NARGS which is to promote knowledge and appreciation of rock gardening. In addition, there are some fabulous benefits to national membership, among them eligibility to participate in the annual seed exchange (with over 5,000 seed species, many of which are not available in the trade), subscription to the *Rock Garden Quarterly* (beautifully and intelligently executed) and *Bulletin*, and invitations to the annual Conference and two study weekends, discounts on books through Timberline Press, and more. Visit their website at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org) to learn more about them.

**How do I join NARGS National?** For those who are members, you are automatically sent annual renewal notices. For first-time and lapsed National members, our Chapter membership form now allows you to join National as well. It's as easy as checking the box indicating that you wish to join and enclosing the additional membership cost of \$30. We'll forward this to the national organization. Their membership, unlike ours, runs a full 12-month cycle. In other words, if you join in April, you will need to renew in April. Once a member, they automatically send you renewal notices.

**What are you waiting for?** A membership form is included with this newsletter mailing. Fill it out and return it now, before you forget.

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## 2007 Year in review

As I conclude the first year of my second term as Chapter Chair, I am pleased to present to you our annual report for 2007 – another action-filled one in my opinion. Speakers, plant sales, newsletters, workshops, trips and more plants through plant-of-the-month, door prizes, and member appreciation gift – all of this we do to accomplish our main mission which is for all of us to grow and learn more about specialized plants – alpiners, low-growing perennials, and wildflowers that grow well among rocks – whether they be planted in woodlands, raised beds, walls, containers and troughs, or alpine berms.

I wish to express my deep gratitude for such a committed and hardworking Board who, like the stones in a rock garden, are the “bones” of this organization. They are the ones to whom I give credit for our continuing success at all levels. Or as our newsletter calls them, they are our “volunteers who help make everything happen.”

Many thanks (in alphabetical order) to Robin Bell, Craig Cramer, John Gilrein, Billie Jean Isbell, David Mitchell, and Carolyn Yaeger. Please take a moment to let them know how much you appreciate their time and effort!

**Carol Eichler, chair**

**Plant sales - David Mitchell, coordinator:**

2007 was one of the best for plant sales. The free seedling exchange in April was a success, resulting in more donations for our May plant sale at the high school. Sales from the May sale were \$2,235.75 (2006: 1,929.32; 2005: \$1,568.03). Nineteen members attended the August members-only sale, netting \$740.50 (2006: \$704.00; 2005: \$318.00).

As plant sales coordinator I am actively searching for ways to improve propagation techniques. I have been gathering ingredients for potting mixes on the basis of soil recipes Maria Galletti of Mont Echo Apines graciously shared with me. The Wurster Garden Study Group has the potential to become our plant lab, a source for plants and cultivation knowledge. I hope members will continue to share special plants and knowledge in the coming year.

**Plant of the month - John Gilrein, coordinator:**

One of our Adirondack Chapter goals is to provide an interesting plant of the month at our meetings. Our criteria for choosing the plant of the month include the following: We're looking to challenge our members, but provide plants that are growable, and plants related to the presentation by the current speaker at our meeting. Sometimes it's a challenge to locate some of the plants covered in the speaker's program, but it's a fun challenge in spite of our ability to locate a source for only some of the plants in the program. I've scoured several mail order sources looking for specific plants. For some I have not been able to find any source. Not surprising, since rock/alpine gardening isn't in the mainstream and many of us seem attracted to exotic plants. We'll continue again with plant of the month in the spring. Hope you have had success and some pleasant surprises with you plants of the month!

**Financial matters - Carolyn Yaeger, Treasurer:**

The Chapter finances continue to be very healthy and stable. Income from plant sales and memberships provide the majority of our annual funding; covering the costs associated with our programs and member benefits such as the newsletter.

This year the Grants Committee proposed and the Board supported the idea to use some funds carried forward from previous years to support workshops and plant introductions for members in addition to providing support to attend conferences. Four members received grants to attend the Eastern Winter Study Weekend in Rochester in January. Then 15 members received 50-percent subsidies to attend the Tufa Workshop in March. And at four meetings during the year, plants or bulbs were given away or offered as buy 1, get 1 free. The Committee and the Board felt this was a good use of the funds and now would like to hear from all of you – should this continue next year?

Funds invested with the Community Foundation have continued to grow. Since the Chapter has not needed the annual interest to support the budget, those funds have been reinvested by the Foundation. The Chapter budget year ends on December 31st, and I will provide a more detailed report with actual figures in the February 2008 newsletter.

