



# Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society  
✧ Volume XLIII ✧ Late Fall 2019 ✧ Number 7 ✧

## Upcoming Programs

**Saturday, November 16, 2019 10 a.m.**  
**Frelinghuysen Arboretum**  
**Annual Meeting & Luncheon**  
**For Members Only!**

**Speaker Michael Hagen of the New York Botanical Garden,**  
**'The T. H. Everett Memorial Rock Garden: Past, Present, and Future'**

**A-E, please bring a pre-meeting snack or appetizer, F- N please bring a side dish and O -Z please bring a dessert. Please bring your contribution ready-to-serve and with any necessary serving utensils.**

**Sunday, February 16, 2020 10 a.m.**  
**Frelinghuysen Arboretum**  
**Speaker Barbara Melera,**  
**'The D. Landreth Seed Company and the Story of America's Great Seedhouses'**

## Our November Speaker:

Michael Hagen is Curator of the Native Plant Garden and the Rock Garden at New York Botanical Garden. He previously served for almost 13 years as Staff Horticulturist for Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, New York, and was Garden Manager at Rocky Hills, in Mt. Kisco, a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy. He lives in Somers, New York.



October blossoms on the petite *Anemone* 'Pretty Lady Emily'. Photo by Hilary Clayton.

## NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER

### Board and Committee Members Stepping Down

After years of service to the Watnong chapter, Michael Wilson will be stepping down from Vice Chair at the end of 2019. With a background in both Public Horticulture and Environmental Studies he is currently the Horticultural Laboratory Technician for Cornell University Cooperative Extension Service of Rockland County, New York, and is an Adjunct Professor of Environmental Studies at Ramapo College of New Jersey. Michael is also a member of the U.S. Study Team for the Aral Sea Disaster in Uzbekistan and has researched the environmental impact from the cultivation of cotton in that region. He retired in 2009 after 20 years at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum and previously trained at the New Jersey Botanical Garden at Skylands.

Michael was responsible for the rock gardens at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum and also grows alpine plants at home. He has also hiked many alpine summits in the northeast U.S., New Foundland, Colorado, Iceland and Uzbekistan. A member of the Watnong Chapter since 1992, he joined the North American Rock Garden Society in 1995.

Michael served as Co-Chair with his wife Pamela from 1999 to 2002. In 2011, he served both as Vice Chair and Program Chair, as well as keeper of the

projector, which continues to the present. He served an additional two terms as Chair from 2012- 2016, and since 2017 has served as Vice Chair.

Mike first proposed the restoration of the South Rock Garden at the Laurelwood Arboretum in 2013 and has served as the project coordinator since the initial excavation and planting in 2014. The Laurelwood project was chosen for the NARGS Norman Singer Award in 2019.

Also stepping down in 2019 is Carolyn Iglesias, who has been serving our chapter in various roles since 1999. Carolyn and her husband Bob joined Watnong somewhere between 25 and 30 years ago, having first learned about the chapter while attending an all-day conifer lecture at the Freylinghuysen Arboretum, where they met former, longtime Watnong members Irv Winter and Howard Fertig.

Carolyn's first board position for the chapter was Secretary, which she filled from 1999- 2002. A communicator by profession, Carolyn is of the firm opinion that brevity is key, and any meeting can be succinctly summarized. As Watnong's Secretary, she introduced a short, one-page summary format using bullets to highlight key decisions and action items. She also developed a board meeting binder to create a historical record of board minutes and key activities for the years she served.

Carolyn served both as Vice-Chair and Publicity from 2007- 2011. As the chapter turned to e-mail to communicate with members, one of her suggestions resulted in using the “blind copy” format to disseminate e-mail to club members. We continue this effort to safeguard members’ privacy and prevent marketing solicitations from non-members who on occasion may receive an informational copy of a Watnong electronic communication.

From 2012 thru 2019 Carolyn has continued to serve as Publicity for our chapter. In addition to pursuing typical media outlets, state and local/community newspapers and bulletins, whose general readership has a broad array of interests, she decided to adopt a targeted marketing approach. Particularly when promoting the chapter’s annual plant sale, she reached out to gardening clubs throughout New Jersey. “It’s gratifying to know that other clubs look forward to our sale and are eager to disseminate our announcements.”

As she steps back into general membership, Carolyn says “Volunteering to serve on the Watnong Chapter’s board on one of its committees is a great way to help plan meaningful programs for our members and form lasting friendships with fellow gardeners at the same time.”

