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April 2014

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## APRIL 19: BETSY KNAPP ON TROUGH PLANTING DEMYSTIFIED

*David Mitchell, Plant Sales and Steve Dell'Orto/Carol Eichler, hosts*

Betsy Knapp will be speaking on **Trough Planting Demystified**. Betsy is a NARGS member, trough builder extraordinaire, and has been a vendor (selling troughs) and speaker at several NARGS Eastern Study Weekends. She was one of the founders of the Genesee Valley Chapter of NARGS. Her troughs are made with vermiculite as an aggregate and have a distinct finished look. The presentation will include a trough planting demonstration, which will NOT be a workshop or involve participation. She may also bring a few troughs to sell at the meeting. You can check out some of Betsy's planted troughs at [betsyknapp.wordpress.com](http://betsyknapp.wordpress.com). If you are interested in purchasing a trough, you can email Betsy at [eeknapp@rochester.rr.com](mailto:eeknapp@rochester.rr.com).

Join us at 1:00 p.m. on April 19<sup>th</sup> in the Whetzel Room (404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University-map at newsletter's end). Optional bring-your-own bag lunch and social time starts at Noon. Drinks provided. Goodies always welcome for sharing.

To me Spring is a movement, a mighty surging upward. It isn't coaxed from above, but moved from below. The growing things break upward through the crust of chill earth the way a man gets out of bed on a zero morning — gradually, reluctantly, cover by cover, a toe at a time; not because someone has waked him, but because he has accumulated the necessary refreshment of sleep and is ready to go forth and do the day's work.

That day's work may not be anything very strenuous, and yet it has a purpose. The earliest flowers in the garden are usually small flowers — as if Nature herself were putting out a toe at a time — snowdrops, crocus, and scillas. If these can stand it, then she comes out flat-footed on the cold floor of the earth with hyacinths, narcissus, tulips, and iris pumila. Once up, she shivers into a kimono of leafing trees, washes her face with April rains, does up her hair into delightful flowering shrubs, and sallies forth — the vain old thing! — in a gorgeous creation of peonies and German iris and lush green grass." (Richardson Wright, *Truly Rural*, 1922)

## FROM THE CHAIR

*Carol Eichler*

If Harvey Wrightman's beautiful little plants didn't get you excited about the growing season, then surely our April meeting will. Besides offering Plants-of-the-Month from Laporte Avenue Nursery in Colorado and our annual seedling exchange, Betsy Knapp will be coming from Rochester to inspire us to build and plant more troughs. Her talk is quite timely since in May we'll be holding a trough-building workshop. This newsletter contains details about all of this and more.

I for one got my Seed Exchange seeds started late (a little trip to Costa Rica got in the way) but fortunately 8 species have already germinated. Maybe there will be even more by our April meeting.

I'm trying to be patient but the calendar is playing tricks with my mind. Spring conjures up images of early blooming bulbs in my garden and an occasional shirt-sleeve day – neither of which I've experienced yet (as I write this column on the first day of spring).

The two weeks I spent in Costa Rica are now just a memory. It's amazing how quickly I acclimated to temperatures in the 80's and 90's (without much thought to the weather I had left back here). Many of the flowering plants I saw there were familiar, because we grow them as houseplants or potted annuals. So my parting thoughts are to share with you a few photos of that wonderful trip. There is one below and one at the end of the newsletter. Enjoy!



Brugmansia Hedge

**Carol**

## PLANT OF THE MONTH: TROUGH PLANTS FROM LAPORTE AVENUE NURSERY

*John Gilrein*

Our April 2014 POM is a collection of trough plants (with a few exceptions) from **Laporte Avenue Nursery** in Fort Collins, CO. These are all short to very short plants.

One advantage of growing plants in troughs is that it's easy to create a special soil mix for a small environment like a trough. It does not require the tremendous investment that a new rock garden requires, which might potentially require yards of gravel, sand, and tons of rock. For a special trough soil mix, one could simply use bagged sand and gravel. Try for a coarse sand rather than fine sand.

The plants that are content with good drainage (GD) are a better bet for anyone who does not have rock garden or scree conditions, and is not planning on purchasing a plant for a trough.

