



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter August 2006

Next Meeting

Saturday, September 8, at 10:30 AM
Berkshire Botanical Garden Exhibit Hall
BBG is located 2 miles west of Stockbridge
MA at the junction of Routes 102 & 183

Chapter Business: Show & Tell, Ask The Expert, and any other relevant or irrelevant activities, as long as they are interesting.

AM – Tamsin Goggin, *Plants of the Swiss Alps*

Tamsin Goggin, a former Chairperson of this Chapter, a long time member, and a wonderful speaker on a huge variety of plant related topics, is finally coming back to visit us with a terrific program on plants of the Swiss Alps. She will take us from the base of the mountains to the top, bringing us an intimate look at the wide (and usually growable) plants that make the Swiss Alps such a special place for rock gardeners worldwide.

Her program will be followed by an auction and then.....

Lunch — BYO. We welcome dessert contributions. This will be followed by

THE BIG PLANT SALE!

So please bring lots of your precious seedlings to share with our Chapter. This is the major sale of the year, and we need to make it really successful.

A general meeting devoted to the 2008 Winter Study Weekend will follow the sale. We need you to participate, so please plan on staying for about an extra 30 minutes.



Chairman's Message – 8/21/07

By Peter F. George

This has been a particularly difficult few months for me, as many of you know. I've missed a meeting and the July newsletter, but it appears that my life is returning to normal for at least the foreseeable future, so I can again focus some of my attention on the Chapter, the Newsletter and the 2008 Winter Study Weekend. The bulk of this issue is devoted to that event, which has developed remarkably well in spite of the lack of time I've had the past two months. Credit goes to Tom Flanagan, Matt Mattus and several other members whose efforts have supported me and moved the project forward in a most remarkable way.

My garden has suffered from the incredible neglect of this period, but I am amazed that amongst the weeds that abound everywhere I look, my plants are growing well. Some are even blooming, which at this time of the summer always is a pleasant surprise to me.

A number of seedlings have grown to adulthood because of my neglect, and that too has been one positive result of my failure to weed. The gardens aren't particularly pretty, but I guess having healthy plants and beautiful flowers is an undeserved and unexpected reward.



The 2008 Winter Study Weekend has really begun to take form. Our speakers will be Elisabeth and Rod Zander, Geoffrey Charlesworth, Priscilla Twombly, Frank Cabot, Alan Bradshaw, John Good, Zdenek Zvolánek and Kristl Walek. I will provide a brief description of several of these very special people later in the newsletter.

We are planning 5 workshops, an open forum with our speakers and several of our vendors, 20 vendors from across North America, and a March weekend when we can expect MUCH better weather than we've come to expect in January, the traditional time for this event.

Matt Mattus has created some really terrific graphics for us, and over the next 60 days you should expect to see a fully developed marketing effort to our national and international members.

And just a quick note about the picture on page 1. Pollinators fascinate me, and every

day I can, I spend some time watching the incredible variety of bees, wasps, flies, moths, and butterflies that abound in the late summer richness that accompanies my (usually) well groomed rock gardens. I did not take this picture, but it is a perfect image of what I saw today at noon, while standing by a huge grouping of Aster in full bloom. It can be found at:
<http://www.isledegrande.com/giimages9/waspmimic.jpg>

The First Czech International Rock Garden Conference (Part 2)



By Robin Magowan

I participated in the first, second and fifth days of the bus tours and will describe three gardens that impressed me.

The first was Jiří Novák's in a tiny backyard, hardly wider than his house, which ran on in the flat for fifty feet before ending at a fence overlooking a river. Yet it housed part of the national saxifrage collection—Novak is the registrar of *Kabschia* cultivars—while containing tufa troughs with *Janka* in bloom, *Eritrichium nanum* grown from wild collected seeds, outlandish *Phyteuma comosum* peeking from a north-facing crevice, self-sewn *Myosotis pumilum*, and a score of acid-loving *Androsace*. Best of all was a tufa garden planted in a shallow cement pond which formed an enchanting alpine environment of peaks, pools and meadows—a bit like the garden in a model

railroad lay-out. There was a second alpine house, full of saxifrage seedlings and seven sets of surgical tweezers for purposes clearly other than removing ticks. I don't think I've ever beheld the work of a more consummate miniaturist.

At the other end of the spectrum from Novák is Jaromir Grulich's garden in Sedloňov, a few miles from the Polish frontier, a work of such scope as to deserve the term "monumental." That it is the creation of a single man who has taken care of it alone, over more than fifty years, staggers belief. The garden started from a rechanneled stream. On the islets thus formed Grulich made a series of raised beds, the niches dotted with high alpine gems, placed so as to be visible. When in the early nineties a storm blew down the trees blanketing the adjoining cliffs, Grulich got permission to develop the newly revealed stone. The result is a towering garden of astonishing surprises, *Primula*, *Lewisia*, *Cassiope*, and a scattering of arctic beauties that appreciate the acid soil conditions, peeping from nooks and crannies as you ascend by one of a number of paths. Grulich's achievement is all the more awesome in that the garden lies on a south-facing slope without any possibility of irrigation. At the time of our visit it hadn't rained in six weeks and it was instructive to see this very old man trudging around with his water pails. All the same he manages, he told us, to get away to the mountains every summer. It is this mountain reality the garden honors. It can't help but remind me

of the cult of the sublime from which the earliest nineteenth-century gardens emerged. Among all the wonders of the rock gardening world, Grulich's might well top the list. And not a weed, not a dead leaf.

