



# Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society  
✧ Volume XL ✧ Summer 2016 ✧ Number 4 ✧

## Upcoming Programs

**Annual Picnic- Members Only!**  
**Saturday, August 13**  
**12:00 Noon until 3 p.m.**  
**Watnong Gardens,**  
**2391 Watnong Terrace**  
**Morris Plains, N.J. 07950**

**Saturday, September 10, 10 a.m.**  
**Frelinghuysen Arboretum**  
**Speaker Hilary Clayton presents**  
**'A Higher State: Steppe to**  
**Alpine in Northwest Colorado'**

**Bring a friend, a favorite plant or**  
**blossom, a warm beverage, and a**  
**snack to share!**



*Paris polyphylla*, photographed by Sid Jones in his home garden in early June

## The Annual Picnic

By Program Chair Noel Schulz

When: Saturday, August 13, 12:00 Noon

Where: Watnong Gardens,  
2391 Watnong Terrace,  
Morris Plains, New Jersey, 07950  
Directions are on page 2.

**Please bring a chair, and an appetizer or dessert. Your dish should be ready to serve, and accompanied by any necessary serving utensils.**

**RSVP to Noel Schulz by**  
**Thursday, August 4 at**  
**[noelschulz@verizon.net](mailto:noelschulz@verizon.net)**  
**or 201-445-6445, so we can get an**  
**accurate count for food.**

We will be the guests of Helen Donn at her home at Watnong Gardens in the Morris Plains section of Parsippany. Watnong Gardens is about 2.5 acres, making it on the small side for a public garden but a perfect site for the numerous dwarf conifers and other small scale plantings that thrive here.

The name 'Watnong' comes from the Native American word for 'little hill', and references the mountain on which Hazel and Don Smith, founding members of our Watnong Chapter, opened their nursery of choice rock garden plants in 1961. Watnong Nursery continued to grow through the 1960s & 70's, and contributed a number of plant selections to the trade,

including *Daphne x burkwoodii* 'Carol Mackie', *Kalmia latifolia* 'Watnong Pink', *Tsuga canadensis* 'Watnong Star', and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* 'Hazel Smith', a hardy giant redwood. The Smiths were a generous couple, and donated plants to a number of arboretums, among them the Frelinghuysen, Arnold, Morris, Strybing, the National Arboretum, and R.H.S. Wisley.

Helen and Frank Donn met the Smiths in 1958, when they built a single story home and moved in next door. The neighbors soon became friends, and before long two gardens were developing side by side. On the Smith's side, the grounds were filled with dwarf conifers collected from arboretums and private gardens. On the Donn's side were many of the same plants, as Frank traded odd jobs at the Smith's nursery for plants, and added a new bed to the garden every year. Helen gradually brought the world to her back door with rock garden plants.

Don Smith died in 1983; at the time of Hazel's death, in 1985, it was understood Watnong Nursery would close, but that the Donns, now close friends, would purchase the Smith's home and nursery, and preserve the collection. The transformation from nursery to display garden occurred over several years, as a collection of the plants introduced by Watnong Nursery was assembled. The Donns continued the Smiths' spirit of giving and continued to donate plants.

The Donns made quite the garden team: Frank was considerably skilled in carpentry and landscaping, and built walls, benches, and steps to blend the two gardens into one. Helen is a talented plantswoman, and carefully combined colors and textures. By 2001, the merged Watnong Gardens was

recognized by Forbes Magazine as one of 'the most beautiful gardens in America'. Edward, the Donn's only child, died in 2003; Helen planted a memorial garden to him in shades of blue and purple.

In 2005, Watnong Gardens was sold to the town of Parsippany as a park, and is now open to the public. Frank passed in 2006. Under the agreement of the sale Helen continues to rent her home and to contribute to the care of Watnong Gardens, as she has for over 50 years now.

The garden is inspiring in any season, with over 450 cultivars of dwarf conifers, carefully nurtured into mature specimens, and a host of unusual trees and shrubs, including the Georgia Plume, *Elliotia racemosa*, a Dove Tree, *Davidia involucrata*, and the original 'Hazel Smith' Giant Redwood. There are over 400 Hosta cultivars, ferns, perennials, and a water garden. There is the one and only Watnong Choo Choo: a true labor of love. Frank Donn built a train of troughs, a to-scale replica of Eddie's toy train, featuring the engine, caboose, and three cars. It stands approximately waist high; Helen grows alpines here. Not to be missed is Helen herself; truly a part of Watnong, she can tell you how to grow any plant here to perfection.

