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February 2009

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February 21 'Members Share' Meeting

The program year kicks off with our annual 'Members Share' meeting, featuring Carolyn and Jerry Yaeger's Alaska trip highlights and presentations by other members. We'll gather in 404 Plants Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca. Brown bag lunch at noon, program at 1 p.m.

Time to renew your membership

If you haven't done so already, please fill out a 2009 membership form and send it in, or bring it with you to the Feb. 21 meeting. If you received this newsletter via email, a membership form is also attached. You can also download one here: <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>

Volunteers needed for Round 2 of seed exchange

From Rosemarie Parker:

Our chapter has committed to do the second round of the 2009 NARGS seed exchange. This mostly means filling orders from the remaining seeds, and mailing them off. Susanne Lipari has found us working areas on Cornell campus, and I'd like to get a tentative list of who is willing to help. It should be interesting, maybe even fun, and I promise to arrange for munchies.

I want to schedule several workdays, most likely in the first three weeks of March. If you volunteer, I'd like to try to meet **your** preferred schedule as much as possible. So, if you would be willing to come select seeds and stuff envelopes, even for an hour, please let me know. And tell me your preferred work times: weekends (morning, afternoon, evenings?) or weekdays (around lunch, late afternoon, evenings, whatever?). The actual dates and times can't be set until we know when the seeds will arrive!

Send your contact info and preferred times to gardener.parker@gmail.com or give me a call at 607-257-4853. We'll also have a sign up sheet at our Feb. 21 meeting.

2009 program plans

Here's the **tentative** line-up for 2009. Check future newsletters or the ACNARGS blog (<http://acnargs.blogspot.com>) for details.

Feb. 21 - 'Members Share' meeting featuring Carolyn and Jerry Yaeger (Alaska trip highlights) and presentations by other members. 404 Plants Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca. Brown bag lunch at noon, program at 1 p.m.

March 21 - Rock Garden Basics Workshop with Michelle Jones Ham, David Mitchell and Robin Bell. Tompkins County Office of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, 1 p.m. (tentative). Details in March newsletter.

April 25 - Miniature Hostas with Michael Shadrack, Chairman and Bulletin Editor for the British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society and co-author of two Timber Press books: *The Color Encyclopedia of Hostas* and *The Pocket Guide to Hostas*. We will also have our annual Seedling Exchange. Kenneth Post Lab, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

Spring dates TBD - Philadelphia garden tour. Overnight road trip to visit private gardens in the Philadelphia area.

May 16 - Plant Sale at Ithaca Garden Fair. Ithaca High School.

May date TBD - Garden tours. Ithaca.

June dates TBD - Work trip to White Pine Camp. Paul Smiths, N.Y.

July date TBD - Picnic and special program with Don and Lela Avery, Cady's Falls Nursery. 404 Plant Science, Cornell University, Ithaca.

Aug. 15 - 'Members Only' plant sale and picnic. Kenneth Post Lab, Cornell University, Ithaca.

Sept 19 - What's Wrong With My Plants? with Michael Loos, horticulture educator with Ohio State University Cooperative Extension, Cuyahoga County and active NARGS member. Billie Jean Isbell's, Brooktondale.

Oct. 17 - Program with speaker TBD.

Nov. 14 - Native Plants for the Naturalistic Garden with Don Leopold, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and author of Native Plants of the Northeast. Kenneth Post Lab, Cornell University, Ithaca.

From the Chair

From Billie Jean Isbell, chair:

Welcome everyone to a new and exciting year for the Adirondack Chapter of NARGS. It is time to renew your membership, if you have not done so. The renewal form is online here: <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>. Fill it out and bring it to the Feb. 21 meeting. I'd like to encourage everyone to join the National organization at the same time. (See Join NARGS below.)

On behalf of the chapter, I would like to thank Carol Eichler for her years of service as chair of our chapter. Under her able leadership, we have had success on many fronts: increased membership, excellent plant sales and superb programs, trips and workshops. Carol has handed me the position of chair with the year ahead full exciting activities for our chapter.

I also want to thank the continuing members of the board and especially thank Robin Bell for his service as Vice Chair and the superb programs he put together. He will be stepping down and Donna Kraft will take over the organization of programs. Tom Myers is relinquishing the job of coordinator of the Wurster garden and we need someone to take over that position. We also need someone to help plan our garden trips. Get involved. Volunteer. Judy Vogel has volunteered and has kindly agreed to be in charge of hospitality for new members.