Regarding sun exposure for Lewisias and Saxifrages: though these might grow in sunny areas in the mountains, they need partial shade in gardens. The higher temperatures and humidity in our low elevation gardens can be stressful; compensation by providing partial shade is recommended. The Lewisias would benefit from minimal summer watering but not getting parched; protection from some winter wetness would be a good idea in a trough also.

Plant	Trough Plant	Sun exposure	Soil Type	Flower color
<i>Aquilegia saximontana</i>	possibly?	S/PS	RG/G D	blue violet/white
<i>Arenaria</i> 'Wallowa Mountains'	yes	S	RG/S C	white but sparse
<i>Armeria trojana</i>	yes	S/PS	RG	pink
<i>Cyclamen purpurascens</i>	*	PS	GD/W	rose
<i>Dianthus</i> 'Nyewood Cream'	no	S	RG	cream aging to pale pink
<i>Hosta minima</i>	yes	PS/SH	W	lavender
<i>Lewisia longipetala</i> 'Little Mango'	yes	PS	RG/S C	yellow/ orange
<i>Lewisia longipetala</i> 'Little Peach'	yes	PS	RG/S C	peach pink
<i>Saxifraga anglica</i> 'Cranbourne'	yes	PS	RG	pink
<i>Saxifraga irvingii</i> 'Jenkinsiae'	yes	PS	RG	pink

### Key to growing conditions:

S = sun

PS = part sun

SH = shade

RG = rock garden soil

SC= scree

GD= good drainage

W = woodland

\* Listed as a trough plant, but I would not recommend it.

Plant of the Month is a member benefit, partially subsidized by your dues, to provide additional encouragement to attend meetings and expand the horizons of our members. The goal is to coordinate the plant of the month to the meeting topic, though sometimes that is not possible. Please send suggestions for Plant of the Month to John Gilrein.



Aquilegia saximontana



Arenaria, 'Wallowa Mountains'



Cyclamen purpurascens

To northern gardeners, this time of year is full of anxious pleasure. Even as they daydream about the botanical pleasures of June and July, ordinary mortals find themselves nearly defeated by the gardening deadlines that pass so swiftly in March. Extraordinary mortals--whose seeds arrived two months ago, whose windows are now full of seedlings, and who are ready to sow peas and carrots the instant the soil thaws--will suffer torments of their own when the perfections they're planning somehow fail to germinate or blossom. A garden is just a way of mapping the strengths and limitations of your personality onto the soil. It would be too much to bear if nature didn't temper a gardener's ambition or laziness with her own unsolicited abundance. ~ Verlyn Klinkenborg, *The Rural Life*, p.33

## APRIL SEEDLING EXCHANGE

*David Mitchell*

The seedling exchange will take place at our April meeting. Bring in your seedlings to share. I'll have labels and plastic baggies on hand. Seedlings are free to members as a benefit of their Chapter membership. Potted divisions will also be accepted and priced for sale or held for the May plant sale. There may even be a bidding table if we get something special!

I'm hoping the seedlings will find good homes and that some will show up on our tables at the May and August plant sales. The seedling exchange is a great way to learn about germination techniques and experiences in growing them on.

Pot up your divisions now for the May plant sale. Please use only soilless potting mix and remember to label every pot.

## MAY MEANS IT'S PLANT SALE TIME

*David Mitchell*

The May plant sale will return to the Ithaca High School on May 17. Sale hours are 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It may be a bit early to dig plants now but once the warmer weather arrives plants will be popping out of the ground and ready to divide for our sale table. We'll be there and so will many nurseries from around the area.

Set up is Friday around 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday beginning at 8 a.m. Arrive early Saturday to drop off plants and help complete the setup. Our booth will be located indoors, exact location to be determined. This year we're asking volunteers to sign up for time slots before the sale. Though this is not a requirement to volunteer, it helps us spread the workload. We'll have a signup sheet at the next meeting or you can email me, David Mitchell, at [dwm23@cornell.edu](mailto:dwm23@cornell.edu) to state availability. We need Friday set-up help, final Saturday set-up (8-9), sales people every hour (especially the 9-10 rush), and clean-up at 2.

