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Visit our blog: acnargs.blogspot.com

January/February, 2019

FEBRUARY 16: ANNUAL MEMBERS' SHARE

Terry Humphries, Program Chair

[Note: Deadline to submit your presentation to both Terry and Craig is Feb. 9th]

As many of you know, we launch our new year of meetings with a few mini-programs generated by ACNARGS members. We call it MEMBERS' SHARE, an opportunity to learn from each other and benefit from members' photos and experiences. We will do it again this year on February 16 starting at 1:00pm.

Winter days like these are a great time to think of a short presentation you might offer. It might be photos from your garden or botanical gardens that you have visited, green spaces you have enjoyed in your travels, cultivation tips, favorite alpines and perennials, or other botanical topics that may interest the group. You might want to share an experience about building a garden or rock wall to grow special plants. We love to learn about anything and everything related to gardening.

If you do not have digital photos, you could create handouts or a poster of prints. All are encouraged to contribute. We usually allot 10-15 minutes per person, so plan your presentations accordingly. Handouts and tip sheets will be printed if you send them to terryhumphries@gmail.com.

As in the past, Craig Cramer is coordinating the AV details. Here is what Craig writes:

"My goal is to make it easy for anyone who has great images to share to do so easily. Here are the Audio/ Visual (AV) formats you can use for your presentation:

- Preferred: Insert your images into a PowerPoint presentation.

- If you can't do that (I can help you if you have questions), put the images you want to use in a Folder/directory so that they are easily sorted by file name in the order that you want to show them. For example, you could rename your files 01rock-garden-spring.jpg, 02rock-garden-summer.jpg, 03rock-garden-fall.jpg, etc.

You can send the PowerPoint or Folder to me via email at cdcramer@gmail.com and I can check them out beforehand. (If they are too big to send as an attachment, I can set up other ways for you to get them to me from your computer.) Or bring your PowerPoint or Folder full of images to the meeting on a USB ("flash") drive. Arrive early so we can transfer to the computer in Whetzel Room. Questions? Email: cdcramer@gmail.com.

For planning purposes: let us know ASAP your intention to make a short (10-15 min) presentation. Send a brief email to Craig Cramer: cdcramer@gmail.com AND to Terry Humphries: terryehumphries@gmail.com. If you already know the AV format you will use, let us know that too. DEADLINE for Submissions is **February 9**. To make it easier for us to plan the meeting without glitches, please try to send your complete presentation in the above formats to Craig by February 15. Let's have a great show!

Join us at 1:00 p.m. on **February 16th** in the Whetzel Room (404 Plant Science Building, 236 Tower Rd, 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.

FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, ACNARGS Chair

I hope you're drawing some energy and enthusiasm from our winter rest; at least it's a rest from weeding and digging. All that weeding can become overwhelming in a hot and steamy June when everything is growing like, well, a weed. By now though, after a few months of winter, weeding and digging is looking pretty good to me. Winter is also a season of hope and planning. With all the plant catalogs coming in the mail and email, it's a great time to be thinking about plants to add to the garden in 2019.

If you need to take in some green before spring arrives in chilly New York State, flower shows are coming up in Rochester (Gardenscape 2019, March 14-17), Philadelphia (Philadelphia Flower Show March 2-10), and Boston (March 13-17). Sometimes there are bus tours for the Philly show, making it easy to attend. The Philadelphia Flower Show normally has an exhibit done by the Delaware Valley Chapter of NARGS, making it especially enticing for the likes of us. Also coming up after spring arrives is a botanical tour in Greece April 19-30, led by Panayoti Kelaidis of the Denver Botanic Garden, a rock star in the world of rock gardening. For more information, email me or check with colin@thalassajourneys.com. Greece is one of, if not the most, botanically diverse countries in Europe, and NARGS members can get a \$500 discount.

During the dormant season here, evergreen plants are really important to add interest to the garden, regardless of whether there's snow cover or the snow is lacking. Most of the hardy evergreen shrubs and trees here are the conifers, and of course there's boxwood.

If you feel inspired, there are currently a plethora of choices with the smaller conifers (dwarf, miniature, etc.) to fit every landscape, even troughs. Perhaps the most critical consideration is the mature size/growth rate of the plant, although if you want to transplant and/or discard the plant after a few years, the growth rate may not be so important.

