



*C. japonica 'Kingyo Tsubaki'*  
at the Lyman Estate Greenhouse

# **CURIOUS GARDENERS**

## **the Newsletter of the New England Chapter of NARGS**

### **February-March 2016**

## **2016 Calendar– Saturday Programs this Spring**

**February 20, 2016 - Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,  
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies. Members A-M please bring nibbles  
**11:00 am** **Michael Dosmann:** *Plant Exploration in China for the Arnold Arboretum*  
**12:00 noon** Lunch (bring your own), chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting  
**1:00 pm** **Group Discussion:** *Ask your Neighbor: Sharing Garden Tips*

**March 19, 2016 - Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,  
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies. Members N-Z please bring nibbles  
**11:00 am** **George Newman:** *Native Orchids and Pitcher Plants of Eastern North America*  
**12:00 noon** Lunch (bring your own), chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting  
**1:00 pm** **George Newman:** *High Arctic Flora*

**April 30, 2016 Tower Hill Botanic Garden, 11 French Drive, Boylston, MA 01505**

- 11:00 am** **Jody Payne:** *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Building and Running the Rock and Native Plant Gardens at The New York Botanical Garden*  
**12:00 noon** Lunch (bring your own), chat  
**1:00 pm** **Rare Plant Auction.** Donate what you can, bid early and often, and we will all have a great time!

**May 28, 2016 – Arnold Arboretum**

- 10:00 am** **Ellen Weinberg,** guide: *A Day in the Boston Area: The Arnold Arboretum and nearby Frederick Law Olmstead National Historic Site*  
Bring your own sandwiches for lunch at Ellen Weinberg's garden in Newton

## Notes from the Chair

Another year, another diverting presidential race, another chance to take the garden in new directions...hold onto your hats.

In keeping with the broad interests of our group, and led by our fearless newsletter editor, Marilyn Beaven, we're doing a bit of creative rebranding by calling ourselves "Curious Gardeners - the New England Chapter of NARGS." Not only is it a cute double entendre (some of us, anyway, have been told we're a little weird), it's an honest acknowledgement that while we hold curiosity and the desire to learn among the highest values, our interests range far beyond rock gardens. I do believe we need to distinguish ourselves from other horticultural groups by maintaining a focus on species and habitats rather than new garden cultivars, but we may as well cheerfully acknowledge that our interests are eclectic and some of our plants are tall. Hence "Curious Gardeners." Thus rebranded, I hope we can focus this year on bringing in new members and continuing to expand our human horizons as well as our vegetal ones.

**On June 5**, Tower Hill Botanic Garden will host a "meet and greet" for as many plant societies as are able to set up an informational table. Volunteers, and enticing pot-grown hardy plants, will be needed. At all times, of course, we welcome visitors to our meetings; let's all try to bring new people this year.

## Notes from the Vice-Chair

**Zone envy** – Every serious gardener I know covets species that are listed outside of our garden's growing zone. In New England that usually means plants that will not traditionally survive our chilly winters. (However, I have killed all *Meconopsis* species other than *M. cambrica* in our warm humid summers.)

My number one coveted genus is *Camellia*. In fact I plan a midwinter outing each year to the Lyman Estate Greenhouses just to experience their camellia collection in peak bloom and perhaps buy one or two specimens. There is something really intriguing to me about the combination of shiny evergreen leaves and rose-like flowers on shrubs that in the South can reach 10 or more feet in height. With our warming climate I have succumbed to temptation and

## We have an exciting spring ahead of us.

Michael Dosmann, Curator of Living Collections at the Arnold Arboretum, kicks off the season on **February 20** with a talk about plant exploration in China (we armchair botanists can't get enough of this sort of thing). That afternoon, we'll have a freewheeling discussion, loosely organized around three topics about which every single one of you must have something to say.

**On March 19**, our own George Newman will show us the orchids and pitcher plants of eastern North America, in gardens and in wild habitats, as well as take us on another armchair tour, this time of the flora of the high Arctic.

**On April 30**, we'll hear from Jody Payne, formerly of the New York Botanical Garden, about her experiences as director of the alpine and native plants gardens at the NYBG. Jody's talk will be followed by our much-loved Rare Plant Auction (as always, please plan ahead for this by potting up choice plants early in the season).

