



**ADIRONDACK
CHAPTER**
North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

Visit our blog: acnargs.blogspot.com

September 2020

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SEPTEMBER 19: KRISSEY BOYS AND ROBERT WESLEY

Carol Eichler



Krissy seed collecting in the meadow

We have two 30-minute talks scheduled in our first ever meeting by Zoom. "Growing Native in New York." (If you are unfamiliar with using Zoom, please refer to the document accompanying this email)

Talk #1: "A Streambank Restoration: Transforming a plant desert into a native plant meadow." Krissy Boys will talk about this project at the Mundy Wildflower Garden at Cornell Botanic Gardens and how the technique could be applied to a home property.

Talk #2 "Take a (Virtual) Walk on the Wild Side." F. Robert Wesley will take us on a virtual field trip to share photos of rare plants from two very different environments. First, he will show us select natives in the Ithaca gorges (be prepared to be impressed at what you will learn), followed by a complete switch in gears to take us on a botanical tour of the Chaumont Barrens Preserve, near Watertown. These barrens illustrate an alvar environment - a fine example described as a



Restored streambank meadow along Fall Creek. Photo by Robert Wesley.

prairie-like landscape resting atop a foundation of limestone bedrock. Yes, there are plants that grow under these hot, dry, near soil-less conditions.

Krissy Boys has been a professional gardener for nearly 30 years. Her gardening career began with native plants at the Brandywine Conservancy and Brandywine River Museum in Chads Ford, PA. She has been managing the Mundy Wildflower Garden at Cornell Botanic Gardens for 20 years. From 1992 -1999 Krissy looked after the Comstock Knoll Rhododendron Collection, the Pounder Heritage Vegetable Crops and the Poisonous Plants Garden. She volunteered as a land steward for the Finger Lakes Land Trust from 1992-2011 and has been a steering committee member of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society since 1998. Here is a nice article where you can read more: [streambank restoration](#).

F. Robert Wesley holds the title of botanist for the Cornell Botanic Gardens, which doesn't nearly describe the range of work that he does there. His area of expertise is native plants. To that end he assists Krissy to identify and use native plants in the Mundy Wildflower Garden, as well as in the 3,000+ acres of natural areas that Cornell Botanic Gardens oversees. He also serves as a field photographer, leads field trips and tours, and writes copy for web and print on Cornell's natural areas. He too serves on the steering committee of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society.



Robert taking time to smell the flowers. Photo by [Karen Thurnheer-Bacharach](#).



NY native Castilleja. Photo by Robert Wesley.

After the talks, we will hold a short meeting to let you know our plans for the rest of the year and the months to come in our covid-19 world. There are a lot of uncertainties in the months ahead and it has required us to thinking differently and creatively to maintain important relationships and organizations like ours.

Join us for this meeting from the convenience of your own home. You will be receiving an invitation to register for this meeting. Once you register be sure to mark you calendar now and don't forget to log in!

FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair

I can feel positive about life on a nice summer day that wasn't too hot, and after a little rain. I wish you all could have that, especially the rain part. I hope your gardens are providing you with much pleasure and respite from the perils outside your eden. If you find you need some more late blooming flowers as the summer winds down and we get through autumn, we'll be providing you with lots of ideas.

The Plant Sale! I missed seeing a lot of you at the plant sale on Saturday August 22, since our attendance was down slightly. In spite of hard times, we had a great event. Everyone was very considerate, masked and keeping distant, and the modified sale worked very well. It was nice to see people there, all 19 or so of us. A big THANK YOU to the big team (all the attendees actually) that made the sale a social and financial success: planner, plant set-up help, plant donors, plant purchasers, cashier, and clean-up helpers.

Due to generous donations we had interesting plants, in spite of reduced attendance, and everyone who wanted plants was able to come away with some interesting ones. This event went well enough that we're thinking of repeating it in 2021, if Covid is still an issue and the Garden Fair is cancelled. We have shown we can successfully host our own sale, for members that is. Fingers crossed for 2021!

