



# Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society  
Berkshire Chapter July 2009

## Next Meeting

**Saturday, August 8 at 10:30 AM**

Berkshire Botanical Garden Exhibit Hall,  
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.



### Morning Program

Robin Magowan

*A Poet's Garden*

Robin will provide the words, and Juliet the  
photographs, as we, their audience, gain a  
deeper understanding of the inextricable  
relationship between poetry and gardening that  
defines their gardens in Salisbury, CT.

### Afternoon Program

Elisabeth Zander

*France and Flowers*

Elisabeth will reprise, through her photographs  
and words, her trip through the Rhône-Alpes  
earlier this summer.

Please remember to bring a plant or two for the sale

## Editor's Message:

On June 1 I took a day trip to New York to  
visit family and two clients, but I managed  
to finish early enough in the day so I could  
visit Abbie Zabar's garden and attend the  
Manhattan Chapter meeting, which featured  
Malcolm McGregor. Malcolm and Steve  
Whitesell met me at Abbie's penthouse  
apartment, and we took a tour of the most  
unusual garden I've ever visited. I could  
describe her garden from a horticultural  
standpoint, but the NY Times does a much  
better job than I ever could, and here is the  
link:

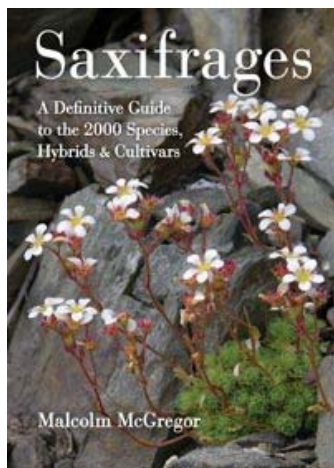
[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/16/garden/16garden.html?\\_r=1&ref=garden](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/16/garden/16garden.html?_r=1&ref=garden)

Each of us gardens for highly personal  
reasons, which often can be drawn from  
viewing the garden as an organic whole,  
created with a plan, rather than simply a  
collection of plants. Any visitor to Cliff  
Desch's Rhododendron rhapsody can easily  
understand what moved him over 30 years  
ago to redo his incredible property in a way  
that pleased him, and, of course, us. One of  
our presentations on August 8 will be Robin  
Magowan sharing with us how his garden  
reflects his inner life as a poet, accompanied  
most skillfully by Juliet's absurdly beautiful  
photographs. For those who have visited it  
in Salisbury, CT, it seems almost too  
obvious why Robin created his masterpiece  
as he did. Abbie Zabar has managed to  
express her aesthetic in a space that would  
defeat a normal person, one without her  
commitment to forge a garden out of a tiny,

narrow and utterly ‘ungardenlike’ space in mid-town Manhattan.

I grew up in New York City, and I still find it astonishing that people actually ‘garden’ there, on patios, in windows, and on roofs. So when I got on the elevator in her building on East 86<sup>th</sup> St. I certainly was not prepared to leave the elevator and find myself OUTSIDE, and on the cusp of her creation. Abbie greeted me, and immediately understanding my confusion, proceeded to explain the ‘why’ of the odd but utterly reasonable elevator ingress and egress issue. After meeting her 2 cats, and getting a quick tour of her apartment (also rather amazing!) I found myself in a narrow, almost compressed space, surrounded by green things which seemed impossible, but which were clearly alive and flourishing in this high, urban environment. She has used plants to create shade, act as a windbreak, but most of all, give her a chance to bring alive a previously sterile space. At points I had to turn sideways as I moved down an aisle of succulents growing in urban paving stones, painted ferns and the umbrella of Hawthorne she has used to perfection!

The overwhelming sense of wonder one finds in professionally maintained public and private gardens is replicated in the intimate space Abbie ‘gardens’. It’s clear that one doesn’t need acreage, or outcroppings, or even direct contact with the earth to have a garden. With love, hard work, and above all, imagination,



a garden can be created anywhere; a visit to E. 86<sup>th</sup> Street proves that with absolute clarity.

