



The Trillium

VOLUME 26, ISSUE 1
JANUARY 2016

Piedmont Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

The JCRA Xeric Gardens: Good Guys and Bad Guys by Charlie Kidder

The oldest portions of the JCRA's xeric gardens date to the early 1990s (as far as I can tell) and were originally referred to as the Southwest Garden. When this area was expanded in 2007, the newest portion was named the Scree Garden; the second expansion in 2008 was named simply the Xeric Garden to reflect that plants were now included that came from areas other than the American Southwest. The green roof on top of the Ruby McSwain Education Building was redone in 2008 and is now known as the Rooftop Garden. Over the nine or so years that many of the newer xeric gardens have been in existence, which plants have survived, prospered, and might do well in your garden? And which have done so well that you might *not* want them anywhere near your garden? We'll look at a few right now, and I hope to consider others in future issues of *The Trillium*. But first a cautionary note: remember that all the newer xeric gardens at the JCRA are planted in amended, well-drained soil. Plants that have thrived here may well not appreciate Piedmont clay.

Many types of agaves have been very happy in the xeric gardens; one of the standouts is *Agave salmiana*. The straight species can be found in the Rooftop Garden in the northwest corner. A few years ago the original plant put up a spectacular flower shoot; then that rosette died. This species offsets profusely, however, so now you can hardly tell that anything is missing. In the newer portion of the Xeric Garden you can see two cultivars of *A. salmiana* growing side by side. On the left in the accompanying picture is 'Crazy Horse', with wrinkled leaves that are a bit lighter in color; to the right is var. *ferox* 'Logan Calhoun'. These two plants were planted too



Photo by Charlie Kidder

Agave salmiana

close together, and a few years ago we attempted to remove one of them to avoid confusion. Unfortunately this couldn't be accomplished without causing considerable damage either to me or to the plants, so we left them to duke it out.

Not your typical xeric or rock garden plant, *Acer skutchii* (Mexican Maple) has prospered in the Xeric Garden. This cousin to—or variety of—the Sugar Maple (*A. saccharum*) was planted bareroot in the spring of 2008 and is now twenty feet tall, with a diameter of about six inches. It develops very good autumn coloration late in the fall and has thrived in our heat and humidity.



Photo by Charlie Kidder

Acer skutchii

We'll end with a plant that looks really nice at its best, but really needs to come with a warning label: don't place this near any other

plant! The Matilija Poppy (*Romneya coulteri*) grows to be a six-foot shrub with attractive blue-green foliage. In spring it sports large white flowers with a yellow disk, earning it the nickname Fried Egg Plant—at least



Romneya coulteri new growth

Photo by Charlie Kidder

to the two of us that work in the Scree Garden. That's the good part about *Romneya*. Unfortunately, although it has survived here for several years, it's not totally happy in our climate. In a typically humid summer, this native to the California desert shows its displeasure via foliage that becomes diseased and spotted. Cutting it back will produce healthier foliage—for a while. The accompanying picture with the large rock shows healthy new foliage appearing this past fall.

The real downside to the Matilija is its aggressive nature. It spreads by rhizomes to a considerable distance. Try to pull them up, and they generally just break off. The picture shows the plant coming

up around and through a hapless *Nolina*. The only possible solution: a physical barrier such as a buried concrete wall, as is sometimes used to keep bamboo in check. A container might work, except that I doubt that Matilija would have sufficient cold tolerance.

