



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society APRIL May 2015

P. waltonii photo D. Zschummel

APRIL MEETING

Dieter Zschummel

Plant Exploration in Iran



Dieter Zschummel has been searching for little known rock garden plants since his early explorations in the 1960's and 70's took him to the Carpathian mountains of Romania, into the remote regions of Bulgaria and the Caucasus with elevations of 6 to 7 thousand feet. His home is in Wallendorf, near Leipzig formerly East Germany. When the Iron Curtain fell and Soviet Eastern Bloc citizens could again travel widely, Dieter made 7 trips to Iran, 1997-2012, collecting the seeds, the photos and the information which form the basis of his talk. At home, Dieter grows all kinds of alpines, bulbs and woodland plants. He favors cushion plants, especially the Androsace and Dionysia. Dieter has a special interest in propagation perfecting ways keep these plants in cultivation in a climate far different from where they originated.

-2015 Calendar-

April 18, 2015 Assabet River
National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA

10:30 a.m. Welcome –
coffee, tea and cookies
Members A through M,
please contribute nibbles

**11:00 a.m. Dieter Zschummel
Plant Exploration in Iran**

12:00 noon Lunch
(bring your own)

**1:00pm RARE PLANT
AUCTION.**

Despite our cold Spring there
will be plants you can't live
without. Even if you don't have
plants to donate, please come
and bid, bid, bid!

May 23, 2015 Garden Tours

A Sudbury Trio Plus

Helga Andrews, 11 Maple Ave.

Marilyn Beaven, 9 Gerry Dr.

Helen du Toit, 319 Willis Rd.

Greene Acres Nursery
36 Elaine Rd.

Directions and a Map will be sent out in
early May.

Notes from the Chair

When last I wrote "Notes from the Chair", I was filled with crazy optimism that spring was coming. Immediately after I finished, the great white-out began. Shows what I know.

But as I write this version, I'm convinced that spring is actually here. It's 46°F at this moment- 46°F!!! - and the 10-day forecast shows highs in the 40s and 50s. A few *galanthus* are emerging at the edge of the melting snow. A desperate robin has been visiting the bird feeder regularly, scouring the ground below for crumbs of suet. Yesterday I took advantage of the still-deep snow pack in the shaded back yard to reach a heavy, low-hanging branch on a young Norway maple which might just not belong to me, but is close, and clearly of no interest to anyone else, and saw it off. Now the *Cryptomeria japonica* in the back corner of my garden will get the western sun in the late afternoon.

In my garage are 552 pots of seed (some are duplicates, so the number of taxa sown is somewhat smaller), the evidence of my total and cheerful lack of self-restraint. When the snow melts, these will be sent outside to enjoy the spring rains and, I hope, germinate. There they will join flats of ungerminated seed from last year - good things take time. I haven't quite resigned myself to no longer having a nursery; the chapter's September plant and seedling sale will benefit handsomely from that.



What else? I'm patting myself on the back for having taken advantage of the long and lovely fall to finish planting my "moraine" garden (a pile of topsoil artistically mulched with larger rocks and then pea stone), cut

back perennials, and rake up leaves where they were too deep and combine them with manure to compost. I'm calculating the most minimalist way to create trellises so vines can obscure my white vinyl siding. I'm contemplating replacing all my wood-chipped paths with graveled ones. I'm trying to resist buying more plants I don't need. Ah, spring.

Seeds and dreams aside, our chapter activities have provided sustenance through the long dark winter. In February, Russell Stafford showed us all sorts of plants native to the US that are rarely found in gardens but ought to be. He certainly got my attention with *Lyonia mariana's* luscious waxy white bells. I'm familiar with the locally-abundant *Lyonia ligustrina*, but *L. mariana* has flowers that are whiter, more fragrant, and roughly twice as large. Russell also donated generous quantities of leftover stock from Odyssey Bulbs, a gesture deeply appreciated by our members. Marilyn Beaven is currently nursing her new *Fritillaria imperialis* bulbs in an ingenious



sand-tray setup that ensures a constant supply of moisture to (she hopes!) the tender new roots."

In February, I spoke on the three-year-to-date process of turning my neglected urban half-acre, the Sow's Ear Ranch, into one big garden. I can't speak for the audience, but it

was fun for me; if anyone wants an update, I'm always happy to have visitors (by appointment).

At our March meeting, Bob and Dee Stewart spoke about some of the hardy and semi-hardy gesneriads, some of which we might hope to grow in our gardens, others of which require the Stewarts' 40 years of experience and magnificent greenhouse facilities to thrive. I renewed an old vow to pay sufficient attention when I germinate ramonda seedlings that they actually make it to maturity, and to go beyond *Ramonda myconii* to attempt to grow *R.serbica* and *R.nathaliae*.