### **Voting for the open board position of Vice Chair will occur at our annual meeting in November.**

Our nominee is Brian Coleman, currently serving on the program committee. Brian was raised on a farm in eastern Iowa and grew up with a love of working outdoors. After stints in Chicago and Philadelphia, where he received a master’s degree in sculpture, he settled in Brooklyn in 1996 and immediately began to miss getting his hands dirty.

After some trouble for illegal window box gardens at his apartment, he joined a community garden in North Brooklyn, where he volunteered for seven years. Brian worked with the garden leaders to develop a master plan, install hardscaping, choose plant material and fundraise. A visit to Wave Hill led to an ongoing interest in hypertufa, and he later received a grant to cast ten large hypertufa planters for the community garden.

In 2006 he and his family moved to New Jersey, buying a fixer-upper in West Orange because it came with an undeveloped extra lot attached, in which Brian created a garden. He grows many rock garden plants in a collection of about 25 troughs at his home, maintains a perennial garden at his office, and volunteers at the garden at the local elementary school. Brian has served on the program committee for the Watnong chapter since 2013 and worked on the renovation of the South Rock Garden at Laurelwood Arboretum.

**Martha Podilchuk has agreed to take charge of publicity for our chapter.** Martha joined our chapter about ten years ago and has served as the volunteer coordinator for the plant sale for the last six years. She gardens in Long Hill Township and looks forward to promoting our plants and activities.

**We are still in need of a coordinator for the annual picnic and plant swap!** It can be held at your garden, or the public garden of your choice. Please contact Noel or Roxanne (see page 11) if you'd like to volunteer.

**We also hope to find a coordinator & volunteers for our hospitality committee.** Volunteers should arrive at 9 a.m. on the day of the meeting to set out table covers, paper and plastic ware, beverage fixings, and start the water for tea or cocoa, which takes about 40 minutes to heat. Hospitality volunteers will also help those who arrive with snacks to share to arrange them for serving. After the meeting, allow at least five minutes for those who want a post meeting snack, then clean off the covers, pack up the remaining supplies, and help carry them out. If you're willing to step up, please speak with Roxanne at our November meeting.

### **There will be plants for sale at the November meeting!**

Melissa Grossmann and Martha Podilchuk picked up some choice trees, shrubs and perennials at Rutgers

Gardens' end of the season clearance. The trees and shrubs will be available for purchase at our November meeting, in order to reduce the number of plants that we have to overwinter at home. *The prices will be low!*



**Martha and Melissa packed the car at the Rutgers Gardens sale!**

We accept cash and checks for payment. The complete list of plants was unavailable at press time, but here is a partial list of the plants that could be yours: *Acer griseum*, *Calycanthus x raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine', *Cercis chinensis* 'Don Egolf' (large pot), *Hydrangea serrata* 'Bluebird', *Itea virginica* 'Scentlandia', *Nandina domestica* 'Harbor Belle', *Osmanthus heterophyllus* (specimen size), *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Tiny Wine', *Rhododendron atlanticum* 'Marydel' (large pot) and *Rhododendron* 'Millenium' (large pot).

## **Dues are due!**

Dues for 2020 will be collected at the November meeting. Dues are \$10 per person, or \$15 per mailing address. Payment by check is preferred; please make your payable to Watnong Chapter NARGS. If you're not able to attend the November meeting, please mail your check to Sid Jones, 123 Mountainside Drive, Randolph, NJ 07869.

## **Save the dates!**

January 6- February 7 2020, exact dates to be announced, NARGS Seed Exchange distribution at The Jordan House, see column right.

2/16/20 Barbara Melera, Landrith Seed, 'The D. Landreth Seed Company and the Story of America's Great Seedhouses'.

3/21/20 Joseph Tychonievich, NARGS Editor, Green Sparrow Gardens, 'Rock Gardening: Reimagining a classic style for Today's Garden'.

4/25& 26, Annual Plant Sale at The Leonard J. Buck Garden, Far Hills.

June, July, or August: Annual Picnic and Plant Swap. Please considering hosting or coordinating this event! Date and location could be yours to determine.

9/19/20 Lisa Roper, Chanticleer Horticulturist, 'Bulbs'.

10/18/20 Randy Heffner, Aquascape, 'Sarracenia'.

