



ADIRONDACK CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

April 2005

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Have you become a joiner? With much of the program year ahead of us, if you haven't taken a moment to send in your 2005 membership dues, I hope you'll do so now. At \$10 (\$15 per family) per calendar year it's quite a bargain.

Membership does "have its privileges," such as the 25-percent discount on plant purchases from our May plant sale booth and many more. More importantly, your membership supports the future of our Chapter – because without members we cease to exist. You help support our mission and become part of a group of plant enthusiasts who enjoy gardening, want to become more knowledgeable and want to share with each other.

Our focus is on small plants, alpine and others suitable for rock gardens and naturalistic plantings of meadow and woods. However, many of us are eclectic gardeners who simply enjoy new challenges. In other words, you don't need to be a rock gardener to become a member.

Now is the time to renew your membership!

Speaking of which, I wanted you all to become aware – especially since it seemed to be a surprise

to the recipient herself – of the lifetime honorary membership our Chapter has bestowed on BZ Marranca. Our Chapter Board voted to recognize BZ in this way as a way to thank her. Her name should be familiar to Ithaca area residents, perhaps less to those of you beyond. BZ lives and breathes plants as a one-time horticulturist with Cooperative Extension and now assists Nina Bassuk with the Urban Horticulture Program. She's one of the original founders of Plants for Life and continues to be a mover and shaker for that astounding community benefit on behalf of the Ithaca Breast Cancer Alliance each fall. She also runs and operates a listserv for gardeners, which in its own right has become a great resource. In conjunction with that she coordinates group orders for seeds and plants. Thanks BZ! We appreciate all that you do.

As I write this, snow still covers most of my gardens. Let's hope by the time you receive this, our weather has started to act more spring-like 'cause I know we're all itching to get our hands dirty.

Happy Gardening!

Carol Eichler

Please visit the Adirondack Chapter website at

www.acnargs.org

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April 16 Meeting Heaths and Heathers and Seedling Sale

You won't want to miss our April 16 meeting, which will feature a great program and our 4th Annual Seedling Sale, as well as heaths and heathers to purchase. Here's the skinny:

Note the location: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave. (where Dey St., Willow Ave., and Rte. 13 meet). If you need directions, visit

www.cce.cornell.edu/Tompkins

or phone (during regular business hours): (607) 272-2292.

Note the tight schedule: Setup begins at 11 a.m. If you are donating plants for the sale, please bring them between 11 and noon for pricing and set up. (See seedling sale details below.) Bring a brown bag lunch and enjoy the company of your fellow gardeners between noon and 1 p.m., when the presentation will begin promptly. To facilitate our tight schedule, time for announcements will be set aside beginning at 12:45. The seedling sale begins right after the talk and ends promptly at 3:30 so we can clean up the space before the next group needs the room. If you can stick around to help with clean up, it would be greatly appreciated.

Lee Nelson on Heaths and Heathers: We are privileged to have Lee speak to us about the culture of heaths and heathers. Lee is a private horticultural consultant who also teaches horticulture classes at Broome Community College. She worked for 19 years as horticulture educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County, where she was curator of the Cutler Botanic Garden, which features a section of heaths and heathers. (Lee's presentation is an ideal way to prepare for our June 11 garden tour, which will feature a stop at Cutler Botanic Garden.)

Heaths and heathers for sale. Appropriately enough, Billie Jean Isbell, our Plant of the Month coordinator, has ordered a selection of 48 heaths and heathers in 4 inch pots from Rock Spray Nursery, Truro, Mass., including lime tolerant plants. They will be available for purchase as part of the plant sale following Lee's presentation.

Heather varieties will include 'Allegro', 'Flamingo',

‘Spring Torch’, ‘Jimmy Dyce’, ‘Alba Jae’, ‘Green Cardinal’, ‘E. F. Brown’, ‘Wickwar Flame’, ‘Carmen’ and ‘Anthony Davis’. Heath varieties will include ‘Joyce Burfitt’, ‘Furzey’, ‘Mary Helen’, ‘Lyonesse’, ‘George Frazer’, and ‘Anne Sparkes’. Preview them online at www.rockspray.com.

Seedling Sale. If that weren’t enough, the April meeting also includes our 4th Annual Seedling Sale. Thanks to members’ contributions, we anticipate a good selection of healthy young plants for sale—easy-to-grow, unusual, irresistible, reasonably priced, or all of the above. Prices will start at 3 seedlings for \$2—more for more advanced plants.

You can help support the Chapter two ways: 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.