Also at our March meeting, we had our first, and possibly last, annual book sale, the main object of which was to disperse the remainders of our chapter library. With supplements from several generous donors, we had a very successful auction and sale, netting \$451.25. Thanks are due to Roy Herold for tending the library all these years. It's sad to see it go, but the world has moved on, and information (and books) is much easier to come by than it used to be.

Looking ahead, our April 18th meeting will be full of excitement. In the morning we'll be treated to a talk on Plant Exploration in Iran by Dieter Zschummel, who comes to us via NARGS's speakers series (reminder: if you haven't joined NARGS, do it!). In the afternoon we'll have our annual Rare Plant



Ellen sorting seed

Auction, always a high point of the year. Given the lateness of spring's arrival, it is essential that everyone dig and pot their contributions at the first opportunity. The more we have, the more fun we have,

and not incidentally, the more money we make. Lastly, we expect to receive our allotment of surplus seed from the NARGS Seed Exchange in time to bring it to the meeting. Despite having gone through two distributions by the time it reaches the chapter, this allotment always contains some hidden treasures, as well as many good, growable selections.

May brings the last of our spring activities: our garden tours. Helga Andrews, Marilyn Beaven and Helen du Toit are generously making their gardens available for this; and as a bonus, we'll be able to visit Steve Greene's operation, Greene Acre Sales, and see (possible buy some) his extensive collection of mini hostas.

And then it's on to summer. I have one final reminder for everyone: please take as many photos as you can, throughout the growing season, of the bugs in your garden. We often fail to notice the little critters, except when they're pollinating or eating our plants. Many of us, myself most certainly included, can only identify a small handful of our garden insects. Yet they are hugely important, endlessly interesting, and almost endlessly abundant. At the end of the season, we'll gather your photos, and Stefan Cover will use them as a basis for teaching us about the world of garden insects.

Ellen Hornig



Helga sorting seeds

Notes from the Vice-Chair

An unexpected joy of our move to the Boston area has been an opportunity for me to delve into gardening history. In the last newsletter I discussed an 18th century nursery down the street from our Newton home. In this newsletter I thought I would share my interest as an Arnold Arboretum volunteer in an early 20th century plant explorer.

The Arnold Arboretum was established in 1872 and its first Director, Charles Sargent, developed a strong working relationship with two gentlemen who would gain international reputations in the Horticulture world. The first was Frederick Law Olmstead who designed the broad paths and general planting schemes of the Arnold Arboretum as part of the “Emerald Necklace” chain of parks in Boston. His original design is largely intact and can be studied in detail at his home in Jamaica Plain. This is now a National Historic Site and well worth the visit. The second, Ernest Henry Wilson was a famous plant explorer who left an indelible print on the Boston area.

“Chinese” Wilson, as he eventually called himself, was born in England and at a young age developed an interest in botany. As a student at the Royal College of Science the pre-eminent nursery of the day, James Veitch and Sons, hired him to botanize in China and send back as many seed and plant specimens as possible. Between 1899 and



Wilson and Sargent (right), 1915 in front of *Prunus subhirtella* at Arnold Arboretum (hand-tinted photo)

1911 he made 4 trips to China and returned with thousands of seeds and herbarium specimens. Charles Sargent co-sponsored these trips for the Arnold and Wilson traveled through Boston prior to the visits and met with Sargent. On Wilson’s third trip to China, Sargent urged Wilson to develop a photographic record of his endeavors. Wilson would go on to botanize in Japan, Australia, New Zealand and India but his travels to China were the most arduous and ground breaking of his explorations.

We are very fortunate as Harvard has the majority of the >5000 original photographs as well as the writings and herbarium specimens collected over 100 years ago. Perhaps most important was that the Arnold Arboretum was able to germinate many of the collected seeds. Dozens of trees and shrubs including *Davidia involucrate*, *Acer griseum*, and *Kolkwitzia amabilis* from the collections are still extant at the arboretum as the original plants or cuttings. The trees and shrubs Wilson found are catalogued in the 3 volume *Plantae Wilsonianae*. There is a copy available in the Arnold Arboretum library and if I am not mistaken also in the Massachusetts Horticultural Society library.

Wilson eventually moved his family to Boston and was employed by Sargent. After Sargent’s death in 1927 Wilson became Keeper of the Arboretum – a role reflecting his importance but also his lackluster organizational skills. Both Wilson and his wife tragically lost their lives in 1930 outside of Worcester MA in an automobile accident. They were survived by a daughter who lived in upstate NY with her husband also in the horticulture industry.

