

Potomac Valley Chapter (PVC) North American Rock Garden Society
pvcnargs.org



Hedysarum hedysaroides subsp. exaltatum

August 2017
Bulletin

Editor: Sarah Strickler,
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Trollius europeus

Pay your **membership dues** by sending your check for \$15 (payable to PVC NARGS) to Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22207 4pvctreas@gmail.com

Fall 2017 – January 2018 PVC Events Calendar

Programs are Saturday mornings and, unless otherwise noted, doors open at 9:30 am for coffee with lecture at 10 am



September 23, Distinctive Diminutive Gardens that Surprise. Learn about plant selections and design creations for challenging small spaces often forgotten or overlooked such as walls, terrarios, corners, fish tanks, boxes, shoes, and more.

Speaker: Laura Falcones is a design professional and founder of VitaWall. She specializes in vertical wall gardens that have both artistic design elements and solid functional performance. Originally from Spain, Falcones explores how the beauty of natural and man-made wonders can harmoniously coexist, while creating living works of art. Laura developed her expertise in horticulture and landscape design at the New York Botanical Garden's School of Professional

Horticulture, and has worked as a horticulturist in gardens throughout New York . www.vitawall.com

Location: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814. RED LINE-BETHESDA metro stop. (Free parking under the building; entrance is on Edgemoor) <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/bcc/> Up the elevator to Room A (West room)



October 14, Plant Exchange, Jane Collins's home, 556 Piedmont St, Arlington, VA 22203
Details to follow.

October: Trough Workshop, Date and Location TBD

November 4, Turkish Bulbs

Speaker: Yasemin Konuralp, author of *A Field Guide to Wildflowers of Turkey: Bulbous Plants*, **Location:** TBA

November 17-19, NARGS Annual Meeting in Durham, North Carolina

<http://www.piedmontnargs.org/>

November/December: Election of New Officers: Date and Location TBD

December 2, Members' Presentations, Annual Meeting

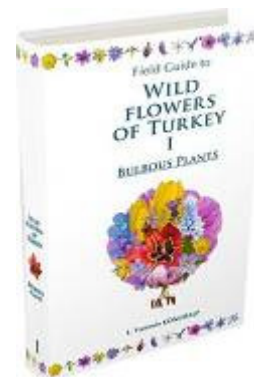
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January 10-12, 2018, Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) <http://www.mants.com/>

January 27, 2018, Save the date!

Speaker: Bill Johnson, former volunteer coordinator and horticulturist, Hillwood Gardens

Location: United States Botanic Garden, 100 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20001



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

After spending over 2 weeks in the Pacific Northwest and at high elevations of Colorado, I'm having a problem adjusting back to the Maryland heat and humidity! It's no wonder plants grow so well in the Pacific Northwest. Temperatures there approached 80° F, and everyone was complaining about how hot it was! We had the opportunity to visit Far Reaches Farm and met with the nursery owners, Kelly and Sue, who spent precious time with us in spite of having deadlines of their own and allowing us in on a day when the nursery was closed to the public. As I expected, their place is AMAZING and it would take days to go through all the plants they have, many of which are not for sale (yet) and being propagated. Just their podophyllums alone were enough to make a grown man cry.

For those of us growing tropical and subtropical plants, the heat, humidity and frequent rains we've had this summer are a blessing. The plumerias, cannas, bananas, hedychioms, bromeliads and elephant ears are reveling under these conditions. Unfortunately, some plants are not so happy. I've lost about a half-dozen rock garden plants although those in troughs seem to be toughing it out admirably. Speaking of troughs, we are planning to hold another workshop on trough making this fall, probably in October. We tried to do this last year but ended up cancelling due to lack of interest. There seems to be more interest this year, so we'll try again. Keep an eye out for the sign up sometime in August/September.

Our Plant Exchange is October 14th, at Jane Collins's house, so start thinking about what plants you can dig and divide to bring. Jane's garden has many cool "industrial chic" metal features she had designed and had custom made, as well as many interesting plants!

