

Newsletter

*North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter December 2011*

Next Meeting: Saturday, March 3, 2012

At this time we still don't know with certainty who will be speaking to us in 2012. Elisabeth has some ideas, but she still needs to firm up dates, so the February newsletter will have much more on this subject. You can also check periodically on:
www.bnargs.org

The programs will be held at the Berkshire Botanical Garden, as usual, and unless there is some kind of adverse weather event, mark your calendar for the 1st Saturday in March!

In the meantime, have a great Holiday Season, get your order in to the NARGS Seed Exchange, plant your seed pots and get them outside, and just have a healthy and happy New Year!

PG



GIVING THANKS



Later this week people from coast to coast will gather with friends and family to celebrate the American holiday of Thanksgiving. Thus it seems only appropriate that my last article of 2011 is about the many things for which I am thankful.

First, I am thankful to the many friends and family that helped me with everything from grocery shopping to moving my troughs to their winter resting place (against the house on a covered porch) as I recover from back problems. I am also very thankful for a wonderful physical therapist who has me confident I will be back hiking and gardening next Spring.

I am thankful that I have a job that I like which also afforded me the opportunity to travel to Paris this past September and stroll through the Jardin des Plantes, a wonderful and free botanical garden in the middle of the city. Though definitely not an alpine, my favorite flower was *Ipomoea tricolor* 'Flying Saucers', a delightful blue and white morning glory with flowers that look a bit like they were tie-dyed.

I am thankful for living in the age of the internet, where I can look up information on just about

any plant anywhere with merely a few key strokes. I am learning about the flowers of Israel through the Facebook page [Israel Wild Flowers](http://www.flowersinIsrael.com) <http://www.flowersinIsrael.com> which includes several interesting species bulbs including *Iris vartanii*, a small light blue iris that I think would look very much at home in the right rock garden or trough. Thanks to the internet, it is also easy for me to stay in touch with gardening friends, as well as make new ones.

While I am sure I speak for many of us when I say I will miss Robin Magowan and Juliet Yli-Matilla, who are moving to New Mexico, I am very thankful for all that Robin and Julieta have done for the Berkshire Chapter of NARGS over the years. I am also thankful that Robin has already agreed to serve as an officer of the new Santa Fe based chapter of NARGS, which will be hosting a national meeting in late summer of 2013.

Lastly, I am thankful for all of you, who over the years have shared your knowledge and your plants, encouraged me with my gardening experiments and entrusted me to be your chairperson.
Happy Holidays!

Erica

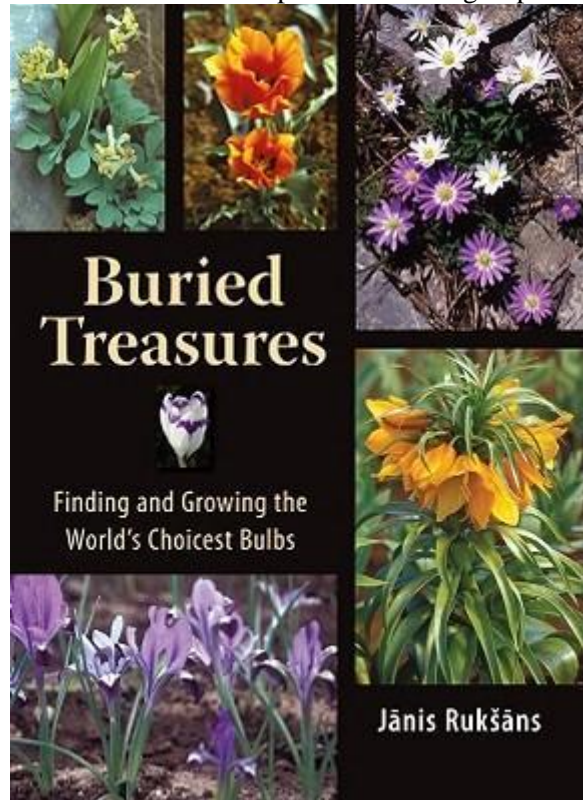
MEMBERSHIP

BY DEAN EVANS

All of us recognize a need for increased membership, and each one of us should make a concerted effort to do what he/she can to recruit new members. During 2011 there were some new faces, most of them were women. I recognize their apprehension, as BNARGS is not your ordinary garden club. For a newcomer, it can be a strange environment, especially if you come alone. The organization should do more to make these new people feel welcome. Every member has to participate in creating a welcoming atmosphere. Don't approach this as if you are being asked to engage