After a light meal, we went off to lower Manhattan to the Malcolm McGregor presentation on Saxifrages. His book is wonderful, but his presentation was better. Malcolm possesses all the right stuff. He’s clever, articulate, funny, and informative, and he connects with his audience in a way that would make most politicians cry with envy. His talk lasted about 1½ hours, but never lagged for a second. If you ever get the chance to attend one of his programs, take it, for he is a star of the first magnitude.

*PFG*

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## PLANTS OF THE SOUTHEAST SVALBARD ARCHIPELAGO

In early July, we visited the southeastern and southern islands of Svalbard: Bjornoya (Bear Island), Edgeoya, and Spitsbergen, which lie closer to the North Pole than they do to the Arctic Circle. At 77 to 80 degrees north latitude, Svalbard is farther north than much of Greenland. Going ashore, walking in rubber boots on the spongy tundra, I felt as if I had been transported into the last Ice Age, because Svalbard is still 60 percent glaciated. On the west coast of Spitsbergen, glaciers are halted by the warmth rising from the last pulse of the Gulf Stream. But on the east coast, the East Spitsbergen current is considerably colder, maintaining glaciers and pack ice through much of the summer. The fresh water tumbling out of melting snow and calving glaciers attracts spawning fish that prefer salt-thin waters. The richness of sea life supports the bird colonies crowded like alpine flowers in their cliff-ledge condominiums.



*Rhodiola integrifolia* [according to EC Pielou] or *Rhodiola rosaea* (according to Grey-Wilson), the only sedum on Svalbard

In the narrow zone between the glaciers and the Gulf Stream-fed waters a unique plant life abounds. These may well be of interest, as they are so well adapted to a regime of freeze and thaw. The species are few in number, only 164 in the whole of the archipelago (as compared to 500-600 in Tromsø, Norway, ten degrees latitude farther south). The combination of nine or more months of heavy snow and strafing wind goes a long way to dictate a community of dwarves, most of whom are no more than an inch high, easy enough to overlook were they not so omnipresent, or so colorful.



*Saxifraga aizoides*

Like flowers elsewhere, individual species possess their niches, determined in part by the permafrost, how many inches down it

lies, and by the melting water that leaches minerals out of the soil. Where nutrients accumulate, however, at the foot of a bird cliff, or on a ledge out of the wind, plants collect, differentiating mainly in their drainage requirements. Some don't mind feet constantly wet (drabas and saxifrages, for instance); others seek sheltered areas in high ground where peat, lichen, moss and bacteria have built up over rock (*dryas octopetala* and *potentilla hyparctica*).



*Saxifraga oppositifolia*

The shore tundra is actually a minuscule forest composed of moss, dwarf birch, lichen and arctic willow. The willow normally flowers at the first snowmelt opportunity, but on Edgeoya we found a white-blossoming carpet all along the shoreline. We landed in a cove once frequented by whalers. Every hundred yards or so, as we gradually ascended, we'd come to another twenty foot-long bowhead whale skeleton, flanked often enough by a great jaw. These skeletons were extremely old—probably several thousand years—and were of whales that beached themselves when sea levels were higher after the great meltdown at the end of the last ice age. Within each skeleton, out of the wind and nourished by slowly deteriorating bone, one could find as many as five different species of saxifrage: the gorgeous purple-flowered *oppositifolia* that has given rise to so many hybrids; roundish-leaved *Saxifraga hieracifolia*; yellow-flowered, reddish-haired *Saxifraga hirculus*, another semi-growable beauty that

has given its name to a whole section; the nodding white-flowered *Saxifraga cernua*; and the tufted multi-colored *Saxifraga cespitosa*, distinguished by an orange rust at the base of each unsprouted rosette.