To help make the sale go smoothly, please bring seedlings and divisions in separate pots with separate labels. (And please bring them between 11 a.m. and noon for pricing and set up.) If you have seedlings in six-packs, for example, please cut them up into separate cells before the sale. Don’t worry if your seedlings are small. Some chapter members who are well-equipped will grow on some of the seedlings for sale at our table at the May 14 plant sale at Ithaca High School.

If you have questions about plant sales, please contact David Mitchell, our plant sale coordinator: dwm23@cornell.edu or 607-342-3660.

Great Greene Gardens Slated for Tour June 11

Our June garden tour program this year will feature three great gardens in Greene, N.Y. (about 40 minutes east of Ithaca, 20 miles north of Binghamton) in the morning, then a stop at Cutler Botanic Garden in Binghamton in the afternoon. (If you enjoy Lee Nelson’s presentation on heaths and heathers at our April meeting, you can see some up close and personal at Cutler.)

Look for complete logistics and directions in the May issue of the Green Dragon, or on our website (www.acnargs.org). Meantime, here’s a preview of what you’ll see.

Yellow Cottage Gardens

Sharon Davis started her “Yellow Cottage Gardens” six years ago incorporating perennials from a previous garden when moving to her present location. The original stone walls on the property provide an inspiring backdrop for peonies, lilies, monarda, roses, and lily of the valley along with other perennials. She transformed the smaller front yard into a shade garden featuring hostas and a crimson cutleaf Japanese maple. Stone pathways added in the backyard area leave only a



Ornamental grasses in Sharon Davis’s garden

small yard space. There you will find small Asian trees, iris, peonies, lilies, old roses, astilbes, shrubs and a scattering of evergreens against a backdrop of mature trees. In July, both front and back give way to more than 20 ornamental grasses, one of Sharon’s passions.

Girtons’ Gardens

The Girtons’ garden is a combination of annuals and perennials interspersed with recycled architectural elements. Creative, colorful and whimsical floral displays will keep you smiling at every turn of the path.



Friendly faces will greet you at Girton’s Gardens

Continued on next page

Shirley's Rock Garden

Editor's note: 86-years-young, Shirley Halwig has an infectious gardening spirit. Here, she tells the story of her garden in her own words. If you're in the Greene area in late May, be sure to take her up on her offer to stop in when the primroses and creeping phlox are in their prime.

by Shirley Halwig

This would be more aptly called a "stone" garden as the final area involved was too steep to use anything of a size that could be called "rocks." This garden is along a bank on the upper side of our main drive. Back in the early '50s, my daughter had a small area about 3 by 6 feet as a 4-H project and you might say it was a beginning.

As for myself, over the years I laid in a few fair-sized stones from my grandfather's old chicken coop along the lower edge of this bank along the drive and out to a dug-out turn-around by the road and put in some candytuft, a few sedums, two blue Rug Junipers and grass pinks. The rest of the bank was populated only by a pole lamp and an evergreen euonymous which bore bittersweet-like fruit, bunch grass and various seedlings from neighboring trees, mostly locust. Impossible to mow and a real jungle. A complete thorn in my side!

In the spring of 1990, I said to myself, "If I don't do something with this mess this year, I never will." And so it began. With the help of a grandson and his buddy – boys of an age where boys like nothing better than to be whacking at something with an axe – we began. We chopped out roots, dug out some sizeable stones that once in the late 1890s were part of the foundation of a cooper shop which stood at the top of the bank in my grandfather's day, moved dirt, gathered stone from an old stone wall down back and wherever the cows would kick up some in the lane at the back of the property.

It was necessary, on the part near the road, to make narrow terraces for planting beds and hence the use of smaller rocks and small stones, or there would have been no room for plants. Starting at the bottom, I worked my way up. The farther up I went, the

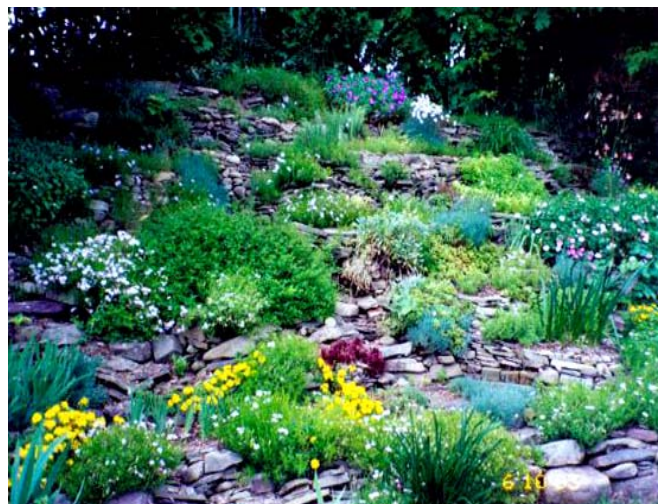
smaller became the stones. Their sole purpose was to retain the soil long enough for sedums, pinks and various other plants to get a toe-hold and do that job themselves. Most of them are still there along with many additions and they have done their job well.

