



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter November/December 2017

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

I have voted for the third option - to keep a skeleton version of the Connecticut Chapter of NARGS. It is obvious at this time that we need to scale back; we need volunteers and new and younger members. Yet I agree with Jonathan's comments that "the Chapter should endure." I have been reviewing the many programs which the Chapter has had and the large number of members in previous years. There is quite a history and it would make an interesting program. I have met some wonderful people in CTNARGS who are great gardeners and who have introduced me to alpiners and woodland plants. I intend to continue membership in the national NARGS and hope that if you are not already a member you will consider joining.

A very special thanks and gratitude to Maryanne for her hard work, ideas for programs and the outstanding *Newsletter* she has produced, and to Barbara for her excellent and meticulous recording of programs. I have enjoyed being a member of the Connecticut Chapter of NARGS.

~Ginny



November's last hurrah: a very late-flowering digitalis seedling, mums from a Chapter sale, *Getiana* 'True Blue'.



Looking forward to spring: buds of *Helleborus* 'Molly's White', *Daphne mezereum*, *Hylotelephium* (*Sedum*) cv.

VOTING RESULTS

The landslide winner was Option #3: Finish 2017 calendar year. Do not collect dues for 2018; reimburse anyone who has paid into the future. DO NOT spend down treasury. Have garden walks if/when members wish to open their gardens; if contacted by other chapters to piggyback on speakers, do so until chapter funds run out. Twenty-two members out of a possible thirty-six voted. Option #3 garnered nineteen votes; option #2, two; option #1, one.

So...if any members wish to open their gardens, even on a spur of the moment, just send out an email to the membership with the particulars: date, time, address. Ditto if someone wishes to host a picnic or workshop, or land a speaker.

We are looking for someone who voted for option #3 to be the contact person for other chapters who are looking to share a speaker, as well as a volunteer to arrange a venue for the presentation.

This is the last issue of the *Newsletter* that I will send out. Many thanks to all those who have contributed articles; your willingness to help will be long remembered.

~Maryanne

September Meeting – Marcia Tatroe Speaker

By Barbara van Achterberg

Marcia Tatroe was a delightful speaker from Colorado, who usually speaks in the west but was currently making a tour of eastern garden clubs. She spoke of Four Seasons in the Garden. "In May and June, the rock garden goes into hyper-drive," but what about the other 10 months of the year? Not a traditionalist, she uses scrap iron sculpture, petrified wood and pretty pots with annuals to drop into a bare spot. She encourages self-sowing annuals and buys inexpensive 6-pack annuals to brighten up the garden. Favorites are gazanias, the brilliant *Catharanthus* 'Cherry Halo,' the delicate *Sutera* 'Snowstorm Pink,' dwarf *Petunia* 'Little Gem' and *Portulaca grandiflora*. (This last one comes back for me year after year in sunny spots, very lightly mulched in the winter and also is easily grown from cuttings in a pot, and then moved to the garden when well-rooted).

Ornamental grasses which she likes are *Festuca glauca* 'Boulder Blue,' *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Pygmaeus, and *Festuca brachyphylla*.

Dwarf perennials with variegated foliage look good all season as do variegated conifers and those with golden and chartreuse needles. *Corydalis ochroleuca* has white flowers from spring to fall.

In winter she likes yucca, *Eriogonum umbellatum* 'Kannah Creek,' and evergreen conifers such as *Abies concolor* 'Charming Chub' and *Pinus ponderosa* 'Tasha.' Snowmelt flowers for winter and early spring include *Helleborus niger* 'Jacob' and the beautiful blue *Alkanna aucheriana*.

She has problems in Colorado with bulbs that are never a problem in Connecticut, including *Tulipa batalinii*, *T. linifolia* and *Crocus speciosus* - all have foliage that is too invasive for her. Most other rock garden bulbs are happy there. *Crocus niveus* is a lovely one.

In July and August she avoids the midsummer doldrums

with lewisias, *Eriogonum jamesii*, numerous sedums, *Monarda didyma* 'Pardon My Purple,' and heat-loving annuals such as small flowered zinnias.

In autumn in the high country texture takes center stage with *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina,' *Yucca harrimaniae*, *Marrubium incanum* and more. Seedheads and fruit are featured, as well as autumn bulbs. Newly planted perennials including *Penstemon* 'Riding Hood Blue' may bloom out of season.

Marcia showed pictures of many other choice plants and plant combinations - these are just a few.

TRI-STATE MEETING October 22, 2017

Planting Fields Arboretum, Oyster Bay, Long Island

By Barbara van Achterberg

Five of us from Connecticut drove in one Prius to the Tristate Meeting. I was the last one to be picked up at the parking lot off the Merritt Parkway, so I had the shortest ride, which was a good thing since I was sitting on the hump. (I turned down kind offers to trade seats). Even having the shortest ride, I left home before 8:00 am and didn't get back until after 5:30 that evening. Traffic was easy Sunday morning but slow Sunday afternoon.

