



# Newsletter

**North American Rock Garden Society**  
Connecticut Chapter November/December 2014

## FUTURE EVENTS

**Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>**, is the first scheduled meeting of the next calendar year. **Adam Wheeler**, propagation and plant development manager at Broken Arrow Nursery, will present on dwarf and slow growing conifers. Meeting at Comstock, Ferre & Co.

In **March**, we hope to visit a member's **dwarf evergreen garden** and have the opportunity to purchase plants which he has propagated from cuttings.

The **NARGS Annual General Meeting** will be held May 7 – 10 in Ann Arbor, MI. Two days of bus tours to selected gardens (remember last September's program by Don LaFond), three evening speakers, and vendors comprise the main meeting, followed by a post-conference trip to the UP. Watch the NARGS website for details: [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org).

Closer to home and just around the corner on Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, the CT Hardy Plant Society is hosting **Jan Sacks and Marty Shafer** speaking on "**Dwarf Iris: Species & Hybrids**". See the attached flyer for complete information.

The CT Chapter has once again volunteered to clean and package seed for the NARGS Seed Exchange. Work days will be held in early **December** at the home of Maryanne Gryboski. If you think you might be interested in giving a few hours of your time, please call Maryanne; she will contact you when seeds have arrived and dates are decided upon. You will enjoy the company and conversation of other members and lunch is always included.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The trough planting workshop held at **Nancy Kulas's** home in Glastonbury on October 18<sup>th</sup> was a terrific example of members working together, charting "new territory" to plant bulbs in a trough for extended bloom expected from March through May. Members toured the landscape of the Kulas property which featured many boulders in the woodlands and one lower section of the property which is fertile land that a local farmer rents to grow many crops.

The **New York Botanical Garden** was a new venue for the **NARGS Tri-State Meeting** held on October 26<sup>th</sup>. Featured was a tour of the Rock Garden by its new curator, Mike Hagen, whose stated aim is to make it the premier rock garden in the country. I was delighted and surprised to see a common wildflower, *Houstonia caerulea*, in a trough. Its appearance in a trough shows how rare the once ubiquitous bluet is. Once found in lawns and landscapes everywhere, it now is seen on old farm land, along roadsides, and in local nurseries. The drifts of *Cyclamen hederifolium* in the Rock Garden were splendid, an idea that should be replicated by rock gardeners. And a benefit of traveling with fellow gardeners was getting to know Bonnie Maguire and learning of her travels and adventures.

I have enjoyed the blooming of two asters this year, one for the first time. I have not seen either in local garden centers or nurseries: they were both obtained from gardeners. *Aster tataricus* grows 6-8 feet tall, has blue or violet purple flowers and is the last aster to bloom. Its origin: Siberia. Mine was brought by Carol Hanby to a Hardy Plant Society sale. The second, *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Alma Potschke', of eastern North American origin, grows 3-6 ft. tall and has lovely pink flowers. I bought mine at the Conn. Horticultural Society Plant Auction and Sale where it was brought in by David Smith.

~Ginny

## SINGIN' THE BLUES

by Maryanne Gryboski

Autumn is here and we've had spectacular color on the foliage front in spite of an occasional heavy rain or strong winds. Mid-October's canopy of golds, oranges and crimsons was brilliant, while at ground level the rosy-lilac of colchicums gave way to the rosy-pink of cyclamen. But it was the blues that sang to me this fall like never before.



*Gentiana clausa*, the native bottle gentian, begins to show color. Note that the foliage often shows dark coloration.

It began in early September when *Gentiana clausa* expanded the tiny green buds that had been showing most of the summer and took on the violet-blue that the native bottle gentian is known for.

Mid-September brought a real surprise: a small pot of *Gentiana acaulis* that I purchased in April at Stonecrop Garden was in bud! One trumpet of exquisite beauty bloomed in late September, the potted plant traveling with me to Illinois so I wouldn't miss its show.



*Gentiana acaulis* mixes lines of darker blue spots and splashes of green with the blues of its trumpet, making an exquisite week-long display.

