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October 2018

## OCTOBER 20: JULIA GOREN

Adirondack may be our Chapter name yet when have we had a program on the Adirondacks? Our October meeting will give us a chance to learn more about our namesake when Julia Goren, Education Director and Summit Steward Coordinator for the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) will be our speaker.

The ADK is dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and responsible recreational use of the New York State Forest Preserve and other parks, wild lands, and waters vital to our members and chapters. To fulfill this mission volunteers, members, donors and advocates are all vital partners “working for Wilderness Together.” With the 29th season of the Summit Steward Program about to conclude, a mid-year update reports “we have continued to increase our outreach efforts and volunteer program to make sure that the hikers who come to recreate on these beautiful alpine summits are educated in Leave No Trace, Outdoor Skills, and alpine stewardship. This year represents the third round of alpine plant population monitoring too.



*A bit of alpine flora atop Whiteface Mountain.  
Photo credit: Carol Eichler*

Come hear from Julia about what the Adirondack Mountain Club is doing to preserve this great natural resource within our state.

**Our meeting will be held** in the Whetzel Room, Room 404, at 236 Tower Road, Cornell University. Map at the end of this newsletter. Bring your own bag lunch at noon for socializing

before the meeting. Refreshments to share are appreciated.

## FROM THE CHAIR

*John Gilrein, ACNARGS Chair*

We didn't intentionally have a theme for our September and October 2018 Plants-of-the-Month, but that's how it ended up. September our POM was *Sempervivum*, hens and chickens, and in October it will be *Cyclamen coum* and *hederifolium*. These are some of the easiest plants to cultivate, assuming proper growing conditions. *Sempervivum*, colloquially "semps" are succulent, and about the only care they need is to have the dead or dying rosettes that flowered get pulled out. Semps are an ideal plant for troughs as they are content to exist on natural rainfall in their trough home, and won't perish if they don't get water for a few weeks in midsummer when you're on vacation. All semps really need is sun, good drainage, and a little rain; spaced out in a trough they'll eventually fill in the bare spots and make a nice display. I think the webby *S. arachnoideum* looks especially good when it's filled in. I wish all trough plants were this easy!

Our two *Cyclamen* species are equally easy, and highly recommended if you're in this area during the colder half of the year. Both go dormant in the summer, as they come from a climate with no summer rain. The foliage of both *C. coum* and *C. hederifolium* is very attractive to gorgeous; the leaves of *coum* can be plain dark green or patterned; leaves of *hederifolium* can be dark green, silver, or patterned. I'd grow some of the *hederifolium* just for the marbled Christmas tree patterns on the leaves. The leaves usually make it through cold weather fine, but in severe weather the leaves may burn, especially if they're in a very sunny and/or exposed position. *Cyclamen* are very good neighbors for other plants, being dormant in much of our growing season. What's not recommended is planting them near plants that are taller and evergreen, like *Helleborus x* (Lenten rose) or *Helleborus niger* (Christmas rose), as they like good light in part shade, like the dappled shade of a leafless deciduous tree. If you keep the competition down around your *Cyclamen*, you should have some seedlings in a few years.

There's a gardening book out titled *Right Plant, Right Place*. Both of our fall POM could give you years of enjoyment if they're well situated. Do I always follow that advice, about choosing a suitable habitat and planting position? Of course I don't, but sometimes I struggle to make the planting site closer to the right place, like adding rocks to the rock garden soil, or taking the rocks out of the woodland soil. It would be so much easier if I just installed plants that were happy with the current conditions!

This is advance notice that we are recruiting for a new membership coordinator effective immediately and for a newsletter editor in the spring. These are both great opportunities to become more engaged with the Chapter and to serve a vital role to keep the Chapter vibrant. If you're interested or want to know more about either position, contact me.

Hope you have some nice sunny days for fall planting, and hope to see you in October.

John Gilrein, Chair

## PLANT-OF-THE-MONTH : CYCLAMEN

Marlene Kobre, POM Coordinator

For our October POM we're offering two species of cyclamen—*coum* and *hederifolium*—provided by Brent and Becky's nursery in Virginia.