Don't forget, chapter elections are coming in November. We need one additional person to join the Nominating Committee, which will present candidates for the President and Vice-President. We also need members to come forward and volunteer to run. Don't be shy - please consider participating and helping our chapter exist and evolve. More details coming soon.

Kevin McIntosh

2017 NARGS Annual General Meeting
Rock Gardening in the Southeastern U.S. - Past, Present, and Future
November 17-19, 2017

The 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of NARGS will be held in Durham, North Carolina and is being hosted by the Piedmont Chapter. The AGM will explore the past, present, and future of rock gardening in the southeastern and mid-Atlantic regions of the U.S.

The AGM will include a welcome reception and presentation on Friday evening, November 17; a full day of presentations on Saturday, November 18; and tours to three gardens in the Triangle area on Sunday, November 19. Additional activities include an optional pre-conference, two-day guided tour of botanically interesting natural areas in North Carolina's Coastal Plain on November 15 and 16, and visits to several gardens in the Triangle area on November 17. Details on the meeting as well as an on-line registration form are available on the meeting website (www.piedmontnargs.org).

From Seeds to Bonsai

Pete Jones

Since joining the Northern Virginia Bonsai club in 1972, I have wanted a *Chamaecyparis obtusa* bonsai. Most such plants are grown for landscaping and are quite costly. After seeing so many different *Chamaecyparis obtusa* at the Gotelli collection at the National Arboretum, I decided to educate myself on these plants and others that are grown in the Gotelli collection.

Back in the 70's I found small rooted cuttings of *Chamaecyparis obtusa* for sale, which I purchased and planted. As they grew, I used several for landscaping our front yard. Over the years they began producing seeds, about every third year, so I decided to collect the seeds so I could plant them.

In the pictures below one can see how seed cones develop on *Chamaecyparis obtusa*.



On the right is the *Chamaecyparis obtusa* planted in our front yard. These cones will be ready to collect in October.

I do hope that some of the younger club members will develop an interest in growing and identifying notable plants for bonsai training.



This picture shows what can be accomplished with a little effort.



This is the same tree at the Roy Nagatoshi workshop in April of 2017. After years of observing several plants from this seed batch, I selected this one to style with Roy's help.

The tree is responding well to the care I am providing. Next spring the tree will be planted in the red bonsai container on the left. It is most rewarding to know that I

grew this Hinoki Cypress from seeds. That makes this small bonsai that much more enjoyable.

This fall I should have quite a few seeds; however, I have also learned over the years that one does not get a high germination rate from *Chamaecyparis obtusa* seeds.

Pick Up some New Plants for your Rock or Scree Garden

Available for Sale at Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA

Judy Zatsick, Horticulturist at Green Spring

If you are noticing a few empty spots in your garden and need plants to fill them, come to Green Spring Gardens. We have a good variety of seed grown plants perfect for rock gardens. Prices are good!

Thornton Burnett generously gave us a range of *Zephyranthes* and we have divided and potted them up for sales. We have a gorgeous large flowered white variety with pink tips on the edges of the petals. Perhaps it's La Bufa Rosa group 'Big Dude' or a hybrid. We also have a smaller clear pink type. Finally, we have a pure white-flowered form. These plants were all hardy in his garden.

We've got some nice *Penstemon*: *hartweggii*, *heterophyllus*, *mexicali* Red, and 'Carillo' We have several *Dianthus*, including *pinifolius*, 'Flashing Lights', and the adorable *superbus* We have several yuccas, including *Y. neomexicana*, 'Color Guard', and 'Bright Edge'

Other plants include:

Cerastium tomentosum

Cheiranthus allionii

Sidalcea malviflora 'Rosanna'

Aubrieta

Silene uniflora

Echinacea paradoxa

Lilium formosanum

Ruschia pulvinaris

Draba

Eryngium 'Blue Glitter'

Gypsophila cerastioides

Oenothera macrocarpa

Phlomis fruticosa

Pulsatilla vulgaris

Anacyclus 'Silver Kisses'

Linum lewisii

Hesperaloë parviflora

Delosperma 'Fire Spinner'

Erigeron glaucus

Various alliums

Happy Shopping!