We invite anyone interested in serving on the board to attend the board meetings and become familiarized with the operation of the chapter.

Please consider signing up for the upcoming seed exchange that will take place in March. Rosemarie Parker is coordinating. See her article above.

Carolyn and Jerry Yeager will give a talk and PowerPoint on their trip to Alaska at our next meeting on Feb. 21 in 404 Plant Sciences. Other members might like to share their photos with the group. We will have a gardening 'open mike' after the Yeagers speak.

See you on Feb. 21st. Don't despair, spring is almost here. Soon it will be time to start those seeds.

In defense of non-conventional rock gardens

by Panayoti Kelaidis

Originally posted on the Alpine-L List Serv and reprinted in the Jan. 2009 issue of the Minnesota Chapter newsletter, Minnesota Rock Plant notes. Used here with the author's permission. View 1,000+ images of Panayoti's alpines at <http://community.webshots.com/slideshow/568971902QOLJAs>

I possess a classic sort of rock garden, chockablock full of *androsaces*, *primulas*, *saxifrages*, *gentians* galore and all the other card carrying members of the Bona Fide Alpine Plant club. In fact, I suspect I grow as many of these as just about anyone else. I love them, of course. I would not want to be without them. You can find most plants in this garden represented in many of the several hundred rock garden books I have accumulated in the course of my lifetime: It's pretty conventional, really. I still like it.

And yet I have another garden where nary a *saxifrage* grows, let alone a *primula*, much less an *androsace*. Here you will find over 100 kinds of miniature cacti, South African succulents, *penstemons*, *eriogonums*, ten species of *Talinum*, *oncocyclus iris*, *juno iris* galore, crocuses, strange cushion plants like *Satureja spinescens*. These are grown in crevices and among rocks just as they might in nature. Probably half the plants in this garden have never appeared in a single rock garden tome. In my heart of hearts, I love both gardens very much, and would be hard put to choose between them: the dryland rock garden has one stellar quality, however. It is utterly novel and fresh in every way.

But what would we make of the blue gramma meadow filled with *fritillaria*, *calochortus* and *allium*? Or the twin berms, one filled with tiny carpeting treasures from Western America (the usual steppe rabble) and the other from the Eastern hemisphere: *veronicas*, *acantholimon*s, tulips and a jillion tiny mints and composites. And hardly a single rock in any of these gardens, which comprise many thousands of square feet? They would hardly qualify as a rock garden technically. They sure as heck ain't perennial borders.

Or my little bog, filled with *Sarracenia*, *Drosera* and treasured *Dionaea*, with blazing spikes of *Lobelia cardinalis* and mats of cranberries and *Mimulus primuloides*, encrusted with *Dodecatheon*, *Primula frondosa* and *Spiranthes cernua* (still blooming alongside the piercing blue of *Gentiana sinoornata*). Are these to be excommunicated, too?

I have but a few shady strips of garden here and there, but these are crowded with *hepatica*, six or seven kinds of *Polygonatum*, lots of *Epimediums* from Darrell, a few treasured azaleas and rhododendrons, and as many woodland waifs as I can persuade to join me in our godforsaken steppe. These are some of my favorite miniatures, and there are rocks among them in several beds. I brashly think of them as my woodland rock

gardens (fool that I am).

I have always thought that rock gardening was the last great refuge of the little plants of the world, the rock ferns that are so precious to us, and so ignorable to the masses. I realize it's hard to define rock gardening, but while you're at it, give me an air-tight definition of music, love, God, poetry or friendship.

Show me a rock gardener who doesn't grow (or wouldn't like to) *Cardiocrinums* and *Meconopsis* and I will show you a paragon of purism: pin a rose on their nose, please, and call them rosy nose.

Of course, we pay special honor to the treasures of the highest crags, but I would think that any rock gardener worth his or her salt would bow on their knees to worship bluets in a New England lawn just as fervently. And I would hope they would marvel as I have at *Rhodohypoxis* and *helichrysums* and *Craterocapsa* on the bona fide Sani Pass tundra in South Africa, the very homeland of Mother Flora.