Old whale vertebra with *Silene acaulis*

As might be expected of a place where saxifrages make up one-tenth of the entire flora, they are unusually distinguished. *S. cespitosa*, after all, adorns the cover of Malcolm McGregor's indispensable book. But for all *S. cespitosa*'s wide distribution in nature—it turns up even in the Great Lakes and Colorado—it is hard to come by, as it doesn't set seed, but clones itself instead by means of bulbils, which break off and are carried away by the wind. The reclusive *S. cernua* with its striking blood-red stem and single beautifully cupped flower earns a full-page portrait in the same work, as does the brook saxifrage, *S. rivularis*, the so-called spotted saxifrage. But encountered flat on the ground, their visual impact is not what it would be outlined against a rock.

In the same shoreline vicinity were three striking buttercups—golden yellow petals with green interiors—identified mainly by the different heights of their stalks. It was early enough that the Drabas hadn't yet fully opened, but I did see both dingy yellow and white varieties. Then there was the spongy-leaved sailors' favorite, white-flowered scurvy grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), which tastes like a vitamin C tablet. It thrives among the bird droppings at the base of the

cliffs. By the shoreline we found white fringe-petalled *Stellaria humifusa* and, on open gravel, its chickweed relative, *Cerastium arcticum*. Here, too, we found great mounds of *Silene acaulis*, the pink



Svalbard Poppy – *Papaver lapponicum*

flowers always budding in a south-defining arc: a useful indicator to any person wandering without a compass.

On the hillcrest above the bird ledges, waving brightly in the gale were lovely pale-yellow Svalbard poppies, *Papaver dahlianum*. I should also mention the cottongrass, *Eriophorum scheuchzeri*, found at shorelines, and even in a marshy lot in the middle of Spitsbergen's sole town, Longyearbyen. We encountered it, too, in the Norwegian fjords, growing in mountain forest. It would make a growable addition to a large woodland garden.



*Saxifraga* in bloom

We are used to measuring ecological health by diversity. By these standards, an archipelago boasting but a single nesting songbird, the snow bunting, can seem a desert. But what little there is on land—flowers, sea birds, reindeer, foxes, bears—seems abundant, if you know where to wait or look for it: under your feet, or say, down on your knees. Then again, as on most islands, the greatest richness of animal life



Pink sax with red hairy leaves

occurs in the surrounding sea rather than on land. The cliffs that hold the birds also hold a dense marine animal storehouse thriving in the uncontaminated coralline conditions. The abundance of cod—which seems to have been permanently fished out in New England waters—can be measured by the 900 pounds our boat’s crew hauled in on lines one afternoon. Several seal species feed on the cod and the bears, on the top of the food chain, find the fat they need to survive in the High Arctic by dining on the seals. In early July the pack ice in Southern Edgeoya was still thick enough to provide a continuous hunting ground for the bears. In two days we saw fourteen of them, on the prowl for the three seals a week their survival require. The presence of so many bears—3500 on the archipelago—could keep one from stopping and examining a *Pedicularis* in the gorgeous complex detail that virtually any arctic lousewort deserves. Nor was there any possibility of writing, of sitting on a large boulder in the middle of a tumbling cascade and watching the plant life emerge as I slowly shifted from one vantage

point to the next. We weren’t allowed to drop behind the hiking group, lest a bear suddenly emerge from behind a rock or out of the water.

The millions of nesting birds and rich animal life leave profuse droppings that compensate for the minerals the melt-water leaches out of the shallow soil. Thus the heat-trapping buns and cushions accumulate. In my garden, in early spring, I’ve been giving dollops of manure to Primulas, Daphnes and Gentians. I suspect that most buns would benefit from a similar feeding. With all the wetness with which the northeast has been blessed this summer, we might even be able to grow a few of these circumpolar beauties.