**On May 28, (Note Date Change)** our vice-chair Ellen Weinberg has organized "A Day in the Boston Area." We will visit the Arnold Arboretum's reconstructed bonsai exhibit and peak flowering areas, and explore the adjacent Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. Bring your own brown-bag lunch for a late repast at Ellen's garden in Newton.

And then it will be summer, and we'll all garden like crazy until we reconvene in fall.

**Ellen Hornig**

currently have three plants in the ground that are in their third and fourth winters. One of them has even flowered every fall. Though I don't have a lot of experience as yet I do think there are a few tips for trying camellias in our area:

- 1) Placement. Microclimate utilization is crucial. In the case of camellias a sheltered location that has good drainage and does not get a lot of desiccating winter sun seems important. My small shrubs are located in a sloping north-facing bed that is about three feet away from the garage cement wall.
- 2) Cultivar choice. The Ackerman series of relatively cold hardy camellias was developed at the U.S. National Arboretum from crosses with *Camellia oleifera*. The plants are fall blooming and at least zone 6b. They have cultivar names with words such as winter, polar, or snow. My blooming plant is 'Winter's Charm' and flowers in Oct/Nov. My two non-blooming shrubs are rated to the same zone but spring flowering and I suspect the buds are not surviving our Feb/March weather. They may go into the compost pile in favor of more Ackerman hybrids.



*C. sasanqua* 'Winter's Charm'

Ellen Weinberg

## February 20, 2016 Morning Meeting

### Michael Dosmann: *Plant Exploration in China for the Arnold Arboretum*

Michael Dosmann is the Curator of Living Collections for the Arnold Arboretum. He writes about his position, "My primary role is to advocate for and soundly guide the development and enhancement of the Arboretum's amazing collection of temperate woody species. We are constantly adding new germplasm to this legendary collection, and it is a true privilege to direct



*Michael Dosmann*

the plant acquisition activities. I also work very closely with the rest of the Living Collections Management team to steward this dynamic landscape comprising some 15,000 accessioned plants. You may find me with our Manager of Horticulture placing stakes in the ground to design new planting areas, or reviewing the latest crop of new accessions in the nursery with our Manager of Plant Production. We do not curate objects (the plants), we curate associations of objects and information. Thus, to ensure these and other documentation needs are met at the highest of standards, I oversee a talented team of curatorial staff who are engaged in field checking, mapping, records management, researcher engagement, taxonomic reviews, voucher collection and preparation, and of course, good old-fashioned sleuthing. Additionally, I participate in floristic efforts through domestic and foreign plant exploration that in turn add to the Arboretum's living collections." Michael will talk about his most recent explorations in China.

Michael received his BS at Purdue, MS at Iowa State and PhD at Cornell. His publications range broadly from climate change to specific genera as well as plant exploration and introduction.

## February 20, 2016 Afternoon Meeting

### **Group discussion: Ask your Neighbor**

This is YOUR CHANCE! Let's kick off the year with a lively afternoon of sharing our thoughts, plans, and yes, regrets about gardening. We often hear members say that one of the rewards of belonging to our chapter is the advice that others willingly offer from their own experience with reluctant plants and hostile environments. So we have set aside an hour to provide a forum for just such an exchange.

Please come prepared to talk about any or all of the following:

My worst mistakes in the garden  
My most intriguing plant successes  
Unusual plants I hope to try this year

If you can supply images, so much the better. You may e-mail them in advance to Ellen Hornig at [hornig@oswego.edu](mailto:hornig@oswego.edu), or just bring them with you on a thumb drive.

## March 19, 2016 Morning and Afternoon Meetings

### **George Newman: Native Orchids and Pitcher Plants of Eastern North America**

If by chance you happen to be driving the back roads of Bedford, NH on a sunny summer day you could be forgiven for stopping dead in your tracks staring at the ranks of *Saracena* filling the roadside ditch. There are red ones, yellow ones, green ones, all comfortably established in this impossible setting. The impossible is possible because this pitcher plant colony is the horticultural work of NE-NARGS member, George Newman, recognized authority on the genus. In his back yard he grows trays of *Saracena* as well as their cousins the *Nepenthes*. With the same thoroughness that he applies to pitcher plants, George has also investigated the species of Eastern American native orchids. For his morning presentation, George will share highlights from his photographic record of orchids and pitcher plants and discuss the conditions in which they grow.



