



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter July/August, 2013

Fern Garden Meeting Report, June 9

By Barbara van Achterberg

Dr. Terry Webster is Emeritus Professor of Plant Morphology who began his career at UCONN in 1965. Ferns and fern allies are of particular interest to him. At his home garden very near the UCONN campus he has labeled numerically, for easy viewing and discussion, 45 native ferns and fern allies, and 16 introduced ferns in a fern cobble in front of his house. Most of these ferns are well-behaved, and the ones which are not are strictly controlled there, although his woodland contains large patches of the spreading ferns.

- *Adiantum pedatum*, the beloved Maidenhair, is a native with delicate tripinnate spreading fronds on long black petioles, and marginal false indusium. Indusium, meaning “ladies underwear,” consists of a membrane that covers the spores on some ferns. Its presence or absence helps identify the fern.
- *Asplenium platyneuron* (Ebony Spleenwort) is small and graceful, with narrow elongate fronds, and is ideal for a rock garden. It likes lime but does not demand it.
- *Asplenium trichomanis* (Maidenhair Spleenwort) is adorable. This one grows in rock crevices of limestone and resembles a miniature maidenhair. Dr. Webster describes it as “ideal for rock gardens.”
- *Lygodium palmatum* (Climbing Fern or Hartford Fern) was the first plant protected by law in the United States, in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1869. Endangered, it is native to sandy bogs and swamps in the Eastern U.S. where it climbs.
- *Pellaea atropurpurea* (Purple Cliff-brake) definitely prefers lime. It has narrow fronds 1-pinnate at tips, 2-pinnate below. It tolerates dryness and is native to Connecticut.

Dr. Webster’s fern cobble has some really choice introduced (non-native) ferns. Some of them may be a little
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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I am enjoying some of the best blooms of my woodland and alpine plants this spring. However, keeping up with prodigious growth of weeds, invasives (hay-scented, New York ferns), and thugs has been a challenge.

With the recent passing of a member of the Conn. Horticultural Society, I am reminded of the demise of gardens nurtured by many great gardeners: they disappear together. Which brings me to Dick Redfield’s splendid gardens. Sally Katkaveck informed me that Dick’s house is to be razed in preparation for a housing development. The good note is that many of Dick’s plants have been secured by Bruce McCue of Wethersfield who grows many woodlanders. So, let us continue to share plants with each other to ensure their preservation.

~ Ginny

JULY MEETING

Annual Pot-Luck Luncheon
Sunday 14 July 10:30 – 1:30
The Garden of Margot Abrams
184 Judd Rd., Easton, CT 06612

Margot has a small rock garden, many mixed borders, and has spent several years establishing extensive semi-shade gardens along the woodland edges that surround her home. Please park in the lower driveway and hug the sides of the drive so cars can pass around the circle.

Please bring a dish to share, a chair, possibly an umbrella. Plant auction to follow meal. Twombly Nursery (Monroe) and Oliver Nurseries (Fairfield) are nearby for your shopping pleasure. Heavy rains cancel. Anyone wishing to carpool can contact Ginny or Maryanne.

Directions: From Merritt Pkwy. eastbound, take exit 46, go right at end of ramp, right at light onto Sport Hill Rd./Rt. 59; go 4 miles to stop sign, take right at Stepney Rd./Rt. 59; go 2.1 miles to left turn on Judd Rd. Drive is on right, across from yellow mailbox.

From Merritt Pkwy. westbound, take exit 50/Rt. 25.

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more challenging than the native species.

- *Adiantum aleuticum* 'Subpunicum' is a very tiny form of maidenhair fern from Alaska.
- *Athyrium filix-femina* 'Frizelliae' is a very delicate form of ladies fern with unique fan-shaped pinnae and is acid-loving. You have to keep an eye on it as sometimes parts of it revert to regular ladies fern.



Athyrium filix-femina 'Frizelliae', left; *Athyrium filix-femina* 'Dre's Dagger', right.

- *Athyrium filix-femina* 'Dre's Dagger' is another dwarf, with thin fronds crested at top and pinnae arranged in criss-cross pattern.
- *Dryopteris affinis cristata* (Golden Scented Male Fern 'Crested Male—the King') has a handsome crested form with tips of fronds repeatedly divided.

Before starting the walk through his woods, Terry Webster showed us some mosses. The mosses have two generations: sporophyte, which forms spores and then dies, and gametophyte, the second generation that looks to us like moss and produces eggs. This is just the opposite of ferns, which have both sexes on the same plant in the same generation.