Some of the most miniature conifers have a growth rate of an inch or so a year, so a mini tree or shrub of that size won't outgrow its space for many years, if ever. However, a spruce with a growth rate of 4 inches a year could quickly outgrow a trough or its allotted space in the rock garden.

Cold Water Pond Nursery routinely sells at the Ithaca Garden Fair in May (the multi-vendor plant sale, and site of our May plant sale). This nursery has a nice selection of dwarf/minature conifers, some of which are grafted, and it's one of many good sources. Cornell Botanic Garden has a conifer garden on Tower Road, so that's a site where you can see some smaller (though probably not miniature) conifers.

As for boxwoods, the columnar cultivar 'Graham Blandy' that I've trialed here is reputedly hardy to Zone 6. I have lost one, but the other is doing OK with some dieback. A hardier columnar boxwood 'Green Tower' is hardy to Zone 5 and so far I've had no dieback here through one winter season. Littleleaf boxwood, *Buxus microphylla v. sinica*, is hardy to at least Zone 4; I have a few specimens of what I believe is this variety (plants came gratis without labels); one is about 16 inches high by 7 feet wide (really!).

Hope to see you in February for our Member's Share meeting and slide show.

Happy New Year,
John Gilrein, Chair

MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

Time to renew your membership! The ACNARGS membership year runs the calendar year. So, unless you've already renewed or you're a lifetime member (and we do have a few of those), your 2019 membership is due now (Individual @\$15, Household @\$20, Business with business card listing @\$30). If you have not renewed, you will see a reminder message in the email announcing this newsletter.

While it's true that our meetings are free and open to everyone, there are advantages to becoming a member: our members-only plants-of-the-month at discounted prices, 25% discount on May plant sale purchases, participation in the members-only plant sale in August, and participation in the April members-only seedling exchange to name four –

any one of which can easily recoup the cost of your dues. Plus, you become part of our network of eclectic gardeners eager to become better ones.

So why delay? Print and complete the 2019 Membership form here: [join acnargs](#). Questions? Contact Mary at mes2@cornell.edu.

ANNOUNCING THE 2020 NARGS ANNUAL MEETING

If you've been paying attention over the last few months, you'll know...our Chapter is hosting the NARGS Annual General Meeting and Conference in June, June 18-20, 2020 to be precise. The Planning Committee comprised of John Gilrein, Terry Humphries, Marlene Kobre, Steve Whitesell, and Carol Eichler have been busy lining up the agenda and starting to work out the details involved with hosting NARGS members from all over the country, and possibly a few international attendees as well.

We are now ready to make our preliminary plans public. Our logo will be announced soon but for the sake of sending the newsletter out now, here's the information to date. We're hoping for good attendance from Chapter members (with the encouragement of Chapter stipends) and for your volunteer assistance. More about that will be forthcoming as well.

Foresight 2020: Exploration and Innovation
NARGS Annual Meeting and Conference
June 18-20, 2020
on the Cornell University Campus, Ithaca, New York

Hosted by Adirondack Chapter NARGS
Co-sponsored by Cornell Botanic Gardens

While many of the details are still to be finalized, preliminary plans follow:

Evening Presentations:

- Cornell Botanic Gardens staff will introduce various aspects of the Gardens including its twelve theme gardens, the Arboretum, and diverse plant collections. The Gardens encompass over 4,000 acres of natural and cultivated landscape and continue a long leadership role in environmental conservation and education.
- Harry Jans, rock gardener extraordinaire, plant explorer, world traveler and author will deliver two talks over two days, one of which will focus on his recent excursions in South America.
- Kaj Andersen will discuss work performed in the alpine gardens at Bangsbo Botanical Garden in Denmark, working alongside Zdeněk Zvolánek and volunteers to build the world's largest crevice garden.
- NARGS annual meeting and awards announcements will occur on Friday evening.



Field Trips:

- Thursday pre-conference members' gardens will be open for visits.
- Chartered buses will offer two tour options on Friday with each including a moderate hike in one of Ithaca's famed gorges to observe the exposed geology dating back to the Devonian Period. Tours will also include visits to choice private gardens in the area.
- On Saturday, docent-guides will be roving throughout Cornell Botanic Gardens along the twelve specialty gardens located near the Nevin Welcome Center. Travel a bit further afield to enjoy the rolling hills, trails, and specimen tree collections of the F. R. Newman Arboretum, recently voted the most beautiful college arboretum in the U.S.
- Free time Saturday afternoon will allow further exploration of the Cornell campus and beyond; a variety of on- and off-campus options will be provided including other Campus gardens, the Johnson Art Museum, Laboratory of Ornithology, or the Cascadilla Gorge Trail.