**George Newman: High Arctic Flora** – Go botanizing with George Newman to Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago at the edge of the polar ice pack, and to a fjord in eastern Greenland.

*George and Sally Newman on a recent plant search in Hawaii*

## April 30, 2016 Open Meeting at Tower Hill Botanic Garden

### **Jody Payne: Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Building and Running the Rock and Native Plant Gardens at The New York Botanical Garden**

From 2006 through 2012, Jody Payne worked at The New York Botanical Garden, first as Curator, and then as Director, of the Rock Garden and the Native Plant Garden. The latter was developed and installed under her direction, and has been widely praised for showcasing the garden uses of the beautiful and diverse plants native to northeastern North America. For Jody, being a garden director and curator at a major botanical garden means being a multi-tasker of the highest order. Not only must she understand the plants and their needs, but she

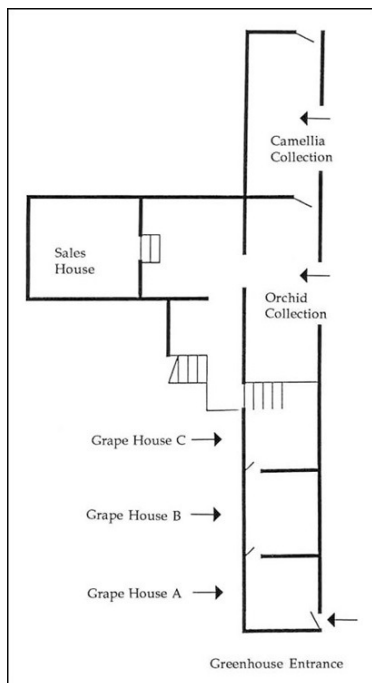
builds collections, oversees design and installation, and works with gardeners, volunteers, and students. Jody will talk about her experiences "doing it all" at The New York Botanical Garden.



*The rock garden in summer at the New York Botanical Garden* Photo credit: Ivo M. Vermeulen

### ***Other Views: The Lyman Estate Greenhouses***

January and February are tough months to be a NARGS gardener in New England. But relief is in store if you live within driving distance of the Lyman Estate Greenhouses in Waltham MA. The greenhouses are part of the Theodore Lyman property owned by Historic New England. Originally built in the early 1800s to provide out-of-season fruit for the family, they now provide even more nourishment by restoring the sanity of winter-starved-gardeners.



***Grape House A entryway***

It is remarkable to learn that the Grape House section at the entrance area may be one of the oldest greenhouses still standing in our country. Constructed in 1804, it is, nevertheless, the epitome of 21<sup>st</sup> century solar design. The lean-to glass façade faces south and balances against a full-height brick peachwall. The bricks soak up heat from the sun during the day and release it at

night. As a result, temperatures on sunny winter days hold steady between 80° and 90° F. This greenhouse supports a wide range of plants varying from *Oncidium* and *Cymbidium* orchids, scented pelargoniums, to huge 'Black Hamburg' grapevines. Nearly 150 years old, the grape vines were planted in 1870 from cuttings acquired from Hampton Court Palace, England.



In January and February it is the camellia house that draws winter visitors. This collection is truly a self-educational opportunity because one can compare well over 50 different specimens ranging from early introductions to modern hybrids. There are the historically early cultivars like the tall *C. Alba plena* introduced in 1790 or *C. japonica* 'Madame Haas' a French introduction of 1879. Both these varieties are among the oldest plants in the greenhouse being 80 years old and about 50 years old respectively. Alongside these traditional camellias are some of the newer, low growing, so called "hardy" camellias, *C. sasanqua* 'Yuletide' and its cousin the cascading 'Bonanza'. Further on there is a specimen of ancient Japanese origin

(possibly early 1800s) *C. japonica* 'Kingyo Tsubaki' known as the fish-tail camellia because the tips of the leaves twist like a goldfish tail. If one of the camellias strikes your fancy you are in luck because reasonably priced cuttings are available on the bench opposite. Or look more closely and see tucked in between the larger camellia specimens there are pots of clivia, a yellow, 'Good Hope,' and a red-tinged form grown from an unnamed seedling. There is a tropical rhododendron with purple flowers, *R. simsii* 'India,' growing near to one of Malaysian origin, *R. viryea* 'Ne Plus Ultra' with vibrant red clusters. Other surprises await discovery. A visit to the Lyman Greenhouse is not a one day and done excursion but a treasure palace to return to many times. Keep it on your list of January and February good things to do. It is well worth the effort.