(Recommended sources include Crow Dog Native Ferns in Pickens, SC, www.crowdognativeferns.com, and Cady's Falls Nursery in Morrisville, VT, www.cadysfallsnursery.com.)

NARGS Annual Conference: 'Exploring the Flora of the Blue Ridge' - Day I

By Maryanne Gryboski

The Annual Conference essentially consisted of three evening presentations, two days of field trips and a day visiting private gardens. Seven field trip choices with varying degrees of hiking difficulty were offered, and I chose two that were rated moderate.

My first day consisted of two trips, the morning devoted to the Southern Highland Reserve, a privately owned native plant arboretum and research center in Lake Toxaway, about fifty miles south-west of Asheville. The Reserve is divided into two areas: the Core Park which contains a well-appointed lodge that houses the education and research center (and part of a collection of Native American artifacts – the balance of the collection is in the Smithsonian) and twenty acres of "highly manicured display gardens planted with native species and their cultivars"; and a one hundred acre natural woodland. At an elevation of 4,500 feet atop Toxaway Mountain, the views are reputed to be expansive but fog made the experience much more intimate.



Rhododendron vaseyi in bud near the pond.

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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.

PLANT PORTRAIT: COLUMBINE

By Angela H. Fichter

Columbine is one of my favorite flowers. The Latin name for it is aquilegia. The Redfield brothers of Scotland were quite insistent that flower lovers learn the Latin names of flowers they like because every catalogue company and every nursery will be showing the same flower for the same Latin name. But sometimes common names are different from one region of the country to another. The columbine is a perennial with delicate blossoms that are basically one cup inside another with bright yellow stamens in the interior cup. But oh the variations! One is known as the Nora Barlow type. This is such a double flower that you cannot see one cup inside another, but rather, a mass of petals. Columbine blossoms can face up or down. They can be solid or bi-colored, such as a white cup inside a purple cup. They can be dwarf (under 10 inches) or standard (up to 40 inches). The root is similar to a tuber, with fibrous roots coming off it. They scatter their own seed after blooming, and the new plants will have a wide range of colors and sizes, different from the parent plant. The seed will not germinate until it goes through the cold winter weather. It should be broadcast on the ground, where it can get some light to germinate. The color range includes white, yellow, red, blue, purple, pink, and lavender with some pastel and some deep and rich in tone. We have a wild columbine in Connecticut, *Aquilegia canadensis*, which grows at the edge of fields or woods. It is red with bright yellow stamens.



Columbine seem happiest with sun part of the day and shade part of the day or dappled sunlight. In other words, not in the middle of your tomato garden which should be getting full sun from sunrise to sunset. Planting them on one side of a building or rock or tree so that they get good sun part of the day would work. The garden books say they like soil that is not as acid as my Scotland soil, so add some horticultural limestone (which I've never done, and they bloom anyway). To get them to flower from May until July instead of just a few weeks, deadhead the blossoms. That means cut off the spent blossom just behind the bottom of the blossom. The stem will then throw out new buds. When I am on my hands and knees weeding in the evening, I love to look up and see all these blossoms.

Sometimes it is dusk so I cannot see the stems, just these little varicolored heads nodding in the breeze.

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The Woodland Glade with tiarella, various carex, Solomon's seal, ferns, galax; the Wildflower Labyrinth filled with sun-lovers that peak in summer; and Vaseyi Pond were some of the garden rooms we walked through. The landscape is well designed and I drooled over the stonework (huge pieces of rock were hauled in for the garden) but spring had come late and the plantings were well behind. Blueberry, huckleberry and sand myrtle made some show but the Azalea Walk, expected to awe us with masses of bloom, was barely showing color in bud. Also, a delayed departure from the hotel and difficulty finding our destination cut into our scheduled time so our tour was abbreviated and we were unable to explore the natural woodland.

We passed heavy stands of evergreen rhododendron punctuated with *Leucothoe fontanesiana* growing along the roadway to our afternoon hike at Coontree Trail, a 'rich cove' area with much plant diversity. The trail, initially rather flat, afforded good looks of *Trillium vaseyi* and *T. rugelii*, often growing side-by-side. An unknown



Trillium vaseyi, *Trillium rugelii* and *Conopholis americana*.

clubmoss (*Lycopodium porophilum*, perhaps); the showy orchis, *Galearis spectabilis*; and squawroot, *Conopholis americana*, were also seen. A sweep of *Trillium grandiflorum* appeared on the down-slope side of the trail to be admired from a short distance, while yellow Mandarin, *Disporum lanuginosum*, and the native ginger, *Hexastylis arifolia*, were seen along the path. A surprise find on the walk out was a lovely clump of *Boykinia aconitifolia*, the brook saxifrage, growing in water at the creek's edge.