As for upcoming Meetings we don't really have a choice for the remainder of 2020. In-person meetings are not going to happen. We're planning live virtual meetings via Zoom. I hope people that would attend a live meeting will participate via Zoom. I never used Zoom until COVID hit, and I'm not the most computer literate person; in spite of that I had no trouble using Zoom. Anyone with a reasonable computer should be able to do this. Clicking on the link you'll be sent will start opening up Zoom and the rest is very intuitive. It's not as good as a live meeting, but think of the bright side - there's no commuting time to get to your computer. [If you do not have a computer or smartphone, we suggest you be resourceful to access a device, such as using a computer at your local library]

Plant of the Month: we're suspending the POM program until further notice, most likely we'll resume when we can have live in-person meetings again. I hope you can support your local nurseries and/or share plants with friends and neighbors. I always enjoy our POM and I will miss it, and enjoy its return even more.

Membership: I hope most of you will continue your membership. You will see in this issue we're offering a deal for membership. We're doing all we can under the circumstances to stay engaged with our membership and it begins with this newsletter. We will still be providing interesting programs (3 of our 6 program meetings are yet to come), but for now access will be electronically.

These crazy times will end, and I hope to see you then.

Cheers,
John

AUGUST 22 PLANT SALE: A GREAT DAY FOR GARDENERS

Carol Eichler, Plant Sale Chair

It was another beautiful day on August 22 – sunny and hot. And it became a great day for gardeners too. It was the day of our Chapter's annual member-only plant sale and the first time we had met in-person since February. The plant sale felt very successful and it was. We came with plants, eager to buy, and eager to chat with fellow gardeners.

So here are the specifics. We made \$1,010 and our only expense was minimal - for the pavilion rental. 18 people signed in - fewer than most years as expected but folks came prepared to buy. And the opportunity to socialize was PRICELESS!

I was so impressed with the quality and variety of plants that we had. They ran the gamut from rock garden to natives, herbaceous perennials to trees and shrubs and a few houseplants. Truly, there was something to appeal to every garden interest!

Many thanks to all who showed up and "behaved themselves" with social distancing, masks, etc. More thank you's to people who brought such great plants, bought plants, came early or stayed late to help with set-up and take-down.

What we learned it that we can pull off a socially distanced plant sale. Our members also have a wide range of plants to share and an enthusiasm for purchasing plants. We feel reassured one way or another that we will hold a spring plant sale – perhaps through Cooperative Extension's annual Garden Fair or perhaps on our own. That is to be determined as this pandemic progresses. But a plant sale we will have - good news!

Unfortunately I forgot all about taking photos. Did anyone? The day will have to live on in our memories.

TROUGH WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY SEPTEMBER 26

ACNARGS will not be holding a trough making workshop this fall at Carol Watson's Greenhouse. The instructor is not available. However, Bakers Acres of North Lansing will be holding a trough making workshop on September 26 from 10-12pm. This is what they wrote in their newsletter about the workshop:



From the Bakers Acres newsletter: "This is the first class we have offered during these very strange times. But it is a good one to offer because it of all the room you need to make a planter, you will get your own bench and of course be socially distanced. Also because you need to wear a dust mask, it will be no different with our masks on. You will have two shapes to choose from. The supplies you need to bring with you are: waterproof gloves, mask a sturdy board at least 24" in diameter, be sure to wear old clothes. The super tufa pot will stay here for at least

2-3 days so it can dry [cure] for you. This is always a fun class. You will be amazed at how easy this is to do. If you would like to make more than one, the cost per additional Super Tufa would be \$22.00 each. Call 607-533-4653 to register. Cost \$30.00. Deadline by September 23rd."

MEMBERSHIP OFFER FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

Have you joined ACNARGS for 2020 yet? If not, we are offering a sweet membership deal. Join now for 2020 (individual \$15, household \$20) and we'll include a 2021 membership. Now is an excellent time to join. Half our programs for the year are ahead of us (September, October, November) and you won't want to miss them. We have some excellent speakers lined up. As a member you will be sent the e-newsletter to get the meeting announcements and all the information you will need to join the meeting electronically.

Zoom meetings are not the same as our in-person meetings but they are a good alternative under the circumstances. E-meetings even raise the potential to extend our reach to people who don't "normally" come to our Ithaca in-person meetings...and the potential to share the meeting announcements to people within your garden networks.

We're just trying to make lemonade here.

