



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter May/June 2012

MAY MEETING

Sunday, 20 May 2012, 10:00 am
Ballek's Garden Center
90 Maple Ave.
East Haddam, CT 06423

Speaker: Jim Almond

Jim Almond is the Assistant director of Alpine Garden Society shows and regularly acts as show photographer. He gives many talks to AGS, horticultural and specialist societies. Key conference talks have included the British Iris Society, Cyclamen Society, Fritillaria Group and some overseas alpine groups. He has a National plant collection of Juno Iris. Visit his website at <http://freespace.virgin.net/almond.jim/>.

Jim will be presenting on 'Alpines and Bulbs from Seed.' Compost and basic techniques are detailed and plants are featured in both flower and seed throughout the presentation.

Bring a lunch and any plants you might wish to contribute to the auction or present for show & tell. Left-over seed from the NARGS exchange will be available.

A tour of the nearby garden of member Dave DeLucia will follow. His exceptional collection of rhododendron is a delight to see and many other choice plants will be strutting their stuff. Don't miss it.

Directions: From Rt. 9, take exit 7; at the end of the (long) ramp, take a left onto Rt. 154N. Go ¼ mile to 1st light and take a right onto Rt. 82. Cross the bridge. At the fork, bear right following Rt. 82. Go 1 mile to 1st stop sign and take a left onto Rt. 151. In ¼ mile take a left onto Maple Ave.

See page 2 for June meeting information. **There will be no additional newsletter** prior to that meeting, so **save this newsletter!**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Barbara van Achterberg, Marge Bingham and Ginny Gingras speak with Lola from Brooklyn, NY in the NYBG rock garden.

News from my garden: *Gentiana acaulis* is in full bloom and gorgeous!!! I have one blossom on the peony "Molly the Witch" which also has lots of foliage compared to my other peonies; and *Arisaema sikokianum* has two more seedlings!!! Woodland plants have done well in this weird weather, but a favorite of mine, the Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, has been affected by the 'no-snow' cover and the numbers have diminished.

As I look over my alpine and woodland plants, I can easily see the influence of members of the Rock Garden Society, friends who have shared both their plants and their knowledge. I recall the words of Mildred Latawic: many people view Rock Garden members as "elite gardeners" for their knowledge and concern for the plants. On a trip to Stone Crop Gardens on April 28th, Sally Katkaveck elaborated on that idea, noting that "early" NARGS members shared their plants to ensure survival of the species. Sylvia Correia commented that she noted a diminishing number of gardeners and that most people appear to be "disposal gardeners" – plant in the spring and discard in the fall.

See 'Message' page 2 lower right

JUNE MEETING

Sunday, 10 June 2012 10:30 am
Oliver Nurseries
1159 Bronson Rd.
Fairfield, CT

A trough planting demonstration with Lori Chips

Lori Chips, Alpine Manager at Oliver Nurseries, will give a trough planting demonstration, covering a bit of the history of trough gardening and a lot of cultivation information, as well as addressing aesthetic concerns. If members have questions concerning shade troughs, drought tolerant troughs, 'mesa' or 'gorge' construction, etc., contact Maryanne with your concerns so they can be forwarded to Lori; she will tweak her presentation to address these issues. There will be handouts which cover soil recipe, winter care and the making of troughs. Lori will also be available to help you determine how many plants would be an appropriate fit for your troughs; bring your trough dimensions, including depth, if you want assistance in this area. The nursery has a selection of troughs available for purchase and, of course, a wide selection of alpines (as well as woodies/perennials/annuals); Lori will be happy to help you make decisions and shop for your particular site/exposure/aesthetic. Also available is an alpine soil mix at \$25 for a 5 gallon bucket, and \$6 bags of grit for top dressing.

Lori Chips graduated from the School of Professional Horticulture at the New York Botanical Garden, and worked there as Propagator for the Rock & Native Plant Gardens. She has been an active member of NARGS since 1996 and also writes articles for NARGS and for Oliver Nurseries. She is a botanical illustrator, her paintings having appeared on the covers of the 1999 NARGS Quarterlies, as well as in issues illustrating her articles in the Quarterly in 2010, 2011, and this year. She has lectured on trough gardening and on the propagation of alpine plants at NYBG and NARGS events.

Directions: From I-95 westbound, take exit 20, Bronson Rd. At end of ramp, turn right onto Bronson. Continue straight thru 2 stop signs; nursery is immediately on left.

From I-95 eastbound, take exit 21, Mill Plain Rd. At end of ramp, turn left onto Mill Plain. At 1st stop sign, turn left onto Sturges Rd. In about 100 yards, bear right at the 1st intersection, continuing on Sturges thru 1st stop sign and across stone bridge to 2nd stop sign where you turn right. Continue .3 miles to nursery on left.



Newly made and planted troughs at NYBG rock garden.

