



# ADIRONDACK CHAPTER

*North American Rock Garden Society*

## *Green Dragon Tales*

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

March 2005

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### *LETTER FROM THE CHAIR*

March Greetings!

Maybe it was cabin fever or the good weather for a February day. Maybe it was because the *Ithaca Journal* ran our meeting notice. Maybe it was the topic (a topic only rock gardeners could love!). Maybe it was none of these reasons or all of these reasons. All I can say is what a way to start off our Chapter year with near record-breaking attendance.

Did anyone count how many? Ken Hover's talk was packed with information and humor. Most of all, it made me realize how much there is to know about concrete and gave me plenty to think about when making my next trough. For those who weren't able to attend, we are starting a new feature in each *Green Dragon* by offering an article that hits the highpoints of our speaker's presentation and we'll also post more info on the website ([acnargs.org](http://acnargs.org)) when appropriate. (See "Concrete for Troughs: It's not that hard," in this issue.) Discussion is also underway about fitting a trough-making workshop into our program year so stay tuned.

I was also encouraged by the interest shown by many of you over growing from seed. I look forward to seeing many of the seeds that were distrib-

uted at the meeting return as beautiful, leafy young plants for our April seedling sale.

Next month promises to be another excellent program with our own Robin Bell speaking. (See "Trilliums and Other Spring Ephemerals," in this issue.) He is always so thorough with his presentation and willingly shares his vast knowledge of plants. We should also have the opportunity to view some wonderful plant photos.

And there's more! We will be offering a complimentary plant to all paid-up 2005 members – new and renewals – as our way of saying thank you for your membership. This may be a not-so-subtle reminder for you to renew your membership now, but we also believe it's a great way to get growing.

Look through this issue of *Green Dragon* for articles that expand on the subjects I've merely had space to mention here. See you March 19. Please bring your gardening information to share.

Happy Gardening,

*Carol Eichler*

***The folks who make it all happen***

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***March 19 Meeting:***

**Trilliums and Other Spring Ephemerals**

At our March 19 meeting Robin Bell will show slides from two trips that he took last year – one to the south of the U.S. and one to the south of the globe!

On the way to the national NARGS meeting in North Carolina last spring, Robin spent some time in Pennsylvania and Delaware as well as the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. He will show slides of spring ephemerals of this region, but particularly of the trilliums seen on the way, including the naturally pink form of *T. grandiflorum*

Bell spent half a day at a wildflower preserve on the Susquehanna River that has an unusual population of hybrid *T. flexipes/erectum* plants. He also spent an afternoon visiting the garden of Dr. Jim-McClements, a renowned collector of woodland plants and visited several other gardens near Asheville, N.C.

In October, Robin traveled to the south island of New Zealand and met up with a newly formed trillium group and toured many gardens around Christchurch. "We only saw trilliums in gardens as there are no native trilliums there," reports Bell. For nearly 100 years, New Zealanders have grown West Coast species, including *T. chloropetalum*, which had virtually naturalized in some gardens. So had other plants considered difficult to grow, notes Bell, including *Meconopsis*, *Cardiocrinum* and gentians.

**Plants of the Month** will feature a selection of Hellebores from member Ellen Hornig, owner of *Seneca Hill Perennials*. Members in attendance will receive a free plant. (If you haven't yet renewed, you can do so at the meeting.)

The meeting will be in the **Whetzel Room, Plant Science Building, Cornell University**. Board meeting at 10 a.m. Brown Bag lunch starts at noon and the talk at 1 p.m. Colette Menasian is bringing refreshments

*Anne Klingensmith*

## February meeting follow-up

### *Concrete for Troughs: It's not that hard*

True, he didn't have any slides of flowers to help drive away the midwinter blues. But Dr. Ken Hover's presentation on concrete still attracted a full house (and many new faces) to our first meeting of the year on February 19.

"Mr. Concrete," as he's known, didn't disappoint. The Cornell professor of civil and environmental engineering gave a humorous, engaging and energetic – as well as informative – talk.

Over the years, I've built half a dozen or more troughs, following various recipes with mixed results. Hover demystified the process. He helped me understand why some of my previous attempts failed and will make my future efforts more successful.

When you make concrete, you are basically making artificial rock, Hover pointed out. The process involves taking aggregates (such as sand, gravel or crushed stone) and binding them together with an adhesive (most commonly portland cement).

In the case of hypertufa troughs, lighter aggregates such as peat, vermiculite or perlite replace some of the sand or gravel in the mix. There are also other binders and additives you can use to change the properties of your final product, including epoxies, polymers and latex.

