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CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

www.acnargs.org

March 2006

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Change of plans for March 18 meeting: 'Cold-Hardy Roses ...'

At our upcoming meeting on **Saturday, March 18**, Lee Ginenthal, owner of the local hardy rose nursery, Der Rosenmeister, will present "Cold Hardy Roses for the Finger Lakes." The meeting will be held in the Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, on the Cornell University campus. Bring a bag lunch and socialize starting at noon. The program will begin at 1 p.m.

Please note the new date. Originally, we had planned to meet on Sunday to hear world-renowned Latvian bulb expert Janis Ruksans. Unfortunately, Janis broke his leg and had to cancel his trip to the United States. Thanks, Lee, for filling in at the last minute for Janis. And we wish Janis a speedy recovery and hope we can host him on his next trip to the U.S.

While details haven't firmed up at press time, we're hoping to have *Cyclamen coum* from Ellen Hornig's Seneca Hill Perennials in Oswego, N.Y. as our Plant of the Month.

Anne Klingensmith, Speaker Coordinator

Mark your calendar: 2006 Programs at a glance

- April 22 – Robin Bell on his trip to Patagonia, Argentina. Seedling sale.
- May 20 - Plant Sale, Ithaca High School.
- Spring/Summer activities - TBA. Plans and possibilities include early spring garden tour, Wurster Garden work party, annual picnic and members-only plant sale, workshops (rock wall building, trough construction, propagation), garden/nursery tours and more. Look for details in future issues of *The Green Dragon*. We welcome additional ideas. (Contact a board member. See People section below.)
- Sept. 16 - Maria Galetti of Alpines Mont Echo, expert grower of extraordinary alpine and rock garden plants from Quebec.
- Oct. 21 - Program TBA.
- Nov. 11 - Annual Meeting and dish-to-pass.

Look for more details on these events in future issues of *The Green Dragon* and on our website: www.acnargs.org

Time to renew your membership

If you haven't already renewed your membership, please fill out and return the 2006 membership form included with this newsletter. (It's a separate attachment with the emailed version.) Questions about your membership status? Contact: Carolyn Yaeger, Treasurer, cao2@cornell.edu or 607-844-9462.

Carolyn Yaeger, Treasurer

Want to read more about rock gardening?

If you can't read enough about gardening, I could use some help. As editor of *The Green Dragon*, I receive newsletters from other NARGS chapters across the continent. There's a great spirit of sharing between most of the newsletter editors. See for example, *Epimediums and Friends* on page 4, reprinted from the Minnesota Chapter newsletter.

The problem is, I don't have time to read through all the newsletters I get to identify articles that might be of value to our chapter's members. If you'd like to read some of these newsletters and flag interesting articles, let me know and I'll forward some to you. (Email: cdcramer@twcny.rr.com) For those of you without computers, I'll bring hard copies of some newsletters to meetings.

Keep in mind, too, that this sharing between chapters is a two-way street. I'd love it if more of our members would share their expertise through our newsletter so that other newsletter editors can tap our knowledge and share it with members of their chapters.

Craig Cramer, Newsletter editor

Letter from the chair

Greetings AC-NARG-ers,

We got off to a good start on the year with a good turn-out at our February meeting in spite of the cold and blustery weather we were having. Harry Jans' DVD proved to feature some wonderful shots of alpiners with a backdrop of mountains and a bit of humor and cultural context thrown in. The Chapter has purchased this DVD and it is available for our members to check out. I highly recommend doing so since the colors on the "big screen" were pretty washed out compared to the quality when I viewed it at home on my television. (Craig Cramer says he'll start bringing a higher-quality projector than the one that is installed in the Whetzel Room.)

Just today as I was preparing for work I heard a story on NPR about a group of international ethnobotanists who are cataloging the alpiners in China's Yunnan province, in the Himalayas at 16,000 feet. It was a fascinating story about how they plan to return in ten years to track the effects of global warming on the distribution of alpiners as an indicator of species survival. This area has to be close to the places viewed on the DVD, though I don't think Jans' trip went nearly as far as East or as high in altitude. If you want to check out the story, here's the link: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5222199>

Thanks to all who shared thoughts, photos, etc. at our annual members share meeting. I'd like to extend a special thanks to Bill Dress for the books he offered as door prizes and to our Greene contingent for bringing wonderful refreshments!

Alice and Peg shared ideas for **garden trips** this year. The first excursion will likely be to Rick Lowenstein's garden outside of Walton. Some of us visited his garden a few years ago and are I'm sure are ready to re-visit his place. It is inspirational. We are also planning a long day trip to Syracuse and Oswego to members John Gilrein's and Ellen Hornig's gardens for starters. Lastly, they are proposing an overnight venture to the New England Wild Flower Society's Garden in the Woods. Stay tuned as the dates and details are set.