PLANTS YOU CAN GROW

By various

So you came home from the August 22nd sale with some new plants. You're excited to plant them and watch them thrive...hopefully. Here are some cultivation tips for plants you may have bought at the sale, based on our experience. Good luck!

John Gilrein offers this general advice for growing non-ericaceous rock garden plants:

Choose a site with sun, 6-8 hours per day is ideal. If your soil has good drainage, you can make a rock garden with 4-8 inches of sand on top of your existing soil. If your soil is clay, my guess is that you would want 8-12 inches of sand on top. Installing rocks is beneficial, after all we're thinking rock garden, but the rocks are optional.

A sand with excellent drainage that doesn't have uniform grains or small grain size is ideal. The sand I used last year is "tube sand", sand which comes in a tube shaped bag available year-round at the big box hardware stores in 60 or 70 pound bags. The bags are heavy, and thus a little awkward to handle. This sand can be the planting medium in your garden, a trough, or even the holes in a concrete block.

This may seem like the drainage will be too fast and the medium will not have adequate nutrition but this is what most rock garden plants want for long-term health and hardiness. Rock garden plants will generally send their roots deep in search of moisture and nutrition and they benefit from dry crowns, especially in the cold rains and thaws of winter. Many rock garden and Mediterranean plants are hardier when planted in rock

garden conditions in our cold, wet climate. They often will be hardier than if they were planted in a nice, rich potting mix. Save your garden loam for tomatoes.

When you plant, it's time for tough love. Most plants raised from seed are grown in an organic rich potting mix. You'll need to carefully bare root your seedlings to remove the rich potting mix (use a pail of water to rinse the mix away), dig a hole in the soil deep enough for the roots, and tuck the plant in, firming the soil around it. The shock to the plant is less of a problem than the difficulty of pushing



P. porphyrantha.
Photo by Terry
Humphries

roots out into the spartan conditions of the rock garden from its pampered potting mix in the greenhouse. Of course, the seedling will need careful watering for the next week or 2, and some shading is also helpful if it's not cloudy. [The cooler weather of early spring and fall will help the plant "take off" in its new environment too] After planting, mulch with stone such as stone chips, gravel, or pebbles.

Terry Humphries' favorite plant is *Potentilla porphyrantha* with hairy gray foliage and pink flowers in spring.

It's native to the southern Caucasus Mountains/Armenia and is critically endangered there. Botanists are seeking new habitats, which could be our rock gardens! The crown should be planted at soil level, ideally on a slope, closely hugging limestone pea gravel for protection. They love calcareous conditions, require excellent drainage, and full sun is preferable. Hers is growing in tufa, so happy, much larger than this photo taken 2 years ago. Good for a trough or in or near tufa (with luck it will seed into the tufa!)

Also from Terry: *Calecolaria* 'John Innes' is a ground hugging perennial growing to 9" when in flower. With the common name pocketbook flower, it wants rich well-drained soil, morning sun and light shade, and regular watering or it may go dormant but not die. It is a hybrid of 2 species and is cold hardy. It even survives Zone 3 in the Adirondacks.



C. 'John Innes.' Photo
by Carol Eichler



Linum dolomiticum.
Photo by Carol Eichler

From Carol Eichler: *Linum dolomiticum* is a favorite of mine. I brought a lot of them to the sale since I have good luck growing it from seed. I love the basal foliage and the large brilliant yellow flowers – I didn't realize what a gem I had! The second year I had over 14 blossoms! Then we had a very wet August and this plant croaked. I surmise it may be short-lived. I am now growing it in a drier area of my rock garden. It would be suitable for a trough, which you can always move if we get one of those wet, wet summers.

Symphotrichum ericoides 'Snowflurry,' common heath aster, has a prostrate form to 6" high with woody stems and is covered with tiny white flowers in late summer. It takes a while to establish but then flourishes and spreads. It can be grown in the open garden as a groundcover; tolerant of a wide range of soils and drought.

Chrysogonum virginianum is a wonderful low-growing ground cover for heavy shade but can tolerate sun if kept moist. It is rhizomatous but not invasive, with yellow disk flowers beginning in spring; OK for the rock garden too.