It was worth it to see Planting Fields for the first time. Purchased by William Robertson Coe for \$750,000 in 1933, it became the site of a mansion in which he and his wife raised four children. After his wife died in 1924, he married a second wife who was a beloved stepmother to Coe's four children. They remained in residence at Planting Fields during the springtime and for Christmas, and traveled to their other seasonal homes in Florida, Wyoming and South Carolina. In 1949, Mr. Coe deeded his property to the people of New York and upon his death in 1955 it became Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park. Coe's second wife, Caroline, lived in the Manor House, built as a dowager villa for her in 1956, until her death in 1960.

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In addition to the Mansion, Manor House, a marvelous Hay Barn now the visitors' center, a large greenhouse incorporating a Hibiscus House, a Camellia greenhouse and numerous garden areas, there are also numerous outside garden areas, a few of which our group had time to visit. We made a picnic sitting under a tree.

In the Conference Hall, plants were available from several vendors. I bought two: a *Campanula chamissonis*, my favorite plant in that genus, and a *Lewisia longipetala* 'Little Peach.'

Yasemin Konuralp, a Turkish botanist, spoke at 11:00 am and again at 1:15 pm. She began with a map of the three main zones of Turkey, all running west to east, with numerous local variations. The northernmost zone is the true alpine zone; she saved that part for her afternoon talk. The middle section contains the Taurus Mountains and is the driest part of Turkey. The southernmost zone has a Mediterranean climate.

The bulbs she described in the morning talk are endemic to the middle and southern zones. There are many crocuses, including the beautiful *Crocus matthewii* with blue and white flowers, and *Crocus sativa*, the cultivated saffron crocus. One crocus, *Crocus yaseminiae*, is named after her - she found it! Of several sternbergias, *Sternbergia candida* is the only white one. *Galanthus*, *Muscari* and *Anemone blanda* are common. *Tulipa armena ssp. lycia* is endemic to the Taurus Mountains and is a beautiful red. *Tulipa cinnabarina* is a lovely red-orange found in the Middle Taurus Mountains at 13,000 feet. *Bellevalia forniculata* is a bulb that I may still have - I hope so, because it is an amazing turquoise; it doesn't spread for me, unfortunately. There are also 470 species of birds and many butterflies in these mountains.

In the afternoon talk, she showed us plants of the alpine zone in northern Turkey. In the high meadows the season is only two months long. People keep summer houses and let their cows graze there. They milk them and make cheese, just like in Switzerland. Spruce, fir, scotch pines and black pines abound. Plants include *Gentiana verna ssp. pontica*, *Androsace armeniaca ssp. armeniaca* - a very cute yellow spotted dwarf, pulsatillas, primulas, campanulas and geraniums. *Silene kouralpii* was found by her. She insisted that this one be named after her husband, who travels everywhere with her and works as hard as she does. (He was there at Planting Fields, working hard).

Immediately after the talk there was an auction. The auctioneer wasted no time and we got through it fast. There were some very good plants, including a white

Gentiana scabra. Immediately afterward, numbers were drawn for the raffle. My name was called late, but while standing in front of the table wondering what I still wanted, a robust *Astilbe* 'Amber Moon' was donated by one of the vendors, so I grabbed that. At the very end, I won another plant and found that another astilbe, *A. 'Rheinland,'* had suddenly appeared. So I now have two new ones. All my new plants are happy in the ground after the 9 inches of rain the last few days.

PIGGYBACK By Angela Fichter

It has been quite a task to create a garden out of nothing at a new home. When we sold our Scotland home last year in September, I tried to bring perennial plants up to Hampton. In fact, I had a clause in the realtor's sales agreement with the buyer that gave me until the day of the sale to remove any plants I wanted to take. Unfortunately, we had a bad drought last year. Less than 5% of the Scotland plants were removed for use in Hampton. Why so few? Try putting your shovel into concrete. It was impossible to dig up the plants that way. So, to avoid the impossible, a spade fork was used. Think of something the size of a shovel but with tongs instead of a full blade. Easier than a shovel to get into the concrete-like soil surrounding the plants. Thus the crazy and impossible was achieved. A circle was forked around the plants I wanted to bring; the plants were carefully lifted up without any concrete-like soil, tossed bare root into empty cardboard boxes and brought up to Hampton. This took from 1pm to 6pm. They were then watered down in the boxes with a hose and left bare root overnight. The next morning I planted them in an area that had already been rototilled. Much to my delight and surprise, they all came up this spring. My next surprise was a plant miracle: plants that I hadn't been able to dig up slowly arose right smack next to flowers I had transplanted. Alleluia! What came up as piggyback plants? The following perennials: creeping phlox, Johnny jump-ups, geranium, anemone, columbine, miniature iris, violets, bluets and foxglove. Most surprising of all were the annuals; they could only have come by having already set some seed into the Scotland soil, a bare trace of which came up to Hampton on the roots of the Scotland perennials. The self-sowing annuals that arose are a catchfly, a gorgeous bushy plant with lots of bright pink flowers, and two red poppies. Those red poppies were a gift from God because I miss the thick swaths of poppies that grew throughout my gardens in Scotland. To wake up one morning and suddenly see the poppy filled me with joy! I have named all these plants that somehow, invisibly, came along with the transplanted ones, as piggyback plants. They weren't dug up and brought. They just piggybacked invisibly from Scotland. Yay team!

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