### **Directions to Watnong Gardens:**

From the north: Route 287 south to Route 10 west. Exit onto Powder Mill Road and make U-Turn onto Route 10 east. Just past Cedar View Drive, make a right onto Watnong Terrace. Park along the right side of Watnong Terrace and on the right side of Cairns Road, a dead-end just off of Watnong Terrace before Watnong Terrace joins up with

Route 10 again. There is limited parking along these roads, so please car pool.

From the south: Route 287 north to Route 10 west. Follow directions above.

## NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER

Are there seeds maturing in your garden? Please consider becoming a donor to the annual NARGS seed exchange this year. Instructions for seed donations can be found on the NARGS website, [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)

Our Chapter will once again be packing seeds for the exchange in early to mid- December. This year we'll be packaging seeds at the Jordan House at The Leonard J. Buck Garden. If you're interested in participating, contact Hilary @[hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com).

### 2016 Plant Sale Report By Melissa Grossmann Photos by Hilary Clayton

It is extremely gratifying to work on a project with so many dedicated, talented, and nice volunteers, and I hope that the plant sale met *your* expectations. The net profit was \$9,504.31, which we split with the Buck Garden, making the Watnong Chapter's share \$4,752.16.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the many facets of the process, including the customers. I extend extra gratitude to Martha Podilchuk, for coordinating the volunteer schedule, and the Buck Garden staff, for their indispensable efforts and expertise.



Wing Yee Pavlosky and Brian Coleman at the cashiers' table Saturday afternoon; Tracy Jacobus is busy with plant tags in the background.



Lainie Beavin leads a tour of The Leonard J. Buck Garden on Saturday afternoon.



Tracy Jacobus kept the sales tables looking great on Sunday afternoon.

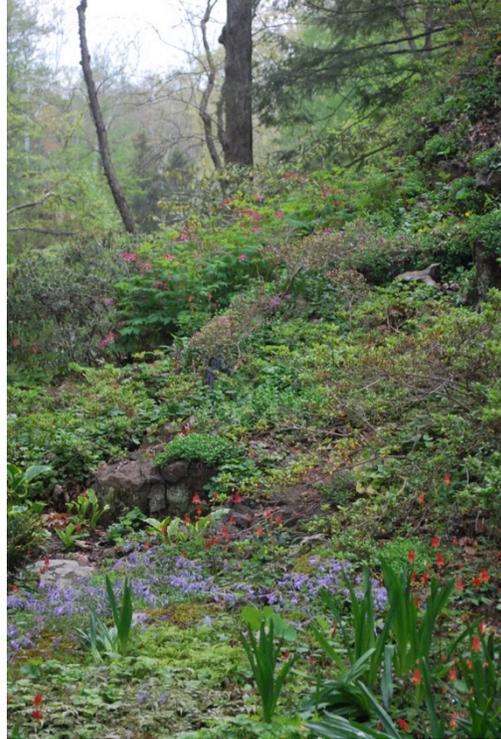


Watnong Secretary Debi Graf, Plant Sale Co-Chair Melissa Grossmann, and Mary Masilimani on Plant Sale Sunday afternoon.

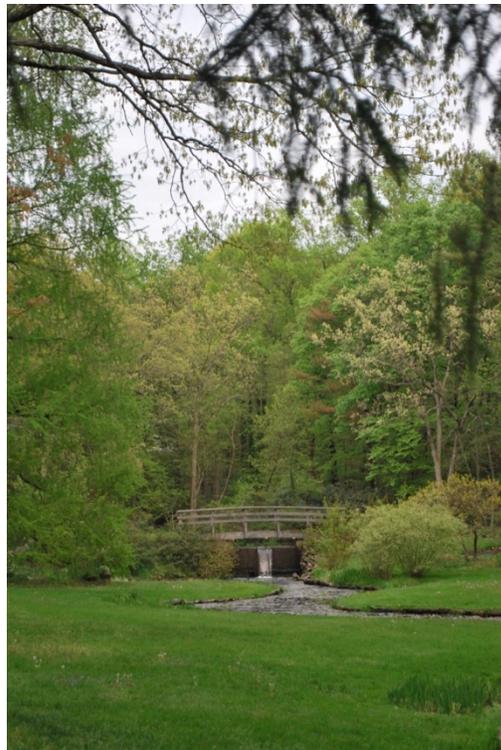
**Our Annual Soiree was held Saturday, May 7, at The Leonard J. Buck Gardens. After a day of rain, the weather cleared in time for outdoor dining. It was a beautiful evening for a walk through the gardens!**



Soiree guests were able to dine outdoors. Photo by Noel Schulz.



