



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter January 2012

GRAFTING WORKSHOP

Saturday, February 18, 2012 10 a.m.
Broken Arrow Nursery, Hamden, CT

Workshop Leader: Adam Wheeler

Adam Wheeler, Propagation and Plant Development Mgr. of Broken Arrow Nursery, will lead a workshop on grafting woody plants. Adam is a graduate of the University of Vermont with a degree in Urban Forestry and Landscape Horticulture. He will discuss the basics of grafting, looking at various types of techniques, the tools and materials needed and the protective coatings that are involved. After the lecture, a hands-on segment will follow wherein participants will graft a conifer and a Japanese maple.

There is a \$10 fee for this workshop and participants will graft two items. **Pre-registration is required and attendance is limited.** To sign up, please send your check for \$10, payable to CT Chapter NARGS, to Maryanne Gryboski (address on pg 2) by February 10, 2012.

Plan on taking advantage of this opportunity to hone your grafting skills and acquire interesting woody plant material for your garden. And plan to stroll through the nursery grounds; the witch-hazel may be in bloom.

Directions: I-84 eastbound take exit 23. Go south on Rt. 69 about 7 miles, take left on Gaylord Mt. Rd. for 2 miles to Broken Arrow Nursery on left.
I-84 westbound take exit 25A. Go left on Austin Rd. which becomes Scott Rd.; follow to end. Go south on Rt. 69 about 5 miles. See above.
Merritt/Wilbur Cross take exit 59. Go north on Rt. 69 for 7.5 miles, take right on Gaylord. See above.
I-91 north take exit 10 to Rt. 10. Take right and go 1.5 miles to left turn on Todd St. Go to end, take right on Shepard Ave., then left on W.Todd, follow to end, right on Gaylord for 2 miles, next right to Broken Arrow Rd.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the New Year.

The weird weather of late is producing challenges to plants and people alike. Storm Alfred left us without electricity for 10 days so we camped indoors. Thankfully we have a rain barrel, purchased from Sally Katkaveck years ago. Since we have well water, and no electricity means no working pump, the snow melt was captured and brought to the rain barrel which we relocated to the garage, thus enabling us to flush the toilets! And the recent balmy days have resulted in the emergence of snowdrops and other bulbs. Will their flowers be diminished if extended freezes come before we get snow cover?

Have you ordered your seeds from the NARGS seed exchange list yet? If you have not joined the national NARGS, I urge you to do so. **The Rock Garden Quarterly** is outstanding and editor Malcolm McGregor is to be commended. I am reading past editions of the Quarterly and am delighted to find excellent articles from gardeners sharing their gardening experiences and techniques.

Finally, we need to attract new members and, since we have an excellent program of speakers and workshops planned this year, publicity is vital and will surely attract gardeners. We welcome your assistance.

~Ginny



October 16, 2011 Tri-State Meeting

By Barbara VanAchterberg

Rock gardeners from the Hudson Valley Chapter, the Connecticut Chapter, the Manhattan Chapter and the Berkshire Chapter all came to the Lyndhurst Carriage House in Tarrytown, New York for the third tri-state meeting there. I think there were a few members of other Chapters there, too.

The speaker was Malcolm McGregor who lives in East Yorkshire, England, but is the editor of the NARGS *Rock Garden Quarterly*. Peter George, the NARGS president, and Anne Spiegel, who won an award at the annual NARGS meeting for having a destination garden, were among his sizable audience.

McGregor's morning talk was *A Rock Gardener's Eye 2: Landscape & Gardens & Somebody Else's Weeds*. The presentation was very funny as it ranged from grassland, including sod-forming grass that responds to grazing which is "why you have to buy little grazing machines" and tuft-forming grass which does not need grazing, to trees, shrubs and herbs (forbs). He tries to grow forbs about the same height as the grass they grow in. Real alpine regions have no trees, virtually no shrubs and few forbs—classic alpine plants have no competition and grow on pure rock. A few plants he likes are:

**Glaucium acutidentatum*, a lovely growable poppy, yellow with red centers

**Aphyllanthes monspeliensis*, an amazing sky blue flower that he can grow in a sand bed (in England) from the south of France

**Bergenia ciliata*—a great species that he can grow in a rock wall, with protection from the north wind.

See 'Tri-State' on page 4

Garden Thoughts In Winter

By Angela H. Fichter

I, like other gardeners, enjoy reading garden columns to get ideas for my gardens. Some garden advice is repeated by the columnists each season, like plant peas early in spring. Another of the old saws is that we should put down mulch around perennial plants to protect them for the winter. The columnists go on to say that we should wait until the ground freezes to do this. The reason for the delay is that mice, voles and moles will make homes under the mulch near your plants, but after the ground freezes they will not be tunneling. Last winter I thought I would follow that advice and wait until the ground freezes to put the mulch on. This is what I discovered.