And what about those Mediterranean hills, once so brimming with bulbs and tiny shrubs and herbaceous plants galore (now more and more replaced with barracks of beach homes for Northern European retirees?). Or the vast stretches of semi-arid steppeland on four continents, filled with tens of thousands of species of miniature gems, few of which have ever been cultivated (so many new to science even), chomped on for millenia by sheep and goats, now ground underfoot by guerillas, blasted by bombs and demolished hourly by the acre for oil and gas development?

Who is to notice, to cherish, to champion these, if not rock gardeners? Are we to turn our back on the vastest treasure trove of rock plants on the planet, because they are not in Farrer or Sampson Clay or happen to grow in the Dolomites?

Perish the thought!

Other events

February 17: Controlling forest invasives. The Finger Lakes Native Plant Society presents a slide show and talk by Charlotte Acharya of Cornell Dept of Natural Resources on Controlling Forest Invasive Plants: Linking Management Practices with Outcomes. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca.

February 20: Designing with Native Plants: Creating Sustainable Landscapes for the Finger Lakes and Upstate New York. 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Cornell Lab of Ornithology. More information: <http://www.cayugawaterfronttrail.com>

February 28: Flowers and Frost, by photographer Dede Hatch. Part of the garden travel slide show series from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County 2:00-3:30 p.m., Cooperative Extension Education Center, 615 Willow Avenue, Ithaca. Refreshments and time to socialize will follow the talk. \$3 suggested donation helps support the Horticulture Program. Please call 272-2292 for more information.

Garden Conservancy Open Days

Mark your calendar:

- Tompkins County: June 13 & July 11
- Oswego: June 13
- Marcellus: July 12

More details to come at the Open Days website.

<http://www.gardenconservancy.org/opensdays>

Join NARGS

From Bobby J. Ward, Exec. Secretary, North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS), the umbrella organization for our Adirondack Chapter and other NARGS chapters around the continent.

NARGS is for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials. Benefits of membership include: Rock Garden Quarterly with articles on alpiners and North American wildflowers, illustrated in color photographs and pen and ink drawings; annual seed exchange with thousands of plant species; study weekends and annual meetings in either U.S. or Canada; and book service to members.

Annual dues in the U.S. and Canada are \$30, payable in U.S. Funds. VISA/Mastercard accepted. Join on-line at www.nargs.org. Or write: Bobby J. Ward, Exec. Secretary NARGS, P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604, USA.

More 2008 board reports

From 2008 program coordinator, Robin Bell:

Our invited speakers for 2008. were:

- March 15: John Lonsdale, Edgewood Gardens, Exton, Pa on "Woodland Treasures."
- April 19: Hitch Lyman, Trumansburg, N.Y., "Snowdrops."
- September 20: Durand Van Doran, Trumansburg, N.Y. metal artist, "Wrought Iron in the Garden."

- October 18: Jody Payne, rock garden curator, New York Botanical Garden, "The New York Botanical Garden Rock Garden: A Work in Progress Since 1929.
- "November 15: Annual meeting and dish-to-pass. New: Tony Reznicek, curator of the University of Michigan Herbarium who gave two talks, "The Eaves of the World -- Plant diversity in the mountains of western China" and "Collector's plants, or why I grow so many weird (and occasionally ugly) plants."

To summarize, the talks did not include any National speakers for this year as we were well served by these speakers in the last year or two. So these invited speakers covered a variety of topics that were relevant or of interest to local gardeners. Some were local, others traveled some distance. However, they were not all "plant" talks since one of the speakers addressed his production of wrought iron work that was complementary with plants & stonework in a garden setting. Only one talk directly addressed plants to dream about, those exotics in foreign environs, in this case China. This was rather less than in previous years. Finally, we have one talk that addressed plant evolution, a fascinating topic & one that diverged from our usual range of discussion points.

From Gilrein, Plant of the Month (POM) coordinator:

Summary for the year:

- March 2008: Member appreciation and our plants were wildflowers and ferns. We also had plants from John Lonsdale from his Pennsylvania nursery.
- April 2008 POM was ornamental grasses and sedges.
- September 2008 POM was *Heuchera* hybrids.
- October 2008 POM was species tulips, *Tulipa clusiana* 'Lady Jane' and *Tulipa linifolia*.

