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April 2009

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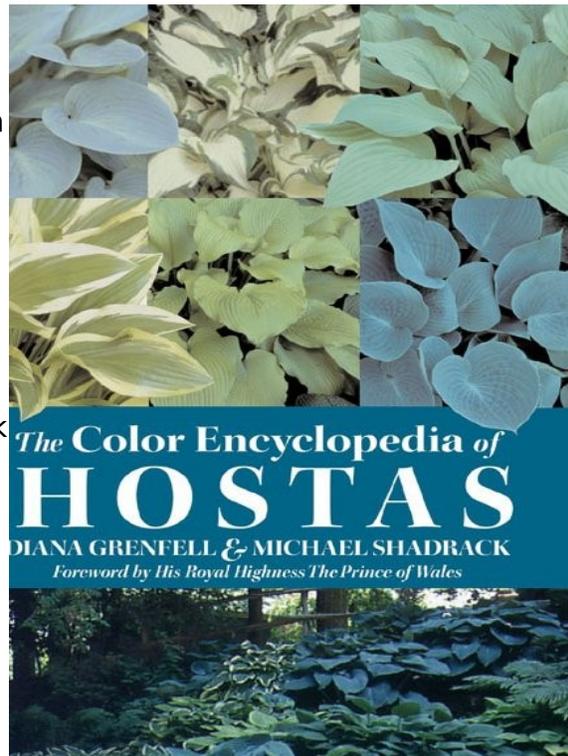
## Don't miss April 25 meeting with hosta expert Michael Shadrack

At our April 25 meeting, we are privileged to have hosta expert Michael Shadrack speak on **Miniature Hostas**. Shadrack is Chairman and Bulletin Editor for the British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society and co-author of two Timber Press books: *The Color Encyclopedia of Hostas* and *The Pocket Guide to Hostas*.

In addition to being a very entertaining speaker, Shadrack is one of the privileged few to have toured Prince Charles' hosta garden. He'll be bringing copies of his book for sale and signing.

We will also have our annual seedling exchange, Plant of the Month (hostas from Tobeytown Nursery) and member appreciation plant (woodland wildflowers and ferns). (See articles below for details.)

**Note new location:** Tompkins County Office of Cornell Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, Brown bag lunch at noon, program starts at 1 p.m.



## Trip to White Pine Camp in June

*From Carol Eichler:*

The Chapter is planning to return to White Pine Camp this June to work on the Heutte Rock Garden there. Depending on how many of us go, the work is likely to take about a half-day of clean-up, weeding, planting, and watering. Then it's time on your own to enjoy the Camp and nearby attractions. Because of the distance, this will be a 2-night overnight. There's a possibility we could schedule one garden stop "on the way." Chapter members Dick and Mary George are currently serving as innkeepers at WPC and they spearheaded the restoration of the historic Heutte RG.

**If you are interested in going to help, we need to firm the dates ASAP.**

Here are the choices: June 4-6 or June 11-13. **Please get back to me by April 15th** (my apologies for the short turn-around) if you plan to go and which date is your preference. Depending on the configuration of singles and couples, the cottages can accommodate 10 - 17. Once I book, I will need payment in full, estimated at no more than \$107 per person plus tax. Contact me: Carol Eichler, ceichler@twcny.rr.com or 607.387.5823.

What else can I tell you? Those of us who went last year - David Mitchell, John Gilrein, and me - had a great time. The 100-year-old Camp is beautiful, cottages are roomy and come with full kitchen, and the place is on a lake surrounded by state land. We really enjoyed the lady slipper orchids in bloom everywhere! There are canoes and kayaks available. It is located in the high peaks region, very close to Paul Smith's and the Visitor Info Center - a wonderful place with trails, exhibits, and gardens. Plenty of birding, hiking, and fishing opportunities. To investigate on your own check out these resources: [whitepinecamp.com](http://whitepinecamp.com) and [visitadirondacks.com](http://visitadirondacks.com)

**Update 4/11:** I have just spoken with the Markerts. They still maintain their rock gardens - with help - and would welcome our visit "on the way" to White Pine Camp, whichever week-end we choose to travel. FYI the Markerts live on the St. Lawrence, mailing address Ogdensburg.

