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CHAPTER

*North American Rock Garden Society*

# Green Dragon Tales

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February 2012

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## February program: The Great American Border

Chapter member Michael Loos will speak on The Great American Border. No, not the US/Canadian boundary; we're talking a perennial flower bed! Expect a presentation that is wide reaching in scope, reviewing not only plants for the garden, but also combining these features into a view of the garden as a whole. Elements of design, soil, and plants create a garden. Fully understanding each aspect helps us create a place of beauty and retreat.

Michael moved to our area in December 2009 and joined our Chapter soon thereafter, although he had "commuted" from Cleveland to attend an occasional meeting and was one of our program speakers in 2009. He has been building new gardens from scratch on his rural property near Interlaken.



*All gardens are not created equal. Good design is captured though various elements of color, texture, and plants. Photo Credit: Michael Loos*

Michael presently works for Cornell University as the Interim Director for the New York State Seed Testing Laboratory at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva. He has worked as a Garden Center Manager, County Extension Educator for Ohio State University, and Curator of Collections for the Cleveland Botanical Garden, and has owned a Landscape Consultation and Design business in Cleveland.

This meeting will be held at the Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Brown bag lunch at noon. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.

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## From the Chair: A Promising Year Ahead

Billie Jean Isbell

**While are gardens sleep, those of us serving on the Board and its Committees have been planning an exciting year of activities.** I want to thank these new and continuing volunteers for all of their hard work. When you get a chance, be sure to **thank these folks** (listed in the People Section of this newsletter. They are the ones who keep this Chapter going!

This is our first newsletter of the year and you'll see we are off and running. Be sure to **renew your membership now** to take advantage of all the benefits that membership brings. Our first meeting on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> is headlined by one of our own - member, Michael Loos, whose credentials as a plantsman are most impressive.

Also, we'll hold a **special raffle** at the Feb. meeting - a propagation system of lights complete with a stand, seed trays and a wicking irrigation system which I am donating. If anyone wants to look at this system (since I won't be transporting it in its entirety to the meeting), please contact me, Billie Jean Isbell 539-6484, [bj1@cornell.edu](mailto:bj1@cornell.edu).

It's time to **start seedlings now** in preparation for our free seedling exchange coming up in April. You can also bring volunteer seedlings from your garden for this event. And remember to share divisions from more mature perennials for our May plant sale, since this is our primary fundraiser supporting our speakers and other activities.



*Woodisia ilvensis*,  
photo by Todd Boland

Jump start your rock garden (or consider starting one this year) by joining us April 28<sup>th</sup> when we are planning **a day trip** to the Rochester area. We'll stop at [Bristol's Garden Center](#), which will be fully stocked with an extensive rock garden selection, perennials, shrubs, and more. I am working with staff there to schedule visits to some private gardens in the area too. We are open to your ideas for garden excursions are in special need for people who are willing to organize them! Let me know if that's YOU!

Last (but by no means least), I want to encourage you to [join our national affiliate the North American Rock Garden Society](#). Membership is only \$30 annually and comes with two valuable benefits, either of which is easily worth the membership fee.

First of all, you receive The Rock Garden Quarterly, an excellent source of information and inspiring photos. In the last issue I found two articles of particular value. The first is "Rock Gardening from Scratch: Propagation for the Rock Garden" by Mike Bone, which will prove usual for general propagation from seeds and cuttings (and he promises a follow-up article in the next issue). Another article, by Lori Chips, "Seed Crimes or the Many Accepted Ways We Torture Seed" amused me (I could relate). Both of these articles are especially pertinent to anyone new to propagation and timely for any gardener this time of year.

That's a great lead-in to the second valuable benefit of membership and that is the Seed Exchange, offering close to 5,000 species of seeds – seeds collected from knowledgeable gardeners, representing species from all over the world, many not available anywhere in the trade. It brings out the plant explorer/adventurer in us all. And how rewarding to grow something

rare or special or wild-collected from halfway across the globe and to be able to say you started the plant from seed!

There are other good reasons to support our National “parent” even though they do not require you to be a member to enjoy: their subsidy to bring national and international speakers to our Chapter, outstanding conferences (Annual Meeting, Eastern Study or Western Study Week-ends – one need only attend one to comprehend how amazing they are!), and [NARGS' vibrant, new website](#) - a wealth of information that should become your “go to” resource for most anything plant-related. Our March newsletter will walk you through some of its fabulous features.

