



**ADIRONDACK  
CHAPTER**  
*North American Rock Garden Society*

# Green Dragon Tales

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November 2016

## NOVEMBER 12: IN PRAISE OF ARTIFICE: ARCHITECTURAL ROCK GARDENS & NOON DISH-TO-PASS

NOTE: We are meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of November this month.



*Trough display at Wave Hill  
moved upstate to a former weekend house in Schoharie County.  
Photo by Carol Eichler*

Looking carefully at public and private rock gardens in the US, Canada, the UK and Germany for many years, I realized the gardens I most responded to were the most architectural, rather than those that tried to mimic natural landscape features. This talk will present some of those I found most beautiful and/or interesting and describe what I found most compelling about them, including ease of construction, maintenance issues, and planting design.

Steve Whitesell recently retired after 27 years as a landscape architect for the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and moved upstate to a former weekend house in Schoharie County. He is a longtime NARGS member and a former chairperson of the Manhattan chapter.

Preceding Steve's talk we will hold our annual dish-to-pass beginning at noon. Arrive early to allow time for set-up. This meeting will be held in the renovated Whetzel Room, Room 404 Plant Science Building on Tower Road, Cornell University.

The program immediately follows lunch, beginning at approximately 1:00 pm. Map at the end of this newsletter.

## FROM THE CHAIR

*John Gilrein, ACNARGS Chair*

As I write this, several of the plants outside are ablaze with their fall foliage display: dogwoods, sumacs, Virginia creeper, poison ivy, red maple. Fall foliage color of many of our woody plants and vines is somewhat diagnostic, so one can make an educated guess about what the plant is, based on its fall colors and other factors, like how early it's changing color and size. It's a bit early for peak fall color here, but should be peak very soon.

My dogwood (*Cornus florida*) trees have turned red, the staghorn sumacs (*Rhus typhina*) along the road are mostly yellow grading to orange, the Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is red, and the poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*) is yellow grading to orange, and sometimes red as well. The red maples (*Acer rubrum*) have turned red, and the sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) nearby are turning yellow to orange but many have not completely turned color. Tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) are usually the tallest trees on a forested hillside, and they are turning yellow now. Even from afar sometimes one can make out the changing foliage of tulip trees in the distance. The oaks, including red oak (*Quercus rubrum*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), and swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) hold their leaves longer into the fall than many of the other hardwoods and are not yet showing fall colors. Our summer drought did not seem to significantly detract from our beautiful fall foliage, at least here.

You may be aware of the fall emergence and blooming of *Cyclamen hederifolium*. But I've included a photo here of another late blooming plant you may not be so familiar with - *Rhabdosia longituba*.



In addition to our November 12 meeting, ACNARGS is going to again be packaging seeds for the upcoming NARGS seed exchange. We'll be doing this in December and we hope that many of you will volunteer a morning and/or afternoon for our seed-packaging event. The annual NARGS seed exchange requires a herculean effort, and we're doing our part by sorting and packaging.

One of the many benefits of NARGS that is available in 2017 is NARG- sponsored trips. Two trips are planned, one to the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming, and the other to the Dolomites of northeastern Italy. Both have spectacular scenery and alpine plants.

Gardeners are generous people, evident from all the plant donations to our plant sales, door prizes at meetings, and even spontaneous plants shared by a member who caught some of us weeding at Wurster this summer! So thanks from the Adirondack Chapter for the work and plants you have donated for 2016.

## **WURSTER GARDEN UPDATE: BULBS ADDED**

Garden season isn't over yet. It's time to plant bulbs and we have planted some at the Wurster Memorial Rock Garden. Thanks to those who helped. Now we will have a bit more early early floral display in this garden. If you're in the area, remember to stop by and watch the spring awakening unfold.

## **NEWS FROM NATIONAL: SEED EXCHANGE TIME!**

*Carol Eicher, newsletter editor*

Growing plants from seed is challenging, fun, rewarding, a cheap way to acquire new plants, and to introduce new plants to your garden that might not be available in the trade. The NARGS Seed Exchange is a long-held tradition and a valued benefit of being a member of National. Here's how it works.

The Seed Exchange begins with NARGS members - national as well as international members - collecting seed of plants from their gardens or in natural areas. DONATED seed is sent to the INTAKE Manager. The Intake Manager enters all the donations into a computer database, verifies the seed name, and adds descriptions where needed. Each donor is assigned a donor number, which will be included in the Seed List.

