



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter May/June 2013

JUNE MEETING

Sunday, June 9, 2013 1:30 pm
Fern Garden of Dr. Terry Webster
Storrs, CT

Dr. Webster is Emeritus Professor of Plant Morphology in UCONN's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Saskatchewan and began his career at UCONN in 1965. Part of his research has focused on the evolution and comparative morphology of Selaginella, and ferns and the fern allies are of particular interest to him.

Terry grows approximately fifty varieties of hardy ferns and fern allies in his Storrs garden. He will lead us on a tour of the garden, which includes a fern cobbler wherein grow a number of species that would lend themselves to rock gardens, and he will be available to answer questions when we break for refreshments.

This past winter Terry led tours of the greenhouses at UCONN and, if you attended any, you know that his presentations are informative, interesting and accessible. So, mark the date on your calendar!

Directions: from Rte.195, turn at the light onto North Eagleville Rd. on the UCONN campus. Look for the Torrey Life Sciences building on the left, and proceed approximately 1 mile to Southwood Rd. Take a right onto Southwood; the garden is at #23, the 4th house (a red Cape) on the left.

* * * * *

BOOK AUCTION

March speaker Betty Ann Addison has donated an un-circulated copy of **Manual of Alpine Plants** by Will Ingwersen for a CT Chapter auction. This reference describes a huge range of alpiners and is essential for every alpine gardener's bookshelf. Opening bid is \$25. Bids may be submitted to Maryanne Gryboski by mail, e-mail or phone. (See box, pg.2, for info.)

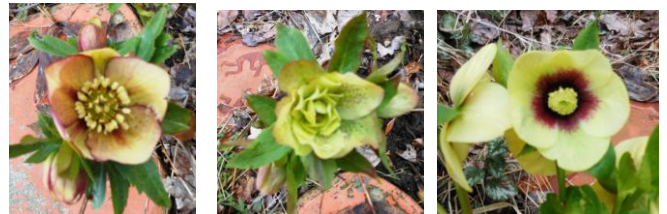
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winter's grasp has finally broken and plants that had been dormant have emerged and grown quickly. I lost a few alpiners - perhaps I should consider covering them as Dave DeLucia does - but my woodland plants have thrived and multiplied. Outstanding have been: *Jeffersonia diphylla* (with many offspring), *Jeffersonia dubia*, double bloodroot, single bloodroot (in clusters), Dutchmen's breeches and primulas.

At the CT Horticultural Society Plant Sale and Auction April 19th, a pot of single bloodroot went for \$22 as did a pot of Dutchmen's breeches. But the prize was \$70 for the double bloodroot contributed by Barbara van Achterberg. The message I take from these sales is that wildflowers are attractive to the gardening public. We in NARGS should advertise their value to gardeners as native plants and also the connection they offer to the woodland landscape.

As I view the plants in my garden, I am reminded by many that have been given to me of my friends in NARGS. Please consider sharing your garden, inviting visitations and offering comments in the newsletter.

~Ginny



Three yellow Helleborus varieties in Jeana Richo's garden.

Meeting Report: March 9, 2013 Landscaping with Rock and Alpine Plants

by Barbara van Achterberg

Betty Ann Addison lives just north of the Twin Cities in Minneapolis and operates Gardens of Rice Creek at her home. It used to be much larger, but she sold the 17 acre nursery site to Wal-Mart! The Rice Creek website includes photos that give evidence to the claim that "Artistic landscape design and diligent installation sets our work apart." Rice Creek not only sells plants but designs landscapes. Rock gardens are a specialty. A forty-foot long greenhouse runs along the front of the Addison house. A river of grass and trees winds through the gently sloping landscape. To make it less monotonous, she uses tall pointed arborvitae as accents.

Put your big rocks in front! She got this advice from the designer of the Rock Garden at Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. Big rocks in front give you the feeling of standing at the foot of a mountain, with the smaller rocks near the top giving an impression of distance.

A weeping white pine acts like a mountain if you don't have a mountain. Rock gardens should be bold. Don't just repeat the same few plants all over the rock garden. If you have too much sun, use big rocks to provide shady nooks. Don't have all the rocks equidistant from one another. Vary the placement, and use a big rock at the beginning of a path to invite people to walk down that path.

Betty Ann showed us slide after slide of choice perennials that do well for her. Minnesota has colder winters than Connecticut, so they should all do well for us. Indeed, many are well known to Connecticut rock gardeners.

- Adonis amurensis is the first non-bulb perennial to bloom in the spring, usually March.

- Anemonella 'Shoaffs Double Pink' was first found in a Minnesota graveyard.
- Androsace sarmentosa chumbyii is the easiest androsace; she's had it over 40 years.