I hope to look at other stars and villains of the JCRA xeric gardens in future numbers of *The Trillium*. ☞



Romneya swallowing Nolina

Photo by Charlie Kidder



Photo by Bobby Ward

SPECIAL ISSUE—MEMBERS' TRAVEL

In January, chapter members share their experiences visiting gardens all over the world. Come enjoy a vicarious visit with them to wonder at the Utah great rocks, Oudolf inspired Dutch Wave Movement, Cape Town beauties, the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens and the breathtaking beauty of Patagonia. The following pages offer just a sample of what you will see January 16. Hope to see you there. ☞

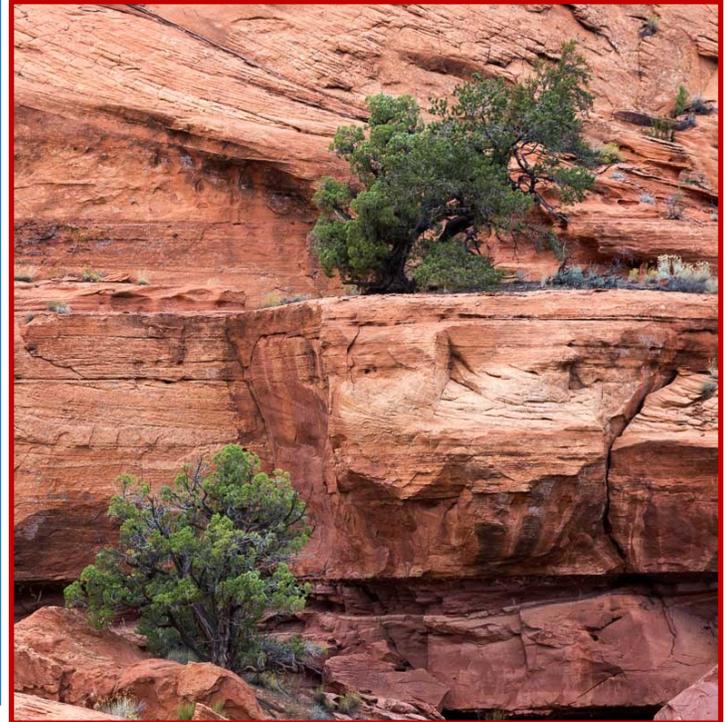
Panayoti cutting Piedmont chapter's 30th year anniversary cake

Utah Rocks! by Vivian Finkelstein

The desert of southern Utah does, indeed, rock. Fantastic shapes and rock formations have built up, lifted, tilted, eroded, worn away and risen again with the action of volcanoes, wind, water, and time. Layers of stone, sand, mosses, minerals, lava, and microorganisms have formed, folded, and reformed over the millennia, leaving a dry and fascinating landscape—or rock scape – that delights the eye and challenges the camera. Peter Finkelstein will show some of his photographs of a surprising variety of the rocks of Utah and northern Arizona in the Escalante Grand Staircase National Monument, White Pocket, and Capitol Reef National Park. Your rock garden was probably never quite like this. ❧



White Pocket Strata



Desert Bonsai

Photos by Peter Finkelstein



Photo by Bobby Ward

Capillary Watering: A Short History and Some Uses

by Maurice Farrier

Sub-irrigated five-inch high cells (with tray below) were used to start seedlings. Note root-cone extractor on top and planting dibble in foreground. Capillary watering minimized irregular watering and conserved seed, water, and time. ❧



Wild Spaces of Piet Oudolf by Helen Yoest

Piet Oudolf is fast becoming a household name in garden design through his work in what is now referred to as *The Dutch Wave Movement*. Oudolf is the *de facto* leader of this movement, but as a humble man and one not interested in being a leader in anything, he still appreciates that others admire and emulate his work.

The Dutch Wave Movement was formally known as the *New Perennial Movement*, which followed *Prairie Gardens*, *Meadow Lawns*, *The Wild Side*, and any number of native styles that have been popular over the centuries. The Germans are now trying out for size the term, *The German Wave Movement*; however, because of Piet's work, I'm sticking with the Dutch.

Piet Oudolf has become the living embodiment of Dutch Wave design. I admire the work of many of the Dutch Wave practitioners, including Petra Pelz, Dan Pearson, Roy Diblik, Nigel Dunnett, James Hitchmough, Cassian Schmidt, Heiner Luz, Sarah Price, and Lauren Springer-Ogden, but it's Piet Oudolf leading the movement.