By mid- to late-November all the donated seeds are cataloged and the database program generates the seed list numbers. The seeds are shipped to various PACKAGING Chapters and individuals who divide them into individual packets in December. The Seed List is posted on the NARGS website in mid-December. The finished packets are then sent to the MAIN SEED DISTRIBUTION Chapter, where the seed orders from members are filled and mailed out from early January to early February. Members are charged \$15 for 25 (non-donors) or 35 (donors) packets of seed. ONLY current NARGS members are allowed to order seed. The ordering process can be done online, with web links when available to look up species pictures and information.

A surplus seed list is posted online (or mailed by request) in late February that includes all the leftover seeds once the Main Seed Distribution has been closed on March 1st. Surplus seed orders are filled beginning in March by the SURPLUS SEED DISTRIBUTION Chapter. All members are charged a nominal fee of \$5 per 20 packets with the option of requesting up to 100 packets for surplus seed orders. After that the remaining seed is sent to various NARGS chapters for distribution to their members.

## **DOING OUR PART: SEED PACKAGING SESSIONS**

Our Chapter is participating in seed packaging for the NARGS seed exchange over two weekend sessions in December to package bulk seed into individual packets. This is a fun, labor-intensive task and we will need many hands. John Gilrein and Carol Eichler are co-coordinating this year and will circulate a sign-up sheet at the November meeting.

Hopefully by that meeting we will have been able to schedule work dates in early December (dependent on when the seeds arrive) and a location (most likely the Ken Post Lab classroom) and can announce these details. If not, we will make sure to contact all volunteers once the schedule has been set. Please consider helping out with this endeavor, whether you can offer one hour or several.



Our work session last year

We make the work sessions fun with plenty of good conversation. You are invited to bring snacks or lunch fare to share.

By helping with the seed exchange you will be participating in something that is truly remarkable – thousands of species of seed grown or collected by gardeners throughout the world and touched by hundreds of hands before finally arriving in NARGS members' mailboxes, planted out, and perhaps ending up in your own garden by way of our own seedling exchange.

Plus as a volunteer you gain "seed donor" status, which allows you to order 35 packages (a bonus of 10 extra over non-donors).

## **WHY I JOINED NARGS: CONFESSIONS OF A RELUCTANT ROCK GARDENER**

*Carol Eichler*

I cannot pinpoint how I got involved with our Adirondack Chapter or even how many years ago it was. Probably I was asked to come to a meeting by a fellow gardener. To be honest, in those days as a new member, I felt really intimidated and so I kept coming up with excuses not to attend the meetings. I enjoyed seeing pictures of wonderful alpine plants but to grow them felt beyond both my knowledge and commitment.

Then something changed. There was new leadership in our Chapter and I was asked to serve on the Board. By getting involved I got to know the other members and I made an effort to help new members feel welcome.

Because I believe in leading by example, I joined NARGS National about that time as well (their records indicate 2001). My involvement in the local Chapter is what drove me to greater participation at the national level.

Through our Chapter I made troughs, purchased and grew Plant-of-the-Month selections (some of which have thrived for me), worked in the Wurster Rock Garden and contributed and purchased plants through our annual plant sales.

I started participating in the NARGS Seed Exchange because our Chapter held a seedling exchange. I attended my first (and only) Study Week-end because it was

conveniently located in Rochester. And six years ago I attended my first National Conference...well, because it was held in the Colorado Rockies.

Thus, I began my slow conversion from a casual to a semi-serious rock gardener. In my "casual" days I eventually tended 20+ troughs – some of them built and acquired even before my ACNARGS involvement. Last year I took what I now recognize as an exponential leap and built a rock garden, which has now moved me into the "semi-serious" stage.

Now that I have finally built a rock garden, I have to admit I am at long last hooked on rock gardening. It has been more fun and more satisfying than I ever could have imagined.

*Editor's Note: Why are you a member of ACNARGS and/or NARGS? Your submissions are welcome. Send them to [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)*

## PLANT PROFILE: MY SUCCESSFUL SAXIFRAGES

Reprinted by permission from the Minnesota Chapter NARGS, October 2016 newsletter

This list of saxifrages is supplied by Chuck Griffith from a talk he gave at his Chapter's September meeting this year.