Some key points that I took home include:

**Curing is key.** I never paid a lot of attention to curing. That's a big mistake. While wet, the cement forms crystals that interlock, much like Velcro. That's what holds the aggregates together. If the mix dries too fast, the final product will be weak. Cover your projects with moist burlap and/or plastic. Mist them often. You need the moisture to drive the cementing reaction. You don't want the moisture blowing off in the breeze.

**"Solid as concrete" is a misnomer.** As the water reacts with the cement, it leaves tiny air pockets within the concrete. This porous structure relieves pressure and helps resist breakdown during freezing and thawing.

**Jacket weather ideal.** Warm temperatures speed up curing. But if curing goes too fast, the result can be weak concrete. On the other hand, freezing temperatures shut down curing. Free water in the mix can freeze and cause the concrete to fall apart. "Jacket weather" is good concrete weather.

**Wear gloves.** I usually start out with cheap disposable gloves that invariably fall apart before I'm done. That's another big mistake. Most aggregates are abrasive and the concrete mix using portland cement is dangerously caustic (pH 13 or more). Next project, I'll invest in some good rubber gloves.

**Plywood forms work well.** But you may need to paint them or spray them with vegetable oil to seal them so your concrete mix won't stick to them.

**Lighter aggregates.** Perlite and vermiculite likely make longer-

lasting hypertufa mixes than peat because their mineral nature resists breakdown. Peat, being an organic, is likely to degrade sooner, though it has a track record of working well in lightweight mixes for troughs and similar projects, Hover notes. Just don't expect it them to last as long.

If you want to try your hand at concrete or hypertufa projects for your garden, I highly recommend any of several books by Sherri Warner Hunter, including *Making Concrete Garden Ornaments* and *Creating with Concrete*. An Internet search for "hypertufa" will turn up many sites with recipes and instructions.

*Craig Cramer*

#### **Free Plants at March Meeting**

Members attending the March 19 meeting will receive a beautiful Hellebore, our Plant of the Month and one of my favorite plants that announces that spring is here. (If you haven't renewed your membership, you can do so at the meeting.)

At our April 16 meeting, we will be selling hardy heaths and heathers from Rock Spray Nursery to accompany Lee Nelson's talk on the subject.

*Billie Jean Isbell*

## April Meeting Preview: Heaths and Heathers, Seedling Sale

At our April 16 meeting, horticultural consultant Lee Nelson will speak about the culture of heaths and heathers. Nelson also teaches horticulture classes at Broome Community College, and worked for 19 years as horticulture educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County, where she was curator of the Cutler Botanic Garden. In her own garden, she grows antique roses and raises the famous Barnhaven primula from seed.

Appropriately enough our April Plant of the Month program will feature heaths and heathers for sale from Rock Spray Nursery, Truro, Mass.

If that weren't enough, the April meeting also includes our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Seedling Sale. You'll find a good selection of healthy young plants for sale – easy-to-grow, unusual, irresistible, rea-

sonably priced, or all of the above. Prices will start at 3 seedlings for \$2 – more for more advanced plants.

Support the Chapter by participating in this fundraiser and our first of three annual plant sales. Bring your extra seedlings to donate for the sale and/or come prepared to purchase plants from others. Mature plant divisions are also welcome and will be priced separately. (Please bring seedlings and divisions in separate pots with separate labels!)

**Note the location of the meeting:** Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave. (where Dey St., Willow Ave., and Rte. 13 meet). Setup begins at 11 a.m., brown bag lunch at noon, and lecture at 1:00 p.m. The seedling sale begins after the lecture (approximately 2:30) and ends promptly at 3:30.

*Anne Klingensmith*

## NARGS Annual Meeting

The Newfoundland Chapter of NARGS is hosting the Annual Summer Meeting, July 14-17, 2005, St. John's, Newfoundland, and you're invited. What better way to see this wonderful Canadian province up close and personal?

The weekend promises many interesting talks and speakers that will help you learn about the province's native arctic-alpine flora. No questions about hardiness here. Daytimes are spent on garden tours to view local coastal headlands, barrens, and peatlands.

One of the tours will be to the third largest seabird colony in eastern North America, with 300-foot cliffs and alpiners to boot. Pre- and post-conference tours of gardens in and around St. John's will also be available. More information is available at

<http://nfldrockgardenociety.homestead.com/Introduction.html>.

## Member Meeting Displays: Who's next?

We have so many talented gardeners who have so many great photos that the chapter thinks it's about time we take advantage of you, in a good sort of way, at our meetings. The chapter has purchased several inexpensive cardboard display boards to permit a member or two to share at every meeting whatever he, she, they, or we are anxious to show the world.

I kicked off the process at our last meeting, highlighting on a display board one of the raised, rockscaped beds I work with, this one dedicated to conifers and broadleaved evergreens. I felt fame, if not fortune, had found me at last.