Yet the garden that most appealed was Vladimir Staněk's crevice garden in Sedlčany that we saw on our last day. The



Androsace vandellii

http://www.floralpinabergamasca.net/pagina_70.html

garden is a rather private affair, tucked on a half-shaded slope behind the house, as if very careful not to rouse a neighbor's jealousy. It was full of old cattle watering troughs, each somehow decked out to look like its own distinctive Alp, but with plants you would never find together; every species possible of *Androsace*, for instance. But instead of being prominently displayed, a

number of troughs were to be found in a corner near the bottom of the crevice garden. The garden itself looked like an extension of the troughs, full of the smallest plants possible, among them an *Androsace vandellii* bearing an impressive '97 tag. Staněk has participated in a number of expeditions to Turkey and the garden displayed a fine collection of *Asperula*, *Campanula*, and *Convolvulus*. Completing the garden was a little woodland of *Primula* and, sheltered on the east, a gathering of meadow orchids. Walking back to the bus, we all noticed the knock-on effect. Every yard had its own thriving rock garden. Could that be the future?

We all, I think, returned home inspired to tear up and re-do at least one of our existing gardens.

In Vienna, on the way to Prague, my wife and I checked out Europe's oldest institutional alpinum, founded in 1803 on the Belvedere Palace grounds near the Südbahnhof railroad station. Never marrying, famous for the parties he tossed, the military hero Prinz Eugen of Savoy had put his considerable talents into the creation of the Belvedere gardens in the seventeenth century.



Gypsophila aretioides
<http://flower.onego.ru/other/gypsophi.html>

The alpinum is a sizable one, with larger plants than are usually tolerated in a rock garden. The plants are what we notice, the yard-wide *Gypsophila aretioides* draped over a boulder, the different species of *Minuartia*, each shrouding the whole of a large boulder, the big shaded tree peonies, the *Haberlea rhodopensis* in pale blue and cream blossoming next to the roots of a small shade tree. Even more prominent than the plants were the huge metal labels. The gardeners obviously delighted in confusing the eye, so you could not tell which was rock and which was plant. *Aethionema grandiflora* lent themselves to these games,

rising in a succession of mounds to a small granite eminence.

For me, the garden seemed more a celebration of variety in bloom, of rocks and the illusion of rocks large cushion plants create, than about visible gems in distinct mountain settings. But my wife appreciated the full generosity of the ancient offerings, the water features, the voluble blackbirds, the gorgeous water-dropped peonies, the air of a rather more wild medieval garden. All the same, there were discoveries I made:

Doronicum looking very cheerful in flower in a shaded site, *Hieracium* brilliantly confined among rocks, or a Siberian iris, “blue-kissed cascade,” blossoming in a deep shade that set off its midnight blue.

Easy Does It

Rock Garden Plants for Beginners

By Rachel Flowers



Convolvulus compactus
<http://www.alpinemtecho.com/culturef.htm>

For me, picking easy plants for the beginning rock gardener is getting easier. The reason is that since I'm a beginner, any plant I can grow is, by definition, easy, and by now my garden has selected out the easy ones from the hard ones. The hard ones are all dead and gone, and all that's left are the easy ones. So I went through the garden and not only found another easy one, I found one that actually has self-seeded, so I have a bunch of them. THAT was too easy! Anyway, the plant for this month is

Townsendia rothrockii, a small member of the daisy family that comes from the Rocky Mountains.

I planted my first one last August, and since my soil is very sandy and has great drainage, my Dad told me it would probably survive and flower the next spring. It did survive, and in late April the buds opened to beautiful, HUGE lavender daisies. The plant itself is only about 1½ inches in diameter, and the flowers virtually covered the foliage. Set right into the foliage, the plant bloomed for about 5 weeks, with the final flower going to seed in late May. Sometime in late July I noticed some tiny plants growing around the mama plant, and I figured out that they were seedlings. By now they are about ½ inch across, and look exactly like mama, with long, narrow and thickened leaves. I collected some seed, and I'm going to save it for next spring so I can build up a few dozen of these lovely plants. As small as they are, I think a large grouping would look a lot better, and I'm hoping to have success with the seed.



Townsendia rothrockii
<http://www.abc.se/~m8449/pic/sten20.jpg>

One thing I did learn from reading about this plant is that it is found in a very small area of Colorado, and is actually quite rare in the wild. So growing it successfully in our gardens helps to assure it's future as

something other than another entry in a museum collection of extinct plants.

The BNARGS Website

Many of you may not be aware of the terrific website Pam Johnson has created for us. The web address is:

<http://www.bnargs.org/>

Pam keeps us all up to date on everything important to us as BNARGS members, as well as having most of our recent newsletters in PDF format. So take a few minutes and visit the site.