in Russian Roulette. Be courteous and friendly. My Native American heritage makes it difficult for me to do this because our meaning of the word "stranger" is the same as that of the word "enemy." Personally, even though I am inclined to be rather shy, I am going to make the effort to welcome these people.

When a new person comes into one of our meetings they progress through certain stages: What is this all about? And is this a valuable use of my time? After all everyone has limited free time on a weekend. Looking around, they see that they are the equivalent of the healthiest, most active horse at a glue factory - - most of us are pretty long in the tooth. And you don't have to check our mouths to estimate our ages. But, be assured, there are some very talented people with a wealth of life experience in this group.



You can gain knowledge and profit from their experience. Each season there are presentations that will enrich your life. I can look back and recall different people I have met as well as remember some of their presentations. I have seen remarkable pictures from places in the world which I would never have been able otherwise to visit. When the Soviet Union broke

up there were many rock garden people who went to Afghanistan and adjacent countries. Their presentations included areas of the Caucasus and the Himalaya Mountains, showing all the unique plants to which access had previously been denied. Furthermore, large numbers of new plants were found and the seeds became available using new techniques of seed distribution. GPS technology enabled collectors to provide locations in feet extended to 5 places beyond the decimal point. Professional botanists trained young children who spend their summers herding to collect seed on distant lofty crags. They would see the plant, photograph it and establish its location, then come back weeks later to collect the seed.



It wasn't that long ago that the only way you could get access to such rare seed was by helping to fund an expedition. This gave you a small share of the collected seed. Today you can buy a pack of these formerly rare seeds for the same amount as you would need for seed from the Rocky Mountains. That in itself makes being a member of NARGS valuable.

NARGS NOTES

The NARGS Seed Exchange is almost upon us, and this year it will be fully online on December 15. This means that you can, if you choose, do your ordering on the computer, without having to cut and paste and generally waste a lot of time and effort. In addition to the new functionality, we're including some terrific seed, much of it wild collected. We've purchased seed from Alplains, and it will be included in the SeedEx

list. And we've solicited some long time members to add some seed of unusual species, rarely found in seed exchanges, which will also be available in quantity for our participants. John Weiser, of Sparks, Nevada has always contributed a lot of seed, especially the dryland plants of his region, but this year he's added some new species, mostly wild collected. Here are some comments and photographs from John about a few of his choice contributions!



Eriogonum ochrocephalum is found growing in the sagebrush, saltbrush and juniper woodland communities of northwestern Nevada and north eastern California, on exposed volcanic clay slopes from 4000 to 5500 feet. Flowers are



Eriogonum ochrocephalum

yellow, the inflorescence is capitate, held 3-4 inches above the foliage. The leaves are elliptic and densely tomentose on the upper surface, slightly less so on the lower surface. The plants grow as a loose, slowly creeping mat. This species sends out short rhizomes, just below the surface of the ground, making it easy to take cuttings and a good crevice plant. They are somewhat deciduous, losing the majority of their leaves in the winter. I find this to be one of the easier eriogonums I grow. Give it sharp drainage and excellent air flow in climates moister than its normal high desert habitat."

"One of my favorite western Penstemons is *Penstemon speciosus*. From the foothills up to the high elevation scree slopes on dry mountain ranges, this Penstemon is found in scattered

populations throughout the Great Basin Floristic Province and the eastern Cascade and Sierra Nevada ranges. The higher altitude forms are low, condensed with denser inflorescence, and a gray cast to the foliage. At altitudes of around 8000 to 9000 feet on Peavine Mountain, just North of Reno, they grow 6 to 8 inches tall, with gray, flushed, glabrous foliage. Most appealing are the scattered azure blue flowers, sparkling across the fractured face of the basaltic slopes.”