A member of the family Primulaceae, the Cyclamen genus includes 23 species that are native to the Mediterranean area, spreading as far north as Central Europe and as far east as Iran. Cyclamen grow corms that serve as storage organs, and three characteristics make them especially valuable in the garden: their bloom time, the upswept reflexed petals of their beautiful flowers, which are usually pink but sometimes white and purple, and their strikingly patterned leaves.

**The Name:** The genus name comes from a Latin and even earlier Greek word meaning circle, or wheel, which most sources interpret as referring to the round shape of the corm, but Tony Avent notes that it could also refer to the way the flower stalks circle upon themselves as they are forming the fruit. English common names for some of the species include sowbread or swinebread, drawn from the belief that pigs fancied them as a food source, but most often the genus name cyclamen is applied to the species. Many of us may be most familiar with the frost-tender florists' cyclamens (*Cyclamen persicum*) so readily available in grocery and big box stores from Christmas until the spring equinox. Fortunately, sources agree that our two POM species—*C. coum* and *C. hederifolium*—are hardy to zone 5.

**Foliage:** The leaves of most species emerge from the top of the tuber, with each leaf having its own 2-4" stem. The early leaf and flower stems can easily be confused, but if you look closely, you will see that the tips curl differently: leaf stems curl upwards while flower stems, which can reach 5", curl downward. The leaves are also usually variegated with green and silver, sometimes in irregular blotches but sometimes, as in *coum*, in more striking regular patterns resembling arrowheads or Christmas trees. The leaves of *coum* and *hederifolium*, like most species native to the Mediterranean, are summer dormant. This is an adaptation to their native habitat, where the summers are hot and dry and the winters are cool and moist. As we'll shortly see, the habitat is central to understanding some of their important cultivation requirements.

**Flowers and Fruit:** The flowers, usually pink but sometimes white or purple, appear on stems that are bent at the tip so the flower faces downward. Each has 4-5 reflexed petals connected at the bottom in a cup, which is embraced by 5 sepals. This cup creates a platform for the bees, as they hang upside down to pollinate the flowers, which look to Tony Avent like "fairy wings" or "shuttle cocks."

After pollination the fruits begin to form through a process that Avent describes as a "bizarre behavior that is beautiful and amazing to observe." The flower stem coils from the end over itself, pulling the fruit down to conceal it beneath the foliage. The small fruit is a round pod enclosing sticky seeds with an elaiosome that are dispersed by ants after they have feasted on the fat, rich-coated organ. Later this year, as my *hederifolium* are forming fruit, I plan to be right there to witness the "bizarre behavior" for myself.

## Differences between Coum and Hederifolium

•**Shape and size of the tuber:** Coum's tuber is rounded and remain relatively small; hederifolium tubers are flattened and can grow to 9" or even larger. The tubers of both are **toxic**, so culinary experimentation is discouraged.

•**Leaf Shape and Pattern** can vary enormously even within a single species and this is part of their appeal. Coum's leaves are rounded and solid green or with silver patterns on the dark green leaves are regular. Hederifolium leaves are ivy-shaped, with irregularly variegated patterns.

•**Bloom Time:** Coum blooms in winter and early spring (Feb.-Apr.). after the leaves have emerged in late fall. Hederifolium, in contrast, blooms in late summer and autumn (Aug.-Nov.) before the foliage appears. Whether it's fall or winter, these flowers are a delightful anomaly when there's so little else to feast our eyes on.

•**Hardiness:** Both species are hardy to zone 5. Of the two, hederifolium is the hardiest, having survived winter temps of -20 F. In several of our gardens coum has also passed the hardiness acid test for Zone 5. The Royal Horticultural Society even says both species are hardy to Zone 4! It has also included both in the top 200 plants of the last 200 years. So you can't go wrong.

•**Leaf and Bloom Time:** Coum's dark green leaves appear in late fall, and are followed by flowers ranging from pink to purple on top of 2" tall stalks. Hederifolium's flowers, in contrast, start to bloom in August before the foliage emerges.

## Planting and Cultivation Guidelines

Good drainage is essential, especially during the summer dormant period, to help them endure the summer wetness that is not part of their native habitat. They tolerate a wide range of soil types, but prefer a slightly alkaline, well-drained soil with a pH no lower than 5.5. To ensure the required drainage add some pea gravel or very coarse sand to the soil and perhaps a little Turface. Plant hederifolium tubers so that their tops are just below the soil surface, but you can plant the coum corms a little deeper to prevent them from sprouting too early in the spring. And remember to mark the spot so you don't damage them when they are dormant. Clay soil is not recommended.

