



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter March/April, 2016

UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Bulb Show in the Lyman Conservatory at The Botanic Garden of Smith College will be held **March 5-20**. See www.smith.edu/garden.

CT Master Gardener Symposium - March 19 "Gardening Gone Native" will be held at Connecticut College in New London. A variety of topics will be addressed; closing speaker is Dan Jaffe from Garden in the Woods and one of the presenters is NARGS' own Matt Mattus. See www.ctmga.org for complete info.

The New England Chapter of the American Primula Society will hold its annual show at Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, MA, on **April 30 and May 1**. Nurseryman Ian Christie, owner of Christie's Alpine Nursery in Kirriemuir, Scotland, is Saturday's scheduled speaker. Excellent vendors – Wrightman Alpines, Sunny Border, Mountain Brook, Primrose Hill and more – will have plants available for purchase. A workshop for children is also planned so you might want to bring a youngster. If you are a member of the American Horticultural Society you can enjoy free admission; just show your AH membership card at the entrance gate. **CTNARGS members will be refunded admission fees by the chapter** (Adult-\$12, Senior-\$9) for attendance at the Saturday speaker program. Those interested in carpooling should contact Maryanne Gryboski.

The **NARGS Annual Meeting**, June 22-27, 2016 in Steamboat Springs, CO, promises to be an amazing conference. Book now as it is filling up - don't delay! <https://www.nargs.org/steamboat-springs-agm-0>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring begins next week but we have been having early spring weather this "winter". I heard the spring peepers last evening, and plants are popping out of the ground and blooming. This weather is following many scientists' predictions and concerns that we are going to experience erratic weather with climate change; all the more need to record information on our plants, e.g., bloom times.

I have been attending flower shows and meetings this month and share the following with you: at the Philadelphia Flower Show (traveled with the Connecticut Horticultural Society), I enjoyed viewing the display of the Delaware Valley Chapter of NARGS (excellent as usual) and learned that their membership is down from 600 to 200 members. So the question as always is: how do we attract new and younger members to NARGS? At the Hardy Plant Society Symposium last Saturday, I learned that the lovely native plant, *Tiarella*, was once numerous in our woodlands. Mildred Latawick's daughter, Fairlee, told me that her mom had many tiarellas, and many grew in the woods near her home in Manchester. At our NARGS Chapter meeting in Easton, I purchased one snowdrop (*Galanthus* 'George Elwes') and won a raffle plant (*G.* 'Elfin') which I will divide and share with members as it increases. Some say all snowdrops look alike, but if one looks closely, one will notice the differences. I referred to **Adventures with Hardy Bulbs** by Louise Beebe Wilder to learn more about these lovely "winter flowers".

~Ginny

MEETING REPORT: January 23, 2016

By Maryanne Gryboski



Left: Jeanna Richo and Angela Fichter look through boxes of seed; right: Karen Krohn and Joan Mencil finish potting tasks.

Seven members attended the seed sowing workshop on January 23rd. After reviewing the protocol from the 2011 workshop led by master seed starter Dianne Huling (see Newsletter for March/April 2011 on NARGS website under About Us/Chapter Newsletters), members made selections from this year's seedex order and a Chadwell order which included a number of Himalayan arisaemas, as well as scouring former excess seedex donations. Attendees took home 6-8 pots and additional seed packets.

In mid-February, Karen Krohn - who said her pots are "still in the cardboard box on my kitchen table. I sprayed them a couple of times to make sure they didn't dry out and have a piece of plastic wrap loosely over the top" - reported germination of *Polemonium caeruleum ssp. himalayanum*, *Primula rosea*, *Scutellaria resinosa* and *Gentiana parryi*. Says Karen: "Now the hard part of trying to keep them going."

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MEETING REPORT: February 29, 2016

By Barbara van Achterberg

It was a treat for those of us in southwestern Connecticut to have the monthly meeting in our neck of the woods, especially for me, living only two miles away. A lively group of Connecticut Chapter members, joined by some churchgoers and Easton Garden Club members, one of whom decided to join our chapter, gathered at the Congre-

gational Church Hall. First to arrive was speaker Ernest Cavallo who set up a table of snowdrops for us to see and buy. He later donated a pot for the raffle. A generous man, his fee was very reasonable too. The church had provided a screen and extension cord, and since we had no techies in attendance, the minister helped make the computer work to project Ernie's pictures. She later stayed for the show. Thank you, Reverend Ostrove!