Penstemon speciosus

“From the High Desert Steppe of the Great Basin and the Eastern Escarpment of the Sierra Nevada Range, at altitudes of 4500 to 8000 feet, we find *Eriogonum douglasii* var. *meridionale*. This plant makes a wonderful mat



Eriogonum douglasii var. *meridionale*

for the garden. It forms a silvery gray cushion two inches tall and up to twelve inches across. The leaves are densely lanate on both surfaces. In early spring it is studded with one inch yellow

pompoms suspended atop 2 to 3-inch slender scapes. In bud they display a blush of ocher red. When the flower heads are through blooming they change color to a deep rust and can hang around all summer before they shatter.

The soft silvery mats add year round interest and would be worth growing even without the added bonus of the bright yellow spring pompoms.”



2012 NARGS ANNUAL MEETING AND STUDY WEEKEND MEETINGS

The NARGS Annual Meeting will be hosted by the Northwestern Chapter in Everett, WA from March 9-11. Here is the link to the Promotional Brochure:

http://nedm.drizzlehosting.com/2012/images_ws_2012/folding_add.pdf

Our Study Weekend will be hosted by the Allegheny Chapter on Columbus Day Weekend, Fall, 2012. Check out their website for more information:

<http://home.comcast.net/~sylvialynch/index.htm>

The 2013 NARGS Annual Meeting will be held in Asheville, NC in May, 2013. Check the NARGS website later in this winter for information:

www.nargs.org

The 2013 Study Weekend is going to be in Sante Fe, NM in late summer 2013. Again, check the NARGS website later this winter for more information.

For those NARGS members who have never attended a national meeting, there is a \$300 stipend available. If you feel that you qualify, please contact our Chair, Erica Schumacher at ejnovick@yahoo.com. She will determine if you qualify, and forward the request to me for action.

A TALE OF 2 ANEMONES

TEXT BY HARVEY WRIGHTMAN AND
IMAGES BY ESTHER WRIGHTMAN

Anemones are among the showiest plants we have for the garden; and thankfully, the tuberous rooted species are some of the easiest to grow.



A. nemerosa 'Viridescens'

Anemone nemerosa is found on wooded hillsides throughout Europe. Digging up a colony reveals a mat of thin, woody stems that much resembles a writhing tangle of snakes – if only they would move a bit. This makes propagating straight forward as division of the “twigs” is all that is required. The result is a carpet of flowers (with 6 or more petals), mostly pure white in type. Of course, gardeners being curious sorts, selections have been made. There is a plethora of color variations and, as with snowdrops, nothing attracts more than the odd ones. *A. nemerosa* 'Viridescens' is most strange. All the flower parts contain chlorophyll. Since it is a large and double form, there is no avoiding it and the weirdness simply draws you in. With this much biological usefulness, the flowers cum leaves are very long lasting. Even the most discerning visitor will ask, “What’s this?”

By contrast, *Anemone blanda* 'Enem' is more notable for beauty and grace. I received this from Janis Ruksans who collected it in a disjunct locality at the Western rim of the North Caucasus not far from the Black Sea. Janis notes

that it was a single population growing in a clay soil below rocky outcrops, the nearest village was Enem some 50 km. away. This is possibly



Anemone blanda 'Enem'

the best blue form, with large flowers of a deep cobalt blue that one rarely sees save for gentians. Flowering is in mid-May and continues for 2-3 weeks. The tubers are thick, black and knobby. We grow it in the rock garden in sand where it performs well, but does not increase as fast as *A. nemerosa*.

SUNSCAPES



TEXT AND IMAGES BY BILL
ADAMS

Sunscapes Rare Plant Nursery is a small specialty nursery growing choice rock garden, hardy native and unusual dry land plants from around the world. The nursery is primarily wholesale and mail order, but we are



Eriogonum gracilipes

active participants in local and regional plant sales including the annual plant sale held by the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society held at the Denver Botanic Gardens.