*Text by Robin Magowan – Photographs by  
Juliet Yli-Mattila*

Ed. Note To The Electronic Version: *In order to allow this newsletter to be shared electronically, I had to ‘shrink’ the photographs.*

## **A Sedum Named ‘Geoffrey’**

When Liz Toffey was planting my rock garden for me (after clearing the rocks and placing others) I asked her about a little niche that was isolated in a section of flat, horizontal, rock that was about 1.5 inches deep, and shaped like a V about 8 inches across the top. I wanted to put a rock across the top, put in a little dirt and put a plant there. She strongly advised against this claiming that only if some dirt washed down into that space and some seed found its way there and grew would it be possible to sustain a plant in a space like that. Liz also strongly advised that I never buy any plants from Geoffrey or Norman because my thumbs were definitely not green enough. The plants would only die for me and disappoint.



Sedum 'Geoffrey'

The next year at a BNARGS July plant sale there was a little sedum that appealed to me. It was labeled "sedum – sensitive" in Geoffrey's fine hand. It was on the dollar table and I boldly decided that I would buy it, consider it an annual and put it in the spot that Liz had recommended against. It bloomed nicely that August. I said 'good-bye' to it as the garden went to sleep for the winter.

That was 5 or 6 years ago and it is still going strong. I, of course, named it 'Geoffrey' that first spring when it appeared alive through the melting snow.

Three years ago I brought in a tiny piece, told Geoffrey my story and asked if he could provide additional information on the sedum. He smiled and said "The label was clearly 50% wrong. I won't make it worse by guessing more information."

I treasure my 'Geoffrey' Sedum as it blooms again this year.

*Norma Abel*

## To Central Asia And Back

I've recently returned from a terrific trip to Central Asia. This was my first AGS sanctioned trip, and I must say if they are all this exciting I'll be doing a lot more in the future! A colleague of mine from Denver Botanic Gardens and a retired Professor



*Gentiana grandiflora* on pass near Mt. Belukha, the highest peak in the Altai mountains

from York were the only other participants. We spent nearly two weeks in far Northeastern Kazakhstan and a week in northwestern most Mongolia, visiting four of the dozens of ranges that comprise the Altai Mountains. Wikipedia says that Kazakhstan is the 9th largest nation in the world (bigger than all of Western Europe) and the largest landlocked country. I can assure you that Borat is not a very good introduction to what we experienced: I was impressed with how bustling and 1st world Almaty seemed to be. Having traveled in Pakistan, where women were extremely shy and mostly absent, I was impressed at how women everywhere we traveled in both Kazakhstan and Mongolia were out and about (often alone), very svelte, dressing more stylishly--if I can be forgiven the comparison--than their European and American counterparts (including in the mountains!). They seemed every bit as empowered and confident as women in the

"West". ... I dwell on sociological aspects of the trip because I don't enjoy visiting places mired in feudalism and futility that much. But I do enjoy the exotic (not a Starbucks nor McDonalds was spied on the trip). The trip leaders were extraordinarily knowledgeable and helpful; everything went without a glitch. Overall, I give the experience an A+.

The Altai were in peak bloom after a rather wet and late spring: we saw hundreds if not thousands of kinds of flowers. The one-day trip up to the Tien Shan outside Almaty blew my mind: giant *Eremurus tianshanicus* in full bloom among wild apples and apricots not far from the city, lush montane meadows brimming with color: Geraniums galore, *Codonopsis clematidea*, *Aquilegia atrovinosa*, Polygonums in variety, *Rheum wittrockii*, *Ligularia macrophylla*, orchids to name just a few of the large perennials (let's not even talk about *Aconitum*, *Delphinium* and suchlike), and then the alpine zone not many miles beyond with no end of *Viola altaica*, *Primula algida*, *Erigeron aurantiacus*, *Tulipa heteropetala*, and a hundred other gems. The high crags beyond the road's end were encrusted with *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, *Androsace akbaitalensis*, *Thylacospermum caespitosum*, *Primula turkestanica* and huge cushions of *Paraquilegia microphylla* at the very peak of bloom.