See you soon. Our February meeting is one of the earliest “signs of spring!”

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## **With the Turn of the Calendar to 2012, It's Time to Renew Your Membership!**

Mary Stauble is our new Membership Coordinator and she wants to remind everyone that the ACNARGS membership year runs the calendar year. So, unless you're a lifetime member (and we do have a few of those), your 2012 membership is due (Individual@\$10, Household@\$15, Business with business card listing@\$25). While it's true that our meetings are free and open to everyone, there are advantages to becoming a member: discounted prices on our plants-of-month, 25% discount on May plant sale purchases, and participating in the member-only plant sale in August to name three – any one of which can easily recoup the cost of your dues. Plus, you become part of our network of eclectic gardeners eager to become better ones.

So why delay? Print and complete the [2012 Membership form here](#). Questions? Contact Mary at [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu).

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## **Call for Volunteers: Round 2 NARGS Seed Exchange**

*From BZ Marrantca*

Many hands make light work. And many hands are needed for us to successfully complete the second round orders for NARGS National Seed Exchange. This is a fun and easy way to get involved with Chapter activities and we'd love to have you join us! Seed is donated from many people around the world. It's an amazing process to be a part of (click [here](#) for more info on how the seed exchange works), and a great reason to belong to NARGS National.

Since we have done Round 2 in past years, many of you will be familiar with the routine. But if not, we post “how-to” instructions on-site. No experience is needed to become an instant “order filler.” We don't yet have a starting date but expect to begin about March 1<sup>st</sup>, setting up in the basement of Ken Post Lab. We will send out an email notice once we know the exact work dates and will post this information to our web page too.

Stop by if you have a little time or a lot. Work alone or bring a friend. Come once, come again and again. Any amount of time you can offer will be much appreciated. Keep in mind filling all the orders takes about three weeks. Again, I will keep you posted as to our progress and needs. Ken Post Lab locks its doors after 5 p.m. so if you plan to come after 5, simply let me know and I can be there to let you in.

As a bonus, SeedEx volunteers will be granted donor-status in the 2013 seed exchange. Contact BZ Marrantca [mmm10@cornell.edu](mailto:mmm10@cornell.edu) for further information.

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## Upcoming Spring 2012 Programs

**March 17, 2012 - Carol Bradford on Chinese Gardens.** Carol is the garden columnist for the Syracuse Post Standard and is a master gardener.

**April 21, 2012 – Melissa Montgomery, hypertufa presentation followed by a troughmaking workshop. We will also hold our annual (free) seedling exchange.** We'll be making small troughs that you can carry home to harden and cure. To participate in the workshop, advance **sign-up is required**, either at the March meeting or by emailing one of the Program Coordinators John Gilrein [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu) or Nari Mistry [nbm2@cornell.edu](mailto:nbm2@cornell.edu) by **April 14<sup>th</sup>**, one week prior. Note: meeting location to be announced so watch for this information and complete details in the March newsletter.

**April 28: Day trip** to Bristol's Garden Center, Victor NY and area gardens. Planning in progress, coordinated by Billie Jean Isbell.

**May 19: Our Plant Sale** at CCETC Garden Fair, NYS Armory, Ithaca.

**Sept. 16: Nick Turland**, NARGS Speaker, Associate Curator in the Division of Science and Conservation at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri since 1993, Co-Director of the Flora of China Project; he will give 2 talks yet to be selected

Details as we learn them will be included in future newsletters and [acnargs.blogspot.com](http://acnargs.blogspot.com). When in question, visit our blog.

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## Plant-of-the-Month Plans

*From John Gilrein*

We won't be having a Plant of the Month for February. But stay tuned! We are tentatively planning for a selection of Trilliums for the March meeting and trough plants for April. Since we'll be making troughs at our April meeting, the trough you make could become the perfect home for the plant you pick up that day.



A choice trillium, progeny from Bill Dress' garden. Photo by Tom Myers.

We will continue to offer Plant-of-the-Month – but you must be a Chapter member to enjoy our discounted prices. I am seeking a volunteer-in-training to help me and eventually take over POM Coordinator duties. Billie Jean offers this testimonial, having held that position in the past, “I can say that it is great fun: You get to pick the plants that are often highlighted in lectures and it's a great learning experience.”

Please contact me, John, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu) if you would consider serving the Chapter in this capacity.