Plant Sales: Several specialty nurseries will offer plants for sale on Thursday and Friday.

Registration Fees: Registration fee is estimated to be \$400. General registration will be announced in late 2019 or early 2020, along with the complete Conference agenda.

Meals: Thursday dinner through Saturday lunch are included with registration. Saturday dinner will be on your own (suggestions provided) before reconvening for the closing lecture by Harry Jans that evening.

NEWS FROM NARGS: SURPLUS SEED EXCHANGE; MAY STUDY WEEK-END; NARGS TOURS

Carol Eichler, editor

So much is happening with NARGS these days, it's hard to keep up. Here are some activities of note.

First, the Seed Exchange is happening now. Ordering for first round selections just ended January 31 and members of the New Jersey Watnong Chapter have been filling those orders. Any leftover seed, and there's generally plenty, will be posted on March 1 when the Surplus Seed Round officially opens, running through March 20, with the Wisconsin-Illinois Chapter in charge of filling those orders. It will cost \$7 for every 20 packets ordered for a maximum order of 100 taxa. Just think, the places that seed has travelled to get to your home mailbox!

A NARGS national meeting is happening quite close to us, relatively speaking, on May 2-5, 2019 hosted by the Delaware Chapter NARGS. The theme "Rooted in Diversity" will

celebrate ecosystems near and far bringing together local and global experts. Based at the Sheraton Great Valley Hotel in Frazer, Pennsylvania, a suburb northwest of Philadelphia, the conference officially begins on Friday afternoon and closes by noon on Sunday.

Each day is action-packed with field trips, lectures, a plant show, plant sale, book sale, and the promise of good food and good company. There will also be gardens open to visit on-your-own during Friday morning and Sunday afternoon. With spring reaching its peak there in early May, it is a gorgeous time to visit. Because this is a Study Weekend, there is no requirement that attendees be NARGS National members. If you have never attended a NARGS national meeting, this is a good one to go to since travel costs will be minimal. More information can be found at <https://www.dvcnargs.org/index.html>.

For those who like to plan ahead, think 2020. Not only is our Chapter hosting NARGS' Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference on June 18-20 (information is elsewhere in this newsletter), there is a pre-conference trip planned to the Adirondacks June 15, 16, and 17 and a post-conference trip to the Hudson Valley June 20, 21, and 22. More information is posted on the NARGS website: <https://nargs.org>. Registration has already opened.

FEATURED PLANT: NATIVE RHEUMS FROM CHINA

Terry Humphries

[Editor's Note: In June 2018, Terry joined a NARGS Tours group of intrepid travelers on an 18-day trip to the western reaches of Yunnan Province in China, taking them into the alpine regions. Here's her account of one of the many fabulous plant genera they encountered]. Photos by Terry Humphries.

We encountered at least a half dozen species of Rheum [to which our edible rhubarb hybrids belong] during our treks in Yunnan. They were most remarkable for their range of adaptive strategies for survival at high altitude. Nineteen species of Rheum, or dock, are endemic in China. We saw great quantities *Rheum alexandrae* with its attractive 3 ft. overlapping yellow bracts thriving in



Rheum spiciforme

humus-rich, moist meadows around Tianchi Lake in

the parallel rivers area southwest of Shangri la. Other species such as *R. pumilum* and *R. delavayi*, *R. palmatum*, *R. likingense* and *R. spiciforme* were found either hugging the earth or on the dry slopes on either side of the pass at Hong Shan.



Rheum alexandrae

One of many highlights of our explorations was our first sighting of *R. nobile* or Sikkim rhubarb, the most

noble dock of all. Visible from a great distance, this iconic Himalayan native towers close to 2 meters in height in open scree, growing at elevations above 4000 meters. The plants we saw stood individually, like yellow stupas separating heaven from earth!

We clambered up sheets of large scree to examine the plants, landslides of flat rocks slowing our progress. We had been told that *Rheum nobile* requires sharp drainage, growing in the steepest conditions, but that was an understatement! We had also heard that the locals gather their stems for salads. The precarious climb made us appreciate their determination. And the closer we got, the more amazing and tall *R. nobile* became.