Eriogonum robustum

We are currently in the process of selecting our offerings for next year and will have our 2012 mail order catalog available in February at www.sunscapes.net. Of special interest this year, we anticipate offering an extensive selection of *Eriogonum* species propagated from wild collected seed obtained through our participation in the Eriogonum Society (www.eriogonum.org) as well as our own collecting in native habitats. We also will offer several *Daphne* cultivars as well as our unique selection of *Aloinopsis* and *Aloinanthus* hybrids that have been hybridized in our nursery over the past several years. Our 2010 catalog is currently available for viewing on our web site and we hope you will visit the new catalog in February 2012.



REPORT ON THE NOVEMBER ANNUAL LUNCHEON MEETING

First we dealt with business and internal affairs. Unfortunately, the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson couldn't attend the meeting, so Peter George took charge of the proceedings. He gave us the report of the nominating

committee. Current Officers had agreed to serve in 2012: Erica Schumacher (Chair), Joyce Hemingson (Vice Chair) and Carol Hanby (Secretary). The Committee would have liked to nominate Pam Johnson for Treasurer, but she had declined the offer because new and increased responsibilities elsewhere would prevent her to give the time and attention she wanted. Martin Aisenberg has accepted to serve as Treasurer. Then, the chapter unanimously voted 'yes' and the new Officers were elected.

Pam Johnson gave a summary of the Treasurer's report: The Chapter's finances are in very good shape, thanks particularly to the decisions relative to the production and mailing of the newsletter. By making a PDF version available we were able to reduce the costs tremendously, without sacrificing any of the features that make the newsletter so attractive. She reminded us that a gift from the estate of Geoffrey Charlesworth has contributed greatly to the happy state of our treasury. The members thanked her with a warm round of applause for her years of attentive and dedicated service as our Treasurer.



Anemonella thalictroides var. *rosea* image by Bill Cullina

Last June, at the NARGS Annual Meeting, the Linc & Timmy Foster Millstream Garden Award was given to Anne Spiegel. But Anne wasn't in attendance at that time, so Peter presented her with the framed certificate now, to which the chapter members added their congratulations and applause.

For Act II, Bill Cullina took the stage. We all know him from his books, his work at Garden in the Woods. He opened his presentation with a few words and pictures about his new place of

interest: the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden. The location is superb, there is a lot of exciting developments going on, in zone 6, where they can grow a lot of plants which wouldn't survive inland. It is certainly a place to add to our list of places to visit.

Then he proceeded to his main subject, his lifelong interest: woodland plants. Many of the plants he was talking about are familiar, many of us grow them: hepaticas, trilliums, erythroniums, arisaemas, jeffersonias, polygalas, polygonatums, etc. We grow them, but do we really know what these plants are doing when we are not looking? Bill Cullina knows and did show us. What happens underground, inside of a bulb or corm, some peculiarities of pollination, preferences and/or adaptation to various soils or layers of soil, mycorrhizae, pH, etc, all that was revealed. Every point was illustrated by gorgeous but most importantly very informative photos. It was fascinating. Everything should be cited. I shall mention just one item: what happens to the flower of the familiar *Jeffersonia diphylla* when it is pollinated? Parts of the flower change and move quietly. Within a few days the flower is gone, spent. Bill Cullina captured these changes with close-ups taken at day 0, day 1, day 2. As I said, fascinating.



Hepatica transylvanica – image by Bill Cullina

After that brilliant presentation, most of us repaired to the Red Lion to socialize and add a festive note to the end of a year of great programs and chapter activities.

JM

Editor's Note: Bill is currently the Executive Director of the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, <http://www.maine gardens.org/>

WHY JOIN NARGS?

BY PETER GEORGE

My previous commentary, “What is NARGS?,” seems to have drawn some favorable attention - but it still leaves open the question, “Why should Chapter members join NARGS?” Before discussing the specific benefits of NARGS membership, I need to briefly address the critical, but often poorly understood, relationship between NARGS and its Chapters.