Members discuss the attributes of specialty snowdrops that speaker Ernie Cavallo, rear right, brought for sale.

Ernie began his talk by handing out a list of his 104 slides with a bibliography on *Galanthus* at the end.

His first pictures were of great *galanthus* gardens in England from where he had just made a pilgrimage to see them. The most extensive is Colesbourne Park; Painswick Rococo Garden has only *Galanthus nivalis* in its myriad forms; The Old Rectory has a long, typically English garden walk planted with many white hellebores and snowdrops.

Next came the *Galanthus* species: the ever-present *nivalis*, the larger and often earlier *elwesii* with its strappy leaves, and a few others, not all hardy in Connecticut.

- Early snowdrops include 'Barnes', an *elwesii* which blooms in October.

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NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

CHAIR: Ginny Gingras / 21 Timber Ln. / Vernon, CT 06066 / 860.875.9865 / ginnygingras2013@gmail.com

VICE-CHAIR: Position open

SECRETARY: Barbara van Achterberg / 359 Silver Hill Rd. / Easton, CT 06612 / 203.261.2156 / bvanachterberg@yahoo.com

TREASURER: Sally Katkaveck / 82 Ashford Rd. / Ashford, CT 06278 / 860.974.2563 / sallybillkat@charter.net

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Maryanne Gryboski / 88 Eager Rd. / Franklin, CT 06254 / 860.822.6589 / strollgarden@aol.com

PROGRAMS: Please talk to one of the officers if you are interested in the Programs Chair position.

SUPER BLOOM 2016 IN DEATH VALLEY



Bonnie Maguire reports that she and Bill Hoover “recently returned from Death Valley where we hit the Super Bloom. It was fantastic. The only problem was that I had an allergy attack because of all the pollen from the millions of flowers.” Above photo shows a sea of Desert Gold, *Geraea canescens*; below left is Caltha-leaved Phacelia, *Phacelia calthifolia*; below right is Notch-leaved Phacelia, *Phacelia crenulata*, which “acts like poison ivy if you touch the leaf.” The El Nino weather patterns shift the track of winter storms into this area and the increased rain results in thousands of seeds germinating simultaneously. Bloom begins at the lower levels and, as these areas become exhausted, it climbs to higher elevations resulting in months of color and a wide variety of species in bloom depending on the habitat. *Photos by Bonnie Maguire*



IMPORTANT NEWS FROM NATIONAL

NARGS, the mother organization of which we are a chapter, requests that each chapter report **a list of its members and their contact information**. We will be submitting this list in early April. If you do not wish to have your email (or snail mail) address listed, you must contact Maryanne Gryboski by March 31st.

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The **Seed Exchange** is in need of a chapter to handle its main distribution round and the CT chapter has been approached. This is a huge job that involves printing and cataloguing over 500 incoming orders, pulling the seed packets to fill these orders, packaging and mailing them, and further cataloguing and packaging any leftover seed to be sent to those handling the secondary distribution.

Before accepting this challenge, we need the commitment of many members who would be willing to travel to the Gryboski home in Franklin which would act as the home base. This would take place throughout the month of January on multiple dates.

Please contact Maryanne and let her know how much time you would be willing to commit to this project. The life of the Seed Exchange may meet its end if no chapter steps forward.

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NARGS is looking for a new volunteer webmaster. This job requires experience or a strong desire to learn Drupal 7 web management/development. Proficiency might include Git, Drush, HTML5, CSS, PHP, MySQL. JavaScript, and Adobe CS Suite a plus. Satisfactory history background check a must. Interested parties can apply to: Elisabeth Zander <coptis@forecast1.com>

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Leucojum vernum, the spring snowflake, blooms in late winter; it is not often offered in catalogs. Photo taken by Joan Mencil of a clump in her garden.



Inula verbascifolia at the NYBG Rock Garden in October, 2015.