Rheum nobile shown in perspective

Rather than hunkering down to avoid the cold and wind, this extraordinary giant survives the elements by taking the opposite approach. It has evolved a big, bold system of shields, developing its own self-contained, multifunctional “greenhouse.” The tower of hand-sized, translucent overlapping bracts hold in warmth, while allowing in visible light during the short growing season. The bracts selectively filter out germination-inhibiting UV-B waves, and shelter interior blossoms from the high winds and monsoon rains that are common in the eastern Himalayas. Pollinating insects are attracted to the relative warmth of the tiny green flowers inside.

It is said the conical tower of *R. nobile* is grounded by up to 6 feet of root, so an extremely deep, cool root run in a huge space (plus 5 or six years of patience) would be needed to grow this plant. While *R. alexandrae* and *R. palmatum* may be found growing as ornamentals in cultivation, *R. nobile* is probably best admired in its Tibetan home, where it thrives in the unique environment to which it has adapted.

ROCK GARDENING HANDBOOK FOR BEGINNERS

How many of you – our members – have the NARGS publication “Rock Gardening Handbook for Beginners?” in either in paper or electronic form?

We have been sending the electronic version of this publication, to our new members. But we realize many of our long-time members may not own this wonderful publication. It contains rock garden basics to get you started – everything from construction to different soil mediums to plants to grow. It’s always good to review the basics.

We want to make sure every one of our members has a copy of this. Let us know if you do not have a copy and want one. We will place a group order into NARGS after our March meeting.

PRE-ORDER ELIZABETH LAWSON’S PRIMROSE BOOK

Elizabeth, was one of our program speakers last year. She writes:

I wanted to let you know that *Primrose* is available for pre-order on Amazon in this country. The official publication date is February-early March (I have been told dates ranging from February 27 to March 13). I was working through this past October on the Index!

I have decided that the only thing more stressful than writing a book is having it published. I served for a number of years as one of the technical editors for *Ecology*, a journal published by the Ecological Society of America. We often joked, wryly, that the minute we opened a new issue we would see an error. Thus I fear that the minute I open *Primrose* I will see a flaw of my own making. Never mind, one has to be brave-- and then humble in apologizing for one's mistakes.

[Editor's Note: This title will be released on March 11 and is likely to be sold locally at Cornell Book Store and Buffalo Street Books].

UPCOMING 2019 ACNARGS PROGRAMS

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 renovated Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, 236 Tower Road, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

February 16: Member's Share; Feb. 9: deadline to submit your presentation to Terry and Craig

March 1: Surplus Seed Round of the NARGS Seed Exchange opens

March 16: Lee Ginenthal, Der Rosenmeister, "Applying Bonsai Techniques to the Rock Garden or Trough"

March 20: Surplus Round ordering ends

April TBD: Virginia Hildebrandt member Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society, "Flora of Iceland;" Chapter's annual seedling exchange

May 18: Ithaca Spring Garden Fair and Plant Sale; ACNARGS plant sale

October 28-November 8: NARGS Tours "Botanizing Greece." More info: <https://nargs.org/news/2018-09-18/fall-bulbs-greece-tour-2019-registration-open>

May 3-5, 2019: "Rooted in Diversity," NARGS Study Weekend, based at Sheraton Great Valley Hotel, Frazer, PA, a Philadelphia suburb. Hosted by Delaware Valley Chapter NARGS with details in the Fall Quarterly (not yet published) and in this newsletter.

October 28 – November 8: NARGS Tour to Greece. Info: [NARGS Bulbs of Greece Tour](#).

June 18-20, 2020: Foresight 2020: Exploration and Inspiration, NARGS' Annual General Meeting and Conference, Ithaca NY

May 8-11, 2021: International Rock Gardening Conference, Perth Scotland. Start saving your pennies.

As we learn more details of these meetings they will be included in future newsletters, our blog, acnargs.blogspot.com, and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

HAVE SOME/WANT SOME

This is our new monthly feature – a classified section – to facilitate your gardening wants and needs. Do you have too many large pots or want some small pots? Do you have too many divisions (that will otherwise go into the compost)? Are you seeking a certain plant? The idea is to use this newsletter to express your “haves,” things you are willing to share and “wants” for any items you are seeking. To post a request contact Carol Eichler at carolithaca@gmail.com.

HAVE:

No requests this month.