Lots in bloom on Little Rock!  
Photo by Hilary Clayton



The Cove, viewed across the Kennel Field, photo by Hilary Clayton



**Azaleas in bloom by the Lower Pond, photo by Hilary Clayton**

## **UPDATE ON THE SOUTH ROCK GARDEN AT LAURELWOOD ARBORETUM**

Our renovation work, performed over the last two years, is yielding great results. Here are a few scenes recorded by our photographer Albert Martin when he visited the gardens in early July.



**Photo by Albert Martin**



**Program Chair Noel Schulz and Plant Sale Volunteer Coordinator Martha Podilchuk, photo by Hilary Clayton**

Member Judy Glattstein's photos of the Soiree can be seen on her website, [BelleWood-gardens.com](http://BelleWood-gardens.com); visit Judy's Garden Diary, then look at the month by month section, and you'll find the Watnong Soiree in May.



**Photo by Albert Martin**



Photo by Albert Martin



Photo by Albert Martin

That's all the Chapter news for this issue! The deadline for submissions to our late summer newsletter is August 17.

## FROM THE CHAIR

Dear All,

So far it has been a pleasant and fruitful gardening season. With the exception of a few short heat waves, the temperatures have been tolerable. As I sit to write, we have had some rainfall, but we are still at a deficit, and although it's not been publicized much, we are in a drought. Fortunately the reservoirs are still in good shape, and we do not yet have any water restrictions. However, I urge you to

conserve water by using good gardening practices, such as mowing your turf at a longer length, using organic mulches, and using efficient irrigation practices.

I've visited Laurelwood Arboretum a few times this season and spent some quality time there weeding. All of our plantings look good with relatively few losses. It is no surprise to me that only one of three *Ramonda* is still alive, but it is doing well and looks like it will be there for many years. The Gentians gave a spectacular bloom this year, and all of those plants are thriving.

I also spent some time there looking at the next bed to be restored, and considering a game plan similar to the first phase of the South Rock Garden project. We applied for a grant through the NARGS Norman Singer Endowment Fund, but have not yet heard if it will be awarded to us.

We have a promising fall season of good programs that will begin August 13 with our annual picnic. This year the picnic will be held at Watnong Gardens, which belonged to our founding members in the 1960's and is always a pleasant garden to visit.

We hope to announce the Watnong Chapter's new Chair at our Annual Meeting in November. Anyone interested in becoming Chair, fulfilling another board position, or helping with a telephone campaign to find the next Chair should please feel free to contact me.

Regards,  
Mike Wilson

## WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

### HYPERTUFA TROUGHS



**BUNNY FERN FARM**  
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**120+ Species of Native & Tropical**  
**Ferns raised from spores or divisions**  
**Visits by appointment only.**  
**908-903-1441**

### 2016 WATNONG CHAPTER OFFICERS

Chair	Michael Wilson	973-328-3723	miwilson@ramapo.edu
Vice Chair	Sid Jones	973-366-7241	sidjones@verizon.net
Treasurer	Caroline Ford	973-993-9426	Carolineford7@gmail.com
Secretary	Debi Graf	201-919-0749	DGRAFat Home@aol.com

### 2016 WATNONG COMMITTEES

Membership	Sid Jones	973-366-7241	sidjones@verizon.net
Programs	Noel Schulz	201-445-6445	noelschulz@verizon.net
Program Committee	Brian Coleman	973-325-3453	bell.coleman@verizon.net
Program Committee	Lainie Bevin	908-537-4448	beavin@embarqmail.com
Digital Projector	Michael Wilson	973-328-3723	miwilson@ramapo.edu
Publicity	Carolyn Iglesias	973-763-3275	mushroomhouse1@optonline.net
Plant Sale Co-Chair	Jim Avens	908-234-2677x 22	javens@scparks.org
Plant Sale Co-Chair	Melissa Grossmann	908-604-8060	donmliss@msn.com
Mailing	Diane McNally	908-234-1170	dmc79@verizon.net
Newsletter Photography	Albert Martin	908-403-0029	AlbertMartin@ AlbertMartinPhotography.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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