Photo by Helen Yoest

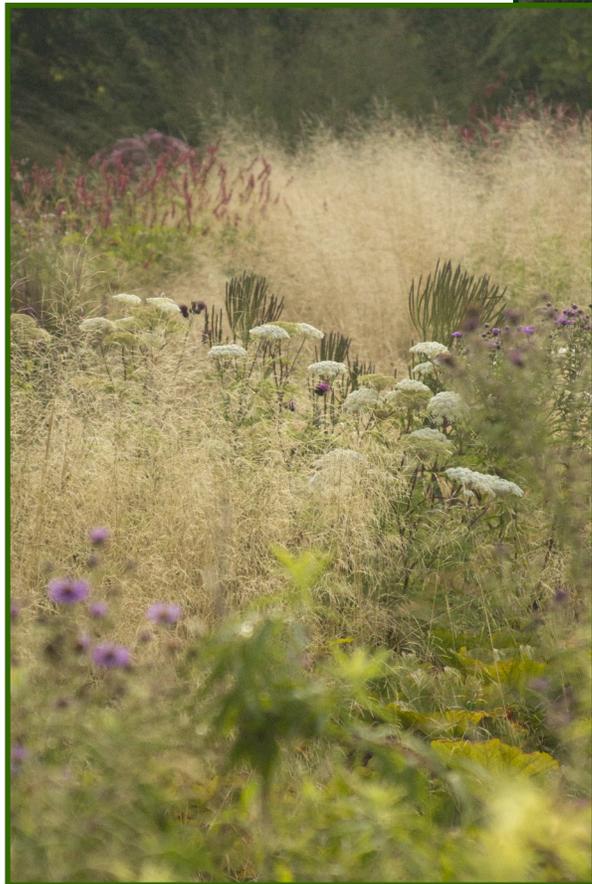


Photo by Scott Weber

Oudolf's philosophy is large-scale, both in terms on height, width, organic, and four-seasons. He primarily works in public gardens, such as the Lurie in Chicago, and the High Line and Battery Park, both in NYC. He recently began design discussions in Delaware. And he has done several private commissions in the US. (I'm on a mission to see any or all of these gardens, if I can figure out a way.)

HOW IT BEGAN

We visited the historical gardens that formed Oudolf's idea of creating wild spaces. Piet Oudolf likes the idea of wild, but with control. Through his nursery in the early years (now closed) he was able to propagate and breed plants to meet his needs. Now, most of these types of plants are widely available, so he and his wife, Anya, who ran the nursery, didn't feel it necessary to continue with that side of their business.



When Oudolf selects plants, it is for interest year round, with plants that don't flop, need staking, have movement, mildew resistant, etc., and also exhibits a fantastic seed structure. Piet reminds us, "Brown is a color too."

HUMMELO

The Oudolf garden in Hummelo, the Netherlands, is a mecca for thousands of gardeners each year when he opens to the public. The back of their home is what is referred to as the trial garden or nursery garden. Here, Oudolf grew plants to show people buying from his nursery how the plants perform. The front of their home is a Piet Oudolf design.



Photo by Helen Yoest



Photo by Helen Yoest

The iconic hedges are gone, and many people have been disappointed. Piet told me that he's not worried. His designs are not based on the hedges. Piet says, "They were

lost due to flooding, and were becoming too iconic anyway. It's best to change the perspective and bring in new ideas."