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## Stop the Car...Now! Roadside Botanizing East of the Cascade Mountains

From Ilse Burch, Northwestern Chapter NARGS



Alluring Everett, Washington with Mt. Baker in the distance beckoning avid gardeners to come visit.

Spring comes early to the Pacific Northwest (while central NY is still looking dreary). And with a plethora of private gardens, there will be an abundance of treasures to see when NARGS' Annual Meeting opens March 9-11 in Everett, Washington (near Seattle). There is still plenty of time to enroll and enjoy the plant sales, speakers, garden tours, demonstrations, and general camaraderie. In fact, why not make a vacation out of the trip? Extra-curricular excursions include the Columbia River Gorge, the Vantage area and Ginkgo Petrified Forest east of the Cascades, Puget Sound beaches, San Juan Islands, city visits to Seattle or Victoria, B.C., wineries, specialty nurseries, whale watching tours, and more! More! More! Information at the conference website: [Stop the Car...Now!](#)

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## The World Loses Two Great Plantsmen

### We knew him as Bill...



Bill "in his element."

Bill was an involved member of our Chapter for many years, serving officially as Board Chair and Treasurer but unofficially as one of our resident plant experts, occasional program speaker, plant donor, and generous "sharer" of plants, information, and go to guy for all questions Latin or taxonomic. We honored with a Chapter Service Award in 1998.

Even before our Chapter's founding in 1976, Bill was part of an Ithaca-based garden study group. Later, he was instrumental, along with others, in moving the Chapter's meetings from Albany to Ithaca where there was a strong base of engaged members. As his health began to fail, he stopped attending Chapter meetings but continued to share his knowledge of plants. Bill died Dec. 15, 2011 at his home at Kendal at Ithaca at the age of 93.

Bill was born in Buffalo, earned an A.B. degree (1931) in classical languages at the University of Buffalo, served in the U.S. Army Air Corps (1942-45), then came to Cornell, earning his Ph.D. degree in botany.

He was appointed assistant professor at Cornell in 1953, associate professor in 1961 and professor of botany in 1968, all at the L.H. Bailey Hortorium. He became professor emeritus in 1982.

Bill taught taxonomy of cultivated plants, plant nomenclature and botanical Latin. His chief research interest was the taxonomy of Compositae (a large group of flowering plants) and cultivated ornamentals in general. He edited two of the hortorium's journals- *Baileya* and *Gentes Herbarum*. For many years, he also served as the editor of the authoritative reference work "Hortus Third: A Concise Dictionary of Plants Cultivated in the United States and Canada."

Dress authored numerous articles on orchids, asters, cacti and milkweeds. In addition, a fossil flower named *Dressiantha bicarpellata* and a hosta named 'Bill Dress's Blue' were named in his honor.



Hosta "Bill Dress's Blue". Of unknown parentage, this cultivar was registered by [S. Chamberlain](#) in 1999. A small plant, it grows to 4 inches in height. Courtesy [PlantsGalore.com](#)

Through Dress' efforts, the town of Ithaca acquired Dress Woods, a 10-acre site of mature forest bordering Culver Road on the town's west side that was long cared for by Dress.

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## Frank Cabot – Builder and Preserver of Gardens

*From Bobby Ward, NARGS Archivist*

We have received news that NARGS member Frank Cabot has died at age 86, on Saturday, November 19, 2011. Frank was the founder of The Garden Conservancy in 1989 and was involved in numerous horticultural organizations.

Frank was NARGS [National] treasurer from 1977-1984 and the co-organizer of the Society's 50th anniversary meeting in Asheville, N.C. in 1984. He was supporter of many NARGS activities, including the Norman Singer Endowment Fund and donor to NARGS of copies of "The Caucasus and Its Flowers" by Vojtech Holubec. Frank was a speaker at NARGS Study Weekends and at local chapters.

Remember the wonderful escorted tour Frank gave us on Les Quatres Vents when our Chapter visited to his gardens? For those who have been there, here's an excerpt from the New York Times obituary that I think you'll relate to:.

"At Les Quatre Vents, after members of the public had navigated its lawns, meadows, streams, hedges and woodlands; traversed its Nepalese rope bridges over lush ravines; admired its riotous floral displays (including 10-foot-high delphiniums and Himalayan blue poppies, no mean feat to coax from North American soil); explored its Japanese garden — and its white garden, rose garden, rock garden, shade garden and kitchen garden; lingered at its reflecting pools, waterfalls and lily ponds; walked round its pavilions, sculptures and topiary; and paused before its massive outdoor oven and ornate, towering "pigeonnier," as Mr. Cabot's dovecote is known, they were sometimes surprised, at journey's end, to encounter Mr. Cabot.