I Can't Believe It Survived the Winter!

Kevin McIntosh

Last winter was mild in the mid-Atlantic region. In Ellicott City, MD, where I live (USDA hardiness zone 6b), we experienced a zone 8 winter having a low of 12°F and no extended cold periods below 18°F. Temps oscillated between warm and cold throughout the winter, and this likely prevented the ground from freezing too deeply. And there was very little precipitation, and this kept roots on the dry side, favoring subtropical plant survival. Nonetheless, I was very surprised about what came up this spring!



Bulbs and Tuberous Plants: Several marginally hardy bulbous plants survived last winter, including:

***Ledebouria stenophylla* 'Gary Hammer':** This South African *Scilla* relative was introduced by the late California plantsman, Gary Hammer. It is usually rated z7b and has long, deciduous, strap-like, grey-green leaves that are heavily spotted. I grew this plant in my cold frame for several years and finally planted it out into the rock garden last summer (2016) where it gets good sun and drainage. It survived last winter and is currently blooming.

***Rhodohypoxis baurii*:** These are small South African bulbs that are marginally hardy in our area but perfect in the rock garden if you can keep them from rotting in the winter. The flat flowers produced in spring are typically red, white or pink. I grew a half-dozen varieties in pots for several years and overwintered them in the garage. Last year they were planted in the rock garden and every one returned this spring forming good-sized clumps but, unfortunately, most put out few flowers.



***Freesia laxa* 'Joan Evans':** This plant was initially housed in my cold frame. In 5 years, it spread to cover about 4 square feet, entirely too much real estate to give up to one plant in a highly desirable neighborhood! So, I dug some out last summer and planted them outside the cold frame. To my astonishment, all the plants survived and bloomed.

It's fragrant but not nearly to the degree of the more common, commercially available freesias. *Freesia laxa* comes from the winter-rainfall region of South Africa, where it can be found in moist, lightly shaded sites. The plant gets about a foot tall and goes dormant in summer. Leaves reappear during winter in the cold frame, later when planted in the garden.

***Tigridia pavonia* (Mexican Shell Flower):** Normally used as an annual, the bulbs overwintered and the plants flowered in June/July.

***Polygonum tuberosum* 'Swarna Rekah':** This plant resulted from radiation-induced treatments to induce mutations of the double tuberose. It exhibits attractive variegated foliage as well as the fragrant flowers characteristic of the wild type tuberose. According to Plant Delights, it is also hardier than the unmutated double tuberose. I planted mine on the south side of a stone wall.



***Eucomis reichenbachii* (Purple Pineapple Flower):** I purchased this rare bulbous perennial native to South Africa about 4 years ago from Annie's Annuals. I recall reading in their catalogue that this plant is more tender than the common



garden variety eucomis, so I kept it potted and brought it indoors during the winter until I obtained offsets that I could separate and grow independently. Last year one was large enough to plant out in the garden. It emerged last spring but has not flowered yet this year. Although I look forward to the purple-edged, green flowers, I would grow this plant for foliage alone which is quite different from the typical eucomis.

***Lochroma australis* SBH6129:** This shrubby angel's trumpet is a *Brugmansia* relative collected in



Argentina by Sean Hogan of Cistus Nursery. It produces 2 inch blue bellflowers that hang from the branches in summer. Root-hardy for me for the past 3 years, *L. australis* this year leafed out above ground and is now the largest I've seen it at about 3 feet tall and wide and getting bigger by the day!

Colocasias, Remusatias, Cannas and Hedychiums: I've been touting the hardiness of *Colocasia* "Pink China" for years so it's no surprise that this cultivar survived the winter. In fact, it has become something of a weed in my

garden. I've dug out large areas where this plant has spread by runners and it continues to come back from little pieces of rhizome left in the soil.

