

Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter October 2010

Next Meeting

Saturday, October 9 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

AM – Andy Brand: *New and Unusual Conifers
and Other Cool Plants for the Rock Garden*

The presentation will feature new and unusual plants
for the rock garden. An assortment of conifers,
maples and other woody plants will be featured.
Andy will be bringing an assortment of plants for
'Show & Tell' most of which will be available for
purchase

(You'll find Andy's bio on P. 8)



Abies koreana 'Silberzwerg'

Lunch ---BYO

We welcome dessert contributions. Lunch will
be followed by Show and Tell, a plant sale and
an auction.

PM – Eric Breed: *Going Wild For Bulbs*

Eric, a bulboholic, has traveled widely, seeking out
new plant material for his business and his hobby.
Among other places he's been to Tibet, Sichuan and
Yunnan. Most recently (October 3) he's presented
several workshops/demos at The White Flower Farm

Editor's Message:



It's a strange late summer/early fall so far,
with virtually no 'color' in the woodlands
and forests here in North Central
Massachusetts. The sugar maples are going
directly from green to brown to the compost
pile, with almost no yellows, oranges or reds.
The only color, in fact, is the reds we are seeing
on the sick and dying swamp maples that are
dotted here and there around the wetlands,
which are unusually dry this year.

On the other hand, my fall garden is filled with
color. Years ago I planted a small rooted cutting
of *Chrysanthemum weyrichii* (photo above, by
Todd Boland), which I got at one of our plant
sales from Dean Evans, with the hope that I'd
get some big white and pink daisies in the late
summer when not much is in bloom. Well, 13
years later I've got a 36 square foot jungle of
green, topped by dozens (perhaps hundreds) of
large white daisies, which are almost worth the
incredible amount of space they occupy. Two
other much less rampant varieties are growing
nearby and both also offer rather attractive (and
a bit more pinkish) daisies.

In what used to be my shady garden, I've got several fall blooming Gentians, almost too perfect to believe. The dry summer seems not to have affected them, and the always surprising blue can be seen from almost 50 feet away.



Gentiana septemfida

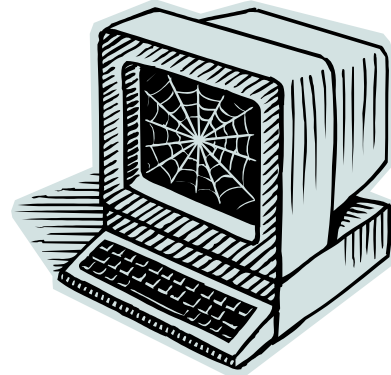
There are quite a few fall blooming onions, and my favorite is *Allium thunbergii* 'ozawa,' a small understated gem that is coming into bloom right now. Others that are blooming and providing color include several different *Orostachys*, *Serratula tinctoria* and the various fall asters that abound in so many forms and colors.



This issue has a lot of business related information, particularly stuff I have received from NARGS, and which I feel needs to be disseminated. In addition, I've included the form you should be sending in so you can attend our Annual Luncheon in November, held this year at the Red Lion Inn. And finally, we're having our annual elections at this next meeting, so please check www.BNARGS.com for the full list of nominees. See you on the 9th.

PFG

Help wanted!



NARGS Webmaster

Scope of services:

The webmaster will be hired as an independent contractor, and not as a NARGS employee, to perform certain technical and professional services including, but not limited to, the following:

- Manage the content on the NARGS website to provide members with information that generally promotes knowledge of rock gardening, including the propagation, cultivation, and conservation of rock garden and alpine plants.
- Maintain one or more websites in a manner that includes: ensuring that software is operating accurately, designing the website, generating and revising web pages, replying to user comments, and examining traffic through the site.
- Act as point of contact between NARGS and the Internet Service Provider (ISP) regarding the web servers, and hardware.
- Regulation and management of access rights of different users of the website.
- Solicit and train volunteers, when necessary, for website administration tasks not covered by webmaster's contract, including volunteer

graphic artists, administrators, editors, content contributors, and coordinate efforts of this team with the NARGS Administrative Committee (AdCom), or its representative, and the Internet Committee. The webmaster should be somewhat familiar with the skills necessary for each of the team positions.