Needless to say, I have yet to recover.

You can get a bit of a taste of this trip from my blog on DBG's website:

<http://www.botanicgardensblog.com/index.php/2009/07/16/altai-by-camel-caravan/#more-1612>

*Panayoti Kelaidis*

*Ed. Note: This was originally a post on Alpine-L*

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## Our Portland Trip

We decided to take a short vacation and spend some time in Portland, Maine. On our way we stopped at 2 noteworthy gardens and 2 nurseries. And were quite impressed with what we saw.

Our first stop was Peter George's garden in Petersham, MA. Peter has a series of beautifully maintained gardens of various sizes, each with very different soil and sun conditions. He has found the correct combination of location and plant that has enabled him to grow some superb plant specimens. His standouts include a *Gentiana paradoxa*, the like of which I have only seen in photos. His Penstemons, especially *P. davidsonii* in full bloom, rivaled anything I have seen in the wild and his *P. rupicola*, which after many years I have finally bloomed, turned me green with envy. It was a pleasure to meet with him and his family.

The next garden stop was the garden of Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer (Joe Pye Weed's Garden.) Jan and Marty have a mail order only nursery and maintain an absolutely amazing garden. They have one of the most beautiful and immaculate gardens we have ever seen. It completely humbled us and almost compelled me to throw in my hat and trowel. The garden contained everything including newly discovered species that are being evaluated prior to introduction. This garden is a must see for any garden lover.

Darrell Probst's nursery (Garden Vision Epimediums) had an open day and we stopped off to visit.. We received an education from Darrell on Epimediums and mosquitoes (the nursery is surrounded by wetlands). Although the nursery has other rare and interesting plants that were new to us including a native *Polygala*, climbing

Polygonatum and an *Orchis odorata*, the lure here is the fascinating variety of Epimediums.

The big surprise of this trip was finding Blanchette Garden Nursery. Thanks to the urging of Jan and Marty who told us this was a “must see” stop for serious gardeners who search out the unusual. Species peonies, dozens of unusual polygonatums, hundreds of hostas, tall to minute astilbes (including *A. yakashumiam*), glacidium palmatum, trilliums (including some of his own hybrids) , jefersonium dubia and difila, are only a few of the plants he has for sale.



<http://www.blanchettegardens.com/gallery/Paeonia%20mollis.php>

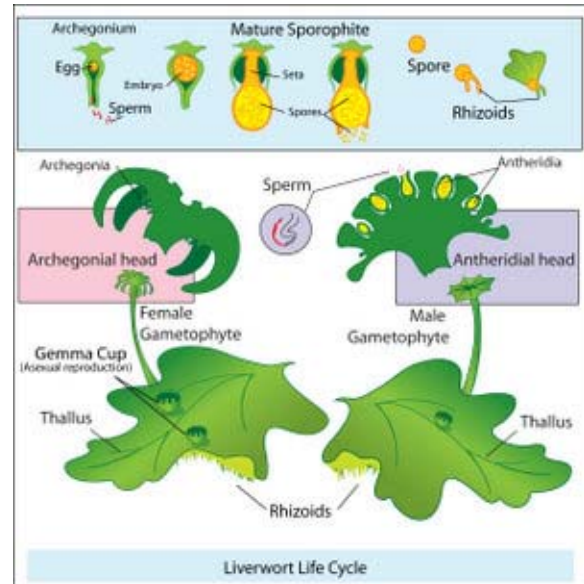
This is a family nursery and Leo, Pam and their son propagate their entire inventory as well as sell and maintain the nursery. They are serious plant people and obtain much of their stock plants on shopping trips to Japan and China. The level of knowledge they posses I have not heard since we lost our dear friend Steve Doonan. My question “Why does my pink *Paeonia obovata* only produces white seedlings: could it have crossed with my *P. japonica*?” resulted in a half hour conversation with Leo explaining that this was virtually impossible due to the difference in chromosomes (Obavatum 22/ Japonica 11). Oh well, I guess I had better keep a better eye on what is going on in the garden.