Ellen Weinberg

REMEMBER APRIL IS RARE PLANT SALE MONTH

It doesn't matter what kind of Winter/Spring we had, the NARGS-NE Chapter Rare Plant Sale is an event not to be missed. Notable plants that have been auctioned in years past include; *Erythronium* 'Pagoda,' exotic Coleus hybrids, *Syneilesis aconitifolia*, epimediums, assorted primulas, silene, and *Gentiana clausa, alba*, just to mention a few. Come and look over the offerings and be surprised. You will find something that cries out to be in your garden

An Invitation:

Dee and Bob Stewart extend an invitation to NARGS members to join them for a pot luck picnic on Sunday, June 7th when they will be hosting their annual outing for friends in the Gesneriad Society and the Begonia society. The hours will be noon to 4:00 PM more or less, rain or shine. We'll eat about 1:00 PM. We'll provide coffee, tea, juice and soft drinks. Bring a dish to share with the other picnickers.

Note from the Eds. Now that we have learned so much from Dee and Bob's presentation on Ramonda and Haberlea last month, we know you will be further inspired to look at their greenhouse collection of tender gesneriads and seek out their hardy *Haberlea fernandii-coburgii*, *Ramonda myconi* and *R. serbica* growing outside on level ground in a shady, well-drained area.

Directions to their house are as follows:

We recommend you come in from the 495/ route 111 intersection - we've never lost anybody coming that way. From 495, head east on 111 (towards Boxborough) for 1/2 mile and take the first right turn onto Burroughs Road. Stay on Burroughs road for 1/2 mile then take your first right onto Old Harvard Road. Follow Old Harvard 2 miles until it ends in a T. Turn left at the T. Follow this road about 1 mile staying to the right past a swamp and up a small hill. At the top of the hill you'll come to a Y intersection. At this point, our house (a cream colored ranch) is straight ahead of you. Jog right and then left into our driveway.

If you're coming from the east on route 117, stay on 117 for 1 mile past the traffic light in Stow (where route 62 turns south towards Hudson). A little past the Pompositticut School on the right, turn right onto Harvard Road. Our house is 2.4 miles more or less straight ahead. After 1.7 miles you'll pass a parking lot on the left. Stay straight past a left turn then a right turn until you see a fork ahead of you. Our house is on the right at the fork. Our driveway is the last one before the fork.

If you're coming from the west on 117, Harvard Road is the first left past the Stow Garden Center on your left.

2015 Sudbury Garden Tours, May 23rd

Helga Andrews 11 Maple Avenue

Because of the late arrival of spring, I am now hoping that my shade garden will still be in bloom for the May visit. It's one of my favorite areas, with its *Glaucidium palmatum*, epimediums, *Hylomecon japonica* and others making a wonderful combination. Or perhaps the trilliums will be blooming by then. Who knows?

Marilyn Beaven 9 Gerry Drive

In my back yard I created a goldfish pond which is bordered on the shady side by plantings of hellebores, anemones (one clump of 'Robinson's Blue' from Helen Herold) and some *Primula sieboldii*. On the sunny side are my *Trillium lutea*, *cuneatum*, and *Pusillum*, 'Road Runner'. The *cuneatum* is surrounded by 30 or so of its 3-year old seedlings. I filled in a second "pondlette" to create a bog garden where *Primula japonica* is at home in front of a group of water loving-iris. Helga Andrews gave me *Iris tectorum* last year and I look forward to its appearance.

Helen du Toit 319 Willis Road

I am sure you will all understand that predicting what will be in bloom this year is just about impossible, given the intense cold and snow cover we've had. Added to that is the uncertainty about what the voles might have been up to under all that snow. In the past they have decimated entire stands of plants, so let's hope that won't be true this year. And then the rabbits have a habit of taking out epidemium flowers (if the voles haven't destroyed the plants from below), so we'll just have to see.

You should see *Iris cristata*, *Hellebores*, *Primula sieboldii*, *Tiarella*, and *Aquilegia*. Depending on when they open *Polemonium* 'Stairway to Heaven', *Tradescantia* 'Sweet Kate', *Rhododendron Atlanticum* 'Marydel', P.J.M. cultivar 'Landmark', *Dicentra* 'Goldheart', *Hemerocallis dumortieri*, *Coreopsis nana*, *Anthriscus* 'Ravenswing', *Papaver atlanticum* (from a Chapter seedling sale many years ago), *Tulip batalinii* 'Bright Gem' (saw this at the Leonard J Buck Rock Garden in NJ and was totally smitten!) and possibly some Siberian Iris, plus numerous Heucheras planted more for their foliage than their blooms.

Please check out the two small *Acer Negundo* 'Winter Lightning' planted for winter interest, as well as numerous hollies, both plain and variegated, and a variety of Cornus cultivars. Given the length of winter here I feel it is essential to have something cheerful to look at during this time. Also be sure to visit the wild area behind the barn where I have a small collection of striped-bark maples, which all have their original ForestFarm tags attached.