11/21/20 Lori Chips, Oliver Nurseries, 'Container Gardening'

## **NEWS FROM NARGS**

### **THE SEED EXCHANGE PHASE III/ DISTRIBUTION IS COMING!**

As one of the largest and most active chapters of NARGS, we've been asked to handle the main distribution of seeds again this year, beginning in late December with the receipt of packaged seeds from various chapters. Seed orders arrive via e-mail and paper mail, and orders are fulfilled throughout the month of January and into February. Last winter 25 volunteers logged about 355 hours to fill 561 seed orders in 13 sessions. Please consider joining the fun this year!

The Leonard J. Buck Garden will again allow us to use the Jordan House, 186 Liberty Corner Road, Far Hills, New Jersey, 07931. We'll be able to work there any day of the week, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We'll decide which days of the week to meet based on which days have the most volunteers available, with a bit of flexibility to allow for uncertain weather. Currently the plan is to meet two days during the week and one or both days on the weekend.

General volunteers, who come for a few hours at a time, can handle the filling of the individual orders. These volunteers don't necessarily have to be NARGS or even Watnong chapter

members; scouts and students in need of service hours are welcome!

**If you would be interested in helping with the seed distribution, please contact Hilary Clayton at 908-781-2521 or [hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com).**

A group e-mail will be sent to members who have expressed an interest in helping on or about November 10. If by the annual meeting you've expressed interest in helping but didn't get an email from Hilary regarding which days of the week, you're available, and whether you drink coffee or tea, she needs to add you to her list.

### **The NARGS Tri -State Meeting by Brian Coleman**



*Cyclamen* for sale by John Lonsdale at the NARGS Tri-State Meeting. Photo by Brian Coleman.

On Sunday October 13, the annual Tri-State meeting of the northeastern NARGS chapters was held at the New York Botanical Garden. The event

included: a plant sale with vendors such as Oliver Nurseries, Don Dembowski, and John Lonsdale; a plant raffle; a plant auction; and a pair of talks from guest speaker David Charlton from the UK. David has been a member of the Alpine Garden Society since 1986, Derby Local Group Annual Show Secretary since 1990, and Local Group Secretary since 2010. He is the co-author, with Cliff Booker, of *'Mountain Flowers, The Dolomites'* and *'Mountain Flowers, Pyrenees and Picos de Europa'*.

David's morning lecture covered the varied flora of the Picos de Europa area of northern Spain. This area is noted for its high, limestone snow-covered mountains, lovely grassy meadows at lower elevations, and Atlantic coast beaches.



Photo by David Charlton.

David's talk underscored the varied types of plants that can be seen in this relatively small area in late May and early June, from the *Primulas*, Orchids, and *Aquilegias* of the hay meadows to the more classic alpine species, like

Saxifrages, Gentians, and Pasque  
Flowers of the higher elevations.



*Saxifraga canaliculata*, Photo by David  
Charlton.

In the afternoon talk David profiled a great number of his favorites from the Dolomites, including *Cypripedium calceola*, *Clematis alpina*, *Physoplexis comosa*, and *Pulsatilla vulgaris*. In the second part of this lecture, David discussed how he has grown many of these same species in his home garden, and finally, he wowed the audience with images of some of the plants that he has grown for the show bench.

### **Our October Speaker:**

**Joann Knapp, 'The Frustrations of a  
Flower Photographer'**

**Summarized by Melissa Grossmann**

While it is impossible to condense the accumulated wisdom of a lifetime of

flower photography into one lesson, Joann Knapp gave us an excellent basis for greater success, interspersed with lively tales of her adventures traveling all over, hunting plants. Joann started by reminding us that although it is easy to photograph flowers, it is also easy to take *bad* pictures of flowers.

One common reason why a picture may not look right is that the background is too "noisy." Easy solutions are to use a flash, which will make the background darker than the subject, or to use a large leaf as a background. You may get lucky and find a specimen that is in the sunlight, while the surrounding area is in the shade. Snow can also be an effective background.

Wind is a frequent nuisance for an outdoor photographer, so Joann learned to hold her breath while waiting for the wind to diminish; alternatively, it's not cheating to have someone else hold the plant or flower still. Speaking of weather, even if the weather is not delightful, taking pictures is a good excuse to get outside and have some fun, and can result in some stunning shots. (She showed us *Caltha leptosepala* in a hailstorm.) Some of Joann's favorite memories are of the times that she overcame unfavorable conditions to find and photograph plants, and she had the wet clothes to prove it!

Ideally, you should take a scenic shot of your plant, a mid-range shot, and a close-up. Where tripods are not permitted, a monopod plus your own two legs equals a tripod. Compose your

shots so that the background tells a story and be alert for undesirable elements in the background. Joann shared some humorous stories of getting, or sometimes not getting, a good shot.