As the saying goes, "the best laid plans of mice and men, often go awry." The speaker that NARGS "National" had lined up for us this month, Janis Rucksans, will not be available. He broke his leg (one could only imagine it may have caused by his relentless pursuit of an elusive mountainside alpine). So please take special note of our new program plans this month.

Have you started your seeds for the April seedling sale yet? The gardening season has begun.

See you March 18.

Carol Eichler, Chair

Epimediums and Friends

Editor's note: *This article originally appeared in the March 2006 issue of Minnesota Rock Plant Notes, the newsletter of the Minnesota NARGS Chapter. Cheryl Philstrom, the newsletter's editor, generously shares her report from a January 21 meeting where Steve Kelley, proprietor of Kelley & Kelley Nursery in Long Lake, Minnesota, shared his appreciation for, and knowledge of, the genus Epimedium.*

Having lived in Minnesota, I can tell you that it's generally much colder and somewhat drier than what we face here in New York. The southern half of the state is solidly in Zone 4. And while this winter in Minnesota has been more like what we face here, the ground generally freezes and stays frozen – often with relatively little snow cover in early winter.

Want to help identify articles from other newsletters for possible inclusion in The Green Dragon? Write me: cdcramer@twcnny.rr.com – Craig Cramer



Epimediums in Marcia Meigs Garden in Ithaca, N.Y.

History: The name *Epimedium* comes from the Greek plant epimedion, meaning "upon Media" (probably a reference to the ancient empire of Medes). The Greek herbalist Dioscorides spoke of epimedions in the 1st Century A.D. as medicinal plants, which may or may not be the plants we know today. Epimediums are native to Western and central China, Japan, Korea, Southern Europe, North Africa, Eastern Russia and Western India. None are native to America. They are members of the Berberidaceae (barberry) family of plants along with *Jeffersonia* (Twin-leaf), *Podophyllum* (Mayapple), and *Caulophyllum* (Blue Cohosh).

Structure: Flowers have outer sepals, inner sepals, and petals, and sometimes have spurs. Wiry stems hold coiled leaf growth. Grandiflorums have huge flowers and are very hardy.

Flower colors: White, yellow, purple, rosy shades, and bicolored. Some Epimediums have profuse bloom in April-early May, others bloom in June, and some are recurrent bloomers.

Culture: Plants can be long-lived (40 to 60 years) and carefree if they are hardy and grown under proper conditions. The genus spreads by woody rhizomes just beneath the soil surface and has numerous fine roots. Epimediums are either clumpers (increase 2 to 4 inches per year) or spreaders (increase 8 to 10 inches each year and grow like a groundcover). Delicate light green leaves, often bronze in spring, can turn green later on or vice versa with cool weather in fall.

Epimediums grow in open woodlands, on the edge of deep shade, mossy banks, thickets, and in Japan they are found on open cliffs. Plants thrive with moderate, cool temperatures in moist, well-drained soils and enjoy morning or dappled light. They do not grow well as a groundcover under pine trees. Leave mulched leaves or aged manure on year-round and keep soil loose and well-drained.

Plants don't need frequent division - wait a few years after planting, and divide in early spring as new growth emerges. Leave foliage on to over winter, and cut it in early spring before new growth emerges. They do not set a lot of seed, and that seed doesn't necessarily come true. Steve Kelley lets the seed drop and germinate in the garden.

Epimediums have no special diseases or pests, however, if you see mottled, disfigured leaves on a plant, there is 'talk' of this being a host for the Tobravirus (Tobacco mosaic virus) that affects Hosta.

Propagation: By seed: Let seed fall at base of plant in garden. By division: Lift plant from garden, wash soil off roots, tease plant apart, keeping 2 or 3 buds on each division. You might have to clip the divisions apart from the original source plant.

Species: There are a limited number of species available:

- *Epimedium cantabrigiense* (*E. alpinum* x *E. pubigerum*) - Two-toned red and yellow flowers on 18-inch stems. This species is evergreen.
- *Epimedium grandiflorum* - Very floriferous yellow, rose, violet, or white flowers, 10-inch bloom spikes. Cultivars: 'Lilafee' (lavender-violet) or 'White Queen' (large white flowers).
- *Epimedium perralchicum* - Profuse yellow flowers. Cultivars: 'Wisley' and 'Frohnleiten'.
- *Epimedium rubrum* (*E. alpinum* x *E. grandiflorum*) - Leaves have reddish cast in spring, flowers are crimson and pale yellow.
- *Epimedium versicolor* - Leaves can be mottled or entirely bronzy in early spring, flowers are a coppery rose and yellow.
- *Epimedium warleyense* - This is a naturally occurring hybrid and has a 'clumping' growth pattern, flowers are a coppery red fading to a salmon yellow.