- Support and coordinate with other NARGS activities that use the website, such as membership and meeting registration, seed exchange, and any other special events.

- Maintain appropriate records of financial transactions and correspondence relating to the conduct of the business for which the Webmaster is engaged.

In addition, candidates should have experience with, or a willingness to quickly learn, Joomla, the content management system used for the existing website.

Compensation:

The compensation to be paid to the Webmaster by NARGS for all services performed under this contract shall be \$1,250 per quarter at the end of March, June, September, and December, for a total of \$5,000 per annum; plus a maximum of \$300 reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses (licenses, space on servers, etc.).

The services of the Webmaster will begin on January 1, 2011.

Potential applicants should request a detailed description from Joyce Fingerut:
alpinegarden@comcast.net

NARGS Nominations Needed

I'm Alice Nicolson (Potomac Valley) and I'm Chair of the NARGS nominating committee. This year we have elections for the four Officer positions as well as one-third of the nine elected

Board Directors. Our committee is tasked with finding candidates for President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer. These officers, plus one of the elected Directors whom the officers choose, constitute the Administrative Committee, which runs the day-to-day business of the Society.

We're looking for **three new Directors of the Board** to help support the NARGS Administrative Committee and keep our society running smoothly, adapting to members' changing needs and goals. Dianne Huling, Tony Reznicek, and I will finish up our three-year terms next year, and we need people to fill our positions on the Board. The job is conducted mostly by email, since most of us can't attend that many national meetings. We are basically asked to contribute our thoughts on the various issues that come up, and to vote on a few matters. Most of you are already contributing your time and ideas to your local chapters, but you may know members who might be interested in doing the same for our umbrella group, NARGS, or you may be interested in such a role for yourself.

Please suggest a couple of people whom you know who might be able to contribute to the continued development of NARGS. Send us their names and email addresses or phone numbers as soon as possible, at least before January 10. Don't worry - they won't be nominated unless they consent! We'll contact possible candidates to ask if they are willing to serve, and if so, that they prepare a short gardening bio that can be published in the spring Rock Garden Quarterly.

Send your suggestions to any of the committee members listed below:

- WA - Claire Cockcroft - ccrft@halcyon.com
- NY - Lola Horwitz - llhorwitz@gmail.com
- ONT - Anna Leggatt - anna.leggatt@sympatico.ca
- VA - Alice Nicolson - taxonomy@verizon.net
- MN - Cheryl Philstrom - cphilstrom@frontiernet.net
- CO - Nicola Ripley -

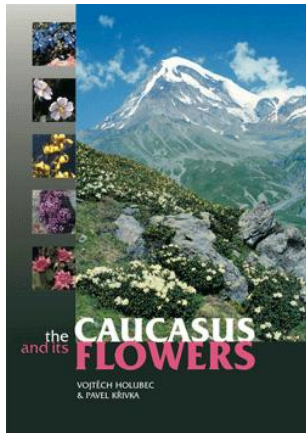
nicola@bettyfordalpinegardens.org
PA - Joan Schmitt - schmitt@temple.edu

With your help, I think we'll come up seven more good people to help keep NARGS running.

Alice Nicolson, Chair, NARGS Nominating Committee 2010.
Email: taxonomy@verizon.net

NARGS Announcement Regarding the Book Service

I am happy to announce the Book Service sale is on! Please check the NARGS website: <http://nargs.org/> under "Book Service" for the inventory of available books and order form; **the sale will end October 31, 2010.**



The sale involves a vast majority of books NARGS Book Service carries at prices which are 50% off retail prices. Excluded from the sale are NARGS self-published and co-published titles. Also, *Caucasus and its Flowers* by V. Holubec & P.

Krivka, although not listed on the sale list, is still available as a special promotion accessible through its own banner on the NARGS home page: <http://nargs.org/> Home page.

This is a great opportunity to acquire books at reduced prices. I want to encourage Chapters to place quantity orders and sell the books to their members at a modest markup. Of course, the sale is open to individual buyers.