Today we have 38 Chapters that are active in some manner and that provide some direct benefits to their members. Each of these Chapters organized itself and requested NARGS recognition, which means that the Chapter founders recognized some real benefit from NARGS to the Chapters. Today, for example, NARGS provides Chapters with prominent and well regarded speakers through its Speakers Tours. In the past four years alone we've shared with our Chapters people such as Josef Halda, Peter Korn, Harry Jans, Pam Eveleigh, Cliff Booker, Alan Bradshaw and John Grimshaw, and we have Jim Locklear, Fritz Kummert and Nick Turland scheduled for the next two years. The opportunity for members to learn from these men and women is a real bonus to the Chapters.

Each year NARGS sponsors both a Regional and a National meeting, providing the sponsoring Chapters with the financial wherewithal to proceed confidently with the meeting, as well as providing financial guarantees that provide security for the Chapters when they contract with hotels, banquet halls, etc. Again, these meetings are of real benefit to both NARGS members and non-members, since most of the recent meetings have not required NARGS membership for registrants.

NARGS also provides a Web site that each Chapter can use to promote itself, advertise its programs, etc. In short, NARGS provides the Chapters with a variety of valuable resources that make their job of attracting and retaining members much easier.

For individual members of NARGS, the benefits are quite straightforward. First, membership includes a subscription to the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly. Under the editorship of Malcolm McGregor the Quarterly has become an informative, interesting and beautiful magazine, providing members with articles, photographs and commentary that enhance our lives as rock gardeners. Frankly, the Quarterly alone is worth the \$30 per year NARGS membership dues.

A second major benefit is the NARGS Seed Exchange. Each year we offer our members hundreds of species, including many that are wild collected, at a very modest cost. This year the SeedEx is going electronic, so members will be able to order online for the first time. My garden has over 40 species that I've grown from NARGS seed, and many of my friends in NARGS have had even more success growing choice seed while adding beauty and sometimes even rarity to their gardens.

Third, NARGS is reviving its Tours and Expeditions Program, offering our members the opportunity to explore many rarely visited botanical wonderlands at a very modest cost. We expect to have our next trip in late spring or early summer in the Pacific Northwest.

Finally, we are developing the NARGS web site into a portal through which all kinds of rock gardening information will be made available to members. We will be implementing dozens of technological initiatives that will enhance our gardening expertise and will provide members (including, importantly, members who are unable to attend meetings) with access to programs, photographic databases, streaming video of workshops, the entire library of ARGs/NARGS's past quarterly publications (searchable too!), and many other benefits.

I do understand why some of our Chapter members don't want to join NARGS. Some have no real interest in rock gardening; some can't afford the \$30; and some simply don't care about the benefits. But I think that, for most Chapter members, NARGS membership is certainly worth the money, and I hope you agree. We're more accessible than ever, more responsive, and more interested in what you want. So please join us and share your thoughts with me and the other NARGS officers. And please visit the Web site at www.nargs.org

Contact me at petergeorge@verizon.net for comments and questions.

DECEMBER MUSINGS



I walked around the garden today, a remnant of this past week's snow still visible on the north sides of the rocks and in the numerous nooks and crannies that abound in a rock garden, and finally sensed the end of the growing season. Until last week I had the last crocuses still visible, fading but opening to the sun, but today everything looks to be asleep. It's somewhat sad, but it presents the opportunity to experience the flush of new life that happens every spring and validates, to a greater degree than anything else I do in the garden, the reason I do it all. Our lives are so linear, but plants move through the full cycle of life each year and when they return, they give us the kind of hope for the future that keeps us going after the challenges of life beat us down. So I'm hoping for that ephemeral event, the "reliable snow cover" we dream about

here in New England, and sometimes actually are honored to receive.

Next year will be my last as editor. I've done it for as long as I can, and I think it's time for someone else to experience the real rewards of doing the job well. It's not really hard, but it does take time, and we definitely have members who are up to the challenge. Between Joyce Hemingson, Elisabeth Zander and me you have plenty of resources and help to get you started. And we all will help you as you learn the job. Let me know when you want to take over. I'll be getting a knee replacement in early April, so that would be a good time for a new editor to start. Email or call me if you have any interest.

