



ADIRONDACK CHAPTER

North American Rockgarden Society

Green Dragon Tales

August/September 2004

Adirondack Chapter

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Letter from the Chair

Greetings all. I hope you are enjoying the fair summer weather we have been having. My challenge this summer has been maintaining my sense of being a rock gardener without actually having a rock garden. I know that many members experience this.

Although I dug many plants from my old garden, I have not built the rock gardens at my new home. So the gems I brought with me were languishing in pots in semi shade on the west side of my house. Not an ideal place for them. So this past weekend I went to work building 10-minute cold frames out of styrene. I was able to get 3 done with an 8" layer of coarse sand, peat, and leaf compost mix. I sunk the pots into this mix, rather than placing the plants into the mix. The mix is actually richer than the soil base they came out of. I don't want my little buns and cushions going into a growth shock and flopping over into untidy and/or unattractive mounds.

Many of the smaller alpi□Ωs I placed into troughs in a sunny location. The appearance of this trough collection is very different from my style of sinking the troughs into the garden as I had done in my old garden. They require more water and more protection from the slugs, it seems. Troughs are a great way to rock garden in small spaces and I am pleased to see that we are offering another trough workshop this year. I encourage folks who enjoy trough making to experiment with the organic portion of the mix. Try using grass clippings, pine needles, finely ground glass chips, dried flower petals (they can create a dye effect), ground dried leaves, old potpourri, shredded cardboard, etc. Instead of synthetic fiber I have recently used animal/human hair, dried burdock and old kite string. I have a very rustic section in my back yard and I made a few troughs with shredded tree bark, tinted it with a bit of brown dye, used more cement mix and less vermiculite and I love the chunky, rustic, unfinished look in the wild wooded lot. We'll see how they survive the winter frost though.

As I have worked to get my new gardens going, I have spent many hours reflecting on the Chapter, our accomplishments, hopes for the future, and my role as we move forward. I have been an active member of the chapter for over 8 years and I have learned much from everyone. I have enjoyed the activities and the obligation of being a member. I have taken on responsibilities

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on the board and enjoyed each immensely. I have organized and enjoyed projects, worked on community events, corresponded with other chapters, and visited many member's gardens. But, my life has gone through a major change in the last half year and I find that I am struggling to adjust and rebalance my life. I apologize that my struggle has impacted the chapter and my availability over the past few months. In November I will have completed my 2-year term as Chapter Chair. I will step down and ask that a new chair be elected.

Please, each of you consider what you can do to add value to the chapter. Look to fellow members and talk to them about what you or they might do to add value to the chapter as a board member. Discuss your suggestions with any board member. This year we will need to fill the positions of Chair, Program Chair (see Anne's recommendations for the role), Member-at-large, and potentially other positions. If you are interested in a board position, I recommend that you talk with the current board members to determine the responsibilities, the time commitment, and the fulfillment that you may find in the role. To remain a strong and growing chapter, we need members to volunteer for the board.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.



*Michelle
Jones-Ham*

NARGS Expedition

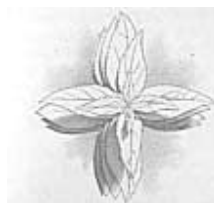
I will be leading the first NARGS trip to South Africa next February. This will be a midsummer trip (in South Africa that is) and my co-leader will be J.P. Roux, the head of the Compton Herbarium at Kirstenbosch, the National Botanic Garden of South Africa. Dr. Roux was the dynamo who led me on my very first exploration of the Drakensberg mountains in 1994. He was once the Director of the Drakensberg Botanic Garden, a fabulous public garden and is a keen horticulturist as well as fountain of knowledge of this fabulous region. These mountains are a major center of biodiversity: over 7000 species of plants occur on their summits and in the foothills surrounding them, and February is high summer.

Participants will see hundreds of bulbs, kniphofias, eucomis, rhodohypoxis, dieramas, and no end of scenery in the great mountains of South Africa. You can get more information and find out all the details about the trip at

<http://www.geostartravel.com/Drakensberg2005/Drakensberg05.htm>

Those without access to the worldwide web can call Geostar tollfree anywhere in North America: 800-624-6633.

Panayoti Kelaidis



August Plant Sale

The August Plant Sale will be on August 21, 2004.

This year, will will be at KPL on the Cornell Campus, our usual plant sale location.

Arrive around 8 AM to set up your plants. We start the sale at 9 AM.

To make sure your plants look their best and contribute to a best ever result for money raised at the August plant sale, please make sure you dig your plants up ASAP if you haven't done so already.

Directions: Since Tower Road may still be closed, take Buffalo St. from downtown up to campus, then instead of turning left and right again as you usually would to get to Plant Science or to KPL, go straight on Campus Road, turn left on Judd Falls Road, right into Tower Road (it is open at the East end) and then take the first legal left turn into the KPL driveway.