Planting them under trees and shrubs is not a requirement, but it can provide the dappled light they prefer and protect them from exposure to heavy wind. Planting under trees and shrubs can also help to manage their water requirements. Thanks to John Gilrein for explaining that since trees aren't big water consumers in winter, they won't interfere with the moisture cyclamen want in this season. Tree roots can also help in summer by taking up soil moisture to help keep the cyclamen corms dry during their dormant period. Tony Avent notes that coum and hederifolium can handle a more open site and even a little direct sun, and he advises against planting either species too close to larger, more competitive shade perennials like hellebores, which can easily overpower these diminutive gems. He even recommends not planting coum too close to hederifolium, which can also easily engulf the smaller species. Suitable companions might include other spring bulbs, primula, small ferns, and dwarf hostas.

If you've never grown these treasures, do give them a try. And if you've already been captivated by their charm, you know one can't have too many of them.

*Editor's Note: The April 2018 Green Dragon included an article and pictures of cyclamen. See "Cracking the Code" by Betty Ann Addison. Reprinted by permission from Minnesota Rock Plant Notes, [their] March 2018 issue.*

## MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

At the October meeting I'd like to have a nametag for everyone. I haven't done nametags for new members in quite a while. My apologies to the newer folks! I will also be doing an inventory of our current nametags and seeing whose is missing. You may be getting an email from me asking if your nametag has travelled home with you or if it is truly lost. Questions? Issues? Contact Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu).

*To our Chapter members: A membership directory is published electronically every year in September and accompanies the September newsletter as an attachment. For those who receive a paper copy of the Green Dragon, you will be mailed a printed directory. To respect our members' privacy we do not post the directory online.*

## NOW IS THE TIME FOR SEED COLLECTING

*This article first appeared in the September, 2018 issue of The Journal, the newsletter of the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society authored by Anna Legatt, Arie Vanspronsen, the seed site ([theseedsite.co.uk](http://theseedsite.co.uk)), and Diana Pooke. Photos and illustrations by Diana Pooke. Used by permission.*



Look around. There may be many seeds (technically fruit) that are starting to brown. Paeonia are opening, Clematis are turning brown, Salvia have brown nutlets on the lower flowering stems. Many Daisy family members will be ripening this month. Berries abound. Seeds will be ripe if they detach easily or have changed colour.



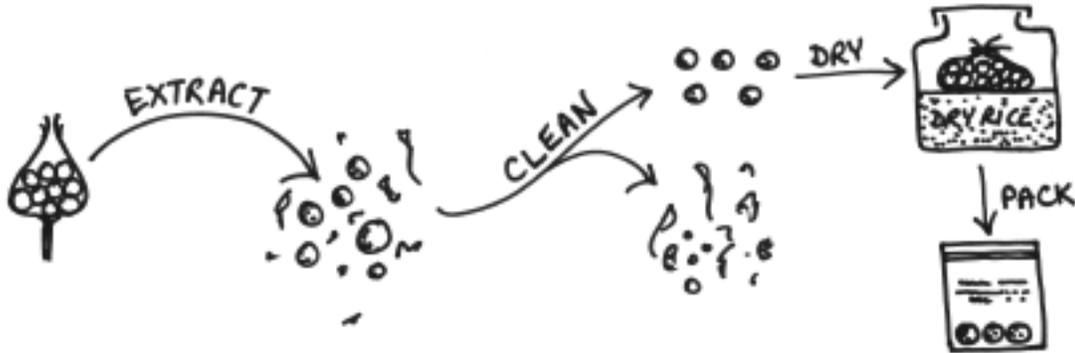
Easy seeds just fall out. You need to make sure they are free from chaff, undeveloped seeds and bugs. The easiest way is to put the seeds in a sieve. Find one that has mesh size a little smaller than the seed. Just move them around in the sieve and unwanted particles will fall through. Use a sieve that has a bigger mesh size to remove large debris.



Another messy way is to put the seeds on a flat plate and gently blow. Lightweight rubbish and unformed seeds should move

away. Then tilt the plate and good seed will trickle down onto another plate. Sometimes it is easier to use fingers to move the good to one side.