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Follow Rt. 25 North; at end of divided highway continue 3 miles on Rt. 25; take left onto Rt. 59 for 2.1 miles; take right onto Judd Rd. See above.

From I 84, take exit 10; if westbound go right at end of ramp, if eastbound go left, onto Church Hill Rd. Proceed to Main St./Rt.25 and take left on 25 South for 7.3 miles; take right onto Rt. 59. See above.

Blue Ridge – Day II



Trillium grandiflorum sweeps down the hillside.

Day two was to take me south to Graveyard Fields and Devils Courthouse but the prediction of cold temps and rain in that area (the previous day's group there, of which Ginny was a member, got soaked) made for a change of plans and, instead, we went north on the Parkway to a trail a few miles beyond the Folk Art Center. We were told the hike would be about two miles and that we would not be disappointed by the flora. As to two miles, there were many boarding the bus at trail's end who questioned the distance; satisfaction, however, was evident throughout the group.

The trail was a steady, moderate incline except for two switchbacks that led more steeply upward, and generally the terrain sloped up on our left. Many familiar wildflowers were dotted about: spring beauty, the yellow star grass, *Geranium maculatum*, various violets including *Viola pedata*, the leaves of pipsissewa or what we call spotted wintergreen, and the rattlesnake plantain. *Trillium grandiflorum*, however, appeared many times in large sweeps on the up-slope, affording excellent, and breathtaking, views.



Delphinium tricorne.

Something new to me was *Delphinium tricorne*, the dwarf larkspur. It first appeared infrequently, an individual plant with loose racemes of violet-purple flowers, but a bit further on there were a colony of them, some purple, some pale violet with darker spurs; and, finally, a hillside of *Trillium grandiflorum* with the larkspur intermingled. Lovely!

Other first-timers were *Phacelia fimbriata* (white) and *P. bipinnatifida* (blue) with many small cup-shaped blooms on short mounded plants; *Silene virginica*, the fire pink, growing from a rock crevice on a steep bank, its bright red flower screaming for attention; *Rhododendron calendulaceum*, the flame azalea, orange buds almost ready to burst. *Trillium rugelii* was again seen, as was *I. erectum*, its narrow-petaled deep wine flower very different from those back home, and a lovely creamy *T. erectum* f. *albiflorum*.



Trillium erectum, left; *T. erectum* f. *albiflorum*, right; *Silene virginica*, upper right corner; *Amelanchier* species, below.

We hiked for about three hours, ate lunch at a clearing that had housed a summer lodge in the early 1900's, and then made a relatively short descent to the roadway and our bus. This last leg ran along a small stream; by the path were the showy orchis, *Galearis spectabilis*; the yellow Mandarin; pink lady's-slipper, *Cypripedium acaule*; and a soft blue *Iris cristata* growing up through the emerging ruddy leaves of *Galax urceolata*.

Since we boarded the bus ahead of schedule, our leader suggested another stop a bit down the road where those who wished could scramble up an embankment to see an



Amelanchier species with particularly large blooms.

The day was full; the weather held. We rode back tired and satisfied, looking forward to a hot shower and a glass of wine.

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Blue Ridge – Day III

Six gardens were offered for tour, equally divided between Asheville and the Hendersonville area; and although the Asheville gardens sounded very appealing, I opted to drive south in the morning since two of the gardens there belonged to NARGS members and, if the weather became so bad as to limit our tour (the rain was heavy), it was members' gardens I wanted to see.



The French's rock garden.

The first was that of Beverly and Joe French (originally from CT!) whose 20 year old garden surrounding the house sits on a one acre lot. Joe, the primary gardener of the two, described how he rented an excavator to dig the pond at the house front, and contoured the back yard so excess rains would run off to a small stream, something that was working very well that morning. Azaleas bloomed along one edge of the property and at the other a small shade house, hoops covered with a silver-coated netting to reflect hot sun, held seedlings and cuttings. A shelf holding four or five bonsai that he played with sat across from this structure.

From there, we rounded the side of the house and entered the rock garden. Ground hugging sedums, colorful sempervivums, dianthus, campanulas, dwarf geranium, wooly thyme, pink zephyranthes, Mt. Atlas daisy, and other mounds still green, filled in against a backdrop of needled



Anacyclus pyrethrum v. depressus, Mt Atlas daisy, left; sempers in a retaining wall, right.

evergreens, azaleas and Japanese maple; and they joined rushes and iris that skirted the lily pad covered pond. Circling back down the drive to the basement garage was a masonry stone retaining wall where Joe had chinked away cement and planted in mesh bags semps and campanula which were now established.