These 4 stops can be made in 1 long day and are all within ½ hour of each other and is a

great way to spend a few days. All the gardens and gardeners are listed in the NARGS directory.

*Alex & Lynn Kenner*

## A Weed to Have Bad Dreams About



What is the worst weed I have ever introduced into my garden? Liverwort is the resounding answer, although Bishop’s Weed does come in an annoying second. Both pests were brought in as hitchhikers on other plants. The latter arrived with an innocent gift plant: a yellow azalea that because someone was moving house needed to find a nice home. I wasn’t even in the market for this sort of shrub at the time. The Azalea is dead now. The *Aegopodium* is not. I fight it all season. But my biggest Waterloo is liverwort.

This menace came in on a harmless enough looking little *Achillea*, very feathery and sweet. The commercial grower had mulched the pots with turface. At the time I had a large and picturesque trough filled with dwarf cactus, topped up with terracotta-



toned gravel and set off with mesa-like chunks of rock I had picked up in South Dakota. Less adventurous garden friends were always impressed, if not outright astonished that cactus could be grown outdoors in Connecticut. Well, due to some designer-esque twitch I had at the moment, I thought: "With all these spines and succulents, a nice gray feathery yarrow will soften the look." So, I installed it in a corner, pleased with the result.

If life were accompanied by the proper sort of sound track, then this is the point in the narrative when we all should be hearing the theme from "Jaws." Needless to say, that day in the garden, I wish I had. A few weeks went by and I started to notice some smooth green leathery pads at the base of the yarrow. I knew what they were, but I did not feel any alarm. I removed them and went on gardening.

Several weeks later, they were back. At this juncture let me say that, at least to my knowledge, I have never allowed liverworts in my garden to produce their little mushroom like umbrella shaped "fruiting Bodies." (I know that is not the correct word for it-but what is?)

So the liverworts were back, but with a little difference. There were many more of them and they had gotten deep in amongst the spiny cactus. I went into the house for an old spoon. I removed all the offending green pads at once. Not without a reprimanding stab from a cactus or two.



Their offending days, however, had just begun. They climbed the cactuses and wedged themselves into cracks of rock. They flattened out against trough walls They appeared as a tiny flake of green and soldered themselves to defenseless stems. One morning I saw that they had jumped the trough. They were not only making an appearance in a neighboring one, they were also in cracks between the paving stones of the patio! "This is IT!" I thought. I went back into the house for weapons. (At this point I ask that John Spain NOT read the upcoming paragraph...)

I brought out full strength bleach. And Q-Tips. I dabbed and patted and watched with satisfaction as the things turned tan. I literally POURED bleach onto the patio. Let no one who thinks these beasts only thrive in shade become complacent. This is a full sun patio. To my regret and sorrow, many of the cactuses developed terrible sores, soft spots, dead spots. Many did not recover.

That episode was over seven years ago. The cactus trough is no more. The liverworts are. More. They have hopped and moved and crept and snuck and splashed and insinuated onto two rock garden terraces and a half a dozen troughs despite an onslaught on my part to stem their tide. I have scooped and hand picked and bleached them. A few years ago I bought a blowtorch. It takes a long time to cook a liverwort. They sit there for a very long time before they start to bubble.

I know some perfectly wonderful growers who actually LIKE the liverworts that infest their pots of perennials and shrubs. "Acts

like a natural mulch.” A mulch against what? What could be worse? I will never buy one of those pots. If you have ever seen a liverwort consume the subshrubby stem of a little western *Penstemon* or climb through and onto the top of a little cushion plant smothering and disfiguring as it grows, well, then, you will understand my “no tolerance” rule about this monster. Be it seedpot, rare plant or cutting- OUT IT GOES. Into the garbage, not the compost. I suspect that its spores or tiny pads can move when we blow the leaves in the autumn.

