



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter May/June 2017

MAY MEETING

A TOUR OF THE CIRILLI GARDEN 5 Ichabod Rd., Simsbury 06070 Sunday, May 21, 11am

Visit the garden of Regina and Robert Cirilli where many rhododendrons are expected to be in bloom accompanied by various treasures throughout the garden.

Tour the garden at 11am. Bring a bag lunch to enjoy after the business meeting.

Directions: from east, at the junction of Rte.10 and Rte. 44 (Avon Old Farms Hotel), go west on Rte. 44 for 1.23miles. Take a right onto Climax Rd.; in 1.49 miles turn right onto Bushy Hill Rd./Rte.167. Take first right onto Ichabod Rd. #5 is on the right. From west, follow Rte. 44 eastbound. Turn left onto Bushy Hill Rd./Rte.167. Go 1.11 miles and turn right onto Ichabod Rd.

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A pink *Corydalis solida* in the garden of Nancy and Gary Johnson.

Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, MA
Primrose Society Show and Sale
Saturday, May 6, 10-5 and Sunday, May 7, 10-4
Specialist nurseries will be offering their wares.
There will be two presentations by Lynne Lawson and Jodie Mitchell, the mother-daughter team that operates Barnhaven Primroses, on May 6th. Daffodil Show will also be held that weekend. See www.towerhillbg.org for more information.

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As per our lecture (by Joseph Tychonievich) at TAC, we can compare the *Iris reticulata* to the snowdrops. Our speaker suggested that snowdrops were not exciting. While the latter thrive along my pond's edge, the iris stand out in the rock garden in the morning light. Surely there is a place for both of these shining stars. ~ Emily Ferguson



Joseph Tychonievich March 26, 2017

By Barbara van Achterberg

Joseph Tychonievich is the author of the new book *Rock Gardening: Reimagining a Classic Style* on which the March talk was based. Malcolm McGregor, the retiring editor of the *Rock Garden Quarterly*, reviewed the book very favorably. The retiring President of NARGS, Matt Mattus, announced that Tychonievich will be stepping up to become the new editor with his “unique generational vigor.” Tychonievich self-identifies as a Millennial and has the goal of attracting young people to rock gardening. We wish him success. All but a few of the sizable crowd gathered at Tolland Agricultural Center in Vernon were either senior citizens or on the cusp of joining that demographic.

Tychonievich has a rock garden in Michigan on limestone. No rhododendrons for him there. However, he will soon be moving to Virginia where he can try them. He also admits that he has no luck with *Saxifraga*. But he has had great success with *Polygala calcarea*, daphnes, pulsatillas, and thymes. In his talk as well as his book he recounted visits to ten rock gardens around the United States, England and Scotland. None of the gardens were large and all reflected the interests of the particular gardeners who cared for them.

Alan McMurtrie’s tiny garden in Toronto is full of *Iris reticulata* which he is hybridizing. When they are in bloom they are all covered to prevent cross-pollination. To show them to a visitor, McMurtrie lifts the cover very briefly and then replaces it a few seconds later before the bees can get in and ruin his work.

Ev Whittemore is hardly a Millennial, but having built extensive and beautiful gardens with large rocks in both Massachusetts and western North Carolina, she has now reinvented herself with a one-acre garden in Penmore, North Carolina, which has almost no rocks but is definitely an alpine garden. She uses hypertufa “rocks” which she spray paints black and grey, then green and red, to make them look natural as they stick out of the

ground. With friends she has built lightweight hypertufa troughs. There are very nice pictures of her garden online under the NARGS website.

While Tychonievich is not a fan of tall bearded iris, he likes some of the dwarf bearded iris that are easy to grow and fit perfectly into a rock garden, such as ‘Red at Last’ and ‘Clown Pants.’

Lewisia cotyledon self-seeds in Denver, but is a challenge in the Midwest. However *Lewisia* ‘Pinkie’ will even grow in Iowa. ‘Little Mango’ and ‘Little Peach’ are a lot more growable than pure *L. cotyledon*.

Tychonievich thinks like a Millennial about what is trendy. Succulents are very trendy. He particularly likes *Orostachys spinosa*, a hardy succulent which has no spines and is easy to grow. *Orostachys fimbriata* is also hardy, with bronze leaves. Even cacti with spines are preferable to those with hairs, he feels. You can quickly pull out a spine, while the hairs of some *Opuntia* stick to your clothes and go indoors with you.

Primula sieboldii is the easiest primrose for most of us to grow. It likes sun, will go dormant in a summer drought, and then come back when it rains. An observation that Tychonievich made is that seedlings of *Primula sieboldii* with jagged leaf edges will later have fringed petals; seedlings with smooth edges will have smooth petals.

Fairy Gardens are also trendy. For Millennials, a fairy garden “can be a gateway drug.” You can buy alpines to plant around your fairies since they take up little room, and before you know it you have a rock garden.

When Tychonievich sees a plant he can’t find in a nursery or seed list, he Googles it. Often there will be a “plant nerd” who owns it and is willing to part with one or two.

We can expect Joseph Tychonievich to be high energy and original as the next editor of the *Rock Garden Quarterly*. Like him, we hope for a younger generation of rock gardeners to be attracted to NARGS.

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Jeana Richo hosted the Styrofoam trough workshop on April 29, collecting the boxes from her job. Participants roughed up the boxes, sealed them with a heat gun and then painted them. Sitting with the finished product are Jeana, Joan Mencil, Maryanne Gryboski and Cris Dominijanni.

Coastal Maine Botanic Garden

There are still open spots for the trip to Maine, June 13 – 15. Please contact Joyce Fingerut, alpinegarden@comcast.net or (860) 535-3067 if you have interest.



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