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CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

www.acnargs.org

July/August 2006

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Member picnic and plant sale August 19 at Billie Jean Isbell's

Plans are set for this year's member picnic and plant sale to be hosted by Billie Jean Isbell at her home and gardens in Brooktondale, N.Y., 4 miles east of Ithaca. The schedule:

- 10:00 a.m. – Arrive, get your plant sale number and help with sale set-up.
- 11:00 a.m. – Plant sale begins.
- 12:00 noon – Dish-to-pass picnic lunch (drinks will be provided)
- 1:30-ish p.m. – Tour Billie Jean's gardens.

As in past years, we'll very democratically allow those who arrive first to get "first dibs" at purchases. So it pays to arrive early. For the treasured and special plants, we will have a silent auction table. Note this is our only members-only sale and we should have some real gems. You may join for 2006 at the meeting for \$10 (\$15 for families). It's still a great value since we have half of our program year ahead of us.

Our Chapter has plenty of good cooks, so bring your appetite, a dish-to-pass, and tableware (Billie Jean will provide paper plates) in addition to plants you want to donate for the sale. We have accommodations for rain or shine so don't let the weather discourage you. And of course, if you need further incentive to come, this will be a great opportunity to see the extensive new and established rock gardens that Billie Jean has created with such flare and fancy.

Directions to Billie Jean's (534 Valley Rd., Brooktondale, N.Y., 539-6484):

From Ithaca: Take Rt. 79 east (State St., turns into Slaterville Rd). Note your mileage at the flashing light at Pine Tree Rd. Travel 2.4 miles to Brooktondale Rd. (Green highway sign reads Brooktondale 2 miles.) Turn right. Travel 2.5 miles on Brooktondale Rd. Billie Jean's house is on the right between the Community Center and the church. **Park in the church parking lot facing Billie Jean's barn.**

From Whitney Point (best route from Syracuse, Greene, Binghamton): Take Rt. 79 west. In Slaterville Springs, go .2 miles beyond the Citco station and store to first left, Creamery Rd. Turn left onto Creamery Rd. Take Creamery Rd. to the end. Turn right. (Sign says Central Chapel Rd. but it becomes Valley Rd. at that point.) Travel 2.3 miles. Billie Jean's house is on the left between the church and Community Center. **Park in the church parking lot facing Billie Jean's barn.**

Mark your calendar: 2006 Programs at a glance

- August 19 - Member picnic and plant sale, Billie Jean Isbell's, Brooktondale, N.Y.
- Sept. 16 - Maria Galetti of Alpines Mont Echo, expert grower of extraordinary alpine and rock garden plants from Quebec. 404 Plant Science Building, Tower Rd., Cornell University.
- Oct. 21 - Program TBA. 404 Plant Science.
- Nov. 11 - Annual Meeting and dish-to-pass. 404 Plant Science.

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

Letter from the Chair

It has been April since our last Chapter meeting and almost that long since our last newsletter. Nevertheless it has been a busy time. This is our combined July-August newsletter and is an attempt to catch you up on all that has happened and what is yet to come.

In this issue you will learn about our annual May plant sale sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Gardeners turned out in droves and as usual our sale tables were busy. Hooray, we also attracted 11 new and re-joining members. I want to offer my thanks to all those who donated, worked, and bought plants. The sale was a great success. I'm very excited about some of the plants I purchased.

June 17, Nina Bassuk, director of the Urban Horticulture Institute at Cornell, led our green-cuttings workshop. Our classroom was filled to overflowing with registrants – not just our members but we opened the class to area gardeners as well. It was one of those hot, humid days that have become characteristic this summer so none of us minded getting wet at the misting benches. July 15, we re-grouped to pot up the cuttings that rooted. You may see some of the surplus offered at our August plant sale.

The next weekend, we held our second garden tour of the season, journeying to Syracuse and Oswego. We covered a few miles to the northern reaches of our membership to view the gardens of John Gilrein, Lida Black, and Ellen Hornig – each one a delight and inspiration.