2008 WSW Positions of Responsibility



2008 Winter
NORTH AMERICAN
ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY EASTERN STUDY WEEKEND

In preparation for the **2008 Winter Study Weekend**, we need to fill quite a few positions of responsibility. Below I am going to list them, with a link to the brief description of the responsibilities of the position provided on the NARGS website. Please email me @ petergeorge@verizon.net if you have interest in taking on one of these jobs.

Garden Visits

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/gardentours.html>

Field Trips

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/fieldtrips.html>

Hospitality

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/hospitality.html>

Conference Packet – Maps – Signs and Badges

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/conferencepacket.html>

Gift Plants

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/giftplants.html>

Audio-Visual

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/audiovisual.html>

Plant Sale

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/plantsale.html>

Plant Show

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/plantshow.html>

Displays and Exhibits

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/plantshow.html>

Raffle and Auction

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/raffleauction.html>

Secretary

<http://www.nargs.org/planning/chairperson.html>

I cannot emphasize how important these positions are, and the fact that we need to fill them quickly. March will arrive before any of us realize it, and we cannot afford to wait for these jobs to get started.

Wild Ginger Farm Rock Garden Plants and More!



Wild Ginger Farm is a small specialty nursery located near Portland, Oregon. We grow rock garden plants, alpines, Northwest natives, hardy succulents, dryland and compact perennials for use in rock gardens, woodland gardens, troughs and assorted containers, and other garden spaces.

We propagate the great majority of our plants, many from seed, in order to offer the adventurous gardener interesting and hard-to-find plant selections.

The 2007 Mail Order Catalogue is now available. We will ship to most locations from mid-March through October. The catalog will be updated throughout the season, so come back often to check out new listings.



Aquilegia rockii

Feel free to browse our comprehensive plant list for information and photos about plants grown at the nursery.

Check out our calendar for our schedule of events as well as our nursery hours.

We occasionally send out information to our customers. Would you like to be on our mailing list?

E-mail your address and we will be happy to include you in our next mailing.

We look forward to seeing you!

<http://www.wildgingerfarm.com/>

Reminder!!

If you haven't paid your 2007 dues, PLEASE make sure you bring it with you to the next meeting or mail a check to our Treasurer



Matt Mattus has whipped up a preliminary set of graphics for the event next March. I've included three different pieces of the overall marketing package, and I'd like your feedback at the September meeting. Of course, I welcome calls (978-724-0299) or emails with your comments as well. Matt will be creating a brochure and a print ad very soon, and I need to be sure that as many of you as possible offer feedback before we make the final decision to go to print. I love the design, but I'm just one person, so please help me out here!

As many of you know we selected the weekend of March 28-30 for a variety of reasons. First, the weather in March is simply more likely to be much more pleasant than the weather we usually get in January. Second, our vendors will have a much larger selection of plants for the attendees, and those plants that we buy will be more likely to survive the 2 or 3 weeks until we can put them outside than the 2-3 months we have historically had to hold them over. And March in Connecticut and New York is usually accompanied by the first serious blooms of the gardening year, enough to make some local garden visits a possibility.

Earlier I listed the speakers who have agreed to attend, and I'd like to offer a few comments about three of these people to whet your individual and collective appetites.

For most members of NARGS, Geoffrey Charlesworth's appearance is, by itself, sufficient reason to attend. His program, 'Glamorous Gardeners – Glittering Gardens' will be as close to a history of North American rock gardening as any of us are every going to get in person.

Frank Cabot is known to many of us through his magnificent garden in Cold Spring, NY, Stonecrop. That incredible garden would be a life's work for most people, but Frank has also created another garden in Quebec, Les Quatre Vents. This garden, subject of his talk, took him over 75 years to complete, and is one of the most exciting and expansive gardens of the modern era.

John Good, author of Alpine Plants: Ecology For Gardeners, is coming from Wales to speak to us about the role of climate in growing alpine plants. Dr. Good is not only a brilliant author and a brilliant speaker, but is offering us a program that is important in this period of intense focus on the issue of climate change and it's impact on the planet.

I will continue these brief introductions in the next issue. I hope to see all of you on September 8 at our **Plant Sale**.

October 6 brings us the great Latvian bulb propagator Jānis Rukšāns, and our Annual Luncheon Meeting on November 3 features Bill Mathis, who will tell us about growable terrestrial orchids.

PFG

Positions of Responsibility

Chairperson – Peter F. George
Vice-Chairperson – Harold Peachey
Secretary – Carol Hanby
Treasurer – Pamela Johnson
Archivist – James Fichter
Audio Visual Chairperson - Joe Berman
Greeter – Harold Peachey
Independent Director – Elizabeth Zander
Newsletter Editor – Peter F. George
Meeting Recorder – **Open**
Plant Sale Chairperson – Bob Siegel
Program Chairperson – Robin Magowan
Proofreader – Cliff Desch
Refreshments Chairperson – Joyce Hemingson
Speaker Housing – Anne Spiegel

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