Don't forget to take notes of what and where you are photographing. Join plant societies so you can travel with experts who know where the great plants are. To find a camera club where you can learn more about photography, inquire at your local library.

### **Book Review:**

*Emily Dickinson's Gardening Life, The Plants and Places That Inspired the Iconic Poet* by **Marta McDowell**

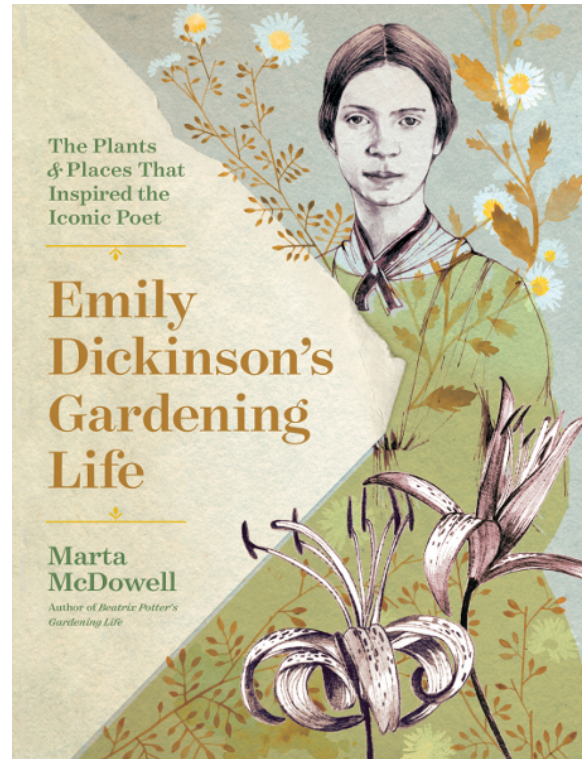
**Reviewed by Judy Glattstein**

Unlike other people in my family I have little interest in genealogy. To know when someone was born, if they married, perhaps had children, then died is like an outline of their life. It doesn't tell us how they lived, what they loved, to turn them from mere statistics into a person.

With her latest book Marta McDowell brings Emily Dickinson to life as a gardener, one who was as enchanted and passionate about the plants and flowers of the Homestead's gardens, the wildflowers of the field, and those she grew in a little conservatory.

As a child, Emily Dickinson studied botany (along with other subjects) at Amherst Academy. She made an herbarium, sixty-six pages with

hundreds of pressed plants, several to each page, carefully labeled with Latin names. Today we think of her, first and foremost, as a poet. In her lifetime, it was the Homestead's garden that was admired.



Deftly weaving together poems, plants, and historical detail, the book takes us down the same pathways that Emily Dickinson trod. The chapters and their plants are grouped by the seasonal changes: early and late spring, early, mid- and late summer, autumn, and winter.

Using words to paint a picture, Emily Dickinson with her poems, Marta McDowell in this book, suggesting how to travel back in time to the days when The Homestead stood on an unpaved street with horse and carriage traffic going by. Flowers from the garden



or from the wild would be little bouquets, we're told, sent with a note to friends and acquaintances. While Emily Dickinson kept no garden notebooks or plant lists, the letters she sent to friends and family often makes mention of what is happening in the garden. Marta weaves the letters people received from Emily Dickinson into the book, for - alas - the letters that came to her were destroyed when she died, as she demanded.

Each season's chapter begins with an historical, a biographical portion, setting the stage for what is to come when we reach the plants. Interspersed with the author's text and Dickinson quotes are a diversity of illustrations - old photographs, botanical illustrations, herbarium pages, and of course, appropriate poems. As befits the author's knowledge of plants and botany, Marta provides information about the plants.

I suppose the book could be read from cover to cover. For me, it's more like a conversation with a friend, a gardening friend. Dip into a season, set the stage, read about her life, what she is doing in the garden. The book has the interwoven biography of a poet and gardener.

There's an annotated list of plants cultivated by the Dickinsons: annuals and perennials; trees, shrubs, and woody vines; fruits and vegetables; other plants mentioned or collected by Emily Dickinson. There are both common and Latin names, where mentioned in poems, letters, the

herbarium or others, if it is native, and brief notes about the majority of them. Multiple pages for sources and citations are provided. Does this sound scholarly and dull? Scholarly it is, but far from dull. It's a gardener's life, one who happened to be a poet.