For silver/encrusted type saxifrages expect good drainage and some protection from afternoon sun. Soil should be at least 50% sand here in Minnesota and they work well in troughs.



*S. frederici-augusti ssp. grisebachii*;  
Photo supplied by Chuck Griffith

- S. callosa*: big strappy leaves, white flowers
- S. paniculata*: tiny leaves, need more protection
- S. x urbium* 'Primuloides Clarence Elliott': spoon shaped leaves, almost like a sedum
- S. frederici-augusti ssp. grisebachii*: probably requires trough, reddish flowers
- S. juniperifolia*: tiny pointed leaves, yellow flowers
- S. cotyledon v. caterhamensis*, wide-leaved, tall 1ft. panicles
- S. umbrosa* 'Aurea': variegated, spoon-like leaves, almost like a sedum
- S. crostata*: thin, long, strap leaves
- S. hostii* 'Altissima': long, strap leaves

Others:

- S. bronchialis*: almost a mossy sax, small leaves, likes wet shady places
- S. veitchiana*: sedum like, likes wet shady places, spreads easily

Mossy saxes like good drainage, shady, wet places, a tricky combination.

Woodland: I didn't mention this one but it is really not a rock garden plant, it is big, tall (3ft) but well behaved: *S. pennsylvanica*

## A MATTER OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY: OOOPS!

Lee Adler

At the ACNARGS spring plant sale I sold/gave away many cuttings of a salvia which I called *Salvia reptans*. It is actually *Salvia azurea* (see photo at right). It is surprisingly hardy, at least in Ithaca. If you took one of these cuttings, please take note. See how beautiful it is?



## MY LIST OF SPECIAL NEEDS PLANTS

Carol Eichler, Newsletter Editor

The title of our October speaker's presentation got me thinking about some of my own special needs plants. For me that means finding the right place for a plant that might otherwise be considered a problem (perhaps not Jill's definition but one that works for me). Here are a few plants from my own garden that I would classify as needing a special spot



*Potentilla argentea*, Silverweed Cinquefoil – I love its silvery finely toothed leaves, because it is certainly not grown for its sparse, yellow flowers. A spot between my 2-bay car garage means it grows essentially between a rock and a hard place (concrete one direction and compacted soil and gravel the other) and keeps it contained. It is a spot that I frequent daily and get to enjoy it.

*Antennaria neglecta*, Pussy Toes: This is an assertive low-growing ground cover that thrives in very tough locations but can't tolerate a lot of competition. I've placed it in compacted soil near the entrance to my veggie garden so it can do its thing and spread.

*Lysimachia clethroides*, Gooseneck Loosestrife: I give this plant lots of space so it can spread while doing its primary job of suppressing weeds, I love the look of the plant in flower which is where it gets its common name. I have planted it with other assertive plants - rudbeckia, bee balm, and bear's breeches and let the plants "duke it out" in what

I call my meadow. I tend to do some selective weeding once during the growing season and in the fall this area gets cut with a mower.

*Allium × proliferum*, Egyptian Walking Onion: No one can deny this plant has an interesting growth habit by growing a cluster of bulblets atop its foliage. Having culled this plant once from my garden it's now back – in the veggie garden that is – where I'm using it at the base of a raised bed. The jury is still out as to whether it will remain this time but so far this seems a far better location to contain it.

*Geranium robertianum*, Herb Robert: Most people would call this a weed that assertively seeds itself especially in shaded areas. But it has its attractive qualities namely deeply dissected leaves, reddish stems, small pink flowers and red fall color. It is very happy establishing itself as a low-growing ground cover in my perennial border, which apparently supplies its preferred shady habitat. Since ground cover lowers my maintenance, I have been letting it spread at will. There is very little root structure so it can be easily pulled if it intrudes into less welcome spaces.



I have to confess maybe, just maybe, more than one of these plants may fill a need in me to grow them rather than the other way around. Finding the right place for their needs and mine becomes a win-win situation.

## UPCOMING 2016 ACNARGS PROGRAMS

*Mark your calendars! Unless otherwise specified, all local events start with a brown bag lunch at noon with the program following at 1 pm, and take place at the renovated Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.*

Nov. 12: Steve Whitesell. Also annual meeting with dish-to-pass luncheon starting at noon. This meeting concludes our 2016 program year.