**Membership - Carol Eichler, coordinator:**

While our plant sales contribute to the financial well-being of the Chapter, our membership is critical to our future. Without attendees at our meetings, participants in workshops, people to go on our garden tours, contributions and buyers of plants at our sales, we would cease to exist

At a time when membership in NARGS National has been steadily declining, our own Adirondack Chapter has been holding its own. At the conclusion of this year our membership stands at 93 (compared to 99 in 2006), with seven brand new members this year. While we can expect to lose some/gain some each year, one prominent loss in membership this year is due to the transfer of some members to the Genesee Valley Chapter,

Attendance at meetings continues to be very promising – in the range of 30-40 people signing in for our programs which, if you do the math, is between 30-40% of our membership total. Impressive (even admitting not all who attend are members)! Craig Cramer does a great job sending out press releases

that advertise our meetings to the greater gardening public and BZ Marranca's unofficial gardeners' listserve also helps distribute information about our meetings to a targeted, gardening audience.

Our meetings become a source for recruiting new members. Our table at the Cooperative Extension Garden Fair in May gives us great exposure and has become another recruitment source such that this year we ran short of brochures to distribute! This year we took a more active role in encouraging our Chapter members to join the National organization by making it easy to join when members renew their annual Chapter membership. By doing so, two of our members became National members too.

We continued to develop new member benefits. Besides an annual member appreciation gift of bulbs, we subsidized the cost of Harvey Wrightman's tufa planting workshop and awarded four scholarships to attend the Winter Study Weekend. It was great to see this kind of representation from our Chapter. We also conducted a member survey to get feedback on how we're doing and how we might improve.

Finally, our membership is critical in providing the current and future leadership of the Chapter to plan and implement all of the above-mentioned activities and more. These leaders form the Board of the Adirondack Chapter. We are fortunate to have a committed group of volunteers who give generously of their time for the greater good. This next year will be critical to the future of the Chapter as several of these positions will be vacated including Chapter Chair (because of term limits). New individuals must be willing to "step-up" to continue the work of keeping the Chapter an active and vibrant one.

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### **Grant Funds available through the Norman Singer Endowment**

Do you have an idea to promote rock gardening for the greater good, but lack the money to carry it out? Perhaps NARGS National can help.

NARGS has established the Norman Singer Endowment Fund for such a purpose. It is "intended to be a resource in support of special, one-time projects that advance the art and science of rock gardening." In the past, NARGS has awarded funds to plant/seed expeditions, to aid in the construction and enhancement of public rock gardens (including the funding for our own Wurster Rock Garden), to study various plant genera such as *Epimedium*, *Phlox*, and *Aquilegia*, and to projects to further inform the public about rock gardening. Past awards have been in the range of \$100 to as high as \$5,000.

If you have a project in mind, I encourage you to talk with me (Carol Eichler at [carol\\_eicler@excite.com](mailto:carol_eicler@excite.com)) before applying. The Board has discussed some ideas as well and I would prefer that we coordinate any applications submitted from within our Chapter in order to keep our application strong rather than to appear in competition for funds. The application deadline is April 15, 2008. Applicants are notified after the NARGS Annual Meeting in June.

Guidelines may be accessed at [www.nargs.org/info/endowmentguide.html](http://www.nargs.org/info/endowmentguide.html).

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### **North American Rock Garden Society Awards**

Did you know that NARGS offers several awards to honor individuals for their contributions to rock gardening, NARGS, or the greater gardening arena?

Here are the nomination guidelines and information about each of these awards. Any member of the Society can nominate a person. Nominating letters are to be sent to the Awards Chairman (Marguerite Bennett, 17015 26th Ave, NE, Seattle, WA 98155, email [mmbennett@mailstation.com](mailto:mmbennett@mailstation.com)) who will distribute them to the Awards Committee members. Deadline is April 15, 2008. If you know someone who would be appropriate to nominate for one or more of these awards, we encourage you to do so. In the past several members of our Chapter have been honored.

**Linc & Timmy Foster Millstream Garden Award** - Newly-established in 2006, this award is for an outstanding contribution to the North American Rock Garden Society for creating a superior garden. This is not meant to be a competition, but to recognize members great gardens across the various styles and regions of the United States and Canada. Since there is such a wide range of possibilities in style and climate regions, it has been decided there needs to be four categories of gardens. They are: the

Container Garden, the Alpine Rock Garden, the Woodland Garden and the Special Garden. Any of these gardens must be a private garden to eliminate unfair institutional advantages. This award is meant to reward the creation of gardens which meet a wide standard set by the North American Rock Garden Society and reflects well on that society. For greater detailed information and requirements contact the current Awards Chairperson.