- Crocus vernus, a showy crocus, is found in Brent and Becky's catalog. There are good deep purple forms.
- Lavender: the hardiest for her is 'Cynthia Johnson.'
- Narcissus 'Hawera', a small daffodil, is very graceful and naturalizes.
- Tulipa pulchella violacea is a tulip that will return.
- Colchicum agrippinum with tessellated petals is a fall bloomer which, like all colchicums, sends up large leaves in the spring and so should be placed where the leaves can be hidden in other spring foliage.
- Dianthus is easy to grown from seed. One is D. nitidis, meaning "nest," for its foliage. Dianthus 'Joan's Blood' was found in the very pass in the Pyrenees which Joan of Arc had to cross.
- Draba are compact yellow-flowering plants, except for dedeana, which is white.
- Erigeron 'Goat Rocks' is one of many small daisy alpines in shades of blue to pink.
- Linum lewisia, a flax from the Lewis and Clark expedition, is a nice light blue in midsummer.

Con't next page

NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

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

VICE-CHAIR: Dave DeLucia / 26 Overlook Dr. / East Haddam, CT 06423 / mrdcac@aol.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

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

- Pulsatilla: soak the seeds overnight before planting.
- Sedum 'Ruby Carpet' is a great mailbox plant. Thank you Betty Ann, I'm going to try this.
- Verbena canadensis is a truly hardy creeping verbena.

Betty Ann suggests that for long periods of bloom we use lots of phlox and dianthus.

Betty Ann's back garden is shadier. Here she grows paper birch, many small rhododendrons and azaleas.

- Azalea (Rhododendron) 'Frank Abbott' is a particularly attractive compact deep rose, best not planted in a windy location as the flowers might get blown off.
- Rhododendron 'Crete,' which she says is the favorite rhododendron in Canada, is a lovely dwarf pink and white.
- Cypripedium reginae is the state flower of Minnesota and needs a really damp spot, but other lady slippers are easier to please, the yellow ones easiest. There are numerous wonderful new hybrids in dazzling bi-colors, such as 'Gisela.' These are propagated by tissue culture.
- Haberlea is a hardy African violet relative from Bulgaria.
- Helleborus: she has a good red one.
- Hepaticas: what's not to love in this genus? (Your Secretary's comment.)
- Myosotis caucasica is a perennial, non-weedy forget me not.
- Trillium 'Merle's Pearl' is a beautiful double. (But no more beautiful than Dick Redfield's clone).

After a lunch break Betty Ann presented a wonderful program on propagating rhododendrons. Maryanne is sending links to Betty Ann's detailed instructions, so I will just add a few points not on the link.

- Rare Find Nursery is a source of many choice plants.
- 'Lois' magnolia is now the best yellow-flowered magnolia.
- Just four rhododendrons of the many she showed: 'Skookum', with bright scarlet flowers on a dwarf plant; 'Trinity', with beautiful big white flowers; 'Haaga', with rose-pink flowers from Finland, gives more and earlier flowers as the plant matures; 'April Rose' and 'April Snow', rose and white doubles from Gus Melquist, have flowers that last longer because they don't get pollinated. (OK, that was five, and it was very hard to limit myself to those.)

- Fertilize rhododendrons and wild flowers lightly in April, heavily in June, and lightly again in early August.

And a final quote from Betty Ann Addison: "In general you don't want a hobby that you can conquer overnight."

Gardens of Rice Creek does no mail order shipping but Betty Ann Addison is open to trading. Currently she has a sky-blue Iris pumila and is looking for a yellow one.

* * * * *

FORSYTHIA

By John Marchacos

Let's talk for-SITH-ia or For-SY-thia ... a member of the olive family (Oleaceae), a deciduous shrub native to Eastern Asia and Southeastern Europe. The plant is named For-SY-thia in honor of William Forsyth (1737-1805), the Scottish botanist who in 1771 created what is thought to be the first rock garden in Britain and in 1779 was named Superintendent at Kensington Palace and St. James' Palace, and cofounded the Royal Horticultural Society in 1804. I know what you're thinking, "Who would want to grow a wily, overgrown, overused, invasive shrub like for-SITH-ia in a rock garden?" I totally understand your doubts with the pruning it takes to tame this gargantuan yellow school bus size plant every other year.

Well, I'm not suggesting Forsythia x intermedia, but a cross of F. x intermedia and F. japonica var. saxatilis performed at the Arnold Arboretum in the early 1940's by Dr Karl Sax. Forsythia 'Arnold Dwarf' is a compact mounding shrub 2-3' tall and just as wide. It can be used effectively as a ground cover or specimen plant in the rock garden. The yellow flowers appear dutifully before the 2 inch light green serrated ovate leaves on arching branches.

Give Forsythia 'Arnold Dwarf' a chance to establish, in full sun, before making any true value opinion. I acquired my rooted cutting from Elizabeth Valentine; growing as a low hedge 3 feet high by 20 feet long and 4 feet wide, it was filled with an enormous amount of golden yellow flowers. Forsythia 'Arnold Dwarf' is easy to grow, easier to propagate. The arching branches touch the soil and root in, growing in well-drained, medium-moist average soil in full sun or part shade. Remember Forsythia 'Arnold Dwarf' will produce many more flowers when planted in full sun.