At the top of the bank, there were two 100-year-old maples along the property line, and I put some junipers between them and along down the slope. They eventually made a nice windbreak and planting background. One of the maples succumbed to disease several years ago and half of the other split off in last fall's high wind.

Over the years I have continued making improvements and additions and now, because of the loss of half of the last tree, I made more changes last fall. I'm anxiously awaiting for spring to see what has prevailed and how new plantings will do. By the time of the tour we shall see.

To continue my statement of the beginning in 1990, truer words were never spoken, for that following winter I spent a good deal of time in the hospital and a few times since as well. However, my "stone garden" and several other beds have been the best of therapies and the time spent working in them my greatest joy.

See you all in June, I hope, and then you can see for yourselves. Of course, anyone wishing to see the creeping phlox and primroses at their peak, the last two weeks in May are usually great. Just give a call and "Come on Down!" 607-656-8712



A rocky slope at Shirey Halwig's

Heath and Heather Tips

Editor's note: Membership coordinator John Gilrein offers these tips on heaths and heathers. A selection of these plants will be available for purchase at our April 16 seedling sale.

Heaths (genus *Erica*) and heathers (genus *Calluna*) are members of the family Ericaceae, which generally need acid soil. Both prefer well-drained, sandy, humus-rich soil and a sunny site. If your soil doesn't fit this description, it's worth amending it with sand (quartz play sand is available at many hardware stores) and peat moss or other acidic compost. (I suggest amending with 50 percent of each).

Erica carnea and *Erica x darleyensis* (an *Erica carnea* hybrid) are lime-tolerant and hardy to Zone 4, so these are probably the best choices for those of us with alkaline soil. Heaths and heathers are best unfertilized or fed sparingly, as they are used to growing in relatively nutrient-poor soils.

If you're unwilling to live with the limitations of the soil conditions in your garden, like me, you could try my experiment. It's working so far, but one growing season is too short to pronounce the experiment a resounding success. Since my pH 7.5 soil is unsuitable for some of the small ericaceous shrubs I'm growing, I've

created soil from sand, peat moss, and potting soil and planted the shrubs in plastic pots with drainage holes.

After planting, I sunk the pots up to rim in the garden, surrounded the pots with garden soil and mulched the pots. Good mulches are pine bark and pine needles. A well-drained planting medium is important as the plastic pot will inhibit air exchange. Good drainage is also essential at the planting site to avoid lime rich water backing up into the pots. So far this has been successful with a rhododendron and an andromeda. This year I'm going to try this with a heather.

John Gilrein

May Plant Sale Just Around the Corner

Every year, we have a table at the plant sale at the Ithaca High School. This year's extravaganza will be May 14. Our purpose is twofold: To help educate the public about rock gardening and to raise money to help support our speakers and other programs.

We need your help again this year, either donating plants or helping to staff the table. Our table has gotten quite a reputation over the years as the place to come for

interesting plants that you won't find elsewhere at the plant sale. That's because generous members during their spring garden maintenance have divided and potted up plants of interest (or started plants from seed) for sale at the event.

Chapter members receive a 25-percent discount. So stop by the table while you're at the sale, and bring a friend. They can join at the sale and receive the discount.

If you have plants to donate, please contact me so that we can arrange to get them to the sale. If it's convenient, you can drop them off at my house in Ithaca. It's 402 Esty St., corner of Esty and Washington St. My driveway is on Washington St. If you have other questions about plant sales, don't hesitate to ask: dwm23@cornell.edu or 607-342-3660

David Mitchell

Container Workshop July 16 We will be having a container planting workshop July 16 near Binghamton, N.Y. Look for details in the May newsletter or online at www.acnargs.org.

March meeting follow up:

I garden because I'm constantly amazed by the diversity of flower and foliage forms in the plant kingdom. Ex officio board member Robin Bell's presentation at our March 19 meeting reminded me that you don't need the whole kingdom to be awed. A single genus will do.