Left: *C. virginianum*. Photo by Harold Peachey



S. ericoides 'Snow Flurry.'
Photo by Rosy Glos

AN UNCONFERENCE DEBRIEFING

Carol Eichler

The cancellation of the Ithaca-hosted national conference is now part of history, and a "victim" of the covid pandemic. As chair of the Conference, I'd like to give you all more information as to what this cancellation meant for our Chapter and for National.

With Cornell Conference Center as the "home base" for the conference, when Cornell shut down in mid-March, that meant the cancellation of all their conference center events as well, which naturally included our conference.

Interest in the conference, as reflected in registrations, was very high. At the time of cancellation, we were essentially at maximum capacity (140 people), even at such an early date

The Conference was on track to be financially successful too. We were on target to make upwards of \$13,000 less NARGS take of 25%. That would leave our Chapter with a net gain close to \$10,000. Even with Chapter funds dedicated to registration stipends and free t-shirts for our volunteers - rounding those costs to \$5,000, we still stood to gain significant revenue for the Chapter. That 25% cut from NARGS, was a guarantee from them that in the case of a loss from the Conference, they would cover those expenses.

Fortunately with Cornell being the entity to cancel, all registrants received full refunds, as well as any advance payments by our Chapter. Our only expense was to the designer of the conference logo.

The Chapter is in sound financial shape, even with the cancelation. Even without the spring plant sale, which was also cancelled. We have a healthy cash reserve. But we also



have our Donor Advised Fund at the Community Foundation, which has subsidized our speakers' costs for several years.

There was however another "cost" to the cancellation, not in dollars but in time. The planning of the conference, mostly from a planning committee of four people, required untold hours of volunteer time. – and that was, perhaps the greatest "cost."

While our Chapter was fortunate to be able to weather this loss of revenue, NARGS national stood to lose a lot financially from the loss of the conference proceeds and also the cancelled pre- and post-conference tours. Hence the birth of a new idea...a virtual conference!

NARGS offered its first ever virtual conference, Taproot 2020, on June 26 and 27. By my count 269 people registered and it was terrific...and profitable for them. It will go a long way to make up their deficit.

Our Chapter was well represented for both the in-person and virtual conferences. Next year's national conference is set for Durango, Colorado from June 17-20. They seem determined to do what they have to do to make it happen. Let's hope so.

WHAT'S BLOOMING IN YOUR GARDEN? LATE SEASON PERFORMERS

From the ACNARGS_Member_Forum

Rock gardens are noted for their wonderful spring displays. That's because many of the plants grow where the season is short and/or temperatures are cool. So as winter wanes, they are raring to go. ..and we are more than ready for these harbingers of spring to bloom their hearts out. For me, that is one of the wonderful phenomena of a rock garden.

The challenge then can be how to extend interest throughout the growing season. Through the ACNARGS member forum I asked people to share their late season performers. Their responses, as well as my own experience, are shared here. Altogether we generated a long list.

From Susanne Lipari, stating "None of these are special or rare (I'd dispute that), but they do provide interest right now."

Chrysanthemum weyrichii: just opening with large pink daisies just above ground level

Indigofera pseudotinctoria 'Rose Carpet': just opening, pink pea flowers at ground level. This is from last year, so it might bloom earlier once established

Lobelia siphilitica mistassinica: very dwarf, sky blue flowers, will open in the next couple of days.

Sedum sieboldii: carpet of bright pink flowers and gray leaves tinged with pink

Allium spirale: about to open, very low, pink

Allium senescens ssp. *glaucus*: just on the border of getting too big for the rock garden, but very lovely right now

Allium thunbergii (and 'Alba'): very late purplish

Erinus alpinus: reblooming

Veronica alpina (white) and *V. alpina* 'First Love' (pink) and 'Goodness Grows' (blue): re-blooming

Clematis scottii: it's the first year this has re-bloomed for me several times through the summer.

Orostachys iwarenge: Not blooming, but at a great stage right now as the rosettes begin to expand.