This means scheduling the visit either Friday June 5 or Friday June 12. Some of you may be interested in this trip without the overnights. We would plan to leave for the Markerts early Friday, arriving before noon, to spend most of the afternoon there before proceeding to White Pine Camp in the Paul Smith's area, approx. another 2 hours away, and arriving before dark.

If interested in the day trip and/or overnight let me know ASAP and stay tuned. I'm trying to finalize our WPC cottage reservation by 4/15.

## April seedling exchange and May plant sale

*From David Mitchell, plant sale coordinator*

In addition to our fabulous speaker, this month's meeting will be our annual seedling exchange. Bring in your seedlings to share. I'll have some pots and potting soil on hand. Potted divisions will also be accepted and priced for sale or held for the May plant sale. I'm hoping the seedlings will find good homes and that some will show up on our tables at the May and August plant sales. The seedling exchange is

a great way to learn about what plants are easy to grow from seed and to learn from other's experiences in growing them on.

The May plant sale will be held on Saturday, May 16th. We'll start setup on Friday around 4 p.m. or so. My driveway is available for dropoffs if you can't make it to the high school before the sale starts. The driveway is on the Washington Street side of the corner of Washington and Esty Streets (402 Esty Street). My phone number is (607) 342-3660 should you have any questions about the sale.

## Plant of the Month

*John Gilrein, Plant of the Month Coordinator*

Due to a shipping error (the supplier forgot to ship the order in time), our March 2009 Plant of the Month, woodland wildflowers and ferns, will be offered at the April 2009 meeting as a member appreciation plant. Plants we will offer include: *Hepatica acutiloba*, *Uvularia grandiflora* (merrybells), Trilliums, including *T. grandiflorum*, *T. luteum*, and *T. sessile*, and *Adiantum pedatum* (maidenhair fern). After members receive a free plant, leftover plants will be offered for sale. For details on growing these plants, please refer to the article in the March 2009 Green Dragon.

In addition, The April 2009 Plant of the Month will be Hostas. As our speaker will be talking about miniature Hostas, we're going to purchase mainly miniature Hostas to coordinate with our speaker's presentation. We have arranged to buy plants from a local nursery, Tobeytown, where an endless array of Hostas is grown, but none in very large quantities. As Tobeytown does not currently have a list of the plants available, you'll have to be in suspense waiting for exactly which varieties we'll offer on April 25. We hope to have some really enticing Hostas to inspire our discriminating members!

Hostas, formerly named Funkias, are hardy in zones 3 to 8. Hostas grow best in partial shade and humus rich, fertile soil with mulch and adequate moisture. In our northern latitude, Hostas are more tolerant of bright sun, but they will suffer more from dry conditions when planted in a sunny spot, unless the gardener provides plenty of moisture during dry spells. Blue leaved Hostas have the best foliage color in partial shade. Hostas with yellow or yellow variegated leaves have the brightest yellow coloring with some sun – but not a location that's too dry or sunny.

Hostas unfortunately are preyed on by slugs, the chief pest of Hostas, but slugs can be controlled, or at least discouraged by baiting and trapping, or by mulching with sharp grit. Slugs can be baited with iron phosphate pellets (e.g. Sluggo), which are toxic to slugs but not toxic to mammals, including the gardener. Iron phosphate pellets will eventually dissolve in the rain, so they'll need to be either covered, or reapplied during the season. An effective slug trap is any small container filled with cheap beer. Disposable, small hard plastic cups work well and can catch a lot of slugs. Some of the thicker leaved Hostas are reputedly more slug resistant. It is important to start slug control early in the season before slugs have a chance to disfigure your Hosta leaves with their chew holes. Hostas are very sturdy plants, though they may suffer from vole damage during the winter; I've only had a minor problem with this during 1 or 2 winters. Unfortunately deer also will eat Hostas. They chewed on my Frances Williams, but apparently never found her tasty enough to consume more than a sample.

I've never tried growing Hostas in a container or trough, but Hostas should be hardy enough to overwinter in a trough in most of our area, if the trough is in a sufficiently protected spot. Miniature Hostas would be perfect for a trough.

## Member volunteers distribute 20,245 seed packets

From Rosemarie Parker.

I hope all the members who volunteered for the NARGS Seed Exchange Phase 4 distribution have recovered somewhat from the back pains, nightmares of seed packet mishaps, etc. I nearly have. I just want everyone to know how grateful I am for all the members who showed up to work whenever they could to help with this monumental effort.