WANT:

Other gardeners to join in possible group orders for mail order plants not available in Ithaca. Order possibilities include Forest Farm in Oregon, Brent & Becky's, Jung, Rare Find Nursery, or other specialty nurseries with unusual plants that you might suggest. Please contact Pat Curran at pc21@cornell.edu no later than Feb. 18th if you're interested.

Panax trifolius and *Asclepius quinquefolia*. Contact Bill Plummer, remmulp@stny.rr.com

CALENDAR OF SELECT GARDEN EVENTS

To have a garden event in your area listed send all pertinent information to Carol Eichler at carolithaca@gmail.com

March 21-24: Plantasia in Paradise flower show, Hamburg NY

April 27: Gathering of Gardeners symposium, RIT Inn & Conference Center, Rochester NY; sponsored by Monroe County Master Gardeners

May 10-19: Lilac Festival, Highland Park, Rochester NY

May: usually the last 2 weekends of May and the first weekend of June, Linwood Gardens Tree Peony Festival, Pavilion NY

Cooperative Extension Horticulture Programs, located at 615 Willow Av., Ithaca. 607-272-2292. Unless otherwise stated, classes require pre-registration and have a self-determining sliding fee scale. More info at www.ccetompkins.org

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society Meetings from 7-8:30pm at the Ithaca Unitarian Church annex (corner of Buffalo & Aurora, enter side door on Buffalo St. & up the stairs). More info at www.FLNPS.org. Plus FLNPS Walks meeting at different times and locations.

Cornell Botanic Gardens calendar of events visit: [Cornell Botanic Gardens Calendar](#).

ABOUT US – ACNARGS

We are an all-volunteer organization and one of thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Our annual Chapter activities include 6 program-speaker meetings, 8 issues each year of the *Green Dragon* newsletter, web and Facebook pages, garden visits, occasional overnight garden trips, hands-on workshops, and 3 plant sales a year. Our meetings are informal, friendly gatherings that provide a wealth of information and offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners. The public is always welcome.

Chapter membership starts at \$15 a year based on the calendar year. Membership includes these benefits: newsletter sent to you electronically (or option by mail for an extra fee), opportunity to travel on our planned overnight garden trips, annual membership directory published in September every year, and plant sale discounts and member only sales, including Plant-of-the-Month sales. Download a membership form here: <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>.

ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at www.nargs.org) for only \$40 a year. Benefits include a yearly seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS National also conducts winter study weekends and holds its Annual Meeting in interesting places where attendees have the opportunity to visit gardens, and take field trips, often to alpine areas, as well as hear talks by outstanding plants people from around the world. More recently, NARGS has been offering botanical tours each year, both within the US and abroad.

2018 BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

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

Chair: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu
 Program: Terry Humphries, terryehumphries@gmail.com
 Program Committee Members: Could this be you?
 Secretary: Vacant
 Treasurer: BZ Marranca, mmm10@cornell.edu

Plant Sales Chair: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu. Seeking a Co-Chair to work alongside David...Why not you?

Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranta, Carol Eichler

Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, mkobre@ithaca.edu

Membership: Seeking someone to do this. Could this be you?

New Member Hospitality: Nari Mistry, nbm2@cornell.edu

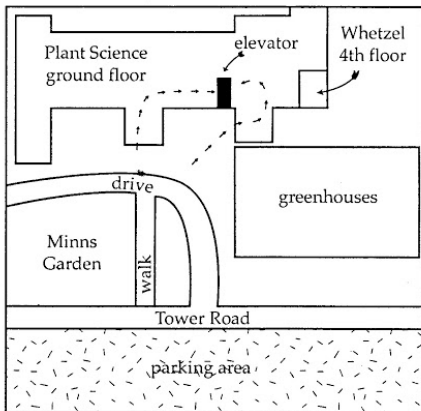
Newsletter Editor: Carol Eichler carolithaca@gmail.com

Calendar: Pat Curran, pc21@cornell.edu

Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, cdcramer@gmail.com

GREEN DRAGON TALES

Published eight times a year (Jan/Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov/Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Carol Eichler, carolithaca@gmail.com. Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be our March issue. The newsletter is always posted and printable each month on our website: www.acnargs.org



Map: Whetzel Room, Room 404 Plant Science Building, 236 Tower Rd., Cornell campus

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH: WINTER!

Photos by John Gilrein



Snow, trees and sky



Grape fern, *Botrychium* sp



Winter Ice