Today I just discovered a spreading patch with outriders in the newest scree terrace. It is dangerously close to a young, healthy *Enkianthus perulatus* ‘Compactus.’ If you have ever tried to buy this slow growing shrub then you know how rare and choice they are. One the size of a tennis ball can cost almost a hundred dollars. But I only hesitated for a second. My latest weapon in a long list is vinegar. I wiped out a large swath of the smug green pads under a sales bench at Olivers’ with this stuff. I now dribbled it on with care.

Many years ago I was in a used bookstore with my brother Mark. He is a big reader and a big collector of books. You would have to understand my family’s history with books to understand our reverential attitude towards them. Upon scanning a bookshelf in our house one might see a classic volume of poetry next to a tome about how to lay undersea cable, next to Ballet, or King Tut or science fiction. In the bookstore my brother squealed with glee at a discovery. “Hey, whadyou find?” I called over. “Know Your Liverworts.”

Well, now, ruefully, I do. Know your enemy. *Marchantia polymorpha*. The spores are in fact airborne. The tiny “Fruiting Bodies” that look like umbrellas are called

gemmae cups. Gemmae are asexually produced “clonal fragments” that can splash onto other plants. Those leathery pads are called *thallii*.



*Marchantia polymorpha*

It has been years since I shopped for books with my brother Mark, and I miss that a great deal. I also miss my liverwort free garden. So I will end with a small piece of advice: Check your incoming pots. Hear the warning music wafting over the hedge. Be stern. Be alert. Be ruthless. And yes; know your liverworts.

*Lori Chips*

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## Cleft Construction

*Text and Photographs by Harvey Wrightman*

In early April, Josef Halda stayed with us, putting the finishing touches to the lectures he brought for his NARGS North American tour. I have always admired the vertical cleft formations that are so often seen in Czech trough and alpine gardens and imagined that they must be painstakingly constructed and slow to mature. Regardless, I was interested in knowing the process, and having Halda here provided an excellent opportunity to learn.

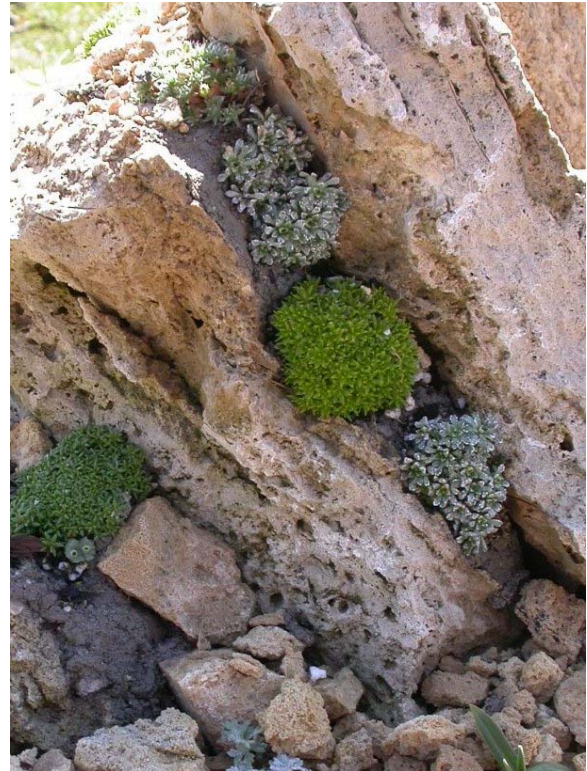


*Eritrichium aretoides* – clay crevice - summer

As it turned out, the whole affair was far easier than I imagined, and the results accrue very quickly. Once I had seen the process, I wondered why I had never been able to figure it out. It was that simple. When I explained To Josef what I wanted to see, he went to the tufa yard and chose quite ordinary-looking stones that could be split along the sedimentation lines. This tufa was from a denser, layered formation that splits on its rift lines quite predictably; and, Josef indicated that it is very similar to the stone they have in the Czech Republic. The breaks are clean and angular making it easy to bring pieces closely together. For a trough, one piece can be split into 2 or 3 pieces. These pieces are book matches and will then form the basic crevice(s).