The photograph at the bottom of the left column on page one is Elisabeth's. Her blog is wonderful, and every member should visit and share Elisabeth's experience with seeds and plants, and her beautiful photographs. Find it at: <http://www.seed-aholic.com/>

As I've already mentioned, the NARGS Seed Exchange is just about ready to activate online. Check it out on or after December 15 at http://nargs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=75&Itemid=123

Other seed sources that I've used in the past and that are reliable and offer a varied selection are: <http://www.alplains.com/>
jurasekalpines@atlas.cz (email)
<http://www.southwesternnative seeds.com/>
<http://www.alpine-seeds.com/>
<http://holubec.wbs.cz/>
<http://b-and-t-world-seeds.com/sublists.asp>
<http://www.pavelkaalpines.cz/>
<https://www.jelitto.com/haupt.html>
<http://www.rockgardenplants.com/seedcatmain.htm>

The beautiful words that Panayoti wrote about Frank Cabot, who died on November 19, can be found in their original form at <http://www.botanicgardensblog.com/2011/11/21/passing-of-true-gardener/>

Have a joyous and healthy Holiday Season!

PG

Passing of a Gardener

This last weekend we lost the most eminent gardener of our era, and possibly the greatest gardener America has ever produced. Francis Higginson Cabot passed away peacefully at his home in Malbaie, Quebec. Frank possessed the vision and means to practice horticulture on a nearly mythical scale: he created not one but two extraordinary gardens of enormous scope: Stonecrop in Cold Spring, New York, and Les Quatres Vents in Quebec. He pursued other gardens on almost as ambitiously in scale in Wales, New Zealand and New Mexico. He took a leadership role in many organizations, notably chairing the Board of the New York Botanical Garden in the seventies, and serving as Treasurer of the North American Rock Garden society for seven years.

He founded the Garden Conservancy in 1989, which now has offices on both coasts and has helped preserve a wide variety of great gardens, in addition to producing innumerable garden tours from coast to coast every year.

I first met Frank at a conference in Victoria, Canada in 1980, where we both spoke at a Study Weekend of the North American Rock Garden Society. It was quite literally my launch in horticulture (I stumbled in pitch dark off the dais onto a soundly sleeping audience). The next day Frank warned the audience that they'd better stay awake for *his* talk, lest "I too hurl myself into your arms." Even I (a naïve and hypersensitive youngster) had to chuckle. Years later, I reminded Frank of the incident. Characteristically, he told me how much he enjoyed my talk and actually recounted details of what I had said decades before, rather than dwelling on my *lapsus*.

He noticed everything. He had a towering passion for plants, people and projects. I doubt that many people have visited more gardens, or studied them with as great an eye. He expressed this vision powerfully in charming, witty and very moving presentations over the last few decades from coast to coast. He captured a facet of his vision in *The Greater Perfection*, a gorgeous coffee table sized book describing his creation of Les Quatres Vents. He lived and breathed gardens as few people have, on an heroic scale that few of us can even imagine.

My sympathies to the many people who have worked so closely alongside Frank at Stonecrop, Les Quatres Vents, the Garden Conservancy and his many other horticultural ventures. And condolences to his wife, Anne, his children and the rest of his family. I shall treasure the times my path crossed Frank's over the decades, and his inimitable, elegant and winning style. What greater tribute than to know that American horticulture has thrived mightily under his Olympian watch.

The Garden Conservancy has produced a notice on their webpage with more information about Frank and his accomplishments and honors. Many more will surely follow.

Panayoti Kelaidis

Positions of Responsibility

Chairperson – Erica Schumacher
Vice-Chairperson – Joyce Hemingson
Secretary – Carol Hanby
Treasurer – Martin Aisenberg
Archivist – James Fichter
Audio Visual Chairperson - Joe Berman
Greeter – Ed Brown
Independent Director – Clifford Desch
Meeting Recorder – Jacque Mommens
Newsletter Editor – Peter George
Plant Sale Chairperson – Open
Program Chairperson – Elisabeth Zander
Proofreader – Martin Aisenberg
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
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Deadline for The Next Newsletter is September 20, 2011

Please contact the Editor before reprinting articles

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