And a preview of 2017 Programs

Feb. 18: Members Share. Time to think ahead to what YOU might be able to share with others and present: photos from your garden, from your travels, or from the natural landscapes you have visited. We ask for short (5-10 minute presentations) to get as many people involved as possible. This has become a fun and participatory meeting and an annual tradition. More details will be available in the January newsletter.

March 18: Terry Humphries and Carol Eichler will share photos and stories from the 2016 NARGS Conference in Denver and Steamboat Springs

April 15: Elizabeth Lawson on primroses and her historical novel about a primrose breeder, Florence Bellis

As we learn more details of our meetings they will be included in future newsletters, our blog, [acnargs.blogspot.com](http://acnargs.blogspot.com), and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

## CALENDAR OF SELECT GARDEN EVENTS

To have a garden event in your area listed send all pertinent information to Carol Eichler at [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)

Nov. 7-19: 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Leaf Swap & Compost Giveaway. 10am – 1pm each day, CCE Tompkins. Bring leaves (CLEAN, no branches or other yard waste) or take leaves. Also free screened compost (up to 5 gal. in your own container)

Nov. 16: Tim Tolen presents Native Green Roof at SUNY ESF building. 7pm, Unitarian Church annex (corner of Buffalo & Aurora Sts.)

March 14-15, 2017: Trip to Philadelphia Flower Show and Longwood Gardens. Fee. Coming soon, promotion by Swarthout & Ferris Bus Company requiring sign-up and payment.

May 10-15, 2017: 3rd Czech International Rock Garden conference, Prague, Czech Republic; info at [Czech Rock Garden Conference on Facebook](#).

## ABOUT US – ACNARGS

We are an all-volunteer organization and one of thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Our annual Chapter activities include 6 program-speaker meetings, the Green Dragon newsletter, web and Facebook pages, garden visits, overnight garden trips, hands-on workshops, and 3 plant sales a year. Our meetings are informal, friendly gatherings that provide a wealth of information and offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners. The public is always welcome.

Chapter membership starts at \$10 a year based on the calendar year. Membership includes these benefits: newsletter sent to you electronically (or option by mail for an extra fee), opportunity to travel on our planned overnight garden trips, and plant sale discounts and member only sales, including Plant-of-the-Month sales. Download a membership form here: <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>.

## ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)) for only \$40 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS National also conducts winter study weekends and holds its Annual Meeting in interesting places where attendees have the opportunity to visit gardens, and take field trips, often to alpine areas, as well as hear talks by outstanding plants people from around the world.

What can the Chapters do for National? Would local chapters exist without National? How do the Chapters benefit from National? Why do so few Chapter members become NARGS members? What would make National more appealing for Chapter members to join? How can National better support its Chapters?

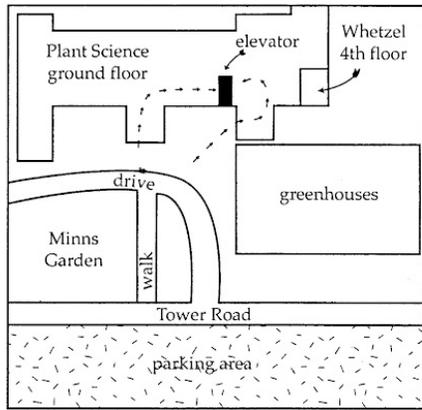
## RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE/2016 BOARD MEMBERS

If you want to volunteer, we'd love to hear from you!

- Chair: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)
- Program: Nari Mistry, [nbm2@cornell.edu](mailto:nbm2@cornell.edu). Seeking a new Chair for 2017. Help!
- Program Committee Members: Could this be you?
- 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). Seeking a Co-Chair for 2017 to work alongside David...Why not you?
- Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca, Carol Eichler
- Plant of the Month: 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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Whetzel Room, 401 Plant Sciences Building,  
Tower Road, Cornell Campus

## PHOTOS OF THE MONTH: MARLENE KOBRE'S GARDEN (WITH HELP FROM RON) NEXT PAGE



## Marlene Kobre's Rock Gardens

Left: Overview of the new  
rock garden; Below: Detail of  
the tufa mound



Above: Trough grouping;  
Right: an established rock garden