But wait there's more! While we take a break in July (and finally some time to tend our own gardens), I encourage you to think ahead to our August 19 picnic and member-only sale. It will be great to get together again and to share our successes and challenges of this growing season, as well as to indulge in two of my passions – food and plants. Billie Jean Isbell is our host and I know she's been busy filling her newest garden with wonderful things. We are all in for a special treat!

I know there are some among us who were vulnerable to the floods that swept through central New York recently. My thoughts go out to you. And I hope the future holds a little less rain and a lot more sunshine. See you soon.

Happy gardening,

Carol Eichler, chair

May plant sale a success!

Thank you to all who donated and bought plants at the May plant sale at Ithaca High School. We raked in \$1929.32, up from last year's \$1,568.03! This money helps to pay for our program of speakers and events through the coming year. Thank you to all who chipped in to help setup and sell. Eleven new and renewing memberships was the icing on the cake. A job well done!

David Mitchell, plant sale coordinator

June 24 garden tour: What a great day!

Sat. June 24: What a great day for a garden tour! The sun was shining, a gentle breeze blowing, the company congenial and three private gardens and one public to view and admire. The gardens were a study in diversity and presented a variety of challenges to the owners.

John Gilrein's rural property is an evolving landscaping project that begins, literally, at the edge of the paved road. A fully mature rock garden clothes the slope between the house and the garage. Continuing down-slope into a naturalized semi- wooded area, mowed pathways lure you toward a sizable pond stocked with goldfish and water lilies. The pond evokes images of quiet summer evenings, perhaps a swim, and absolutely a game of hide and seek. What an idyllic place to raise children, but with the ground work well-laid to add more plantings as the children mature. Thank you John for sharing your garden and your visions for the future as well as your memories in the form of a photo album that documents the development of your property. Thanks also for the plants you gave us and as if that isn't enough may I beg you for the recipe for the cookies?

Lida Black's city garden in Syracuse is a model of ingenuity and enterprise. Working on a nearly perpendicular slope along one side of her driveway that would challenge a mountain goat, she has created a natural tufa garden. Thankfully, she provides gently angled steps from the sidewalk to the house. Rounding the corner one is surprised to find a totally secluded garden refuge that invites solitary meditation or a quiet gathering of good friends. Relatively small in square feet, this garden packs a big whallop! The perfectly scaled two-level pool and the sound of the connecting waterfall lulls the senses. Do the plantings complement the setting or the reverse? Lida's garden strikes a perfect balance. She certainly meets the challenge of what most would consider a difficult property.

Thornden Park in Syracuse showcases a large rose garden that was a riot of color when we were there and has a wide variety of cultivars. If anyone is interested in researching roses this is a good place to start.

The prize at the end of the drive to Oswego was worth the trip there. Ellen Hornig is highly regarded in horticultural circles and respected for her knowledge. Her garden mirrors her reputation. She showcased the exotic alongside the mundane. She uses existing trees and augments those with cleverly placed vertical species to create a subtle guide to paths beckoning the wanderer to explore what is around the next bend. The planted areas flow from well defined beds to a more free form wild area, an open meadow boasting a pond and back toward the house and the greenhouses that comprises her business. Throughout the landscape, one senses a respect for all plants regardless of size, popularity, rare or commonplace. Can't wait to see what she brings back from South Africa.

Our group ended the day at Rudy's Stand on the shore of Lake Ontario where we ate out of doors, enjoyed the good food and great conversation. What better way for rock gardeners to remember a pleasurable day than to lift some rocks from the shore to transplant to our gardens.

Alice Davis, garden trip/tours co-coordinator

April tour gallery:



George Erdman awaits the arrival of the April tour to his garden in Endicott.



Troughs bordering George's driveway.



Rick Lowenstein in his Walton garden.



Rick explains his plantings to April tour participants.

June tour gallery:



Steep slope at Lida Black's Syracuse garden.



Thornden Park rose garden, Syracuse.



Cooling off at John Gilrein's.



Colorful slope at John Gilrein's garden on the June tour.

Looking for hardy cactus?

Member Pat Curran, Extension educator and coordinator of Tompkins County Master Gardeners has lots of hardy cacti leftover from the May plant sale that are looking a home at very reasonable prices. Interested? Contact her at 564-7927 or pc21@cornell.edu.

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, bj1@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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