



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter May 2011

MAY MEETING

Sunday, 15 May 2011, 10:15 a m
Garden of Anne Spiegel, Wappingers Falls, NY

Anne's garden is a series of stepped ledges in an open, windy and sun-baked site. Screes, sand beds, raised beds, crevice gardens, a trough collection and two new features will delight and intrigue us. The terrain is rugged so wear appropriate shoes.

We will meet at the garden at 10:15; expect a 1 to 2 hour ride depending on your departure point. If you are looking for a ride or are willing to drive others, please call/email Maryanne or Ginny and we will try to facilitate carpools. Bring a lunch or take your chances on finding a local eatery.

Directions: From I-84W to Taconic Pkwy. N, take Noxon/LaGrangeville exit. Turn left off ramp and proceed 0.4 miles to stop sign and turn right onto Noxon Rd. Go 2.2 miles to Maloney Rd. on the left, and then 1.5 miles to garden on left at 299 Maloney Rd.

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NARGS 2011 National Meeting
Discovering the Flora of New England
June 17-19

Discover The Fells and Clarence Hay's 80-year-old rock garden, the beauty of Eshqua Bog and Philbrick-Cricenti Bog, and visit exceptional private gardens. Keynote speaker Arthur Haines will discuss native alpine plants and some interesting adaptations seen in New England. Closing speaker Bill Culina will talk about growing New England's challenging alpiners and woodland plants.

See: <http://fellschapter.wordpress.com/about/>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As our New England spring advances, it reveals plants that are reminders of the people who have given them to me or who initially informed me of them. This is but one of the many values of belonging to a group of dedicated, generous and knowledgeable gardeners. Among the plants that I now enjoy from fellow NARGS members are: three species of anemone, Helleborus 'Potters' Wheel', Jeffersonia dubia and diphylla, winter aconite, marsh marigold, semi-double bloodroot, spring beauty, double bloodroot, Primulas kisoana, japonica and sieboldii, dutchman's breeches, and Omphalodes.

Our April meeting at Quackin' Grass in Brooklyn was VERY cold, but we enjoyed the Power Point presentation of Ev Whittemore's garden and the auction of special plants, most notably SHORTIA from Peggy Taylor's garden. Last Saturday, five "very hardy" members made the trip to Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, NY, for its big sale. Again, the weather was cold (44 degrees) and, in addition, rainy and windy. In both instances, the very next day, warm weather prevailed.

I purchased Lewisia tweedii from Richard Evermay at Stonecrop, and Anne Spiegel, who was helping man the booth, advised as to the proper planting: remove all soil, plant in sun in well drained soil with pebbles at the bottom of the hole and place pebbles around the collar to keep the plant dry. I am looking forward to visiting Anne's garden on May 15th.

Please consider sharing your knowledge and tips on your favorite plants.

~ Ginny

Meeting Report: 16 April 2011

By Barbara van Achterberg

Quackin' Grass Nursery, Wayne Paquette's highly original horticultural home business in Brooklyn, Connecticut, was the delightful setting for our April meeting. Wayne threw his barn open to the Chapter, and we shared news, enjoyed refreshments, and watched a digitalized slide show of Ev Whittemore's presentation on the history of rock gardening, followed by pictures of her North Carolina rock gardens and related travel photos. Ev was there virtually, while Ginny and Maryanne did the honors.

The show began with pictures of scree and crevice gardens in nature in Montana and Wyoming, areas that get about 12 inches of rain a year and are exceptionally well-drained. Then we saw numerous troughs made by Ev and her late husband, using cement blocks covered with hypertufa, some sprayed with flat black paint. There were also raised beds (over red clay soil a necessity), rock wall gardens and even a rock garden built on a large stump, overlaid with concrete patio blocks. Ev's garden is near Asheville, a hilly part of western North Carolina with relatively cool summers and good air circulation. Not all high alpine will thrive, but many will.

Phlox subulata forms are among the easiest plants there, as they are in Connecticut. Gentiana acaulis is also doable, but must be planted in fertile moist soil in sun. If it doesn't bloom, it is telling you to try a different spot. An interesting oxalis is the very compact non-invasive Oxalis 'Arthur Fairbairn,' which has rich purple flowers. Bright pink Geranium cinereum 'Splendens' is a favorite in the garden or a large trough. It is sun loving but shade tolerant and a clumper, not a spreader. Dicentra 'King of Hearts' is a hybrid between the difficult and tiny Dicentra peregrina and a western dicentra. It has grey-blue leaves and is much easier to grow than peregrina. Hirpicium armerioides var. armerioides is a ground-hugging daisy native to the Drakensburg Mountains in South Africa but hardy, as are several Delospermas from the same area. (So far in Connecticut I have succeeded in overwintering only Delosperma congestum, the yellow one, in gravelly

soil in sun). Dianthus, on the other hand, is easy to grow even in clay soil. Pulsatillas should be in every rock garden, believes Ev. They come in shades of red, blue, pink, purple and white and the spring flowers are followed by airy ornamental seed heads. There were dozens of other plants she recommends for both sun and shade.

After the talk, we auctioned off plants donated by members, including five budded clumps of Shortia galacifolia from the late Peggy Taylor's garden; Trachystemon orientalis, a cute dodecatheon relative; Corydalis solida hybrids; epimediums; Jeffersonia dubia; and a fine pot of Saxifraga exerata 'Peter Pan.' Every gardener in Connecticut should join our Chapter just to get great bargains at our auctions and sales!

Finally, Wayne took the remaining members on a tour of his extensive nursery, which he apparently maintains with only the help of an intern and his lively mother, Lucille, who we saw cheerfully bustling about. How they do it, I don't know. Like all of us, Wayne went through a terrible winter and lost one of his three greenhouses. He had to do really heroic shoveling to get to the other two. He proudly showed us the perennials and shrubs he is growing in his greenhouses and he is selecting special forms of some and giving them original and memorable names. He has a catalog and will soon have one online.

All in all, it was a memorable day and well worth the two-hour drive from my house.

UPCOMING EVENTS

American Primrose Society National Show

April 30/May 1, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, MA
Speaker: Chris Chadwell www.americanprimrosesociety.org

Berkshire NARGS, May 14, at Berkshire Botanical Gardens Stockbridge, MA. 'Alpines of Kashmir' & 'Growing Himalayan Rock Garden Plants', Chris Chadwell

New England NARGS, May 15, at Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge, Sudbury, MA 'Growing Himalayan Plants in New England' & 'Plant-hunting in Tibet'. Chris Chadwell

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