To glue the slabs together a paste of clay is made with some sand added. We used Spanish River Carbonatite as its grain size was acceptable and it would provide added nutrition. While one could dig clay from the backyard, it is easier to buy a bagged mason's or refractory clay from a hobby store. Measure out 3 parts clay to 1 part sand and mix the 2 together thoroughly as dry materials. Then slowly mix in water until a sticky paste is formed. Using a flat spatula, the clay paste is applied to one side of the crevice to ~10mm thickness.

Now the daring parts, for us Josef did this outside during a week when it froze solid every night, and all the plant material was from the heated greenhouse! The plants were bare-rooted whether they be cutting, seedling or potted plant. The roots were



*Arenaria 'Wallowa Mtn'* & Sax - spring

splayed out on the side smeared with clay, the crown set just above the crevice. The matching piece is then gently brought into contact, and the 2 were pressed/tapped together to eliminate any voids. That is the basic method.

Why does it work? This is a process that closely mimics actual crevice conditions in nature. Heavier, clay/silt materials will accumulate in such formations because the particles stick together and do not wash away, as sand on gravel would. Provided a crevice is elevated and does not sit in water,



*Arenaria 'Wallowa Mtn' & Sax - summer*

it will not collect excess moisture. Neither will it dry out as quickly. In effect, the moisture level remains within a range suitable to plant growth. Clays have far more surface area for cationic activity and will provide better nutrition. Although the use of clay seems counter to most published advice regarding “drainage”, elevating the piece will ensure that over saturation never occurs.

Watching Josef choose plants and where he placed them was also very instructive, as he has a huge amount of actual field experience. Many of his choices were new seedlings from the winter’s sowing, including some *Eritrichum aretioides*, *Gentiana spp.* and *Androsace spp.* from West China. He was very happy to see them and have the use of them. All were lined up in the crevices - both vertically and horizontally, adding dimension to the planting. Useful too, are small mat/cushion plants such as *Arenaria spp.*, *Silene acaulis*, *Gypsophila aretioides* and *Salix spp.* In

these mats, *Gentiana spp.*, *Primula spp.*, and others will grow comfortably, again replicating what will happen in nature.

From what we have observed so far, this is a great improvement in cultural conditions and our control over them. As a bonus, lots of sensitive species can be grown this way. Perhaps even more importantly, the stylistic side of culture is greatly enhanced. The use of vertical plantings produces drama, and even quite ordinary plants become riveting when displayed this way.



*Androsace spp. and Semps*

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## Our September Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Sept. 5. Our speaker is Judy Sellars, a *Primula* guru, and we will be having our **ANNUAL PLANT SALE**. This sale is our major fundraising event, and we need everyone to make sure they bring a few plants that our membership really want! So bring one or two of your *Eriogonum* seedlings, or a *Primula* or two, or perhaps a dwarf iris. But bring plants!

## **Our Gardens In July**



'Buzz' meets The Snapper, at the Wrightman Garden



*2 From Sally Cumming's Garden*



*Zauschneria garrettii* – Peter George's Garden



*Helicrysum milfordiae* – Abby Rorer's Garden



*Lewisia cotyledon*, blooming very late in Peter George's garden– Ruth Sheppard brought it to a plant sale last year

## **Positions of Responsibility**

Chairperson – Cliff Desch  
Vice-Chairperson – Robin Magowan  
Secretary – Carol Hanby  
Treasurer – Pamela Johnson  
Archivist – James Fichter  
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Greeter – Open  
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