We sent out roughly 20,245 packets. That is assuming everyone got exactly the right amount, but I know some got less, a few got more. We filled 331 orders, and sent off remains to 23 chapters, including our own. That is a massive undertaking.

All together, we had 22 volunteers helping with the seed pulling. Marcia Meigs wins the attendance award for having missed only one work session. David Mitchell and BZ Marranca were close seconds! Harold Peachy gets the laid-back-nod for being willing to figure out the most bizarre and complex order forms with no complaints or snide comments.



We had wonderful snacks and dinners provided by volunteers - Lynn's chocolate peanut butter cookies, Billy Jean's casserole, Carol's pizza, and David's party leftovers come to mind. And every volunteer who wanted to order was able to pick and choose the packets for themselves.

## 2009 program plans

Here's the **tentative** line-up for 2009. Check future newsletters or the ACNARGS blog (<http://acnargs.blogspot.com>) for details.

~~Spring dates TBD - Philadelphia garden tour. Overnight road trip to visit private gardens in the Philadelphia area. Canceled.~~

**May 16 - Plant Sale at Ithaca Garden Fair.** Ithaca High School.

**May date TBD - Garden tours. Ithaca.**

**June 4-6 or June 11-13 - Work trip to White Pine Camp.** Paul Smiths, N.Y.  
Contact Carol Eichler by April 15 if you'd like to attend: ceichler@twcny.rr.com,  
607-387-5823

~~**July date TBD - Picnic and special program.**~~ Don and Lela Avery, Cady's Falls  
Nursery will not be able to join us.

**Aug. 15 - 'Members Only' plant sale and picnic.** Kenneth Post Lab, Cornell  
University, Ithaca.

**Sept 19 - What's Wrong With My Plants?** with Michael Loos, horticulture  
educator with Ohio State University Cooperative Extension, Cuyahoga County and  
active NARGS member. Site to be determined. We are looking for a members  
garden where Michael can actually show us what's wrong with our plants.  
Volunteers?

**Oct. 11 - Pam Eveleigh on primroses** (tentative).

**Nov. 14 - Native Plants for the Naturalistic Garden** with Don Leopold, SUNY  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry and author of Native Plants of the  
Northeast. Kenneth Post Lab, Cornell University, Ithaca.

## From the chair

Don't miss our April 25 meeting (a week later than usual this month) with hosta  
expert Michael Shadrack, author of two Timber Press books on the subject. His  
presentation on miniature hostas will be at 1 p.m. preceded by a brown bag lunch  
at noon at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave.,  
Ithaca. The Plant of the Month will feature hostas and we'll have our annual seedling  
exchange.

### Seeds, seeds, seeds and seedlings

Congratulations to Rosemarie Parker and all the volunteers who completed Round  
Two of the National NARGS seed exchange, the pulling of packets and mailing of  
orders that went out to NARGS members around the world. If we do this again next  
year we will need more volunteers. The whole process is amazing and I picture the  
gardeners that benefit from our effort planting their seeds in the next weeks.

David Mitchell is propagating seeds from the exchange for our chapter for the May  
16 plant sale at Ithaca High School. However, everyone should search in their own  
gardens for seedlings that can be brought to the April 25 meeting at Cooperative  
Extension where we will have our free seedling exchange after the program. The  
idea is for each of us to take seedlings home to grow them on for the May 16 plant  
sale. So as you clean up your garden, pot up those seedlings.

### Chapter Needs

Is anyone interested in helping organize trips and garden visits? If so, email me  
bj1@cornell.edu.

We also need someone to take over organizing work parties for the Wuster garden.

### **Up for a trip to Linwood Gardens Tree Peony Festival?**

Check out the website: [www.linwoodgardens.org](http://www.linwoodgardens.org). Located in Pavilion, NY, 35 miles west of Rochester, the festival is held May 23, 24, and 25; May 30 and 31; June 6 and 7. Cost \$8 a person. Email me with suggestions for convenient dates and we will finalize the plans at our next meeting.

**Billie Jean Isbell**

## **Soils follow up**

*From David Mitchell, plant sale coordinator*

Plants need soil to grow in, but what kind? Success is in the mix and if you have any number of materials on hand, you'll find it easier to make up a trough or section of the rock garden to meet the soil needs of most rock garden plants. You'll find many soil recipes include sterilized soil, but I don't use soil as most of the plants I grow in pots will end up at our plant sales where soilless mix is required by law.