I also passed along two spare display boards to Peg Ross and Alice Davis, the board members who are organizing our June garden tours. They will do a display for the next two meetings to whet appetites for the gardens we'll visit in Greene.

My big question now is, Who's next? Don't be modest. We would love to see pictures of your garden and hear more about what you're doing. Chapter glory is but a display board away. If you want to be added to queue or have questions, see me at a meeting, call me at 607-748-3984 or email me at [gerdman@binghamton.edu](mailto:gerdman@binghamton.edu).

*George Erdman*

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



## 2004 Year-end Treasurer's Report

by Carol Eichler

As required in the Chapter By-laws, we must publish an annual Treasurer's Report. As you review the figures below, note that 2004 was another strong year financially.

Revenue	Actual 2004
Membership	\$770.25
Plant Sales( Total Plant Sales)	\$2,419.25
POM (net)	\$144.60
Seedling	\$177.00
Garden Fair	\$1,345.65
Aug. Member	\$752.00
Other Sales Net (books, labels, etc.)	\$45.00
Workshops (net)	\$175.04
Interest	\$6.17
Donations-Wilkinson Memorial (brought forward)	\$125.00
<b>TOTAL Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,540.71</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Communications-Newsletter/web	\$164.75
Program/Speaker	\$1,253.50
Wurster Garden	\$84.73
Plant Sales & other sales expenses	\$60.00
Supplies	\$32.98
Hospitality Supplies	\$79.41
Insurance	\$148.13
Member Benefits . . .	
Premiums and Awards	\$385.00
Other (Handbook)	\$115.83
Other - Wilkinson Memorial	\$375.00
<b>TOTAL Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,699.33</b>
<b>Other Net Income over Expenses</b>	<b>\$841.38</b>
CFCU Accounts:	
Checking	\$618.57
Savings 1 (Wilkinson Memorial)	\$853.46
Savings 2 (Reserves)	\$2,117.05
Community Foundation	\$17,272.05

## Volunteers Needed

Program Coordinator: Per Anne Klingensmith's announcement at the February meeting, we are looking for a Program Coordinator to serve for 2005 and 2006. This is a new position, as we have changed the responsibility of setting up the chapter's programs from a single person to a committee.

While the title may sound daunting, the job will not be difficult for someone who is relatively well-organized and likes to work with others. And for this year, at least, the program planning responsibilities are covered. Of the four meetings for which this person would be responsible (February, June, August, and November), others have assumed leadership for 2005. (Thank you's to Anne Klingensmith for organizing February and June, Debi Lampman for organizing August, and Krys Kail for November.)

So volunteering this year is a good way to "break-in" to the job. We also invite the Program Coordinator to serve on the Chapter's Board. If you are interested in finding out more about this position, please talk to Carol Eichler in person, or phone 607-387-5823, or email

[cme24@cornell.edu](mailto:cme24@cornell.edu).

Carol Eichler

Please visit the Adirondack Chapter website at

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

## Programs at a Glance

Mark your calendars. Here's the tentative program line up for the rest of 2005:

**March 19:** Meeting speaker: Robin Bell on Trilliums and other Spring Ephemerals. (Whetzel Room.)

**April 16:** Meeting speaker: Lee Nelson on Heaths and Heathers. Seedling sale. Cooperative Extension, Ithaca.

**May:** Plant Sale Fundraiser, Ithaca High School.

**June 11:** Garden tours in Greene and Binghamton.

**June 25:** Work session and brown bag lunch at Wurster Garden, Cooperative Extension, Ithaca.

**July (date TBA):** Workshop (topic to be determined)

**Aug. 20:** Member Plant Sale/ Picnic hosted by Debi Lampman, Bedlam Gardens, King Ferry.

**Sept. 17:** Meeting speaker: Harry Jans from the Netherlands. (Whetzel Room.)

**Oct. 15:** Meeting speaker: TBA. (Whetzel Room.)

**Nov. 19:** Annual Meeting & Lunch. Members share tips on overwintering plants in pots. (Whetzel Room.)

Updates and more information: [www.acnargs.org](http://www.acnargs.org) and in the Green Dragon newsletter, published eight times a year (Feb., March, April, May, July, Sept., Oct., Nov.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Craig Cramer:

[cdcramer@twcny.rr.com](mailto:cdcramer@twcny.rr.com).

*Craig Cramer*

## June 11 Garden Tours in Greene and Binghamton

Visiting other people's gardens is fun! It's a break from your own garden chores and you can rationalize the time spent by saying that you are researching ideas and information for your own use.