Companion Plants: *Hepatica* and ferns are good companion plants, as well as gingers, bloodroot, Maidenhair fern, *Aruncus*, *Astilbe*, *Tiarella*, *Heuchera*, *Pulmonaria*, *Primula*, and *Thalictrum kiusianum*.

E. rubrum blooms for weeks in spring. *E. youngianum* can grow in tight spots or on slopes along rock steps. Try growing Epimediums at the base of taller Mayapples or *Brunnera*. Steve Kelley suggests lining a garden path with

Epimediums. *Corydalis lutea* seeds around nicely and its 4- to 6-inch delicate, ferny foliage complements Epimediums. Both plants grow well in light shade. Additional companion plants to consider: *Dicentra* 'King of Hearts' (long bloom period), *Anemonella* 'Cameo', and *Heuchera* 'Silver Scrolls'.

Sources of Plants (not comprehensive):

- Ambergate Gardens - www.ambergategardens.com, 952-443-2248
- Arrowhead Alpines - www.arrowhead-alpines.com, 517-223-3581
- Busse Gardens - www.bussegardens.com, 763-263-3403
- Garden Vision - home.earthlink.net/~darrellpro/
- Heronswood Gardens - www.héronswood.com, 360-297-4172
- Plant Delights Nursery - www.plantdelights.com 919-772-4794
- Rice Creek Gardens - www.ricecreekgardens.com, 763-754-8090

Cheryl Philstrom, Editor, Minnesota Rock Plant Notes

NARGS International Interim Rock Garden Plant Conference

The North American Rock Garden Society's (NARGS) annual meeting and international conference will be held July 21-26 at the Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort in Snowbird, Utah, and hosted by the Wasatch Chapter. The double-barreled program format includes both a lecture series and a three-day field trip.

The lecture series at Snowbird is planned much in the manner of a Study Weekend, to highlight our knowledgeable and entertaining speakers, who will educate you about the plants and the ecosystems you will see in the field. The three-day trips will allow you to roam far afield, to areas (and states!) not visited during any previous Annual Meetings. The trip around the Wasatch Mountains (based at Snowbird), has been specially designed so that members whose hiking abilities may have decreased, but whose enthusiasm remains undiminished, can still enjoy the alpine flora.

Plans also include banquets, sales tables with books, seeds, arts, and local crafts, and a plant sale. The all-inclusive fee for this six-day meeting is of \$850, plus lodging of \$105 or \$130, per room per night.

For more information, visit: <http://www.nargs.org/IIRGPC.html>

Or contact me:

Joyce Fingerut, Conference coordinator

537 Taugwonk Road
Stonington, CT 06378-1805
860-535-3067
alpinegarden@comcast.net

Other events

Experiences with Houseplants – March 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Tompkins County Cooperative Extension Education Center, 615 Willow Avenue, Ithaca. Tom Weiler of Cornell's Horticulture Department will review and continue the "Houseplants -The Basics" discussion begun on January 19, emphasizing reasons for the successes and challenges attendees are experiencing with their houseplants. \$5 fee. Pre-registration preferred. Please call 272-2292 for more information or registration.

Going Native – April 1, Craftsman Inn, Fayetteville, NY. Speakers: Bill Cullina, director of the New England Wild Flower Society Nurseries and Don Leopold, SUNY ESF and author of *Native Plants of the Northeast*. Tuition: \$35. Sponsored by Men's Garden Club of Syracuse. More info: 315-451-2964 or 315-428-9401

People

Questions? Want to find out how you can help the Chapter? Don't hesitate to contact one of the volunteers who help make everything happen:

- **Chair:** Carol Eichler, cme24@cornell.edu, 607-387-5823
 - **Treasurer:** Carolyn Yaeger, cao2@cornell.edu, 607-844-9462
 - **Speaker Coordinator:** Anne Klingensmith, aekling@lightlink.com, 607-256-9308
 - **Garden Trip/Tours:** Peg Ross and Alice Davis, pogr@aol.com, 607-656-4237 (Peg), 607-656-9931 (Alice)
 - **Member participation:** George Erdman, gerdman@binghamton.edu, 607-748-3984
 - **Plant of the Month:** Billie Jean Isbell, bji1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484
 - **Plant sales:** David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu, 607-342-3660
 - **Membership:** John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, 315-492-0844
 - **Newsletter editor/Webmaster:** Craig Cramer, cdcramer@twcny.rr.com, 607-539-7233
 - **Rep. to National, and Ex-officio:** Robin Bell, rgb2@cornell.edu, 607-272-2074
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The Green Dragon

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