To order books, print the order form located on the Book Service page (available in PDF and Word versions) and fax or snail-mail to the Book Service Manager, Jan Slater, as per information on the form. When it comes to payment, use a credit card number. Sending

checks to Jan would most likely create a lot of unnecessary work for her since many of the titles are available in quantity of one copy only and Jan would have to issue many refunds.

As you already know from my previous message, after October 31, 2010, the Book Service will be re-organized. By decision of the NARGS Board, the remainder books (except for NARGS titles and *Caucasus* book) will be sold to a discount bookseller and the NARGS Book Service will be transformed from a compensated position into a volunteer run NARGS Publications Service which will sell NARGS published or co-published titles.

Grazyna Grauer, NARGS President

Alpine Habits: Lilliputian Ground Covers

The little groundcovers of the gardening world have had their praises sung far less often than they deserve. A flat, level plant in the miniature landscape of a trough contributes a sense of peace and tranquility achieved by nothing else. Think of what the soft greensward of a lawn does for the rest of the garden! Besides this, many of these plants bloom in their season, and their individual textures provide a pleasing effect of their own.

One alpine groundcover that is perfectly in scale in a trough is *Erigeron scopulinus*. We got this plant originally from the late Norman Singer and I always think fondly of him whenever I tuck one into a trough. It has tiny leaves a bit atypical of the genus and little starry white flowers in the spring.

A couple of small-scale *Sedums* perform beautifully in this role. For a hot spot choose *S. hispanicum* 'Minus' whose blue-green leaves take on rosy tones in full sun. The rich cranberry color of *Sedum* 'Coral Carpet' is stunning in winter, just be aware that the proclivities of this plant are to colonize. It will root down wherever a piece of the plant falls. For partial shade the well behaved apple green rosettes of *Sedum nevii* is the answer. This is a native plant, and

one of the few succulents that actually does respond with nicer, fuller foliage if you preemptively pinch out budding flower scapes.

Arabis x sturii is a dense mat former whose leaves turn almost chocolate in winter. Brilliant white flowers appear in spring and cover the plant. This is the only mat I can think of which truly does not let a weed get a foothold within it. Speaking of dark winter foliage: *Globularia cordifolia* ‘Nana’ has leaves that are almost black in cold weather, contrasting beautifully against stone or lighter gravel. It carries little balls of blue flowers in spring. Another dark



Erigeron scopulinus – photo by Mark McDonough

carpet to experiment with is *Leptinella squallida* ‘Platt’s Black’. Its dense tiny fronds are fernlike and the more sun you give it in summer the darker bronze it will be. If it proves hardy for you it has the penchant to spread.

Why not pair up a dark leaved matt with a silver one? Although not reliably hardy, *Raoulia hookeri* is an enchanter that spreads its delicate silver skin substantially inside one season. For a relatively foolproof silver carpet try *Antennaria neglecta* v. *gaspensis*. This is one of the smallest

pussytoes. The more sun it has the more silver it will be.

Penstemon davidsonii ‘Microphyllus’ is one of the most diminutive of the genus and will form a somewhat woody, open groundcover that bears simply beautiful violet flowers in spring. In my experience it needs a little root room and doesn’t



Sedum hispanicum ‘minus’

want to be fried in afternoon sun.

Lotus corniculatus ‘Flore Plena’ is a fast grower with a flat habit and double yellow flowers. Provide plenty of space for this member of the pea family; it is capable of taking over. It likes plenty of water.

The veronicas offer several choices in this category as well. Choose from *Veronica rupestris* ‘Purpurea’, the gold leaved *V. ‘Sunshine’* or *V. oltensis*. This last one, arguably the tiniest, will form a refined lace doily of greenery sprinkled with blue blossoms early in the season.

In choosing and planting these diminutive groundcovers, either in a trough or in the rock garden, select for texture, leaf color and size. Be aware that a two-inch high mat is too tall when your shrub of choice is only six inches. Don’t place the same groundcover on a “bluff” as you do in a “valley.” Even, or especially, when working with these small dimensions, it makes a world of difference to decorate the high points with silver and the low ones with lush green.

This is how it would happen in nature, a hill is drier, a swale is wet and usually green.

Finally, in a trough pay special attention to the size of the leaf and the height of the flower stems. If in scale with the other plants the effect will be complete. A tiny groundcover can clinch the believability of a miniature landscape.