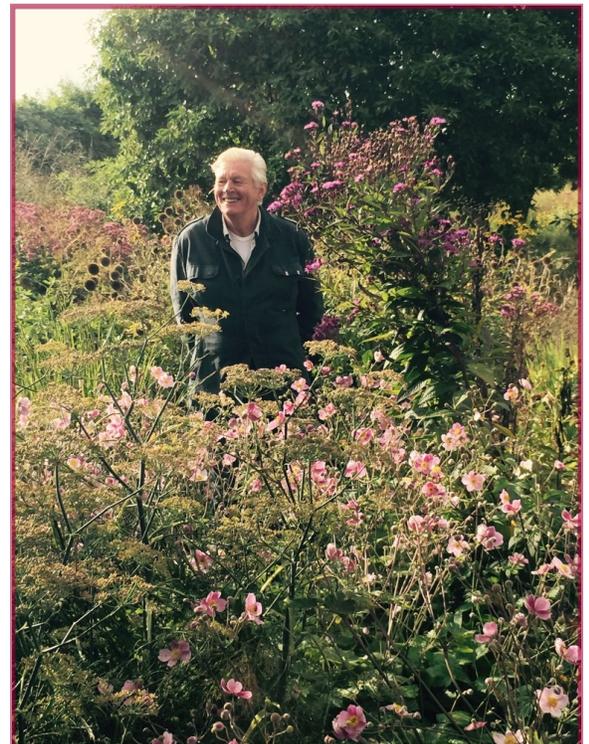


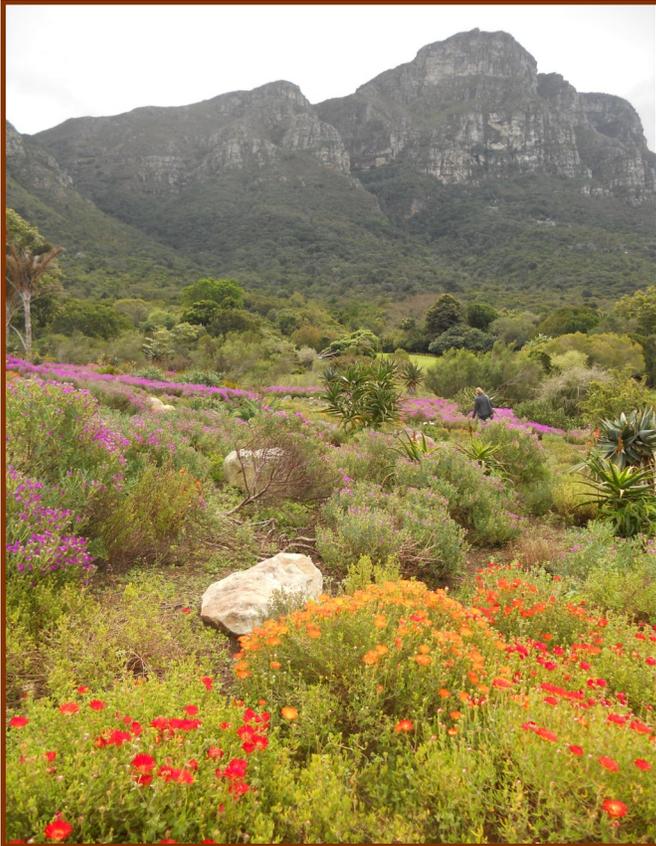
Photo by Helen Yoest



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden by David White

David White's presentation will feature pictures from his trip to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden (KNBG) in October of 2013 (spring in the Southern Hemisphere). In addition to a general overview of KNBG, he will discuss the unique flora in the Cape Town region, including plants in the Proteaceae family.

All photos by David White.



View of Table Mountain from KNBG



Protea cynaroides (King protea)



Conservatory at KNBG



Spring wildflowers at West Coast National Park,
Western Cape Province, South Africa



Cuba Experience by Amelia Lane

In November 2015 I visited Miami, Florida and Cuba with a JC Raulston sponsored tour. In Coral Gables, Florida, we toured Montgomery Botanical Center, established in 1959 to advance conservation of palms and cycads from wild collections around the world. Their palm collection is outstanding in color, trunk shapes, fruits, and size. It could make a palm geek of any visitor!

Next was an extensive tour of Miami's Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. What a treasure of tropical eye candy for "can we grow that in NC"? Fairchild opened its 83 acres in 1938 with an extensive palm collection, a rainforest, rare plant house, a vine pergola, a spiny forest, and native plants.