Remember to pot your plants in soilless mix and to label each pot in advance (Latin name preferred). I'll bring labels to the April meeting and will have them on hand at the sale setup (though it's preferable, if possible, to label your plants before sale day).

My driveway is available for drop offs any time before the day of the sale if you can't make it to the high school Friday or Saturday morning. The driveway is on the Washington Street side of the corner of Washington and Esty Streets (402 Esty Street). My phone number is **(607) 342-3660** should you have any questions about the sale. Tompkins County Cooperative Extension can be reached at **(607) 272-2292** or [visit the plant sale website](#).

Members receive a 25% discount on their purchases from our table. We'll have a current membership list and 2014 membership forms on hand in case you have not yet renewed for the 2014 calendar year or want to join for the first time. so you may do so at the time of your purchase.

## TROUGH WORKSHOP MAY 31 - SIGN UP NOW!

*Mary Stauble*

We are planning a Trough Workshop on May 31st from 10am to 4 pm at the Stark/Stauble garden in Lansing. We will be building standard hypertufa troughs with the Hi Sand mix that was most popular at the last workshop. The cost of wet hypertufa will be \$0.60 per quart. This is \$0.24/qt less than the last workshop due to the gift of former member Robin Bell's supply of

liquid acrylic. The largest trough at the last workshop required 31 quarts. Most troughs were 5 to 10 quarts. Troughs less than 1 foot can use 1" thick walls. 12" to 24" troughs should use 1 1/2" walls and larger troughs should use 2" walls.

If you plan to come, please sign up at an ACNARGS meeting or e-mail Mary at [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu). When you sign up please estimate how many quarts of wet hypertufa you will need and indicate when you plan to arrive. We hope attendees will spread out over the 6 hour period to prevent congestion.

### YOU NEED TO BRING STUFF

Building troughs is messy and the mix can burn your skin, so wear old clothes and bring rubber gloves. Small troughs can be built over forms while larger troughs should be built inside a form with sloping walls to prevent collapse. If you want to build a large trough with vertical walls, use inside and outside forms. Don't forget to bring a board covered with a sheet of plastic so that you can move your wet trough(s). Plan to use a plastic bag to cover your trough to keep it moist. We'll have tables under a tent on the front lawn so a light rain shouldn't be a problem. You can bring a lunch and eat on the beach. We will supply finger food on toothpicks (your hands will be dirty) and drinks.

Remove the trough from its form after 24 hours. The hypertufa will still be soft and you can use a wire brush and tools to texture its surface or sandpaper to smooth it. Keep the hypertufa damp by sealing it inside a plastic bag and let it cure for several weeks in a shady spot. Then leave it outside in the rain to reduce its' alkalinity before planting.

**Directions:** From 34B in Lansing turn onto Algerine Rd. (towards the lake). After 1 mile turn right on Cedar Cove Rd. Cedar Cove is a private gravel road. There's a small sign set back from the road. Follow Cedar Cove for 1 mile, going right at the two forks. When you're near the lake, look for our green roof and the low Stark/Stauble sign at the top of our driveway.

## CAZENOVIA GARDEN TRIP JUNE 7

*Terry Humphries*

It's a date! We are in the process of arranging a day of garden tours in the Cazenovia area for June 7, anchored around Graham Egerton's gardens.

Graham moved to upstate New York from Baltimore about 15 years ago. An avid (and determined) gardener for many years (he commuted from Baltimore to Philadelphia once a week for years to take horticulture classes at the Barnes Arboretum!!), he despaired about leaving his treasured plants behind, so he trucked them north. Graham had long doubted the veracity of zone designations for many plants, suspecting that speculative hardiness information gets passed and becomes cited as truth. The bet paid off and years later he has a wide variety of unusual plants worth visiting. You will want to have a notebook in hand!

Be sure to mark your calendar now for his must-see gardens and more.

## SEEDS THAT PLANT THEMSELVES

*Nari Mistry*

Folks, you might enjoy this from *Science* magazine, Mar.14, online. **This video** illustrates the action.