“He invariably had a question: Had they found their odyssey emotionally exhausting?”

Those brave enough to answer yes were met with a characteristic reply. “Good,” said Mr. Cabot, genuinely gratified.

For the complete NY Times obituary click [here](#). The ACNARGS library has a copy of Mr. Cabot's book, *Les Quatres Vents* available on loan.

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## Book Review of the Month from NARGS WIKI Book Review.

*Phlox: A Natural History and Gardener's Guide* by James H. Locklear  
Published by Timber Press

This book is a feast for the eyes, and, for anyone who values nature like Jim does, you will not be disappointed. Phlox is one of the most enjoyable plants to grow and admire. Plus they come in every size imaginable with varieties for the perennial border, greenhouse, or rock garden.

Jim's writing style is clear and thoroughly enjoyable. Although he has written widely for magazines and contributed two chapters to the *Rock Garden Plants of North America*, this is his first book. The book is packed with botanical history and cultivation information. It deserves to be on your reference shelf.

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## Calendar of Local Garden Events

*Compiled by Pat Curran*

No need to get the winter doldrums with so many garden programs being offered in our area (or a bit further afield). This is not intended to be a comprehensive listing. All listings are free unless indicated.

Feb. 15, 7 pm – Bringing Nature to Your Garden, Ellen Folts, Amanda's Garden at the Unitarian Church annex (corner of Buffalo and Aurora, enter side door on Buffalo St & up the stairs); sponsored by Finger Lakes Native Plant Society

*Finger Lakes Native Plant Society Plant Walks meet at different times and locations. Topics vary from wildflowers to lichens to winter twig ID. For more information, call Anna Stalter (607) 379-0924 or Susanne Lorbeer at (607) 257-0835.*

Feb. 18: 1 pm, A Garden in Winter, sponsored by Cornell Plantations. Pre-registration and fee. ([www.cornellplantations.org](http://www.cornellplantations.org) for details on this program and others)

March 1-4: [CNY in Bloom](#), Onondaga Community College, Syracuse. Fee.

March 4-11: [Hawaii: Islands of Aloha!](#) Philadelphia International Flower Show, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Phila. PA. Fee.

March 15-18: [Recipe for Springtime](#), Greater Rochester's Flower & Garden Show, Henrietta Dome near Rochester. Fee

March 22-25: [Taste of Spring](#), Plantasia Garden & Landscape Show, Hamburg, NY. Fee.

March 24: "Colorado Wildflowers: An Excursion into the Alpine Tundra," presented by Carol Eichler; 2:00-3:30 pm. Tompkins County Cornell Cooperative Extension Education Center, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca.

March 31: "Pictures of Permaculture through Australia, New Zealand and Trinidad," presented by Erin Martea; 2:00-3:30 pm. Tompkins County Cornell Cooperative Extension Education Center, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca.

March 29: Shade Garden Flowers & Ferns, 6:30 -8:30 pm. Tompkins County Cornell Cooperative Extension Education Center, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca. Pre-registration recommended, fee. Info: Pat Curran 607-272-2292, [pc21@cornell.edu](mailto:pc21@cornell.edu).

### And looking farther ahead...

May 19: CCETC Garden Fair & Plant Sale

Aug. 4: Garden Conservancy Open Garden Day in Tompkins County

Sept. 9: Gathering of Gardeners, Rochester NY

October 12-14: Autumn in the Garden – A Time for Troughs, NARGS Winter Study Week-end sponsored by Allegheny Chapter, Pittsburgh, PA

To have your garden event listed, contact Pat Curran, [pc21@cornell.edu](mailto:pc21@cornell.edu).

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## Responsible People/2012 Board Members

- Chair: Billie Jean Isbell, [bj1@cornell.edu](mailto:bj1@cornell.edu),
- Program: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)
- Program Committee Members: Nari Mistry
- Secretary: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)
- Treasurer: BZ Marranca, [mmm10@cornell.edu](mailto:mmm10@cornell.edu)
- Plant Sales Chair: David Mitchell, [dwm23@cornell.edu](mailto:dwm23@cornell.edu)
- Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca
- Plant of the Month/program: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)
- Membership: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)
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### Green Dragon Tales

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