In the interest of full disclosure, I must say that Marta and I have been friends and colleagues for many years, as well as gardeners talking and trading plants back and forth.

*Emily Dickinson's Gardening Life, The Plants and Places That Inspired the Iconic Poet* by Marta McDowell. Timber Press, hardcover, \$24.95, ISBN 9781604698220.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher.

## **The Gardens of the Cross Estate Text and Photos by Judy Glattstein**

Perhaps you remember the Watnong picnic at the Cross Estate on Old Jockey Hollow Road in Bernardsville, New Jersey, back in August 2017. A lovely time had by all who attended the event - lovely gardens in which to stroll, pleasant company, and good food too.

Open from dawn to dusk, the early twentieth-century landscape of the Cross Estate, characteristic of the Arts and Crafts period, includes a formal perennial garden, a wisteria-covered pergola, a Mountain Laurel allee, and a garden of native plants. Parking is free, and there are no entry fees.



I should visit more often, but this is somewhat out of my travel pattern. September offered a trifecta of events to come for a visit: the gardens, of course, and then a talk and tea featuring Marta McDowell' informative and entertaining presentation about her latest book, Emily Dickinson's Gardening Life. Obviously, the first thing for me to do is arrive early so I can wander around the gardens. I am not the only one with this thought in mind. People are strolling and enjoying the day, somewhat warm for late September.



The two levels of the stone walled garden are reached by passing through a self-closing wooden gate that brings you to a lengthy pergola supported by 19 stone columns, in season embellished with blue and white Wisteria and male Kiwi vines.

At this time of year, the beds of flowers included Dahlias, Autumn Crocus, *Colchicum speciosum*, Asters, *Boltonia asteroides* (an Aster look-alike), Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana*, and more. Out beyond the garden there is a playhouse, evocative and lost in the tall grass.

I'm told that thanks to the faithful volunteers who meet every Wednesday morning from March to December, and student interns, the gardens look wonderful at any time of year. I really must come more often.

## WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

### HYPERTUFA TROUGHS



**Coopers Hollow Farm** specializes in native plants with people-pleasing qualities; pollinator friendly and ecologically beneficial. We offer selections of flowering perennials and shrubs, understory trees, shade grasses for dry to wet areas, ferns, and ground covers. Smaller sizes are available for mass plantings. Coopers Hollow is a NJ registered nursery located in Bernardsville, using only organic practices (not certified).

We are open by appointment only. For requests and availability, contact [CoopersHollowFarm@yahoo.com](mailto:CoopersHollowFarm@yahoo.com)

**Free to a good home:** 3, circa 1965 glazed clip-on storm windows, suitable for trough protection and more. The wood frame is 51"x32", the glass measures 44"x 28". Contact Hilary (see below) for more information.

**Would you give a friend a ride?**

Long time Watnong NARGS member Ann Wiss would like to continue to attend our meetings and activities but needs a ride to and from. If you live near Short Hills, New Jersey, please consider bringing her with you. For more information contact Hilary (see below).

If you would like to place an ad here, send copy to the Newsletter Editor, [hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com). The deadline for our Winter 2020 edition is January 10.

**2019 WATNONG CHAPTER OFFICERS**

Chair	Roxanne Hiltz	973-361-6680	roxanne.hiltz@gmail.com
Vice Chair	Michael Wilson	862-397-9339	miwilson@ramapo.edu
Treasurer	Don Grossmann	908-604-8060	donmliss@msn.com
Secretary	Debi Graf	201-919-0749	DGRAFatHome@aol.com

**2019 WATNONG COMMITTEES**

Membership & Distribution	Sid Jones	973-366-7241	rsj40jr@icloud.com
Programs	Noel Schulz	201-445-6445	noelschulz@verizon.net
Program Committee	Brian Coleman	973-325-3453	bell.coleman@verizon.net
Program Committee	Debby Zweig	201-230-7725	zweig@hotmail.com
Digital Projector	Michael Wilson	862-397-9339	miwilson@ramapo.edu
Publicity	Carolyn Iglesias	973-763-3275	mushroomhouse1@optonline.net
Plant Sale Co-Chair	Jim Avens	908-234-2677x 22	javens@scparcs.org
Plant Sale Co-Chair	Melissa Grossmann	908-604-8060	donmliss@msn.com
Newsletter	Hilary Clayton	908-781-2521	hilaryhclayton@gmail.com

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**THE WATNONG CHAPTER  
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY  
c/o The Leonard J. Buck Garden  
11 Layton Road  
Far Hills, NJ 07931**

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