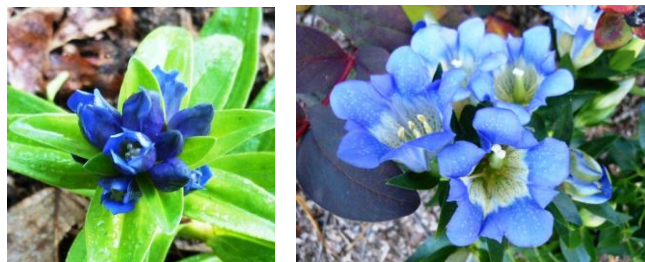
In the garden, *Gentiana makinoi* 'Royal Blue' held its slightly opened tubes on upright two foot stems. All summer this grows in almost full sun where its blossoms would open more widely, but by the time of the equinox the sun has dipped behind trees and so it sits in shade and remains mostly closed, making it difficult to see the darker spots that mark the inner tubes.

*Gentiana makinoi* 'Royal Blue' will open a bit more if sited in sun. It's lovely to see in the September/October garden.



Blooming at the same time is another gentian which I grew from seed. Labeled *G. acaulis* but very unlike the *acaulis* mentioned earlier, it has deep blue flowers each the size of your pinky fingernail. If anyone can ID this, please let me know.

The last gentian, which I spotted on an unplanned stop at Ballek's, is *G.* 'Alpine Success Blue'. Its blossoms are large and very plentiful and the tag claims it will bloom from July to November and, yes, it is still going strong in my unheated sun room. I'll let you know how it does next year when it is moved to the garden.



Left: an unidentified gentian from seed. Right: *Gentiana* 'Alpine Success Blue'.

### NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

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**PROGRAMS:** Please talk to one of the officers if you are interested in the Programs Chair position.



## TRI-STATE MEETING OCTOBER 26, 2014

by Barbara van Achterberg



A drift of *Cyclamen hederifolium* in the NYBG Rock Garden.

Members of NARGS Chapters from Manhattan, Hudson Valley, Connecticut, Long Island and New Jersey came to the Tri-state meeting at Ross Hall in the New York Botanical Garden, a great venue with comfortable auditorium seating. There were tables of superior plants from vendors for sale. I decided to wait until spring to get plants from Oliver's, only a few miles from my home, but I did buy a 'Wendy's Gold' snowdrop from Ernest Cavallo, a plant I had wanted for years since seeing photos of it in England and Scotland. I had no idea that it was available in the U.S.

Mike Kintgen is Senior Horticulturist at the Denver Botanic Garden, overseeing the Alpine Collection and nine gardens including the Rock Alpine Garden and the South African Plaza there. Since his teen years, he has traveled all over Europe and North America with his parents and brother. When they travel, his family gives him a limit of one public garden a day. Mike's morning talk was on public European rock gardens. Munich's is beautiful, very wild looking, with lots of grasses among the alpiners. Wurzburg has an alpine garden featuring a *Kelseya uniflora* that "you water when it cracks." Copenhagen has its rock garden on the Old City Wall. Gothenburg, in Sweden, is his favorite public rock garden. It contains *Iris paradoxa*, a very choice plant, in its alpine house. Peter Korn also has an amazing private garden outside the city. He has removed all the clay soil and replaced it with sand. The formerly wooded site is now tundra-like. Uppsala and Edinburgh have wonderful rock gardens. Some of Edinburgh's plants have grown so large that sunny gardens became shady gardens. Even Paris has a small rock garden tucked away in the old city. Kew has just opened a new alpine house, very modern. Kew's gardens are the least naturalistic of the European rock gardens.

We broke for lunch, which we had to eat outside of Ross Hall. Two people told me that the sushi they had at a Japanese restaurant was delicious. I tagged along with

the group going on a tour of the New York Botanical Rock Garden led by its curator, Michael Hagen, and nibbled on my bag lunch. There were plenty of benches for resting. Like Edinburgh, the NYBG Rock Garden has become overgrown and is being completely renovated. Part of it is being restored to the plan of its first designer, T.H. Everett, while other parts are new. The extensive work is being done mainly by Hagen and one hard-working assistant.