### MUSCLES FOR PLANTS:

Plants lack muscles, but findings presented at the symposium showed that for some, surface tension can substitute. "When there's a change in surface tension, you get motion," explains

Rachel Levy, a mathematician at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California. "It creates motion in ways you don't expect."

Consider *Erodium*, a group of flowers whose fruit resemble a bird beak. Inside that beak, each seed develops a centimeter-long awn—a rodlike "tail" that serves two purposes. Initially, inside the fruit, the awn is stretched out. When the fruit dries and cracks open, the freed awn spontaneously coils, releasing its stored energy and sending the seed a half-meter from the parent plant. After the seed lands, the awn winds up during the day and unwinds at night, screwing the seed into the ground bit by bit—a millimeter or so a day.

Kim has found that surface tension drives the process. Normally, surface tension causes water droplets to ball up to minimize the air-water interface, he explains. But when those droplets meet a surface that has a greater attraction for the molecules of water than water itself, they will spread out and wet it. He found that the awns of *Erodium* and of *Pelargonium*, another group of plants with self-burying seeds, consist mostly of fibers of lignin and pectin, both water-loving molecules. At times of day when humidity is high, the fibers quickly absorb moisture. "The wet tissues swell and become straight from [an] initially dry, coiled configuration," Kim explains. When humidity drops, the fibers dry out, the tissues shrink, and the awn coils up again.

Kim mounted seeds from both groups of plants onto a force sensor and increased the humidity to measure the force they generated as they tried to uncoil. He also tested the burying potential of the force by watching awns drive their seeds into "soils" of glass beads of different sizes. The force "is just enough to dig into the soil," Kim reported in January.

## 2014 PROGRAM PLANS

*Mark your calendars! Unless otherwise specified, all local events start with a brown bag lunch at noon with the program following at 1 pm, and take place at the Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (see map on the last page).*

**April 19:** Betsy Knapp, Trough Planting Demystified

**May 17:** look for us at the Ithaca Garden Fair and Plant Sale at the Ithaca High School. Members get a 25% discount! Plan on volunteering for part of your visit.

**August 16:** Members-only plant sale and picnic.

**September 20:** Judy Glattstein, topic to be determined

**October 18:** Mike Kintgen, Rock Gardening, and Alpines of Colorado and Wyoming

**November 8:** John Gilrein, A Tour of Newfoundland

Details as we learn them will be included in future newsletters, our blog, [acnargs.blogspot.com](http://acnargs.blogspot.com), and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

## CALENDAR OF GARDEN EVENTS

**Spring Into Gardening**, Sat. March 29, 9am-4pm, TCCE, one day-event on the theme of Gardening and Climate Change: complete schedule coming soon

**Worm Composting Class**, Sat. March 29, time TBA, TCCE

**Restoring Neglected Apple Trees**, Sun. March 30, 1-4 pm, Akiva Silver, Twisted Tree Farm, register at [akivasilver@yahoo.com](mailto:akivasilver@yahoo.com)

### APRIL:

**Great Trees for Your Landscape**, Wed. April 2, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, TCCE

**Garden Conservancy Open Gardens**, Hitch Lyman's Snowdrops April 5, 10-4, See Garden Conservancy website for details.

**Citizen Pruner Training**, Mon. April 7, 21, and 28, 7-8:30 pm, TCCE, see Earthkeeper for details

**AgStravaganza!** Sat. April 5, 10-3, see Earthkeeper for details

**High-Density Crops for Your Garden**, Tues. April 8, 6:30-8:30 pm, TCCE

**Insect Pests in the Home, and How to Cope!** Tues. April 15, 6:30-8:30 pm, Carolyn Klass, TCCE

**“Giving” Trees**, Akiva Silver, Wed. April 16, 7pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

**Trough Planting Demystified**, Betsy Knapp, Sat. April 19, 1 pm, Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, Wetzel Rm., Plant Sci. Bldg., Cornell