Greene Acres Nursery 36 Elaine Road

In late May my garden features over 300 hosta cultivars in their spring dress: fresh colors, especially the intense blues, dominate several beds. The daylilies won't be blooming yet, and the bulbs will be past, but there are always some surprises. The cottage garden will be in vigorous growth, and the dwarf evergreens will be happy after being covered with snow all winter. Come enjoy 3 main lines of garden scale trains in the front garden. **Steve Greene**

N.B. A Map and Directions will be sent in an early May email

Other Views: the Boboli and Bardini Gardens in Florence

While we in New England were trying to cope with four feet of snow drifts, my friend Bobbi escaped to Florence for ten days of research and writing. When she travels she posts photos on her blog to share with home-bound friends. Of course, I expected to see pleasant Italian early spring views but I was overwhelmed by the amount of green there in contrast to the unrelenting scene of white snow and black tree trunks in Sudbury. To my surprise, however, the Florentine green was not from new deciduous tree foliage or early green bedded plants but from the strong lines of boxwood hedging and columnar evergreen conifers. Many deciduous trees were just as skeletal as those at home. Of particular interest was a row of pollarded trees enclosed within a severely clipped ilex hedge. The hedge was a rigid green box behind which grey, spiky fingers shot up out of the blunted tree stumps. Such a striking contrast. These pictures of the Boboli and Bardini garden vistas are hardly rock garden stuff despite the occasional rock ornament, nevertheless, tucked into sheltered corners were small intimate compositions with fountains and streams lined by moss covered rocks and a mix of rhododendron, laurel and ilex shrubs. This contrast of the short view and the long vista results from the fact that Florence is situated on the flood plain of a river valley; on the opposite slope, the gardens rise abruptly. While our suburban New England back yards rarely exhibit such dramatic scale, rock gardeners have often manipulated plantings to create an illusion of the contrast between the long view and the intimate even if in miniature.



Boboli, deciduous and evergreen landscaping



Boboli, hedge and pollarded trees

Marilyn Beaven Bobbi Fisher, photos



Bardini Gardens



Bardini Gardens

Note from the Eds.: **Other Views** is an occasional series of articles about interesting gardens that our members have visited. If you have seen a memorable garden, please share your thoughts and photos with us. We will be happy to feature them in a future Newsletter.

Reminder: Bring Your Own Mug

In the interest of being more environmentally responsible we would like to suggest that members bring their own mugs for coffee or tea to meetings. The Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge is a "carry in, carry out" facility which means that we have to remove our garbage after each meeting. We are all concerned about non-recyclables clogging up landfills, so the board feels that this would be a good move.

Naturally, we will always have spare coffee cups available should anyone forget to bring their own mug to a meeting.

Please also note that there are recycling bins on the far side of the room we use at ARNWR.

March Book Sale Notes

A copy of Norm Deno's "Seed Germination Theory and Practice," was sold to a lucky buyer at our March Book Sale. For those of you who underbid, Deno's, "Second Supplement to Seed Germination Theory and Practice" (1998) has been made available online courtesy the USDA and can be downloaded at naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/41278/pdf. Even if you don't wish to consult the reference for its germination studies, Deno's first sections; Preface, Memories and General Comments are worth a read any day. Ed.

Membership List

At the March meeting the Society voted to publish a membership list to be circulated for benefit of **members use only**. The information would include; name, address, phone and email. In the interest of having the list on-line, in a format easily kept up-to-date, it seems best to make it available as an Excel file. We will send out an email in June asking you to verify the information we currently have and/or to notify us that you do not wish to have your information included. We anticipate that the compiling of the membership file could be finished over the summer in time for mailing out before the September meeting.



Dionysia khuzistanica grown by Nigel Fuller from seed collected by Dieter Zschummel

Directions to Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge

**680 Hudson Road,
Sudbury, MA.**

from Route 95/128 and the East: Take Route 20 (Boston Post Road) West through Weston. Turn right onto Rt. 27 and follow this into Sudbury. Stay straight on Hudson Rd. and go about 3 miles to Winterberry Lane on the right. The Parking/building is 0.4 miles in on the left.

from Route 1 495: Take Exit 26 to Rt. 62 for 6.5 miles as merges with Sudbury Rd and go another .5 miles on Hudson Rd. On the left is Winterberry Lane and the parking/building is .4 miles in on the left.

Chapter Officers for 2015

Chair: Ellen Hornig: hornig@oswego.edu

Vice-Chair: Ellen Weinberg: weinbergellen@gmail.com

Past Co-Chairs: Rachel Ross: h.rachel.ross@comcast.net

Helen du Toit: NJGarden@aol.com

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