Our goals for Plant of the Month are to expand our horizons and provide interesting plants. For Plant of the Month, we either offer plants at a subsidized price, either for a single plant or buy 1 get 1 free. When possible we like to coordinate our plant choices with the monthly speaker, and even purchase plants from the speaker, if possible. Suppliers have been cooperative and sometimes we even get a discount on purchasing the plants. The biggest challenge for Plant of the Month is to accurately gauge how many plants to order, due to variable attendance at meetings.

NARGS national going electronic

From Dick Bartlett, NARGS President:

We all know the current times are difficult right now and changes have to be made. We in the leadership of NARGS know making changes are hard when we have been doing things the same way for many, many years. If you think about it, and many of us have, the most influential change in our lives has come about because of the Internet. It is very important for all of us to realize, if we want our Society to survive and grow, it will be because the younger generation has shown us how to use the Internet. For us older people, and I am one of them, we must adapt to it to be current. We also need to pay close attention to announcements concerning the electronic changes to our Society.

An example of these electronic changes was a valuable announcement mentioned on the inside front cover of the Fall Quarterly effecting how we will be replacing inserts. Jane McGary, the Quarterly editor, very distinctly explained the reasons for the changes which comes down to the normal bottom line of cost. If we fail to pay attention to these significant notices we will possibly miss out on our favorite features such as the Seed Exchange. In the Fall Quarterly, there is an electronic change in the Seed Exchange mentioned on page 242. "NARGS Seed List will not be mailed out to all members this year." For further details read your Quarterly or look at "Seeds" on the NARGS website. In other words, the seed list will be on the Internet.

Likewise, there is a different procedure for learning about our upcoming meetings and applications for registration. On pages 309 to 312 of the Quarterly are the announcement and forms for attending "Some Like it Hot!" This is the January 30-February 1, 2009 Eastern Winter Study Weekend held in Reston, VA. The NARGS website also has information on this meeting. As you can see, these pages replace the old color inserts. On the following pages are the same sort of announcement and forms for the Western Winter Study Weekend hosted by the Columbia-Willamette Chapter. "Revitalizing the Rock Garden" is the title of this meeting held in Portland, OR on March 13-15. And it will also be our annual business meeting so it should be an important one.

As President, I cannot take all this space up in giving you all the details about how these changes work or just why we must do them. The important point is that I let you know that they are here or soon to come about. This Extra President column is one example of only many changes we must adjust to. The chapter Chairs and Editors have been informed about the President column on the website and that in about 45 days there should be an additional one. It is hoped the Chairs pass the word about these announcements on to the membership, and that the Editors publish them in their newsletters. But if we are going to bring about these changes smoothly, it is important that everyone spreads the word by mouth. Talk about these

alterations with your fellow chapter members. Tell your gardening friends and neighbors about our NARGS website.

I am pleased to announce we are making great progress on a new NARGS website, and hope it will be operational shortly after the end of March. We have a "pre-prototype" at <http://planethugh.com> for people to view. There will be a lot of text to be filled in, but as can be seen we will be able to have color photographs. Hugh MacMillan (CO) is the website designer with a great deal of experience having created the Penstemon Society Internet site. We recommend you visit that site to see his work. But remember, our website is much larger. And so it is, that change comes, ready or not; but that hopefully our electronic foot print is much improved.

People

- Chair/trips: Billie Jean Isbell, bjj1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484
 - Vice chair/program: Donna Kraft, dkaft@twcny.rr.com, 315 696-8626
 - Secretary: Carolyn Yaeger, cao2@cornell.edu, 607-844-9462
 - Treasurer/Plant sales: BZ Marranta, mmm10@cornell.edu
 - Program: Carol Eichler, ceichler@twcny.rr.com, 607-387-5823
 - Plant sales: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu, 607-342-3660
 - Plant of the Month: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, 315-492-0844
 - Membership: Susanne Lipari sel3@cornell.edu 607-387-9308
 - New member hospitality: Judy Fogel jfogel@twcny.rr.com 607-275-3332
 - Newsletter editor/Webmaster: Craig Cramer, cdcramer@twcny.rr.com
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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: cdcramer@twcny.rr.com. Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be in March.