**Beautiful Shrubs & Vines**, Mon. April 21, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, TCCE

**Grow Your Own Spuds**, Thurs. April 24, 6:30-8:30 pm, 4H Acres

**Earth Day**, date TBA

**Compost Fair & 4-H Duck Race**, Sun. April 27, 12-4pm, TCCE

#### **MAY:**

**Keeping Critters out of Your Garden**, Thurs. May 1, 6:30-8:30 pm, 4H Acres

**Gorgeous Perennials for Your Garden**, Tues. May 6, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, TCCE

**Dividing Daylilies & Other Perennials**, Wed. May 7, 6:00-8:00 pm, Pat Curran, TCCE

>>**Garden Fair Plant Sale, Sat. May 17, 9am-2pm – SAVE THE DATE!!!**<<

**Discovering New Life in Great Smoky Mountains National Park**, Wed. May 21, 7pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

#### **GARDEN SHOWS/EVENTS in 2014:**

**CNY in Bloom**, Syracuse, no show in 2014

**Philadelphia Flower Show**, March 2-9, 2014

**Gardenscape Flower Show**, Rochester: No show again this year; sale of the Henrietta Dome dragged on long enough that no show could be planned for 2014

**Plantasia Garden & Landscape Show**, March 20-23, 2014, Fairgrounds Event & Expo Center in Hamburg, NY

**Lilac Festival**, Rochester NY, May 9-18, 2014

**Southern Cayuga Garden Club Garden Tour** (King Ferry area), Sun. June 8, 2014, 1-5 pm (starts at King Ferry Winery with a free tasting with ticket)

**Dryden Open Gate Garden & Art Tour**, Sat. Aug. 16, 9am-2pm (5 gardens for \$5)

**Gathering of Gardeners**, Sat. Sept. 13, 2014, David Culp and Elizabeth Licata, speakers

#### **RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE/2014 BOARD MEMBERS**

*If you want to volunteer, we'd love to hear from you!*

Chair: Carol Eichler, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)

Program: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)

Program Committee Members: Nari Mistry, [nbm2@cornell.edu](mailto:nbm2@cornell.edu)

Secretary: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)

Treasurer: BZ Marranca, [mmm10@cornell.edu](mailto:mmm10@cornell.edu)

Plant Sales Chair: David Mitchell, [dwm23@cornell.edu](mailto:dwm23@cornell.edu)

Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca

Plant of the Month: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu), Karen Hansen

Membership: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)

New Member Hospitality: Terry Humphries, [terryh@workingsolutionsrome.org](mailto:terryh@workingsolutionsrome.org)

Newsletter Editor: Kathy Purdy, [kopurdy@gmail.com](mailto:kopurdy@gmail.com)

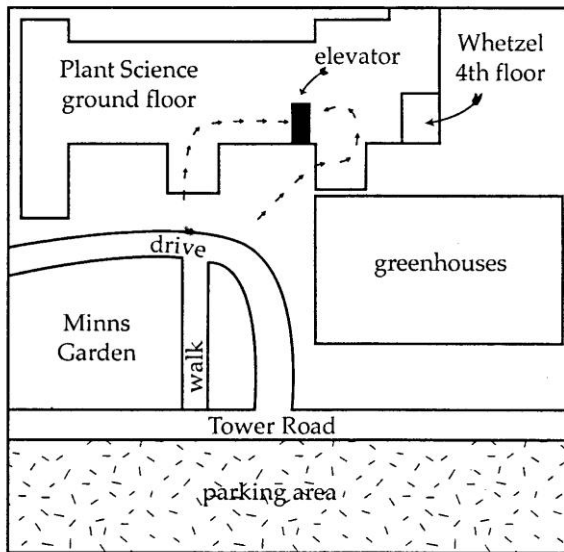
Newsletter Assistant: Pat Curran, [pc21@cornell.edu](mailto:pc21@cornell.edu)

Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, [cdcramer@gmail.com](mailto:cdcramer@gmail.com)



## HOW TO GET THERE: MEETING ROOM MAP

The Plant Science Building is located at 236 Tower Road on the Cornell University Campus.



## 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 Kathy Purdy, [kopurdy@gmail.com](mailto:kopurdy@gmail.com). Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be in May 2014.



Cacao fruit