



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter July/August 2015

AUGUST MEETING
Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Picnic
Saturday 15 August 12 noon
Garden of Ginny Gingras
21 Timber Lane, Vernon, CT 06066

There will be a tour of Ginny's gardens followed by a pot luck luncheon. Please bring a dish to share and a chair on which to sit. The business meeting will follow lunch and that, in turn, will be followed by a plant sale. The meeting will conclude with a visit to the nearby Valley Falls Farm.

Plant sale: please try to bring two plants for the sale. They don't have to be large divisions, but do bring something special/uncommon. And please pot them up ahead of time so they're not wilting in their containers.

Directions: I 84E take exit 66 'Bolton/Tunnel Rd.' Bear right onto S. Frontage Rd.; at stop sign take left onto Tunnel Rd. After going through tunnel, take first right onto Timber Lane. From I 84W, take exit 66; at end of ramp, take left; at stop sign, take left onto Tunnel Rd. See above.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Chapter of NARGS is to be held at my home in Vernon on Saturday, 15 August. The agenda includes election of officers and planning for program speakers and workshops. (One program suggestion I have is that our Chapter revisit/recall "legendary" Connecticut gardeners such as Dick Redfield, Fred and Mary Ann McGourty, and Betty Valentine, and consider their contributions of plants and ideas.) The meeting will also include a visit to Valley Falls Farm, about 1 mile away, owned since 2001 by the Friends of Valley Falls of which I am President. We chose to purchase the buildings and 8½ acres of land in order to save the historic site. The property remains intact as a fine example of a turn-of-the-century Gentleman's Farm, originally part of the 300 acre estate owned in the 1900's by Charles Coffing Beach and Mary Batterson Beach, daughter of the founder of the Travelers Insurance Company.

Among my recent visits to Earth Tones in Woodbury, CT, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay Harbor, ME, O'Brien Nurserymen in Granby, CT, and Wickham Park in Manchester, CT, I saw plants which I grow in my own gardens that were sited very differently in these gardens. I was struck by the versatility of plants' needs and uses. In other words, there is much to be learned by visiting gardens besides enjoying their beauty.

~Ginny

MEETING REPORT: JUNE 14, 2015

By Maryanne Gryboski

Owner Lisa Turoczi took our group of eight on tour through the expansive Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery. In the early days of their landscape design and installation business, she and husband Kyle often had to look far afield to source the native plants they needed. It made sense to them to begin growing these plants themselves from seed they collected so they could offer true Connecticut natives, and even specific genotypes when requested for restoration jobs. And so the nursery was born.

A dirt drive climbs gently through woods and past a pond to the nursery location, uphill from their home, a now open area which once held the trees that were felled to build the business offices. Paths and stone steps connect various nursery areas. Pots of trees, shrubs, perennials and ferns are sited according to their needs so that the customer who is looking for shade plants, for example, would go to the shaded areas. Two bogs have been created, one a display garden and one to hold sale plants which are dug as needed since bog lovers don't do well in pots. A rain garden was developed to absorb storm runoff which previously washed out a service road.

Instead of a soilless mixture, the nursery uses a potting mix of its own compost, soil, sand and bark which Lisa believes makes the plant's transition from nursery pot to client's soil an easier one.

Good blue flowers on an eighteen inch high *Amsonia tabernaemontana* var. *montana* caught my eye; it was planted among *Asclepias tuberosa* whose buds were just beginning to show orange. The architectural *Eryngium yuccifolium*, the rattlesnake master, was also a knockout well appreciated by our group. I personally could not pass up that *Amsonia* or a *Lillium canadense* with buds dangling (I've been trying to grow it from seed with little success) both of which will be added to my meadow, as well as the diminutive *Hypoxis hirsuta*, the yellow stargrass.

Both Lisa and Kyle are very personable and full of information. They run the business on a green philosophy of no pesticides or fertilizers, and they stock New England natives. If you are thinking of turning an open area into a meadow, repopulating a woodland or wetland, or are simply interested in adding natives to current gardens, it is worth a visit to this Woodbury destination.

*

There was a discussion during the business meeting concerning ways to interest younger people in CTNARGS. Emily Ferguson suggested placing troughs in our Community Colleges accompanied by information on CTNARGS. Members who live near the CC's could stop by to maintain them. Jeanna Richo suggested placing brochures in local nurseries. It was pointed out that we do not have a brochure and Emily Ferguson offered to work on one. On another note, Joan Mencil suggested having a meeting at the Bartlett Arboretum in Stamford.

* * * * *

IN MEMORIAM

The Connecticut Chapter lost three members this winter.

Sandra Steinberg passed away on February 14th. Her garden in Hartford's West End was designed and installed by Howard Pfeifer but Sandy, a collector of choice plants with an eye to good design herself, changed it and made it her own. She did not offend easily and handled both ends of a question with aplomb, was generous with her plants and spirited in her dealings with friends. She was active in the Chapter, last attending the June, 2014 meeting.

Margaret and Roger Bradley passed away March 2nd and March 8th respectively. They were longtime CTNARGS members who gardened on the family farm in Somers and are remembered for their friendliness and plant knowledge.

NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

CHAIR: Ginny Gingras / 21 Timber Ln. / Vernon, CT 06066 / 860.875.9865 / ginnyingras2013@gmail.com

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

ADDITIONAL HELP: Please talk to one of the officers if you are interested in contributing time or ideas to Programs, Hospitality, Venues.