Get a small plastic yoghurt dish. Rub it round with your fingers to create some static. Put uncleaned seeds in and swirl around. Tip out. Much of the rubbish will stay behind.



Berries are usually easy. You may be able to squash them out or peel off the skin. Use gloves. Squashed seeds can be put in cool water and swilled around. Then the water + skins can be poured off and the cleaned seeds placed on a paper towel to dry.

[Whether collecting for yourself or to donate to a seed exchange, you should] put your clean, dry seeds in a paper or glassine envelope, not plastic. Make sure the seeds cannot leak out. Label with your name and the plant name. Record the details like plant height, flower color, and time of bloom.

## NEWS FROM NARGS: TIME TO THINK SEEDS

*Carol Eichler, editor*

The NARGS Seed Exchange is an annual event that for some starts as early as July when instructions for donating seed are printed in the summer NARGS *Quarterly*. Many people are involved to make this highly regarded national/international seed exchange possible - from seed donors, to seed packagers to those fulfilling first and second round orders. Each of these stages requires even more steps. The remarkable Intake Manager, Laura Sierwicz, the Seed Exchange Intake Manager, who enters all the donations into a computer database, verifies the seed name and adds descriptions where needed, and packages countless boxes containing everything that is needed for the Seed Packing step (and I mean everything). This is where our Chapter gets involved.

On or about December 15<sup>th</sup> the Seed List “goes live,” that is when one can begin ordering. Much like ticket-buyers to a concert, there are those who have been known to wait up all night to get first crack at ordering some of the most in-demand seed. For the rest of us we have until January 31 to send in our orders. Though admittedly earlier is better, there always seems to be plenty of seed to go around. But, if like me, you don’t get to ordering until late within the 6-week window, it’s advisable to suggest plenty of alternative choices. Making your selections from the list of 3,500 or so species (at least for me) takes time and maybe even a method for making one’s selections. Some assemble a “wish list” through the year and this can be a great way to build your order.

The online ordering system has some great features including links on most species to view photos and cultivation requirements and allowing you to save and edit your list over several sessions at the computer.

Our Chapter has participated in the Seed Packing phase for a number of years, as I expect we will do again this year, which occurs over 1 or 2 week-ends in December. We are generally assigned to package 150-200 genera out of the 3,500+ total genera that have been donated.

Even if you are not interested in growing plants from seed (and the seeds donated are by no means limited to rock garden plants), the current seed list, as well as past lists, using the web links are an excellent resource for learning more about a species.

## AIR TRAVEL WITH PLANTS

*Editor's Note: Barbara Cooper and Bella Seiden, from the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society, faced some extra challenges when they tried to bring plants home to Toronto from western Canada in their carry-on bags. For any of us traveling domestically, this is something to look into (if you're wanting to bring plants back that is). Here's their story.*

The issue for us about bringing plants [onto the plane] as part of our carry-on was the medium in which they were planted. The pots were what we all typically use for sowing seed. The medium was a grit and sand. It was somewhat coarse, with an even coarser top dressing - tiny stones.

It was explained to us that this material caused alarm as it passed through the X-ray machine. The folks are on a pretty high alert for material that is the consistency of Epsom salts. This material can be used to detonate bombs. In Canada, at least, they are limiting the amount you can take with you onto the plane to 30ml - not enough to even fill one pot. I must say that they were even somewhat reluctant to tell us what they were looking for. It seems to be a recent threat.

The airline was willing to take the plants as 'oversize' luggage - less time on a conveyor belt and somewhat more careful handling - not ideal. We had Saxifraga that were young and would have been killed by unpotting them, so we chose this route and packed them as tightly as we could with bubble wrap.

I would assume that the US carriers would be screening for the same material, but I don't know for sure. You might be able to find out by being in touch with the airline - though the Canadian ones didn't know as they farm out their security. A better resource might be to try the government agency that deals with plants and soil [US Dept. of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service or USDA APHIS] that would otherwise pass as carry-on.

## UPCOMING 2018 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, 236 Tower Road, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.*

October 20: Julia Goren, Education Director and Summit Steward Coordinator for the Adirondack Mountain Club.

Oct. 25: Deadline to donate to the NARGS Seed Exchange. Detailed info at [nargs.org](http://nargs.org).