Antennaria neglecta v. *gaspensis*

Lori Chips © 2005 (originally appeared in the Oliver Nursery Newsletter)

Norwegian Wood

Part 2

By Trond Høy

Let me profile a typical year, starting in January. At this time of the year we see the sun only for a couple of hours each day if at all – it is often cloudy. Temperatures linger around 0C (32F) and snow storms occur, leaving behind 20-30cm (1ft) of snow cover. Unfortunately this snow lasts only 2-3 days. I love the snow because it protects the plants against the cold weather and makes the world brighter! Following a snowfall, we almost always get milder weather, often with rain. The snow melts and the temperature can rise to as high as 8C (46F). The following week it may drop as low as -8C (17F). If the fjord doesn't freeze, the temperature almost never drops below -10C (14F). In the past 25 years the fjord has frozen twice and the coldest I have experienced here is -17C (1F) but some miles

further inland they regularly experience -25C (-13F). This fjord freezes only when a lot of rain is followed by prolonged cold weather with no wind.

February is similar to January but the days lengthen and some years the first crocuses and daffodils burst into flower. Early shrubs like Hamamelis, *Viburnum farreri* (and cultivars) and also some Mahonias often start flowering now, if they haven't done so already.

In March the sun stays in the sky 5 min longer each day and by Spring Equinox many bulbs and



Chrysosplenium macrophyllum

other plants start to flower. These include *Cyclamen coum* and *Chrysosplenium macrophyllum*. I only have a very small lawn, but it is fully planted with spring bulbs. They flower from February through May and I spare the leaves until June when I cut the grass for the first time that season. Some of the early rhododendrons also flower. We can have warm, sunny days but cold nights with freezing temperatures that destroy many of the rhodie flowers. Cold weather from the north (along the west coast it is often northerlies) brings snow and hail.

The last frost often occurs in April; we typically have some cold nights this month. The birches leaf out toward the end of this month and many rhododendrons flower are now in flower. In the woods, many *Corydalis* species flower and so do the many *Cardamines* I have together with *Anemones*.

The fruit trees flower in May, as do the majority of the woodland perennials. Among those plants in bloom at this time are *Chrysosplenium davidii*, *C. alternifolia*, many species of wood anemones, *Claytonia sibirica*, lots of *Primula* species and cultivars, *Vancouveria hexandra*, and several *Dodecatheon* sp. We can have hot spells (that is about 20C/68F) for some days in April or May, but more often the “hot weather” is 12-15C (54-59F).

Although we have a lot of precipitation during the year, May and June can be very dry with almost no rain at all. We are often banned from



Dodecatheon pulchellum – photo by Mark McDonough

watering our gardens, not because of a lack of water but because the capacity of the distribution net is too small.

June, July and August are our summer season. We can have warm weather (that is 20-25C/ 68-77F) or cold (10C/50F) with lots of rain and wind. We usually get enough rain from July on so that I don’t need to water the garden or pots outside at all later in the year. For three months, May, June and July, we can have sunshine on all four sides of our house during the day. The sun

is above the horizon for more than 21 hours during the day. (You have to go much further north to get midnight sun.)

When we return from our 6 week summer vacation, new plants like Fuchsia (grown as perennials or shrubs in mild winters), Clematis, Phuopsis, Geranium, some late Arisaema and Phygelius have started flowering. Hydrangeas also flower now. The late-flowering large-leaved shrub *Hydrangea aspera* has grown to a huge shrub but I am reluctant to prune it. Heathers like *Daboecia* and *Erica* also have late-flowering cultivars that I really enjoy. Some of the deciduous *Agapanthus* species can be used as perennials here. They typically flower from August onwards.

September, October and November are the fall season. September can be a very surprising month because of our odd weather. The first “spring flowering” shrubs often start blooming at this time of the year. That includes several Mahonias, Viburnums and *Ulex europaeus*. We almost never experience freezing temperatures before mid November or December. October and November are often very rainy and with the shorter days it seems that most fall-flowering Crocuses dislike this kind of weather; fortunately their cousins the Colchicums do quite well! Some perennials like *Saxifraga fortunei* and perennial *Impatiens* species flower until the first hard frost, which might be as late as December or even January. *Cyclamen hederifolium* tolerates a lot and I grow several different forms with various attractive leaf designs. I have found that those grown from seed do much better in my climate than those grown from purchased tubers.