A little more surprising was the return of a *Colocasia* I obtained from Steve Silberstein at a Four Season's plant exchange (pictured next to a 4 foot split rail fence). Steve told me this elephant ear was hardy most years for him in eastern New Jersey. Although I don't know the species or cultivar, the plant has pleasing glaucous leaves and gets about 4 feet tall. It is by all appearances more robust than 'Pink China' with thicker leaves and beefier stems.

Even more surprising was the return of *C. esculenta* (aka *antiquorum*) 'Illustris' (pictured below) and *Remusatia pumilo* 'Mini Mask'. Both came from Plant Delights and have leaves overlaid with black markings. *Remusatia* appears to be related to *Colocasia* but broke off from this genus "over differences in reproductive philosophy" according to Tony Avent. It produces an erect stoloniferous spike in late summer covered with bulbils/tubercles which can produce new plants. Purported to produce spiky, yellow, fragrant flowers (never seen them), *Remusatia* grow as an epiphyte but does well for me in a rich,



moderately moist soil. I've tried to overwinter its larger cousin, *Remusatia vivipara*, several times without success but did not try last winter.

I also had *Canna* 'Tropicana' return this spring. I did not dig all the tubers last fall and accidentally left a few in the ground. They were planted in a wet drainage area without protection and came back like gangbusters. The nicely



variegated *Canna* 'Stuttgart' also has been perennial for me.

I grow 3 *Hedychium* species, all of which have overwintered here successfully for several years. They are *H. greenii*, *H. coccineum* and a third from a mountain in China has a collection number (and a lost tag). Although they continue to increase in size vegetatively, I have only seen flowers on the mystery *Hedychium* and these are an unremarkable green.

Begonias: Ever since reading about John Boggan's experience with begonias on his blog *DC*



Tropics (<http://dctropics.blogspot.com/>), I too have been experimenting with winter hardiness in this group of plants. The following plants survived last winter: *B. 'Metallic Mist'*, *B. pedatifida*, *B. hemsleyana*, *B. 'Little Brother Montgomery'*, and a *Begonia* I gave to my mother-in-law for Mother's Day a few years ago which I purchased at Home Depot (pictured to left). She thought she killed the plant and gave me back the barren hanging basket which I put on the back patio in the graveyard area. Several months later after a few good rains, the plants popped up (surprise!) and I planted them in the garden as annuals, not expecting to see them

again. Well, several winters later, they're still there!

Gesneriads: The Plant Delights introduction, *Gloxinia nematanthodes* 'Evita', hails from Argentina and is reputed to be fairly hardy (z7b). The plant grows as a ground cover, spreading by underground runners/stolons in rich humusy soil in shade. It is not fazed by heat and actually seems to enjoy high temperatures. To my amazement, it emerged this spring and has



spread like an invasive, swamping smaller plants around it. It's a beautiful "invasive", however, with brilliant orange-red flowers produced continuously from mid-summer through frost. I'm not worried at this point as I think a normal winter will set it back or kill it but I am going to keep my eye on it.

Encouraged by the hardiness of this plant, I recently purchased another gesneriad, *Gloxinia* 'Little Red', introduced by John Boggan. It has not as yet been overwintered outside.

and *Arachniodes simplicior* 'Variegata' (East Indian Holly Fern) sailed through last winter.

Ferns: The marginally hardy ferns *Pyrrhosia shearii*

Succulents/Xerophytic Plants: *Tradescantia*



sillamontana (above, right) which I obtained from Thornton Burnet, is a gorgeous plant with silver, hairy leaves and magenta flowers in late summer/fall (it's blooming now in mid-August). It's been tricky getting this one through the winters here but I've had success covering it with pine needles in the fall after frost has killed the leaves. It's planted in the rock garden in full sun with good drainage.