**Award of Merit** - Established in 1965, this award is given to persons who have made outstanding contributions to rock and alpine gardening and to the North American Rock Garden Society. In addition, the recipients will be people of demonstrated plantsmanship. The recipient must be an active member of the Society. Nominations for the Award of Merit must be accompanied by a letter stating why this person deserves the award. List outstanding services to the Society, comment on the person's plantsmanship, and - if appropriate - refer to any published articles or books on rock gardening authored by the nominee.

**Marcel Le Piniec Award** - Established in 1969, this award is given to a nursery person, propagator, hybridizer, or plant explorer who is currently actively engaged in extending and enriching the plant material available to rock gardeners. This may be a joint award if two people have worked closely together. The recipient need not be a member of NARGS. Nominations for the Marcel Le Piniec Award must be accompanied by a letter stating why this person deserves the award and listing the specific activities that qualify him or her for the award. Two seconding letters should also be sent to the Awards Chairman.

**Edgar T. Wherry Award** - Established in 1973, this award is given from time to time to a person who has made an outstanding contribution in the dissemination of botanical and/or horticultural information about native North American plants. The works must be scientifically sound, but may be written for popular readership and do not have to be specifically about rock garden plants. Generally, the award recognizes a body of work or a lifetime of literary effort rather than a single work (see the Carlton R. Worth Award). The recipient does not have to be a member of the Society. No supporting letters are needed for the Edgar T. Wherry Award only a letter outlining the specific books and/or articles written by the nominee that qualify him or her for the award.

**Carlton R. Worth Award** - Established in 1985, this award is given to an author of distinguished writings about rock gardening and rock garden plants in a book or in magazine articles. Special preference is given to material published in the NARGS Bulletin. The recipient does not have to be a member of the Society. No supporting letters are needed for the Carlton R. Worth Award, only a letter outlining the specific books and/or articles written by the nominee that qualify him or her for the award.

**Marvin E. Black Award** - Established in 1990, this award is given to a member of the Society who excels at promoting membership in NARGS; organizing study weekends, national, and international meetings. They should also be involved in such activities as planning trips to study plants and to meet other plant people. The emphasis shall be placed on a member who has helped other people to reach their potential in the plant world. The recipient must be a member of the Society. Nominations for the Marvin E. Black Award must be accompanied by a letter stating why this person deserves the award and listing the specific activities that qualify him or her for the award. Two seconding letters should also be sent to the Awards Chairman.

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### **Treasurer position available**

The Adirondack Chapter of NARGS will need a replacement Treasurer in 2008. The perks are great:

- You get to take in lots of other people's money and then spend it;
- You get to hear all the news first hand and help shape the future direction of the Chapter;
- You get to work with the current treasurer to learn the job.

The only requirement is basic knowledge of computers and Excel spreadsheet software. No bookkeeping experience is necessary and it takes only a few hours a month of your time. Plus, you'll learn a marketable (perhaps even new) skill!

If you are interested, please call me, at (607-844-9462).

**Carolyn Yaeger, treasurer**

## Need Sand?

Jerry Yaeger has a truck load of sharp sand. If any members would like a bucket or a pickup truck load please contact him at jay7@cornell.edu or call 844-9462 evenings/weekends.

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## People

Questions? Want to find out how you can help the Chapter? Don't hesitate to contact one of the volunteers who help make everything happen. (This is the slate to be voted on at our Feb. meeting):

- **Chair/Membership:** Carol Eichler, carol\_eichler@excite.com, 607-387-5823
  - **Vice Chair/Program:** Robin Bell, rgb2@cornell.edu, 607-272-2074
  - **Treasurer/Secretary:** Carolyn Yaeger, cao2@cornell.edu, 607-844-9462
  - **Garden trips/tours:** Billie Jean Isbell, bji1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484
  - **Plant sales:** David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu, 607-342-3660
  - **Plant of the Month:** John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, 315-492-0844
  - **Newsletter editor/Webmaster:** Craig Cramer, cdramer@twcny.rr.com, 607-539-7233
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## Green Dragon Tales

Published eight times a year (Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Craig Cramer: cdramer@twcny.rr.com. Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be in **February**.