December, January and February are the winter season but still some plants flower at this time: The mahonias go on strong, the same do *Viburnum farreri*. The first Hellebores open their flower in December and amazingly, others continue right through to midsummer.

In a typical year something will be in flower every month. Last winter however, was the

worst in 100 years. Fortunately we got a heavy snowfall in mid December. Then we got extremely cold weather that lasted for 3 months! The temperature at the coast stayed low all the time and the snow covered everything out to the open sea from December to mid March. A lot of birds died of cold and hunger. They couldn't find food when even the beaches were covered by snow. The persistent snow cover spared many plants, but some shrubs and trees lost limbs or broke down. Other trees, and shrubs with their heads above the snow cover, risked frost burn. Evergreens suffered worst, and I lost some newly planted Rhododendrons and other shrubs and a 5m/16ft tree of *Prunus laurocerasus*.



Cyclamen hederifolium

One of the paradoxes of living in a coastal climate like ours is that, as a result of the low summer temperatures, woody plants never really harden off enough to survive the freezes and thaws of the winter. Many plants from continental climates do not tolerate the winters at all, even the mildest ones. The summers are too cool for them! Another problem is that mild spells early in the spring motivate plants to emerge or just simply leaf out too early and they subsequently get damaged by the inevitable frosts of our spring. Many plants also see their flowers damaged by too much summer rain. Roses and other plants with double flowers suffer most. It is essential to deadhead most non-native plants as this part of the flower acts as a vector for fungi, which often attack and potentially kill the plant.

Another irony of our climate is that many plants simply get too large! I have to prune, cut and remove plants, and that's not to the liking of a lazy man like me.

Who Is Andy Brand?



Andy has been involved in agriculture his entire life. During his childhood he worked in his family's vegetable garden. After graduating from UConn with a BS in Environmental

Horticulture and an MS in Plant Science, Andy spent two years operating a plant tissue culture lab at the Plant Group in North Franklin. For the past 20 years he has been employed at Broken Arrow Nursery in Hamden where he is currently the nursery manager. Andy is a past President of the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association and recently received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the UConn College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Alumni Association. He has put his interest in native plants to use as a volunteer for the New England Plant Conservation Program where he helps monitor historical sites of endangered native plants.

Besides his love for plants, Andy is an avid naturalist. He is a cofounder and past President of the Connecticut Butterfly Association as well as a long-standing member of the New Haven Bird Club. In Hamden, he works hard to protect the town's open space and natural resources as a member of the Hamden Land Conservation Trust and the Inland Wetlands Commission. Andy has spoken to many groups statewide on a range of topics including native plants, new and unusual ornamentals, butterfly gardening, butterflies of Connecticut and their life histories and how to attract more wildlife to your yard.

PFG

Berkshire Chapter of The North American Rock Garden Society

Annual Luncheon

Saturday, November 6, 2010.

Luncheon 12 Noon

Main Dining Room

Red Lion Inn

30 Main Street
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Followed by our Program **at the BBG**

Sydney Eddison

“How to Garden Wiser as You Grow Older”

Menu:

- Assorted Field Greens, with House Vinaigrette
 - Pan Seared Salmon, with chive puree
- OR
- Hand Carved Native Turkey, pan gravy

Dessert:

Fruit Crisp

Coffee and Tea

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Price is \$28.00 per plate, which includes room, gratuity and tax. Please return by November 2.

Luncheon Reservation Form – Please return to:

**Thomas Flanigan, 12 Overbrook Farm Road, Bloomfield, CT 06002
860-286-0128 tflanigan@yahoo.com**

Make checks payable to: Berkshire North American Rock Garden Society (BNARGS)

Please list attendee/guests by Name and Entrée Selection:

Name 1 _____

Name 2 _____

Name 3 _____

Positions of Responsibility

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

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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 August 20, 2010

Please contact editor before reprinting
articles

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