Bell took us on a visual road trip, retracing his travels last year from Pennsylvania through the Blue Ridge Mountains to North Carolina, and later on to New Zealand. While Robin focused on trilliums, he punctuated his presentation with other spring ephemerals he encountered on the way.

In Pennsylvania, Robin saw wild woodland populations of trilliums in nearly solid stands. "The range of variation is what excites me," he noted. In one area, perhaps one flower in 50,000 was solid red, sticking out like a sore thumb in a sea of white blooms. But the more subtle effects of genes for red flowers were expressed here and there, with some flowers speckled, dusted or bulls-eyed with reddish tones.

Awed by Trilliums

As Robin continued south, he observed even more variation in gardens and in the wild:

Trilliums standing the full 18 inches or so most of us are familiar with. Trilliums closely hugging the ground.

Trilliums holding their flowers high above the leaves or tight to the foliage. Trilliums with their flower stalks tilted at odd angles.

Trilliums with modest blooms, as well as outspoken double-flowered trilliums. Trilliums with spectacularly mottled foliage that you'd be happy to grow even if they never flowered.

"I don't know why we don't grow them more," Robin wondered. "It wouldn't be difficult

at all to breed more garden-worthy varieties."

We need only look to New Zealand to see what the results might be. There are no native trilliums there. But around 100 years ago, several of our West Coast trilliums (most spectacularly, *T. chloropetalum* and *T. chloropetalum* var. *giganteum*) were brought to the islands.

Over the last century, gardeners appear to have selected for different flower colors and leaf variegation patterns, although no one really had a solid understanding of their genetics. Most of the forms seen were not named or propagated as individual plants, noted Robin.

While they remain nameless, the trilliums Robin saw thriving in the cool, maritime climate of New Zealand's South Island sported an incredible variety of foliage marbling patterns and flower colors, ranging through reds and pinks to yellows and bronze. Hopefully such specimens will awe us in our own woodland gardens sooner rather than later.



T. cunetaum at the Botanical Garden at Asheville

Craig Cramer

Vermont Garden Road Trip

The trip to North Hill Garden in Readsboro, Vt., has one car with four people going. If anyone else would like to go and meet us there, it would be a pleasure. Again, you must make your own reservations online. Go to www.aidsprojectsouthernvermont.org/events/nhgt_tickets.html

Four reservations can be made in one name. Our tour is on June 30 at 1:20 and as of March 25, there were 10 spaces left at that time. All the information you need is on the website. I understand that there is a fantastic planted wall on the grounds with a "host of tiny treasures." If you have questions, contact me at: pogr@aol.com or 607-656-4237.

Peg Ross

Wandering the Web

Finally, on March 18th, I have flowers in my garden. I went out into the gardens this morning and enjoyed seeing some harbingers of spring doing their best to put on a little show.

It is delightful to see dozens of *Galanthus* cultivars, four or five sorts of *Eranthis*, *Cyclamen coum* from Ellen Hornig with a myriad



of leaf forms as well as bloom, and *Helleborus tibetanus* in bud. Even more exciting is seeing some of the Adonis, ordered from Peter's



Nursery in Germany, with friends last winter, producing buds. It has taken over twenty years for me to find species other than the more common *Adonis amurensis*.

Photos of various Adonis can be found at the Edgewood site shown below as well as at Peter's website.

The sight of these blooms in my garden reminds me of all the wonderful sites on the web I enjoyed

perusing over the winter. There were so many, it made it difficult



to choose any for this little column. I am going to list a few of



my favorites and hope you will look them up and enjoy them as well.

If any are from retail nursery sites, please do not take my listing them as comment one way or the other on the quality of plants you might order. We all know that some nurseries provide great plants at reasonable prices and others do not.

Some sites, such as Edgewood, John Lonsdale's superhuman site, are repeat listings as the creators of these sorts of sites change and add many new photos over time.

Edgewood

(John Lonsdale)

www.edgewoodgardens.net

I simply cannot believe one

person can have so many plants and successfully grown. We simply must go down for a visit some day.

Arrowhead Alpines

(Bob and Brigitta Stewart)

www.arrowhead-alpines.com

Almost 1,600 images and all grown on site, even if not all for sale. Uniquely arranged by color, which I find helpful. After all, if you know your plants, you can use the search for species, etc.

Peters Nursery

(Jurgen and Susanne Peters)

www.alpine-peters.de

This website is terribly difficult for me to negotiate and the plants, what with shipping are very expensive. However, the wealth of plant material (300 gentians, hepaticas reduces one to tears) makes the trouble take very rewarding.