After exhaustively trialing agaves in my rock garden for many years and failing dismally, I finally had some success last year. Agaves that made it through last winter include *A. utahensis ssp kaibabensis*, *A. gracilipes* and an unknown unlabeled *Agave* I purchased from Putnam Hill Nursery (see photo above left).

Woody Plants: Survivors include *Schefflera delavayi*; *Pittosporum heterophyllum*; *Cestrum* 'Orange Peel', fatsias (the species and 2 variegated cultivars); multiple *Trachycarpus* palm cultivars: *T. wagnerianus*, *T. 'Landcraft'* (a hybrid of *T. takil* and *T. 'Bulgaria'*), and *T. 'Taylor'*; and several *Ficus* trailing species including *F. pumila* (below left) and *F. 'Camellia Forest'* (below right).



I hope my experience with these plants inspires you to bring out your zone warrior from within. Many plants are hardier than you think and if you throw on a little mulch in fall, you may be surprised at what comes up the following spring!

Wildflowers in the Dolomites

Sarah Strickler

Judy Zatsick and I represented the Potomac Valley chapter on a week-long trip in late June and early July to the Dolomites of northeastern Italy. (Former chapter members Betty and Ed Spar were also along.) The trip was organized by NARGS and run by the British travel company Naturetrek. Our base was a



Phyteuma orbiculare

charming family run hotel in the small village of Tamion near Val di Fassa, about a 3 hour drive north of Venice and an hour southeast of Bolzano. A delicious surprise (literally) was the Michelin-star-winning chef in the kitchen who is also the innkeeper's husband!

We had a knowledgeable British botanical guide, Jessica Turner, who didn't tire of repeating plant names for us as we struggled to keep track of them all, and an excellent, young Italian bird and butterfly expert in Luca Boscain.

Last winter in the Dolomites was mild with little snow, producing a spring our guide said was as much as 3 weeks ahead of schedule. So no *Cypripedium*, *Primula*, few if any *Soldanella* or *Daphne* were blooming, for instance. Still there was an abundance of flowers, most of which I had never seen – or never seen in the “wild” – and being new to the area, I was blissfully oblivious to what I missed.

The landscape is both bucolic and dramatic. Craggy mountains with white calcareous scree falling from their shoulders (it almost looks like snow in certain locations) top lush green meadows and dark stands of conifers below. We often heard the lilt of cow bells in the distance as cattle graze up to 6 thousand feet, at least, in this part of the world.

With unusually cool weather to start, we spent the first few days wearing most of the layers and rain gear we brought. Though precipitation was sporadic, it included some hail.



Miss 'Swiss Grey'



Can you find the refugio?

We looked at flora in both true alpine meadows like the one below on the left, as well as ones created by grazing, periodic mowing and making hay like the one on the right.



I saw plants growing so handsomely and harmoniously in rock and scree formations I wish I could have plucked them from the mountain side and brought them home intact. Below are some of them.



Veronica bonarota



Potentilla nitida



Saxifraga paniculata

And just to prove we were there, here is a picture of 3 of us-- Judy Zatsick on the left, me in the middle, and Marcela Ferreyra on the right--sitting near a refugio (hut/hostel) you can just barely see at the top of a peak in the photo above next to the cow. (You may have to get out your magnifying glass.) Some of you may remember Marcella from the NARGS meeting in Steamboat, where she spoke about the flora of Patagonia, where she lives.



Stay tuned, there may be a NARGS trip to Patagonia in the future!

What is NARGS? The North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) is our parent organization. We encourage you to join (online at www.nargs.org) for only \$40 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS also conducts winter study weekends, and holds its Annual Meeting in interesting places where attendees have the

opportunity to visit gardens, and take field trips, often to alpine areas, as well as hear talks by outstanding plants people from around the world. More recently, they have begun sponsoring botanical tours each year open to members only. There is a trip to China in June 2018 and more coming.

Officers, Committee Chairs and Board of Directors 2015 -2017

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Meadow of the Dolomites , S. Strickler