Several people asked me where I found the materials I presented at the beginner's rock garden workshop: granite grit, potting mix, composted pine bark, gravel, fired clay grit, and sand.

**Chicken grit** can be found at Agway's feed and grain across from their garden center on Fulton Street. The brand I buy is called Gran-I-Grit "starter" size and a 50 pound bag sells for about nine dollars. This is 100% granite and it is slightly acidic at about a pH of 5 to 6, but doesn't seem to affect the pH of the soil mix. Granite grit: Ithaca Farm and Garden Center, 213 S Fulton Street, Ithaca, NY, Tel. (607) 273-2505.

The potting mix is **Fafard brand Number 52** found at Griffin Greenhouse and Nursery Supply in Auburn. Griffin does not promote itself as retail, so you won't know how inexpensive they are until you find them. They have a website with lots of product details, but no pricing, but I can tell you the trip to Auburn is worth the gas money. The Number 52 contains 24% peat moss, 8% perlite, 8% vermiculite, and 60% bark. This is the lowest peat content I could find. Potting mixes, etc.: Griffin Greenhouse & Nursery Supplies, Inc., 1 Ellis Drive, Auburn, NY, Tel. (315) 255-1450.

If you want to eliminate the use of peat altogether, you may want to try using **aged pine bark**, also known as composted pine bark. I found 2.8 cubic bags 35 miles southwest of Rochester at Palmiter's Garden Nursery, 2675 Avon Geneseo Rd., Avon, NY, Tel. (585) 226-3073.

**Local sand and gravel** can be found at several gravel pits in the area. The one I use is the Brooktondale Pit, 113 Perkins Road, Brooktondale. Drive in and park at the white trailer, go in and let the person know what you want and they'll give you instructions. I usually get three or four buckets of material for about 5 dollars.

The **Turfacer** brand soil amendment I found at Banfield-Baker in Horseheads (thank you Bill Plummer). It's fired clay grit that is used on baseball playing fields and sometimes seen as cat litter. The clay is porous and holds moisture. Banfield-Baker

Corporation, 2512 Corning Road (Rt. 14), Horseheads, NY, Tel. (607) 739-8771.

The beautiful, dustless white quartz sand I have was found at a garden center in Cleveland for about 4 dollars a bag, priceless as they say. Haven't seen it here, but play sand may be an option.

## Other events

The Finger Lakes Native Plant Society presents Rob Raguso, Department of Neurobiology & Behavior, Cornell University on "Red and Rotten: The "Wine-Red" Spring Wildflower Guild." Rob's research focuses on red, early spring blooming flowers. He asks why they are red, and smell like wet dogs, rotting meat or fermenting sugar. April 21, 7 p.m., Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca

American Primrose Society 59th National Show, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, located in the quaint New England Town of Boylston, Massachusetts, May 1, 2 & 3, 2009. More info: [www.americanprimrosesociety.org](http://www.americanprimrosesociety.org)

Mark your calendar for Garden Conservancy Open Days: Tompkins County: June 13 & July 11, Oswego: June 13, Marcellus: July 12. More details to come at the Open Days website: <http://www.gardenconservancy.org/opensdays>

## Rock garden help needed

*From David Mitchell:*

Elizabeth Reid is seeking help to maintain the rock garden created by Toni and Bob Wilkinson that sits in front of her cottage at Kendal. She can be reached by phone at (607) 257-4330.

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## People

- Chair/trips: Billie Jean Isbell, [bjj1@cornell.edu](mailto:bjj1@cornell.edu), 607-539-6484
- Vice chair/program: Donna Kraft, [dkraft@twcny.rr.com](mailto:dkraft@twcny.rr.com), 315 696-8626
- Secretary: Carolyn Yaeger, [cao2@cornell.edu](mailto:cao2@cornell.edu), 607-844-9462
- Treasurer/Plant sales: BZ Marranta, [mmm10@cornell.edu](mailto:mmm10@cornell.edu)
- Program: Carol Eichler, [ceichler@twcny.rr.com](mailto:ceichler@twcny.rr.com), 607-387-5823
- Plant sales: David Mitchell, [dwm23@cornell.edu](mailto:dwm23@cornell.edu), 607-342-3660
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## Green Dragon Tales

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