Hosta Library

hostalibrary.org/donatenew.html

Yes, there are rock garden sized hostas. However, I know for a fact that some of you grow large numbers of hostas and hope that you don't lose the labels that I do. This is an invaluable site for planning future purchases and identifying the plants missing their labels.

I hope you enjoy these websites as much as I have. If you have any you would like to share with others, please do send them along, either as an article or for me to include in this little column.

Marcia Brown Meigs

Program committee update

Billie Jean Isbell has agreed to serve as workshop coordinator as a member of the newly-formed program committee. So far this year, a container planting workshop has been scheduled for July 16th. There has been interest expressed for at least three others including a trough workshop, propagation workshop, and digital photography workshop. So, this new responsibility is guaranteed to keep Billie Jean busy! Billie Jean already serves as our plant-of-the-month coordinator and as a member of the Chapter's board of directors. Thank you Billie Jean!

Billie Jean's stepping forward to accept this role has filled a big gap in our new, "many hands make light work" approach to programming. But we're still looking for someone with good organizing skills to head-up the program committee comprised of Anne Klingensmith, Peg Ross, Alice Davis, Debi Lampman, and now Billie Jean, and to assume the coordinating role for our four non-speaker meetings each year. Contact Carol Eichler for more info: cme24@cornell.edu or 607-387-5823.

Carol Eichler

Work party at Wurster

Mark your calendars. We'll be having a work party at Wurster Garden, June 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please join us for weeding, dividing plants, brown bag lunch, and socializing.

The garden is located at the Tompkins County Cooperative Extension office, Willow Avenue, Ithaca. The garden is actually kitty-corner to the Cooperative Extension building and can also be reached from Dey Street (312 Dey Street). Please call Anne Klingensmith if you need directions: 607-256-9308.

The Wurster Garden was built and planted in 2001-2002 and there are many plants there that are ripe for editing or dividing. Come and see many rock garden gems, get your hands dirty weeding, get answers to your most difficult rock garden questions, enjoy the company of fellow rock gardeners!

The party will be postponed only if it is raining heavily. aekling@lightlink.com
607-256-9308

Anne Klingensmith

Events by other organizations

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

May 15: **Garden Conservancy Open Garden Day**, Tompkins County.
www.gardenconservancy.org

June 12: **Fall Creek Garden Tour**, Ithaca

June 18: **Garden Conservancy Open Garden Day**, Tompkins County.
www.gardenconservancy.org

June 28 to July 8: **Fern Tour of the Central Piedmont**.
www.bps2005.org

Sept. 10: **Plants For Life Sale** to support the Ithaca Breast Cancer Alliance
www.ibca.net/plantsforlife/

Latvian Bulb Order

Peg Ross, our garden tours coordinator in Greene wants everyone to know that Kathy Purdy is organizing a group order from Janis Ruksans' Bulb Nursery in Latvia. Ruksans offers corydalis, colchicums, fritillarias and other plants that you won't find anywhere else "unless you plan to climb the East Bozkirian Mountains of Turkey yourself," according to *Horticulture*. There's also a chance Ruksans will be speaking at one of our programs in 2006. For more information, contact Kathy directly at: kathy@coldclimategardening.com or 607-692-3413.



ADIRONDACK CHAPTER

North American Rockgarden Society

Membership Form 2005

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City : _____ State:____ Zip:_____

Date: Phone: _____ Fax: _____

new renewal Individual Individual life family family life nursery

Have you joined NARGS national?

Is your garden open for visitors?

Would you like to help? (Please circle below and/ or give details)

Hospitality: Host a picnic Host a speaker Provide transportation Make phone calls

Newsletter: Write or solicit articles draw pictures provide photos

Events: be a speaker (subject)_____ suggest a speaker (who?)_____

other suggestions _____

Would you like receive the Green Dragon (our newsletter) as

paper copy as a PDF file attached to an an email providing you with a link to

Please remember that you can always print out the electronic version of the newsletter if you prefer not to read it while sitting at your computer. Sending it electronically is easier and cheaper for the chapter and makes it possible to include color photos and linksto great garden sites, which will not be

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

607-844-9462 cao2@cornell.edu

2005 Program at a Glance

April 16: Heaths and Heathers.
Speaker: Lee Nelson
Seedling sale.
Cooperative Extension, Ithaca.

May 14: 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 16: Container planting
Workshop

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

....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@twcnny.rr.com.

Printed Matter

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