NB Eds. Information for this article was taken from the [www.historicnewengland.org](http://www.historicnewengland.org) website and from conversations with Lynn Ackerman, greenhouse manager.

### ***First Snowdrop in Bloom Survey***

Given our last winter of persistent snow that radically delayed the emergence of early bulbs, in comparison to the remarkably warm January of this year, I would like to ask members to participate in a survey and record the date when the first snowdrop blooms in their yard. If you would send an email to Marilyn Beaven at [mmbeaven@comcast.net](mailto:mmbeaven@comcast.net) with the date, species, cultivar if known, your address, and a photo if handy, I will post the results on a map of New England and publish it in the April newsletter. It will be interesting to see just how much these climate variations affect *Galanthus* performance. I'll be willing to bet that Ernie in Abington, MA or Diane in East Greenwich, RI will still have the first open blooms. Last year at our February 21<sup>st</sup> meeting Ernie said his *Galanthus* in a sunny spot were already in bloom. That's something to shoot for.

***Galanthus nivalis***  
**Sudbury MA**  
**March 8, 2012**



## *FYI: Items of interest from other nearby plant societies*

**Rhododendron Society:** Our next program is April 3, Sunday 1:30 pm. Tom Clark from the Polly Hill Arboretum, Martha's Vineyard, MA will speak about rhododendrons at the Arboretum and other select flora. The meeting will be held at Elm Bank, Massachusetts Horticultural Society headquarters, 900 Washington Street, (Rte 16), Wellesley, MA.

**American Primrose Society:** The National Society has just announced that back issues (1943-2012) of their quarterly journal, *Primroses*, have been digitized, posted on line and are freely accessible to anyone from the web page <http://www.americanprimrosesociety.org/> Great references and more than enough information on primroses for any gardener.

## *NARGS-New England Chapter Membership and Dues*

**Membership** in NARGS-NE is \$10.00 a year payable January 1 to Ernie Flippo, 264 Wales St., Abington, MA 02351. Payment may also be made in person at our meetings. We will begin collecting 2016 dues at the November Annual Meeting.

**Local Chapters:** –There are thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Chapter events include lectures, an on-line Newsletter, garden visits, field trips, demonstrations, and plant sales. These friendly gatherings provide a wealth of information; offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners in your region. Our Chapter meets 6 times a year, February, March, April, September, October and November, and organizes garden tours in May and June.

**National Organization:** We encourage you to join the national NARGS organization. [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org) Dues are \$40.00 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS national also conducts winter study weekends and holds their Annual Meeting in interesting places.

### *Chapter Officers for 2015-2016*

Chair: Ellen Hornig: [hornig@oswego.edu](mailto:hornig@oswego.edu)  
Vice-Chair: Ellen Weinberg: [weinbergellen@gmail.com](mailto:weinbergellen@gmail.com)  
Past Co-Chairs: Rachel Ross: [h.rachel.ross@comcast.net](mailto:h.rachel.ross@comcast.net)  
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The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is published 4-5 times a year, February, March, April, September, and November, as the spirit moves.

## 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 I 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.


## Directions to Tower Hill Botanic Garden

11 French Drive, Boylston, MA


**From Boston:** Find your most direct route to Route 495 and its intersection with Route 290. On Route 495 that is Exit 25B for Route 290 west. Once on Route 290 W, take Exit 24, Church Street, Northborough/Boylston. Follow to Boylston 3 miles. Entrance to Tower Hill is on right with a dark red sign.

## PLAN YOUR TRIP NOW

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June 22nd-27th 2016

**NARGS**  
Rocky Mountain Chapter