In Cuba we visited an organic farm and saw the biggest worm compost beds ever; spent a morning in Las Terrazas, a sustainable community west of Havana; and travelled in Soviet built trucks up the mountain to Collantes National Park—quite the thrill ride! In Collantes, bromeliads grew wild on the trees, tree ferns were abundant, and colorful tropical flowering trees had us all guessing their names. On to Cienfuegos Botanical Garden in south central Cuba. We had a walking tour, then rode our bus with our Cuban garden guide to see the collections. Conservation is their priority. There also are impressive conservatory collections from dry, arid regions and more tropical areas.



Photo by Amelia Lane

The array of Sanseverias, Begonias, and ferns was striking.



Photo by Amelia Lane

At the National Botanical Garden we had an informative tour with our Cuban garden guide. So many unusual trees, fruits and nuts, unique growth habits, leaves, fronds—all interesting to this NC native! 🌿

Patagonia by Charlie Kidder

Imagine a place that stretches from southeastern Colorado, west to the California coast near San Francisco, then north to Sitka, Alaska, and back east to northern Alberta. This would give you some idea of the topography, climate and vegetation found in Patagonia. Although the latitudinal spread would



Photo Charlie Kidder

Andean Glacier

be the same on both continents, the actual South American place would be radically compressed longitudinally and would be referred to as Patagonia.

Most of Patagonia is in Argentina; a much smaller portion lies in Chile. The landscape varies from semi-arid steppes to moist mountain peaks, glaciers, fjords and temperate forests. The climate is generally not as severe as the corresponding area in North America; still, with Antarctica only seven hundred miles away from the southern tip of South America, it can get pretty cold. And wind is ever-present.

My tour of Patagonia was an all-purpose one, an overall introduction to history, politics, culture and nature; therefore, I was not able to learn as much about the flora as I would have desired. Still, I did



Photo Charlie Kidder



Photo by Charlie Kidder

Araucaria araucana

indeed get to see some interesting plants, as well as spectacular landscapes. Don't expect to be wowed with scores of scientific names; nevertheless, I hope you'll enjoy the journey as much as I did. ☞

***Araucaria araucana*—Monkey Puzzle Tree, up close**



Photo by Unknown Fellow Traveler

Charlie in Windy Patagonia

NARGS Piedmont Chapter Meeting

JC Raulston Arboretum

January 16, 2016, 9:30 am

**Piedmont Members'
Presentations
"Gardens and Travels"**

February 13, 2016

[note special date]

Damon Waitt

**"Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower
Center and Texas Wildflowers."**

Director, NC Botanical Garden
Chapel Hill, NC

Message From the Chair

Charlie Kidder

Happy New Year to all, and I hope that your holiday was wonderful. Just a couple of items of note:

It is time for the NARGS Seed Exchange, our second and final year for helping out with this effort. By this point you have probably seen at last one email from me regarding this, so I won't belabor the issue. It's a big task, but many hands, etc. Please sign up for as many shifts as you can.

Also, we will not be having plant auctions at the January or February meetings. We are still considering other options for future plant auctions or sales, so stay tuned. And please let me know your feelings on this subject.

Finally, let's hope that winter 2016 will not be too hard on our plants! ❧

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OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:

Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox

Refreshments: Gwen and Maurice Farrier

Bring Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letters below,
please consider bringing something to share.

For January I — M

Piedmont Chapter Award for Service: *Marian Stephenson*

Marian Stephenson has been a vital part of the Piedmont Chapter for many years, contributing her time and talents in many ways. She has served on our board, including a six-year term as chapter chair, during which time the by-laws were updated under her leadership. In 2004 Marian chaired the highly successful NARGS annual meeting that the Piedmont Chapter hosted in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area.

In September 2004, she became co-editor of our newsletter, *The Trillium*, and has served in that capacity for the past eleven years, publishing typically five issues per year. During this time the newsletter has introduced color pictures and has been published electronically for our membership, thereby saving on mailing costs.

For all these reasons and more, the Piedmont Chapter is pleased to present the NARGS Award for Service to Marian Stephenson. ❧