After the lunch break, we regrouped to see and hear Mike Kintgen's talk on Rocky Mountain alpiners. He covered plants of the southern Rockies - Colorado and Utah; the middle Rockies - Wyoming and Idaho; and the northern Rockies - Canada. Many of the best locations are accessible only by hiking. Others have lots of rattlesnakes. *Eritrichium aretioides*, a high alpine, is his favorite plant. *Eritrichium howardii* is much easier to grow in the garden. *Ipomopsis globularis* is great in a pot, with low, white and fragrant flowers. *Pinus longaeva* lives 5000 years, more than twice as long as *Pinus aristata*.

The winners of the plant show were named. Two of the winning plants were in long tom pots beautifully crafted by the late Lawrence Thomas of the Manhattan Chapter. I regret that I never took him up on his invitation to visit his terrace garden, and now I never can. There was time for more purchases from vendors, then the auction. Many choice plants, and several of Lawrence Thomas' long tom pots, were prizes.

The two friends I traveled with from Easton wanted to see the Japanese Chrysanthemum exhibit in the Conservatory. It was quite amazing, but artificial to my eyes. Our tickets to the exhibit also entitled us to a tram ride around the whole Botanical Garden. Since I was starting to limp from a healing torn meniscus, I was glad to sit down. The tram ride showed me many parts of the garden I had never seen before and was worth the price of the ticket. The foliage was still bright. Best of all, it delivered us right to our car.



Bonnie Maguire admires *Symphyotrichum oblongifolius* 'Raydon's Favorite' in the NYBG Native Plant Garden.

## GARDEN TIMES AUTUMN 2014: THE FOX

by Angela H. Fichter

In October, a friend came over to go to lunch with me. She went to look at my flower gardens while I went to get my purse. When I went outside again, she asked me if the animal lying on a large plastic sheet next to the peonies was a dog or a fox. It was lying down on its stomach with its head on its paws, facing us, much as a dog would do. I got binoculars and saw that the tips of its ears were brown and the nose was sharp and pointed. The coat was not a bright red but rather a blondish red. My friend noticed the animal because when Maggie, our cat, saw it, she flattened her ears and ran for the garage. I didn't want to get too close to this animal to check its shape and size, because if it was a fox, it could have rabies.

I have seen foxes in our back yard only twice before in 31 years, and both times they were in a group and were against the back stone wall, and as soon as they saw me they pelted out. I once came across a fox when hiking in the woods in R.I. many years ago. It started to cross the trail. As soon as I saw it I stopped, and it saw me and stopped, but then ran away.

After my husband came out to see what the animal was, we all walked to a different part of the yard with a clearer vision of the animal, but not too close. As soon as the fox saw my husband stop and stare at him, it rose



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up and ran off, not too fast, but loping, and much to my satisfaction it did not limp, stagger or show any other central nervous symptoms, hence maybe no rabies.

For days since, I have been on the lookout for the fox. The websites on foxes indicate that if one was rabid, it would be aggressive, unusually bold, and show lack of coordination. Well the fox did not try to approach us, but simply not running away I interpreted as rather bold. Our neighbor suggested that he just wanted to warm up on the black plastic, which would soak up heat. But I think he just might be a pushy fox that wants us to pretend he's just a dog wanting to be fed. Or worse, maybe he wants us to ignore him so he can eat our cats.

Once when we went to a movie at a large theater with a huge parking lot next to the Hartford waste water treatment plant and near some houses, I saw a disconcerting thing after the movie when it was dark and we were looking for our car. A fox was running across the parking lot towards a small copse of woods with a cat in its mouth. I think the cat was invited to dinner, but not the cat's dinner, just the fox's.

Of course, it could be that American culture has become so rude that American foxes just barge in. Plus, the fox websites say that teenage foxes go looking for their own neighborhood to be in charge of away from their parents. So much for modern American culture.