NARGS AGM: POST-CONFERENCE TRIP

By Maryanne Gryboski

While the weather was fair and warm for the outings during the conference, the sky turned gray and showery, the temps dropped and a nippy wind followed our caravan of three vans, a pickup and two autos on our drive up Rte. 23 to the Mackinac Bridge and our base camp, a motel in Saint Ignace. As we sped along the highway we saw woodlands carpeted with *Trillium grandiflorum*, and low areas covered with the yellow bloom of the marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*.

Our main stop that first afternoon took us through a series of backroad turns to a woodland known for the occasional *Trillium grandiflorum* oddity. This wild population showed great variation: white flowers with wide petals, narrow petals, petal edges flat or pie-crust-ed. We found one plant with four leaves, another with large leaf-like sepals, one with green flowers, and one with nine leaves, twelve sepals and a bud that appeared to be fully double! We also spotted an *Erythronium americanum*, the trout lily, whose leaves were silver instead of the usual mottled green and tan, as well as *Claytonia*, bloodroot foliage, yellow violet, and two species of blue cohosh: *Caulophyllum thalictroides* with green flowers and *C. giganteum* whose flowers are purplish-brown.

Our second day began on a Lake Huron beach. The woody growth here, predominantly *Chamaecyparis*, is stunted and I assumed it was caused by the low nutrient, sandy soil; but I learned that it primarily is the result of the freezing winter lake waters which shear the woody plants. Keeping the woodies in a continual process of regrowth prevents them from shading out the herbaceous layer that inhabits the beaches. The bird's-eye primrose (*Primula mistassinica*), dwarf lake iris (*Iris lacustris*), bearberry, Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja coccinea*), pitcher plant and *Pyrola assarifolia* were all found here.

We next stopped at another woodland where *Trillium grandiflorum* again grew en masse, but here it emerged through a ground cover of ramps (which made for a highly scented romp in the woods!) and many pink forms were found. Also in this wood was a small community of *Phyllitis scolopendrium* var. *americanum*, the rare American hart's-tongue fern, growing in the crevices of limestone. We stopped to eat lunch at a stone dump where we saw *Viola labradorica* (not the garden variety) and then continued on to an alvar environment. This is an exposed plain of limestone bedrock where grykes, vertical cracks in the limestone, have formed



Trillium grandiflorum in its many forms.



Left: a view of growth on the beach; right: grykes formed in the limestone plain.

when the limestone is dissolved by water. Mosses grew on the limestone and maidenhair spleenwort, *Asplenium trichomanes ramosum*, was tucked in the crevices.

A quick stop along the lake's dunes showed the lyrate rockcress (*Arabidopsis lyrata*), *Artemisia campestris*, beach heather (*Hudsonia tomentosa*), hairy puccoon (*Lithospermum caroliniense*) in bud, and *Salix myricoides* and *S. discolor*.

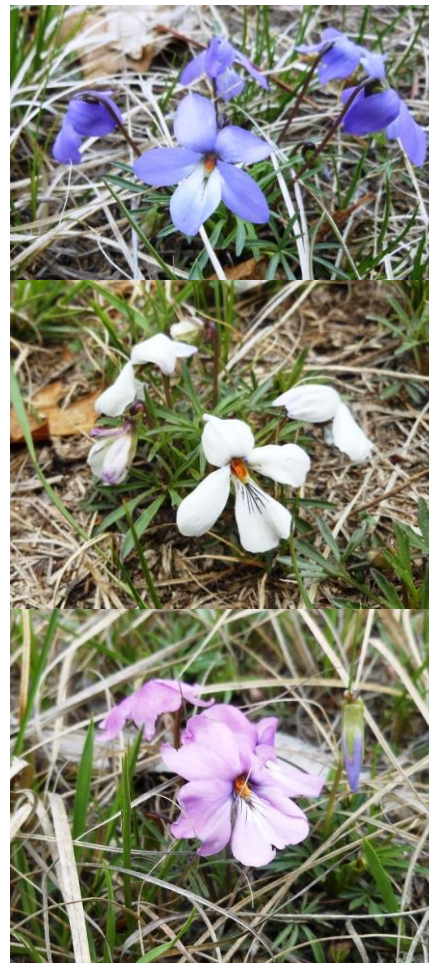
Day three saw us cross the Mackinac Bridge back to Lower Michigan. Our first stop was a short walk along a wooded road that led to the lake's shore. Here, we hoped to see large numbers of *Iris lacustris* in bloom; although the foliage was plentiful, Michigan's late spring provided only the promise of its state flower's buds. We did see small sedges with soft yellow flowers, more bird's-eye primrose, many pitcher plants, and the emerging foliage of lady slipper orchids and *Pinguicula*, the butterwort.

Our final stop was an open area under power lines. Here was a community of *Viola pedata*, the bird's foot violet, predominantly mid blue-violet, but with the odd white, pink and bi-colored form, and even one with deep purpled-green foliage. In the woods at the edge of this mowed area were wintergreen, lowbush blueberry and a creamy-flowered form of the trailing arbutus.

Throughout the trip group leader Tony Reznicek, ever ready with plant identification, treated questions with equanimity, good humor, and a frequent joke. This botanical "expedition" was an adventure which I completely enjoyed and I'm marking my calendar for next June when the NARGS AGM will be in Steamboat Springs, CO!



NARGS Connecticut Chapter
Maryanne Gryboski, Editor
88 Eager Rd., Franklin, CT 06254



Three color forms of *Viola pedata*.