The second garden belonged to conifer fanatics Hazel and Byron Richard, a three acre garden where, since the early 90's, they've planted over 200 conifers, mountain laurel, azalea, rhododendron and deciduous trees, all surrounding a large koi pond. Because of the heavy rains we limited ourselves to the paths around the pond, but even those less adventuresome had wonderful views from the rear family room windows.



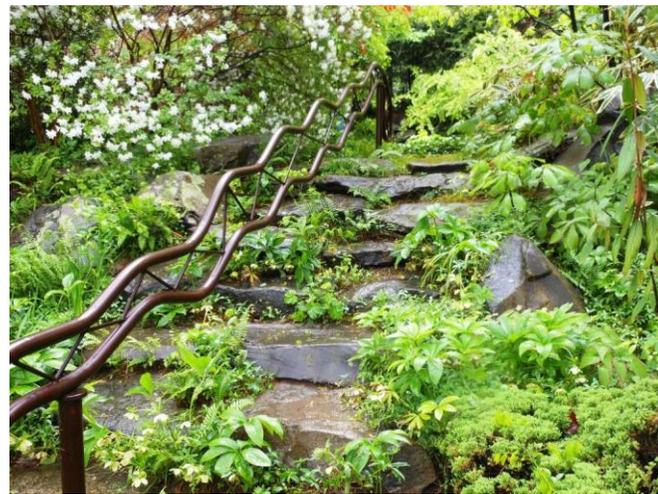
The last stop of the morning was at Ev Whittemore's, a one-time CTNARGS member, whose one-acre garden, 'Tall Pines', is her third since moving to North Carolina. She has a large collection of homemade hypertufa troughs filled with dwarf evergreens and cotoneaster, semps, dianthus and iris which are primarily clustered at the garden's entrance. Scree areas are filled with the same,



as well as *Aquilegia canadensis*, *Alchemilla erythropoda*, a pure white zephyranthes, daphnes, and many more conifers, while *Primula japonica*, *Primula kisoana* and *ramonda* inhabit damper areas. A bog garden near the house is filled with the blooms of pitcher plants; the slope running across the back of the house is covered with *Phlox subulata*; and *Arisaema sikokianum* is dotted about the shady woodland.

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After driving back to the hotel for a change of dry clothes we headed out a second time for a nearby garden in the historic Kenilworth area of town. The morning storm that gave us heavy rains to the south produced a micro burst in this Asheville neighborhood and we were stopped by a roadblock as workers removed a large fallen tree. This is an old residential neighborhood with narrow, winding streets – no such thing as going around the block – and we had no GPS, so it was pure luck that we found a back way to our destination.



Two views of the of the Cram garden.

The garden of John Cram, overlooking Lake Kenilworth, begins with the upper-lawn moss garden designed in the 1950's. From there, a series of paths and stairways meander through the property shaded by mature specimen trees, accented with rhododendron, azalea, needled evergreens, wisteria, all manner of shrubs, and shade loving perennials. Mossy paths traverse the woodland, a dry-laid retaining wall with built-in stone bench is seeded with hellebores, and arches and railings are pieces of art. Now only a drizzle, the rain turned the garden verdant, soft and intimate. It was a treat!

Notes from Our Members

Barbara van Achterberg writes:



This was a seedling of *Paeonia mlokosowitschii* that came up right against the trunk of a blueberry bush, on its south side. I tried to dig it up and it broke off. The next year it came back and again the plant broke up, being completely tangled in the roots of the blueberry. When it came back a third year, I said, "This peony really wants to live." and it has be-

haved like this every year since. My real 'Molly the Witch' is yellow, but not blooming this year. I may have to do some high pruning of the Seckel pear it is under, to give it better light.

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Bonnie Maguire notes that she has two pitcher plants in bloom, each coming from one of the bog workshops we held six and seven years ago.

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Judy King writes that she was rereading **The Collector's Garden** by Ken Druse and was surprised to see Nick Nickou mentioned. Phil Waldman, who established the former Roslyn Nursery on Long Island, took cuttings at Nickou's, including some *Rhododendron*, *Enkianthus*, and *Acer* selections.

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And from Barbara: A year ago members of our Chapter enjoyed a trough-planting demonstration by Lori Chips in the rock garden propagation and sales area of Oliver Nur-

series. Of course we had to go home with our own plants, and most of us chose this one, Nordic Dragonhead. Here it is in my sunny rock garden one year later (June 12, 2013) planted next to the pale pink *Campanula punctata* with the unfortunate name 'Little Punky.' *Tulipa tarda* seedpods are in the background.