The ground does not freeze in Connecticut until December. It is cold in December. When I went outside to put the mulch around the plants, I had to wear a winter coat, which limited my mobility. I couldn't wear my good, warm winter gloves as I had to wear garden gloves to handle the mulch. Garden gloves are not lined. They are made for people who garden in summer, which is when normal people do their gardening.

Furthermore, the mulch was frozen. I had bought big plastic bags of shredded bark. The bags were made of thick, protective plastic. Most people I know don't have heated garages that are big enough to store not only their cars, but many bags of mulch, too. So those plastic bags had been sitting outside at the mercy of the elements since the fall. (In case you didn't know, you can't buy mulch in winter from garden centers.) After I opened the bags and found the mulch was a large frozen chunk, my close inspection of the bags revealed that there were a few tiny holes in the plastic. So the mulch got wet from the fall rains. Since the mulch was almost entirely covered with plastic, the dampness did not evaporate. It just froze. Have you ever tried to break up chunks of frozen mulch with your hands in December when the frigid wind is whipping around your body? I do not recommend it. It took forever to place the
See 'Thoughts' on page 4

NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

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



Crocus zonatus in the late October garden.

After the September meeting, I reluctantly purchased corms of *Crocus zonatus* for some autumn color. (I truly wanted more colchicum bulbs but hurricane Irene had interfered with Ballek's order.) They were planted in mid-September, pushed out of the ground in mid-October and bloomed their fool heads off from late October, holding their own beautifully through the Halloween snowstorm, right through the month of November and the Thanksgiving holiday. Ten corms produced well over fifty flowers offering me five weeks of delight. Surely purchasing fifty corms next year wouldn't be too many.

Maryanne Gryboski.

ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT 2011

Beginning Balance:		
Webster Checking A/C		\$4357.61
Income:		
Dues	\$510.00	
Fundraising	<u>402.50</u>	
		912.50
Expenses:		
Newsletter	< 39.38>	
Programs	<u>< 480.57></u>	
		< 519.95>
Ending Balance		\$4750.16

Sally Katkaveck

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW

Annual membership runs Feb. through Jan. Membership includes the newsletter, visits to members' gardens, plant sales and auctions, workshops, and access to top notch speakers.

Use the form below to renew your membership for one or more years at the rate of \$10 per year. Also, consider giving a gift membership to a gardening friend or relative: a one-time introductory gift membership is only \$7.

NARGS CT Chapter 2012 Membership Dues - \$10

Send this form along with check payable to **CT Chapter, NARGS**
CT NARGS, Sally Katkaveck, Treasurer, 82 Ashford Rd., Ashford, CT 06278

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Gift Membership: _____

Sending the newsletter digitally saves money. All e-mail addresses are confidential and are not shared.

CT NARGS needs your time and talents. Please consider volunteering for:

___ Newsletter Editor

___ Programs Coordinator

___ Workshop Leader

___ Program Presenter

___ Garden Host/Hostess

___ Newsletter Article

Comments: _____

'Tri-State' continued from page 2

The Manhattan Chapter invited us all to attend any of their meetings, including the one at the New York Botanical Garden on April 21, 2012. Thank you, Manhattan Chapter.

There were abundant plants for sale and for the raffle. It seemed that everyone won something. Nobody had to go away empty-handed—especially any gardener wanting to expand his cyclamen patch! And wow, how about that *Gentiana scabra*!

McGregor's afternoon talk was *A Rock Gardener's Eye - Worlds Away*. It was a travelogue of his trips to tropical Vietnam and mediterranean Australia during his wife's teaching stint in Vietnam. His wife, Marcia, was in the audience. McGregor's presentation was an expansive talk covering plants, food, fish, frogs, grubs, history and culture! I learned that the starfruit, or carambola, grows on trees and is a member of the oxalis family, and that my favorite tropical fruit, mangosteen, which I tasted in Congo, is native to southeast Asia.



NARGS Connecticut Chapter
Maryanne Gryboski, Editor
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mulch around the plants. No, I didn't get frostbite, but I could swear I heard snickering. I'll just bet it was all those dang mice and voles and moles laughing away. After all, they had plenty of tunnels dug in the grass all around my garden beds. They had a high old time watching me put that frozen mulch around in December.

This year I put the mulch around in October. It was 60 degrees out. The trees were glowing with gold and orange and red leaves. The Canadian geese were honking overhead on their flight south. I took a deep relaxed breath. Sure a few mice might have taken up residence under the mulch before the ground froze, but since they live a few inches away in the grass, just what is saved by putting mulch on in December? Yet every fall the garden columnists come out with this advice. Why? Because *they* never went out in December to place frozen mulch around plants. In December, they were inside at the computer writing a gardening column and drinking cocoa. Happy winter gardening!