'Message' con't from pg 1

At the Rock Garden Study Day at the New York Botanical Garden on April 21st, Tony Reznicek commented on the demise of botany courses offered in colleges. He noted that biology students were encouraged to focus on pre-med courses and that Land Grant Colleges would be the schools to continue to offer students course work in the field of Botany. He ended his comments by asking those present to check what their high school science curriculum offers for botany courses. I will comment on this topic in the next newsletter.

~ Ginny

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

Rock Garden Study Day at the N.Y. Botanical Garden April 21, 2012

By Barbara van Achterberg



A scene along Azalea Way at New York Botanical Garden.

Four of us from the CT Chapter carpooled to this event, which fortunately took place on an absolutely beautiful Saturday just before the much-needed downpour which blessed our gardens and the New York Botanical Garden on Sunday.

The continental breakfast and talk by Anton Reznicek took place in the delightful Stone Mill, built in 1840, transferred to the NYBG a century later, declared a National Historic Landmark, and restored as a LEEDs-certified building by the Lillian and Amy Goldman Foundation in 2010. It is often rented for special events and even has a bride's changing room.

There were people there from the Manhattan, Connecticut, Berkshire, Hudson Valley and Adirondack Chapters. We had time to greet old friends and make some new acquaintances.

Anton Reznicek gently protested his long introduction and said that all we needed to know about him is that "I am one of those taxonomists who keep changing the names of things." He is curator and assistant director at the University of Michigan Herbarium.

He explained that Linnaean classification was done by pattern recognition. Now we can

- 1) read the DNA of every plant we want to
- 2) sort the information we get using complex mathematical techniques
- 3) perform these calculations using powerful computers.

We used to think that ferns and conifers came first, then monocots, then dicots. Now, modern science tells us that

there are "Anita Grade" plants which came before monocots, and that magnolias also predate the split of dicots from monocots. There are only a few Anita Grade plants, in the families of Amborella, Nymphaea, Illicium, Trimenia and Austrobaileya. Examples include water lilies and the star anise, and they were here in the late dinosaur period. The magnolias which followed them came before there were bees, and are pollinated by beetles. Then came the monocots (onions, bulbs), and finally the dicots.

Modern classification has changed or is changing Latin names. Penstemons are now in the plantain family and Reznicek spoke of them as "plantains with makeup." Plantains are wind pollinated. "Just think of the changes in human genetics if we were wind pollinated," he joked. Verbascum is almost the only thing left in the scrophularia family. Rhododendron now includes Ledum and Menziesia. Then there is the "aster disaster"; asters are now all over the place. Blackberry lily is now an iris, despite its totally different flowers: it is now *Iris domestica*. Mustards are still good (i.e. in their old family). So are beans, lupines, daisies, aroids, orchids, borages and gentians. But *Lewisia tweedyi* is no longer a lewisia. What it is I don't know.

He touched on the well-known similarity of plants in eastern North America and in East Asia, many of which have no relatives in Europe. These can be crossed, resulting in beautiful plants like the yellow Magnolia 'Maxine Merrill' or *Shortia x intertexta* 'Leona,' a cross between our *galacifolia* and the Japanese *uniflora*, and the easiest *shortia* to grow, he told us.

Next came a tour of the NYBG rock garden. Everything was early. I was particularly taken with *Leiophyllum buxifolium*, a compact ericaceous shrub resembling a daphne; many blooms of the dwarf *Tulipa batalinii*,



Leiophyllum buxifolium (native sand-myrtle) drew rave reviews.

which I need to get again, having lost mine to rodents; *Pulsatilla albana*, an adorable low, pale yellow plant in scree; *Arnebia pulchra*, with little yellow flowers, each with 5 dark spots; *Erigeron leiomerus*, from the Rocky Mountains; and *Carduncellus pinnatus*, amazing rosettes with one big blue flower in the middle.



A charming clump of *Pulsatilla albana* in the NYBG rock garden.

I pointed out the dwarf pink *Rhododendron* ‘Ginny Gee’ to our own Ginny Gingras, telling her “Here’s a *rhododendron* for you,” but she already got one last year. *Rhododendron* ‘June Bee’ was an equally adorable white.

The garden tour was ostensibly led by curator Jody Payne, but her voice was soft and the group spread out. Two members of her staff as well as Lori Chips were also fielding questions. Our group of four continued our tour too long to break for lunch. We decided to forego the tram and walk through the azalea garden back to the work area where the trough making demonstration was starting at 1:00. There were no signs, and by the time we found the right place it was half over. The trough making equipment looked sturdy and not too hard to reproduce. There were no handouts, so we signed an email list to get instructions, left early and went back to my house for lunch and a much more modest garden tour (though my clump of *Trillium grandiflorum*, which originally came from Maryanne Gryboski, was better than any I saw at the NYBG).

All photos by Maryanne Gryboski



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