Donating plants

I love plant sales. I think they are a great way of acquiring plants that have been donated by local gardeners and so will most likely do well in this climate. I also love the fund-raising aspect of them. But I have a bit of a pet-peeve about some of the donated plants.

People shopping at a plant sale or an organization's sales table at a plant sale should be able to trust that the plants offered there are good plant material and not invasive. *Phalaris* (ribbon grass), *Sedum acer*, *Sedum album*, *Lysimachia* in many of its forms (*L. nummularia*, *L. vulgaris*, *L. clethroides*), many of the mints, the regular *Convallaria*, some of the *Adenophoras*, some of the *Campanulas* that spread by runners.. in short, any plant that can only be eradicated by using Roundup liberally should not be offered at a sale. As members of a plant society we should be taking the educational aspect of membership seriously. Selling an invasive plant to a possibly brand new gardener who trusts that the plants (s)he buys from us (or that we buy from each other) will not cause us to tear out our hair (along with the plant) in just a few year's time is not fair. Let's make a distinction between a good groundcover and an invasive plant. I have been battling *Sedum acer* and

Sedum album in my rock garden, the ordinary *convallaria* (not the pink or the variegated forms!) and the ordinary *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* (not the cultivar "Herman's Pride") in my shade garden, and gooseneck loosestrife wherever I planted it in the garden because I thought it (and still do!) so beautiful. I have almost succeeded in eliminating *Campanula punctata* and *Campanula glomerata* in the garden, although I love them as groundcovers along the property edges.) I have been battling ribbon grass for 15 years, in spite of having used Roundup on it, and I am resigned to weeding out *Myosotis* - the careless gift of an experienced gardener to me, a brand new one - for as long as I live. I am sure others have similar stories. So, please before donating a plant to either of the Chapter plant sales, ask yourself a few questions:

1. Is the plant hardy here? If not, you can still donate it, but please mark it on the tag.

2. Have you had the plant for at least 3 years so that you know if it is a happy spreader or an invasive plant? If not, please ask somebody. Any plant you think of donating in a big grocery bag rather than potting it up might be in the latter category.

3. If you had the plant you are planning to donate and it suddenly died out in your garden, would you

buy it again, or would you thank your lucky stars that it disappeared? Donate the former, leave that latter at home.

4. If you know cultural conditions that turn a plant thug into a good garden citizen, go ahead and donate it, but go to the trouble of writing that information on each plant tag. We have all bought plants and not remembered, when we finally found time to plant them, if this was the one that needs to be in a dry spot not to be invasive or the one that needs a wet spot to survive. Most garden books won't give that information - we need to provide it to our fellow gardeners.

Finally, if you have donated a plant experienced gardeners consider to be invasive, and they ask you to please take it back home with you and not put it on the sales table, don't be offended. We all have made the mistake of loving a plant for its vigor one year only to curse it a couple of years later. Some of us are even embarrassed about having passed such plants along to our friends before realizing that we were not doing them a favor.

So keep donating the plants you love - not the ones you love to hate!

Susanne Lipari

TROUGH WORKSHOP

August 14th at 9:30 am – limited to 15 participants

Register for the trough workshop as soon as possible via email (bjil@cornell.edu) or by phone 607- 539-6484). It will be held at my house: **4534 Valley Rd. Brooktondale, NY 14817.**

All who register will receive driving directions. The cost of the workshop is \$25 for two troughs, 35\$ for three. In your email, please indicate how many troughs you plan to make and the size of each trough so we can estimate needed material.

Billie Jean Isbell

While you were picnicking . . .

It was with mixed loyalties on such a lovely Saturday that I chose to skip the Chapter picnic on July 10th in favor of visiting The Garden Conservancy's Open Days in Tompkins County. For the first time ever six area gardens were featured among a rising number of 500+ participating gardeners, who open their gardens to visitors while helping to support both The Garden Conservancy and local causes. As it turned out, three of the six gardens in the County had significant rock gardens so I wanted to use this space to make mention of them. All three gardeners happen to be Chapter members too!

My first stop was along Taughannock Boulevard just a short jaunt from my own house – a garden which I get intriguing, 45 mph glimpses at on my daily commute to work. This is the garden of David Geiger and John Lamb which is literally built into the side of a cliff.

Stairways lead to the multilevel beds and to Cayuga Lake far below. Right away I was enchanted by the variety of cactus plans situated among the stones – boulders, really and obviously thriving. As I proceeded along the steep walk down to the lake I passed a variety of woodland plants and hosta as well as a greenhouse packed with orchids and other tropicals and some wonderful sculptures. At lakeside the ground levels off and opens up to sunshine. There were lots of botanical gems tucked in along natural or man-made rock crevices and a bog garden. (I

only wish I had taken photos or even notes) The challenge of this garden is the battle with nature to stabilize the steep bank where landslides can and have obliterated planted beds. On the brighter side, I was told that deer are never a problem in their garden.

