



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter August 2008

Next Meeting

Saturday, September 6, 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 – Member’s Potpourri of Slides

Several of our members will be providing visual peeks into their gardens. It will be an informal but encompassing look at the favorite plants of our members, both in their natural habitats and in the open garden.

Lunch — BYO. As always, dessert contributions are welcomed!

**Following Lunch will be our
ANNUAL PLANT SALE!!**

We encourage all members to bring as many plants as possible, and be prepared to return home with many new and interesting additions to their gardens. Late summer is a great time to plant, and we all expect a large and varied selection of plants from which to choose. Please try to arrive a bit early to allow our volunteers to set up the plant sale prior to the morning program.

Chairman’s Message, 8/08

“If you build it, he will come,” a mysterious voice says to Ray Kinsella, an Iowa farmer, played by Kevin Costner in the 1989 movie “Field of Dreams.” The voice tells Ray to build a baseball diamond in his corn field and the ghost of Shoeless Joe Jackson (and the rest of the ghosts of the 1919 Chicago Black Sox) will appear. Ray did as the voice instructed and he got to watch the ghosts play ball. Now apply the above movie script line to most gardens in rural and suburban New England. Build a garden and the deer will come. Based on food and habitat preferences of the White tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*, one’s garden may become an all seasons, 24/7 feeding station with vegetation for concealment thrown in as a bonus.



Fifteen years ago (1983) during my first reign as “Chairman” of the Berkshire Chapter, I reported in the Newsletter (Sept.) that my garden had been assaulted, for the first time, by the 4-legged “locust.” A White tailed deer eats 6-7 pounds of vegetation per day. At the time it was a shock as I had been gardening here for the previous 15 years without incident. Initially summer fare was browsed: *Hosta*, *Trillium*, Solomon seal, etc. In winter, feeding became more wide spread with preferences towards *Ilex*, *Rhododendron*, *Kalmia* and conifers. This is

not a complete list. My defense was easy and useless – highly perfumed bar soap hung on branches and foliar spraying with dilute solution of Dave’s Insanity Sauce. Dave’s sauce is so hot that it can be referred to as a “non-food” item. The deer ignored my efforts and continued to eat. Damage has varied from year to year, but this past winter was the worst. It was now time to take the advice from studies on deer control: the only effective deer barrier is a fence. I decided to build a fence. The word combination “deer fence-retail” on Google yielded a number of on-line sources of fencing. Based on the wooded nature of my garden and the irregular terrain, I decided to install a non-electric type of barrier. The Web site with the best information on deer psychology and instructions for fence installation is: www.invisible-deer-fence.com. The Web site with the best prices is: www.deerbusters.com. I will bring samples of the fencing materials to the Sept. meeting for Show and Tell. My fence is 1650 feet long and I put it up without assistance. The most time consuming part was clearing the fence perimeter. I completed the fence on 20 May and there has been no sign of deer, yet. With the abundant rain this summer and the absence of browsing, the *Hosta* are extremely lush and I am able to collect *Trillium* seeds. The deer typically decapitate the *Trillium* before the fruit matures. I still find myself thinking: the fence appears to be effective so why did I wait 15 years to build it? Of course, so far so good, but what will happen this winter? Will the fence “work” then? I’ll report back this spring.

Two summers ago, our next door neighbor left a message, in an excited voice, on our answering machine:” There’s a moose walking down your driveway.” Later I was able to find the tracks. The deer fence around my garden is very strong but I doubt it is moose proof. I hope the moose-in-my-

driveway was a unique occurrence. A moose eats 40 pounds of vegetation per day!



From Canada to New England

Harvey and Irene Wrightman

We were on summer vacation towing 200 tons of rock in our trailer. Harvey was delivering tufa and stone troughs to Robin, Peter and Bruce. Combined with garden visits we were in for a good time.

We arrived at Peter George’s after 12 hours of driving. Peter has a large rock garden, astounding, almost impossible. At one end grew 3’ *Echinacea*, lilies and other large perennials right beside a rock garden section



Dianthus anatolicus in Peter George’s Garden – photo by Rachel Flowers

with perfect buns of of various *Eriogonums* How was this possible and why? He explained this was a former horse pasture with well-manured soil. Where the rock garden sits, the soil was excavated to 3 feet deep and filled with gravel/sand. The large flowering perennials provide habitat and food for pollinators. A circular rock garden featured smaller rocks and plants at the perimeter with larger flat rocks raised to the inside, providing access and viewing platforms. Again the soil conditions were very gravelly, suiting the likes of *Centaurea achтарovii*.



Peter George's Rock Gardens – Irene Wrightman

The next morning Peter served us the most delicious blueberry pancakes. We watched two wild turkey hens with a cluster of chicks eat all the blueberries we had dropped just minutes before. Perhaps a clever decoy to keep them from the rock garden.