Salvia sylvestris 'Marcus' and 'Little Night:' re-blooming

Lithospermum diffusum 'Grace Ward:' re-blooming with small but incredibly intense bright blue flowers

From John Gilrein:

Aster (Symphotrichum) novae-angliae 'Purple Dome' and 'Vibrant Dome': 2 short cultivars

Crocus speciosus: beautiful lavender flowers striped with violet

Colchicum autumnale

Eucomis sp. (pineapple lily): this is hardier than listed but go for a hardier species

Cyclamen hederifolium: blooms from late August into November

From Rosy Glos: Here are a few late-season performers in my garden. We live in a cold microclimate (was zone 4 and only just slipped into zone 5 in the past several years), so some of these may bloom unusually late in my garden. (See photo collage at the end of this newsletter)

Aster ericoides 'Snow Flurry:' a prostrate aster that gets smothered in white flowerheads in mid- to late September.

Allium cernuum: a native allium with nodding flower buds that open in late August.

Clematis tangutica 'Helios:' bright yellow, nodding flowers in early September

Silene regia: cardinal red flowers on tall (~4ft) stalks in mid to late August.

Mentzelia nuda: a short-lived perennial native to sandy parts of the Western US. I grow it as an annual. Sticky, sandpapery leaves and three-inch-wide white flowers that only open between 4 pm and dusk. Highly recommended but not very common. Mine are blooming now (mid August).

Callirhoe involucrate: a popular rock garden plant that just keeps giving. Mine has been going strong since the beginning of the month and shows little sign of slowing down.

From Rosemarie Parker: some of the aforementioned plus

Phemeranthus calycinus: used to be talinum, hot pink flowers waving above the sea green rosettes, succulent

More Plants to be continued in the October issue of the Green Dragon

Join the ACNARGS Member Forum

Not a member yet? The Forum is limited to ACNARGS Members who must be invited to join. Join this Google Group by sending a request to Carol Eichler,

carolithaca@gmail.com.

ACNARGS 2020 PROGRAMS

NOTE: Due to covid our fall meetings will take on a different format. We will hold live meetings via Zoom and are currently in the process of booking speakers, hopefully on our "usual" meeting dates. For those of you unfamiliar with Zoom, this newsletter includes information about downloading it and navigating a meeting. See below for the programs that have been finalized at publication date.

September 19: Krissy Boys and F. Robert Wesley from Cornell Botanic Gardens via Zoom. See article in this newsletter for more information. An invitation to join this meeting will be sent to you via email.

October 17: TBD

November 1: Dr. Kevin Nixon, Cushion Steppe and Alpine Zone Flora of Patagonia. Program starts at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom. A link will be sent to you.

Details as we learn them will be included in future newsletters, our blog, acnargs.blogspot.com, and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

CALENDAR OF SELECT GARDEN EVENTS

For the latest information, visit these websites of these gardening organizations.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Online class information:
<http://ccetompkins.org/gardening>

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society monthly meetings postponed until further notice.
<https://flnps.org/>

Cornell Botanic Gardens: no on-site events at this time; visit Cornell Gardens at home:
<https://cornellbotanicgardens.org/explore/events/>

Liberty Hyde Bailey Garden Club: <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/LHBGC/>

To have a garden event in your area listed send all pertinent information to David Mitchell at david_mitchell_14850@yahoo.com

2020 ACNARGS BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

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

Chair: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu
 Program: Terry Humphries, terryehumphries@gmail.com
 Program Committee Members: Could this be you?
 Secretary: Currently rotating amongst "Responsible People"
 Treasurer: BZ Marranta, mmm10@cornell.edu
 Plant Sales Chair: Carol Eichler carolithaca@gmail.com
 Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranta, David Mitchell
 Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, mkobre@ithaca.edu
 Membership: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu

New Member Hospitality: Graham Egerton
Newsletter Editor: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu and sometimes Carol Eichler.
Looking for a new editor!
Calendar: Pat Curran, pc21@cornell.edu
Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, cdcramer@gmail.com

ABOUT US – ADIRONDACK CHAPTER NARGS

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, two plant sales a year, and frequent plant giveaways. 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 at acnargs.org/join.

ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at www.nargs.org) for only \$40 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication focused on rock gardening, and an online website 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.

GREEN DRAGON TALES

Published eight times a year (Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to David Mitchell, david_mitchell_14850@yahoo.com Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be October 2020.

Last page: Collage of late season flowers by Rosy Glos