Garden #2 took me all the way to the Spencer countryside where a covered bridge, built by this gardener, literally connects Tompkins County to Tioga County across the natural creek boundary. The bridge and other built items are the handiwork of Wayne Myers. Wayne admits to a



lifelong interest in gardening and stonework and he has spent the past 23 years expanding on that interest to create 3 1/2 acres of flower beds containing more than 600 varieties of perennials and stone walls everywhere to define his 35-acre expanse. It is perhaps the “bones” of these gardens that are most impressive – and his eye for recycling and reusing found objects including some wonderful stone and fossil specimens. The most impressive stonewall reaches a height of 9 1/2 feet (with a six foot base), rising to create a circular patio, wrapped by a stone

stairway, and, on the top, a seating area (though I can't imagine Wayne having time to sit down) and a one-of-a-kind sundial, made from stone, of course. The patio took three years (if my memory serves me), 56 tons of stone, and all of \$4.65 for him to build. Other features include the gazebo, 20-by-40 foot mill, waterwheel, and “the fossil” house. This structure was built to display an extremely rare glass sponge fossil, a species of *Uphantania* that Wayne found on his property. All I can say about the fossil is “wow! go see it for yourself.” Wayne welcomes visitors by arranging with him directly at 607-589-4572. To quote a friend, “this place is not just a garden, it is a destination.”

Lastly, my travels took me again to David Mitchell's and Scott Heald's garden in downtown Ithaca. This garden never ceases to amaze me. It surely has to take the award for the most variety of materials and variety of beds – everything from rock garden to acid berm, pond, patio and arbor, to woodland and sunny borders and one of the most artful vegetable gardens I've ever seen all within a small downtown lot. They've really made every inch count with carefully selected herbaceous and woody plant material. Always a delight and ever-changing, I had visited this garden during the Chapter's garden tours of Ithaca just three weeks earlier. Yet each time I notice something new and inspiring to savor. If you didn't get to the Chapter tour this summer, or even if you did, think about a visiting this garden by contacting David at 607-316-2916

Carol Eichler

July Picnic at Chickadee Farm

Many thanks to Jerry and Carolyn Yeager for hosting the chapter picnic



on a very hot July day. Unlike the garden tours a couple of weeks earlier, with most plants tweaked into their best showing, this was a chance to see an evolving landscape on a

large scale. Chickadee Farm is the Yeager's 40-acre cabin property in Dryden, with ponds, streams, bogs, loads of trails, and intriguing industrial-era ruins. The lunch under the pond-side cabana (next to the sand beach Jerry hauled in one day) featured amazing strawberry shortcake, a joint effort with rum cake topped by locally picked strawberries and homemade ice cream. Yum!

We were treated to a tour of the pond - excavated by Jerry and hosting

a number of native and introduced species at the edges. We munched on loads of wonderful raspberries while listening to the saga of the bog garden. The critters at Chickadee Farm are reputed to be extraordinarily intelligent and persistent, pushing Jerry and Carolyn to heights of inventiveness to prevent the dismemberment of tiny *Drosophylla*, *Sarracenia*, etc. The latest effort (3rd?), a small raised island totally surrounded by wire mesh, seems to be working – the plants are reproducing and no one has gotten past the barriers. A section of a natural bog that has been planted with wild rice has native flowers blooming above the rice seed heads. There is even a sap house for boiling maple sugar, with tubes running hither and yon up the hills.

I want to particularly thank Jerry and Carolyn for their efforts to ease the visit for less agile folks. The main parking spot had a radio link to bring

Jerry for truck-shuttle duty, transporting people to and from the picnic site as desired. They arranged lots of shade and tables, and somehow the mosquitoes didn't find us. If you missed it, you missed a quirky and personal landscape. But maybe they will volunteer again, I'm sure there will be dirt to move, things to build, more to see in the years to come.



Rosemary Parker

September Event : Stalking the Wild Orchid

September 19, 2004. Brown bag lunch at noon, lecture at 1 PM.
Room 404 Plant Science, on the Cornell campus

Our speaker for the month of September will be William Mathis of The Wild Orchid Company. His company produces and sells a variety of terrestrial orchids from North America, Europe, and Asia, all ones that are hardy in southeastern Pennsylvania. (Terrestrial orchids are those that grow in the ground, as opposed to many from the tropics that are



epiphytic on trees, and include lady slippers as well as several other genera.)

His presentation is titled "Gardening with Hardy Terrestrial Orchids: "Indoors and "Out" and will be an overview of the cultural requirements for successfully growing terrestrial orchids. Over ten species will be discussed

include orchids that grow in upland, wetland, and transition habitats.

On his website, www.wildorchidcompany.com/ you will see Cypripediums for sale as well as *Dactylorhiza*, *Pogonia*, *Spiranthes*, *Habenaria*, and *Bletilla*. Come and learn if you can create the right conditions to add these rare and wonderful plants to your garden.

Anne Klingensmith