We are currently organizing a tour for Saturday, June 11. It will feature three great gardens in the Greene, N.Y., area plus the Cutler Botanical Garden about 17 miles south of Greene in Binghamton. Watch for profiles of the gardens in upcoming issues of the *Green Dragon* and at [www.acnargs.org](http://www.acnargs.org), as well as logistics and directions.

Thinking ahead, we would like to encourage people to check the box on the membership form that asks if your garden is open to visitors. The comments most often heard on this subject are: "I'm just now constructing my garden," or "My garden is a mess." What better source for ideas and suggestions for formation and development of your garden than from experienced gardeners and fellow chapter members who have perhaps already been down that road? From the standpoint of the visitor, who doesn't like to be in on the birth of a new garden or renovation of an old one? It's almost like starting over on one's own without the aching back.. Also, for the visitor, it's a great venue for new ideas of design, plant combinations, cultural information, introduction to new cultivars, and general networking of people with like minds.

In addition to visiting member gardens, we are looking for sug-

gestions and ideas for visiting gardens (both private and public) and nurseries that are outside our general area. One suggestion has been an overnight trip to the Philadelphia area. If we can't arrange a group tour we can post information on the website and people can plan their own trips.

And plans are being made to go to Readsboro, Vermont, Thursday, June 30, to visit the North Hill Gardens of Joe Eck and Wayne Winterrowd. That may be an overnight trip. It takes longer to get there than we first thought.

Please contact us if you're interested or have ideas and feedback.

*Peg Ross*

([pogr@aol.com](mailto:pogr@aol.com), 607-656-4237)

*Alice Davis*

(607-656-9931)

## Other Events

March 20: Tompkins County Master Gardeners' Winter Garden Slide Show – **Toronto and the Royal Botanic Garden**, Hamilton, Ontario, 2:00-3:30 p.m., Tompkins County Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Avenue, Ithaca. More info: Pat Curran, (607) 272-2292 or [pc21@cornell.edu](mailto:pc21@cornell.edu).

April 28 to May 1: American Primrose Society's **National Primrose Show & Convention**, Boyleston, Mass. More info: (914) 533-2661, [www.americanprimrosesoc.org/meetings.htm](http://www.americanprimrosesoc.org/meetings.htm)

June 28 to July 8: **Fern Tour of the Central Piedmont**. More info: [www.bps2005.org](http://www.bps2005.org).

## Overwintering troughs

What do you do to help trough plantings make it through the winter? Here are a few tips from Adirondack Chapter members.

"I leave mine out, and hope the winter sends snow," says George Erdman, Endicott, N.Y. "When the snow looks like it's kind of thin, I may shovel some more on top, just to keep things covered and protected from the sun. I also put wire over some to thwart the deer."

Protection from sun and drying winds is important, agrees David Mitchell, Ithaca, N.Y. "I leave my troughs outside in the snow, but move them behind the cold frame out of the winter sun and winds," he says. "My *Dryas octopetala* in the trough out-lived

one I had in my rock garden. So just having a trough sometimes is the only way I can keep certain plants."

In snowy Syracuse, John Gilrein makes the most of the cover, sometimes from November through March. He relocates troughs raised on rocks to ground level, and shovels snow around them if the snow isn't deep. "After the troughs are well covered in snow, I forget them for a while," he says. "This winter has been a little tougher with some single-digit temperatures without snow."

Carol Eichler, Ithaca, N.Y., places her troughs in a sheltered, 12-foot-wide spot between her house and garage. "There, they

are exposed to snow but not much sun," she says. "I do keep an eye on thaw days for heaving. And lacking snow, check moisture content and make sure there's no standing water on the surface. I don't seem to lose plants when there's been snow pack – more when we lack snow and get a sudden cold spell.

"One mistake I made was to bury the troughs one year," she adds. "Some of them fell apart."

Have more ideas? Email them to Craig Cramer at

[cdcramer@twcny.rr.com](mailto:cdcramer@twcny.rr.com).

*Craig Cramer*



## ADIRONDACK CHAPTER

*North American Rockgarden Society*

### Membership Form

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Address 2 \_\_\_\_\_

City : \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:  Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

new member

renewal

Individual life time

family membership

family life time

nursery

Please fill out and include your check for \$10.00 for an individual, \$150 for individual life time, \$15 for a family, \$225 for a family life time, and \$25.00 for a one year nursery membership and send to:

Carolyn Yaeger, 400 Irish Settlement Road, Freeville NY 13068

Please visit [www.acnargs.org](http://www.acnargs.org) for a more detailed membership form to download

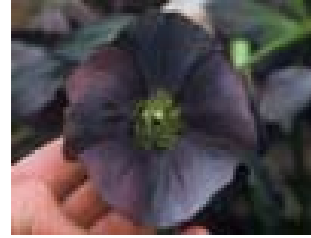
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