Plant Lust #2: *Inula verbascifolia* By Maryanne Gryboski

I guess I'm a sucker for soft silver leaves because here is another that has caught my fancy. I spotted this baby while strolling through the NYBG rock garden last October, its small mound of nearly-

white hoary leaves tucked near a miniature hosta. The foliage looked similar to mullein or lamb's ear although its wooly feel had a shorter nap. A member of the *Asteraceae*, it has daisy-like flowers during summer so I didn't see it in bloom, but online photos show a strong clear yellow with narrow strap-like ray florets. Reputed to be low maintenance, it prefers full sun but will make do in part shade, thus its hosta neighbor at NYBG and perhaps the reason the foliage in the above photo looks a bit forlorn.



Inula verbascifolia growing on Mount Biokovo, Makarska Riviera, Croatia. Photo by Frantisek Pleva, on BioLib.cz.

Primarily a native of the Balkan region but also reaching into southeastern Italy, it is hardy to at least zone 5. Panayoti Kelaidis grows it in his Denver garden (see www.prairiebreak.blogspot.com). There are a number of subspecies distinguished mainly by the foliage, some having more denticulate, or toothed, edges. Each is lovely.

Seed was offered in this year's seedex; germination was quick and I now have a dozen plugs under lights in my basement. For a particularly lovely shot of this plant in the wild, see www.ukwildflowers.com, go to thumbnails, click on "Plants A to Z", scroll to and click on *I. verbascifolia*.

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- Good Doers: the best doer of all is 'S. Arnott', often called Sam Arnott. In its true form it is a sterile clone which never produces seed. It is large, fragrant and blooms for six weeks, spreading nicely. 'Comet' is a wonderful *elwesii* with big flowers. 'Magnet' floats on its long pedicel and has beautiful movement in a breeze.
- Doubles: the owner of Colesbourne said she likes them "because they are always open for business," even in the coldest weather. 'Flore Pleno' is the best known. 'Hippolita' was recently voted the #1 double. Ernie told a funny story about 'Blewberry Tart', not named after a small pie but for a forward lady (like *Ranunculus* 'Brazen Hussy'). He learned this in the small town of Blewberry, England. 'Lady Beatrix Stanley' has flowers like petticoats, a lovely double. 'Walrus' has outers like tusks!
- Yellows: finally, thanks to Ernie, I have my own yellow, 'Spindleston Surprise'. It is very similar to 'Primrose Warburg'. Twice before I tried to grow 'Wendy's Gold', a larger snowdrop which proved not hardy here, although Ernie grows it in the milder climate of his garden on the south shore of Long Island.
- Poculiformis have very strange markings on their inner and outer segments.
- Unusuals include 'Diggory' which "you can identify from about 30 feet." It has a crinkly floral texture, long marks, and is very striking but unfortunately is not a good doer.
- Diminutives include 'Wee Grumpy', whose markings look just like a pouting face. So cute!

Companion plants: Ernie recommends *Adonis*, early *Narcissus*, *Cyclamen*, *Daphne*, hellebores and *Anemone blanda*.

Propagation: natural division is easy; chipping is practiced for rapid propagation but requires care and sterilization.

Cultivation: Ernie fertilizes with bulb fertilizer around Columbus Day, with bone meal, phosphorus and lime at bud stage, and bulb fertilizer again when the flowers are gone. Labels are necessary for the Columbus Day treatment.



Left: attendees visited the garden of Barbara van Achterberg. Right: with *Adonis amurensis* 'Fuku Jukai', *Galanthus* 'Spindelstone Surprise' blooms in the garden of Barbara van Achterberg.

After the meeting, I invited all to stop at my garden. I think it was Rick Goodenough, who came all the way from Massachusetts, who identified my house as "midcentury modern." Ernie, who came from Manhattan, was able to identify a particularly strong variety of *Galanthus* with strappy leaves as "classic *elwesii*." My sister-in-law gave me the first clump of this from their old farmhouse garden. Ernie also identified *Galanthus* 'Spindelstone Surprise' which I purchased from him at a tri-state meeting, even though it was in its green bud stage. He said it is a late bloomer. After several warm days it is in full bloom March 11th.

The last weekend of February was mild, and my snowdrops and winter aconites were buzzing with the first honeybees of the year collecting pollen. My original single *Eranthis hyemalis* took 5 years to bloom from a bag of dried corms. It now has thousands of descendants. Love that bright gold at the end of the winter. Love my snowdrops too, of course.