Meeting Report: April 13, 2013 Styrofoam Trough Workshop

by Barbara van Achterberg



Dan Richo files away uneven edges, left; Regina Cirilli and Joan Mencil cut drainage holes, right.

Frank and Jeana Richo and their son Dan generously opened their house and garden to an enthusiastic group of Chapter members, friends and neighbors for a Styrofoam trough-making lesson. Jeana works in a laboratory where many sizes of polystyrene foam containers are byproducts that have to be recycled. She is encouraged to bring home all she wants, and she does. The Richos' front garden has a number of finished Styrofoam troughs that look like stone and have lasted through several winters. There was a huge pile of plain white boxes behind the garage from which we made our selections.

After choosing whichever size boxes we wanted to turn into troughs, we carried them to the Richos' deck and scraped away. I had to use a dust mask. There were several worktables appreciated by senior citizens. Frank and Dan demonstrated cutting techniques. We used their chisels and scrapers and some of our own to simulate rock striations, rough weathering and, in one



Jeff Hurtig, left, and Barbara van Achterberg, right, scrape, gouge and attract bits of Styrofoam.

case, bricks. There was much creativity shown. Most of us had time to make two troughs.



Those of us without heat guns had our troughs finished with them by Frank and Dan. Otherwise too much Styrofoam would come off when we painted them.

We made quite a mess, with polystyrene foam bits going all over the Richo deck, onto the driveway, through the kitchen door and into the house. Jeana wanted to show us Dan's hydroponic gardens in another room, and we left a trail of white dust behind us. As usual, your Secretary was the messiest person of all - like a magnet, I attract whatever debris any job produces. But the Richos demonstrated amazing grace and hospitality, inviting us indoors to warm up with fresh homemade pastries and cups of tea or coffee.



Workshop participants, and the family dog, had a fun time.

Painting the troughs is a two-step process. Exterior paint must be used. I found some old paint and plan to use earth tone for the first coat, and grey for the second. So far I haven't had time, but it will happen this spring.

Editor's note: Jeana has more boxes if anyone is interested. Her contact info is in the last issue.

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR SALE

The Chapter has received a letter from Joan Balla, daughter of Ethel Balla, former Chapter officer and friend of Doretta Klaber who authored a number of books on various genera. Ms Balla is in possession of 22 original illustrations for Doretta Klaber's book, *Primroses and Spring*, and is interested in selling them as a set. Each pen and ink illustration is done in outline form on 8"x11" tracing paper and includes editorial notations.

Any interested persons may call the editor (see pg. 2) for Ms Balla's contact information.

* * * * *



Narcissus 'Minnow'

I ordered bulbs of four different small narcissus last fall for what I hope will begin a naturalization process among the little bluestem that is growing down the slope at the front of our house. Of the three that have thus far blossomed – 'Jetfire', 'Topolino', 'Minnow' – it is 'Minnow' that wins my heart. In clusters of three or more, the flower is a little thing, only the size of a quarter as it opens its soft yellow petals, expanding to just over an inch when fully spread. The deeper yellow cup is shallow and only 3/8" across. And at 7 inches in height, it requires the admirer to squat down in order to catch the delicate sweet scent of this tazetta. ~ed.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The 2013 Annual Show of the **American Primrose Society** will be held at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, MA, on May 4th and 5th.

Horticulturist and photographer Merrill Jensen will be guest speaker with two presentations: *The Primula National collection: How We Got There* and *The History of the Jensen-Olson Arboretum: from Gold Miners to Primula Growers*. As Manager of the Jensen-Olson Arboretum in Juneau, AK, Mr. Jensen has built a National Collection of Primula that contains the most species under cultivation in the U.S.

The exhibition will be held in the main corridor. A sales area, containing a wide assortment of hard to find and garden primroses, will also be offered. The **Seven States Daffodil Show** will be held concurrently, so be prepared for a double treat. For more info: www.americanprimrosesociety.org or www.towerhillbg.org.

* * * * *

NARGS BOOK REVIEW: Seeing Trees -- Discover the Extraordinary Secrets of Everyday Trees, authored by Nancy Ross Hugo with photography by Robert Llewellyn

Definitely for the coffee table, this book has amazing photographs, observations, and comments that would capture the naturalist in all of us. It is formatted in large size (10 1/2" x 9") for obvious reasons. The details, "intimate views" of leaf scars, barks and fruits coupled with "tree traits," offer so much more than just identification. It prods the reader to observe with fresh eyes "both the miniscule and the spectacular." The photos enhance the insights of the author. I can see why she considers tree exploration addictive. Zooming in on a tree's characteristics without distraction is a moment of pleasure enjoyed by all. A really lovely read.

The review was contributed by Susan Stiles, editor of the Mason-Dixon Chapter Newsletter. It is located on the NARGS Web site at "Book of the Month": <http://nargs.org/nargswiki/tiki-index.php?page=Book+of+the+Month>