A short walk up the road is the home of Abby Rorer, an artist who specializes in woodcut printing. Her gardens are thoughtfully designed and meticulously cared for. A large collection of small succulents and dwarf Pelargoniums, some treated as bonsai specimens, adorn a greenhouse and some outdoor space around it. They give the appearance of easy care, but the urge to water them must be controlled. In the rock garden was a *vaccinum* sp. from an island in Sebago

Lake, Maine - an interesting form (we took cuttings) as it is from a dry site. Also a dwarf (under 8") form of *Lobelia syphilitica* appeared in the garden - unknown to us and small enough for the bottom of the rock garden.

That evening we were invited to Bruce Lockhart's place. The pastoral view from the house, sheep pasture, orchards and vegetable garden is breathtaking. The rock garden on a gentle slope down to the meadow is in a large expansion. Very exciting, I can see an alpine meadow! We had a wonderful dinner fresh from the garden. Was it a 100-yard meal?



Matt Mattus & Joe Phillip's Garden – Irene Wrightman

The next day began with a short detour to the Worcester garden of Matt Mattus and Joe Phillip. A large, impressive flower garden (with lilies still in bloom) spills out everywhere, but for me the main attraction was a South African tortoise tethered in the middle of a small piece of surviving lawn. He trims the turf to the correct height, and with his "turtle house", provides the perfect lawn ornament.

From there we left for the Connecticut Berkshires and Robin Magowan's house. I loved the natural outcrop of large stone in his rock garden, but something looked different. In between slabs he planted

Saxifraga, Drabas, small gems in a heavier, stickier loam to prevent washout. It was most effective. I checked his many troughs. Wow! What's this? *Campanula zoysii*, the most choice slug food untouched. I check the pot...ouch! It's volcanic rock. You are a wise man, Robin.



Magowan Crevice Garden – Harvey Wrightman

For moving the trough (~ 100 lb.), there was a smallish tractor available, but with more capacity than imagined. With Harvey operating it, and Robin directing, the bare trough was placed on 12 pieces of stone coursing brought along to elevate it. - about 30" high. Planting soil, a mix of 3 parts composted pine bark / 1 part sand / 1 part grit, with a large dash of SRC, Spanish River Carbonatite, a slow release rock powder we put in all our mixes now. Two large pieces of tufa that had been specially chosen to fit the trough and create an "elevated" planting. They were planted with *Eritrichum howardii*, *Phyteuma comosum*, *Saxifrage x 'Jana'*, and *Jankaia heldreichii*. The cooler, wetter weather of this summer

was very beneficial for the transplants. Robin kept appearing with more choice plants for the trough and I set them in around the edge until it was complete.



Keiser Rock Garden – Harvey Wrightman

Next day we arrived at Susan Keiser's. She has large tufa rocks planted with *Haberlea*. Behind the house is a vast area with lichen-covered granite rocks and gravel mulch, awaiting more plants. We left for the Rockefeller Center to see Susan's trough creations on the 3rd floor balcony. There were many large troughs with trees, shrubs, cacti and alpine plants. Susan has been planting here for 5 years. It looks so easy and beautiful. The *Origanum*



Keiser Trough With *Origanum* – Harvey Wrightman

hanging over the side can't be duplicated in a garden. On the South side of the balcony she grows cacti and dry land plants. I wonder what zone this is; there is a large

clump of *Ruschia*, which is not hardy for us in zone 6, and then at the very top of the trough is *Centaurea achtarovii*. This is the fun part-- to see our plants find such wonderful homes. What an oasis in a sea of concrete. I wonder if bees and butterflies find these flowers.

We were back at Robin and Juliet's the next day planting troughs, wining and dining; what a good life. But visitors and fish - after 3 days and it was time to head home!

Back home I look at my soggy pots and I can't believe this is the same place that didn't rain last summer. *Campanula Mai* Blyth looks stunning. The western phlox are begging for sun and heat. Oh well you can't please everybody.

(Not Quite) Easy Does It

A Bit More Difficult (But Still Growable)
Plant For New England Rock Gardens

Rachel Flowers

Campanula saxifraga, commonly known as the Rockfoil Bellflower, is found in the Caucasus. It is a beautiful little plant averaging 4-6 inches in height. It forms a tight mound similar to *Saxifraga* sp. Blooming in the spring and early summer with flowers typical to the *campanula* species. This plant likes full sun to partial shade and sandy soil, which I have a plethora of. It dislikes a lot of moisture that has been hard to deal with this summer in New England (we have had *way* too much rain for the plants). It has a long taproot and does not like to be moved once it is established, so careful care in choosing



a location is important. It does really well in scree and crevice garden situations and will also tolerate a trough. I have mine in the garden getting 8-10 hrs of direct sun, planted in coarse sand. Next year I hope to gather seed for further plantings in the garden.



BERKSHIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

Rtes. 102 & 183, P.O. Box 826

Stockbridge, MA 01262

Phone (413) 298-3926

Fax (413) 298-4897

**Horticulture Certificate – Level I
Herbaceous Plants**

Tuesdays, September 9 - 28, 6 – 9 p.m.

Cost \$130, All levels

Learn about herbaceous plants used in the garden setting, including: identification, planting, fertilizing, pest control and pruning. Plant selection will be the focus with some time spent on annuals and bulbs.

Students should dress for outdoor field study including sturdy waterproof footwear.

Instructor - David Burdick, B.S. a distinguished plantsman and collector, shows regularly at the American Daffodil Society exhibitions.

**Horticulture Certificate –
Level II Advanced Pruning**

**Wednesday, September 11 &
17, 6 – 9 p.m., & Saturday,**

**September 27 10 a.m. – 3 pm
Cost \$130, All Levels**

Advanced pruning will focus on small ornamental trees, and shrubs including: both deciduous and conifers species.

Techniques and logic for pruning will be covered including hedging, rejuvenation and shaping and general plant health. Saturday workshop will be an outdoor hands-on pruning demonstration and work session on the grounds of Berkshire Botanical Garden. **Instructors - Ken Gooch**, is the Department of Environmental Management's Forest Health Specialist for Berkshire County.

Nature's Fertile Garden

Saturday, September 13, 10 – 1 p.m.

Cost Members \$20, Non-members \$25

All Levels

Learn how to identify a wetland (soils, plants, hydrology). View slides of a variety of attractive native plants that homeowners might want to grow on their land. Following the lecture, take a walk on the grounds of the Garden and view different wetland sites and consider basic plant identification. **Bill Lattrell** is a professional wetland scientist certified by the Society of Wetland Scientists, and the New Hampshire

Four Season Harvest

Saturday, September 13, 2 – 4 p.m.

Lecture/Field Study

Cost Members \$16; Non-members \$21 **Beginners**

Learn how to extend the season's harvest to enjoy your own garden greens throughout the fall, winter and early spring months. Crop selection, soil preparation, timing, planting, cultivation and harvesting will be covered with a focus on early and late season production. Instructor **Dominic Palumbo** owns Moon in the Pond Farm, a NOFA (Northeast Organic Farmers Association) certified organic farm in Sheffield, Mass. He produces organic eggs, meat, wool, yarn and honey. He teaches for



Berkshire Botanical Garden on topics related to family farming.

Wintering Over Tender Plants

Saturday, September 20, 10 - noon

Demonstration/workshop

Members \$18, Non-members \$24 **Beginners**

Discuss the tricks of the trade for bringing plants indoors and encouraging them to thrive for the winter months. Topics will cover cultivation, fertilization, watering, and healthcare. Participants will learn basic propagation techniques and take home a variety of cuttings. **Jenna O'Brien** owns Viridissima a garden design and maintenance business. Her specialties include perennial gardening & design, container culture & design, and indoor gardening/houseplants.

All About Roses

Saturday, September 27, 2 -4 p.m.

Lecture

Cost Members \$20, Non-members \$25, All levels

A rose primer specifically designed for north-country gardeners who want beautiful roses to grow and thrive in their cold-country gardens. This course is filled with all of the autumn "must-do's" and "need-to-knows" - plus helpful and inspiring tips and techniques for successful culture, designing with roses, and where to obtain the rare and hard-to-find but hardy, "focal point" beauties. **Joanne Rosman** is a Certified Consulting Rosarian for the American Rose Society, master gardener, and nationally published garden writer.

=====
Editor's Note: There will be an auction of quite a few books from Geoffrey's collection at the next meeting. Pam Johnson, Geoffrey's executor, has provided these.

Positions of Responsibility

Chairperson – Open
Vice-Chairperson – Robin Magowan
Secretary – Carol Hanby
Treasurer – Pamela Johnson
Archivist – James Fichter
Audio Visual Chairperson - Joe Berman
Greeter – Open
Independent Director – Peter F. George
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

Published 10 times per year (Feb. through Nov.) by the Berkshire Chapter NARGS

Membership is open to all members of NARGS
Dues \$10.00 single, \$12.50 Family
Payable to the Treasurer
Pamela Johnson
PO Box 203, 140 Main Road
Monterey, MA 01245

Deadline for Next Newsletter is September 15,
2008

Please contact editor before reprinting
articles

Peter F. George, Editor
Berkshire Chapter NARGS
PO Box 833
Petersham, MA 01366