November 10: Evelyn Lee, Butternut Gardens, LLC (formerly with Oliver's Nursery in Fairfield, CT.) Behind the Scenes at a Flower Farm. Our last meeting for 2018 with a dish-to-pass preceding our speaker program.

Dec. TBD: Chapter workdays to package seed for the NARGS Seed Exchange

Dec. 15: NARGS Seed Exchange ordering begins

May 3-5, 2019: "Rooted in Diversity," NARGS Study Weekend, based at Sheraton Great Valley Hotel, Frazer, PA, a Philadelphia suburb. Hosted by Delaware Valley Chapter NARGS with details in the Fall Quarterly (not yet published) and in this newsletter.

May 8-11, 2021: International Rock Gardening Conference, Perth Scotland. Start saving your pennies.

As we learn more details of these 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>.

## HAVE SOME/WANT SOME

*Our new monthly feature – a classified section – to facilitate your gardening wants and needs. Do you have too many large pots? Do you want some small pots? Do you have too many divisions (that will otherwise go into the compost)? Are you seeking a certain plant? The idea is to use this newsletter to express your "haves" you are willing to give away and "wants" for any items you are seeking. To post a request contact Carol Eichler at [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com).*

### HAVE:

### WANT:

Still seeking more plastic berry containers. I'd also love small (about the size of a quart berry box would be ideal), sturdy boxes to use for shipping. Carol Eichler, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)

*Panax trifolius* and *Asclepius quinquefolia*. Contact Bill Plummer, [remmulp@stny.rr.com](mailto:remmulp@stny.rr.com)

## 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)*

Cooperative Extension Horticulture Programs, located at 615 Willow Av., Ithaca. 607-272-2292. Unless otherwise stated, classes require pre-registration and have a self-determining sliding fee scale. More info at [www.ccetompkins.org](http://www.ccetompkins.org)

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society Meetings from 7-8:30pm at the Ithaca Unitarian Church annex (corner of Buffalo & Aurora, enter side door on Buffalo St. & up the stairs). More info at [www.FLNPS.org](http://www.FLNPS.org). Plus FLNPS Walks meeting at different times and locations.

Cornell Botanic Gardens (formerly Cornell Plantations) calendar of events visit: **CBG Calendar**. Fall Lecture Series continues Oct. 10 and November 7. **CBG Fall Lecture Series**.

## 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 \$15 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, annual membership directory, 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. More recently, NARGS is offering botanical tours each year, both within the US and abroad.

## 2018 BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

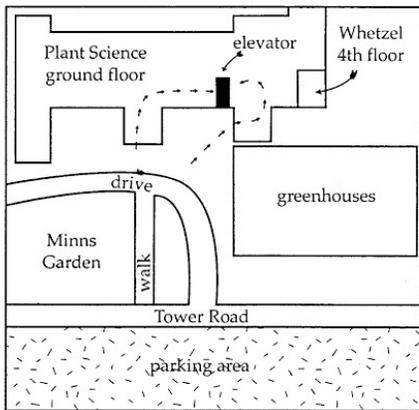
*If you want to volunteer, we'd love to hear from you!*

Chair: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)  
Program: Terry Humphries, [terryehumphries@gmail.com](mailto:terryehumphries@gmail.com)  
Program Committee Members: **Could this be you?**  
Secretary:  
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 to work alongside David...Why not you?**  
Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca, Carol Eichler  
Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, [mkobre@ithaca.edu](mailto:mkobre@ithaca.edu)  
Membership: Seeking someone to do this. **Could this be you?**  
New Member Hospitality: Nari Mistry, [nbm2@cornell.edu](mailto:nbm2@cornell.edu)  
Newsletter Editor: Carol Eichler [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)  
Calendar: Pat Curran, [pc21@cornell.edu](mailto:pc21@cornell.edu)  
Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, [cdcramer@gmail.com](mailto:cdcramer@gmail.com)

### GREEN DRAGON TALES

Published eight times a year (Jan/Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Carol Eichler, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com). Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be our November issue. The newsletter is always posted and printable each month on our website:

[www.acnargs.org](http://www.acnargs.org)



Map: Whetzel Room, Room 404 Plant Science Building, 236 Tower Rd., Cornell campus

### PHOTO OF THE MONTH: ATOP WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN

