



Chelsea Flower Show 2016  
crevice planting

# **CURIOUS GARDENERS**

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

### **September-October 2016**

## **-2016 Calendar- Programs this Fall**

**September 24, 2016 -*Saturday*** Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,  
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies.  
**11:00 am** *Charles Swanson, Sand Bed Growing 2008-2016*  
**12:00 noon** Lunch (bring your own) chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting  
**1:00 pm** ***ANNUAL SALE of SEEDLINGS and PLANTS***

**October 23, 2016 -*Sunday*** Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,  
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies.  
**11:00 am** *Eleftherios Darios, The Alpine Flora of Greece*  
**12:00 noon** Lunch (bring your own) chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting  
**1:00 pm** *Eleftherios Darios, The Flora of the Rumeli Mountain Peaks*

**November 12, 2016 -*Saturday*** Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,  
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies.  
**11:00 am** ***ANNUAL MEETING***  
**12:00 noon** Buffet sandwiches or byo lunch. Board Meeting  
**1:00 pm** *Jill Nooney, “Making a Garden and Where that Can Lead 30 Years On.”*

## Notes from the Chair

### Ask Not What Your Chapter Can Do For You....

As chair of this wonderful organization, I have had the opportunity to observe that your Board and former Board members work very hard not only to identify and enlist interesting speakers, but also to do almost all of the tasks that make it possible for meetings to happen. These include, but are not limited to, picking up and delivering speakers coming from afar, hosting and sometimes entertaining speakers, setting up and taking down chairs and tables for meetings, setting up and taking down refreshments and making coffee, and identifying and contacting promising speakers in the first place. In short, a lot of work goes into producing the meetings that we all find so enjoyable.

Unfortunately, we have fallen into the habit of leaving it to the Board to make everything happen. This is not working for the Board, however well it may work for the membership. All of us, Board members included, are aging, and many of us are dealing either with our own infirmities or those of loved ones. We need to spread the burden wider and thinner if we're going to continue to make this club be successful.

Our most specific needs are these:

: **hosts for speakers.** We need people who can physically host them (i.e., give them a bed and food), and people who would be willing to take them on hikes, garden visits, etc. in the event that their stay is long enough to require entertainment

: **drivers** to fetch and/or deliver the occasional speaker to/from an airport or their previous/next host

: people with great ideas about whom we might invite to speak (and a willingness to contact them yourself, if you know them)

: **people** to set up before meetings and take down afterwards

: **people** to make coffee and set up and clean up the refreshment table

I will be circulating a sign-up sheet at our September 24 meeting to identify who can do what. The more names and phone numbers we have, the thinner the burden will be spread. But if we want to continue to bring in outside speakers, and make our meetings the delightful social events we have all come to expect, we really need to get more hands on board. It's as simple as that.

**Ellen Hornig**

## Notes from the Vice Chair

### May Tour Review

An unusually hot day in May prevented many of our members from venturing into the Arnold Arboretum to visit the Larz Anderson Dwarf Tree Collection as we had planned. Instead Ellen Weinberg has written about two of the highlights of the collection in hopes that you will undertake a trip to the Arboretum on your own. **Eds.**

Although the Arnold Arboretum's Bonsai Collection does not have the oldest specimens in the United States, it does have the record for those under the longest cultivation in our country. The Honorable Larz Anderson of Brookline was briefly the U.S. Ambassador to Japan from 1912-1913. At the end of his assignment he imported 39 already-old trees from Japan and cultivated them in his local Japanese style garden. The first of the group was donated in 1937 to the Arnold Arboretum with the rest to follow over the next few years.

#### *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Chabo-Hiba'



This past May our local NARGS group had an opportunity to visit the Dwarf Tree and Shrub Collection. Over the years there have been many additions to the collection as well as changes in the display setting. The most recent display improvement occurred in 2015. With the installation of a new security system, the Arboretum has had the opportunity to open the inside of the pavilion to the public for the first time in almost two decades. The trees are now on individual stands that place them at eye level and can be rotated. We were able to view up close two of the 17th century *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Chabo-Hiba' trees imported from Japan in 1913. The other picture is a *Corylopsis* with its spring racemes. (see ill. pg.8) I don't have its age but likely it was started pre-1960.

**Ellen Weinberg**

# SEPTEMBER MEETING Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>

Morning Session 11:00 am: **Charles Swanson, Sand Bed Growing 2008-2026**

Charles Swanson is a Massachusetts native, with a BS in Life Sciences from MIT and has been interested in gardens and gardening from a young age. He built his first trough (for cactus) and rock gardens in the 1960s. Later living and botanizing in California's Bay Area for 6 years, Charles became aware of the possibilities of dry garden landscape. Despite this temptation when he returned to Massachusetts he spent 20+ years doing woodland gardening. Charles says that encouraged by our chapter presentations he has recently emerged into the sunshine! "My observations of plants growing in a granite quarry dump in Rockport and in pure sand at home, are evidence that plants in New England can attractively grow under much more demanding conditions than we are inclined to provide."

## **Sand Bed Growing 2008-2016: The Charles Swanson version**

We all appreciate the drama of classic alpinists, but dryland plants from the American west, the Middle-east, and South Africa offer a similar drama, although for very different conditions.

Historically, Carleton Worth wrote about success with sand bed growing of western dryland plants, in the 1940s. Norman Deno and Michael Slater revisited this technique; and wrote about their experiences, in Pennsylvania, in the **Rock Garden Quarterly 56(2) Spring 1998**.

My concept is simple: dump the sand and plant. I start with builder's sand and generally have been adding up to 10% clay loam and sometimes stone or marble chips. I fertilize according to Evermay Nursery recommendations and on an as-needed basis, I add ¼- ½ tsp. Osmocote in the spring.

With these basics, I grow *Opuntia*, *Echinocereus*, *Acantholimon*, *Yucca*, *Penstemon*, *Delosperma*, and many others with variable results. I look forward to sharing my successes, as well as the brief fireworks, and the failures with you. There are lessons to be learned from both.  
**Charles Swanson**

Afternoon Session 1:00 pm

## **ANNUAL SALE of SEEDLINGS and PLANTS**

Every September our Chapter holds a seedlings and plant sale for the benefit of our treasury, which pays for speakers, room rentals, and other expenses. Members bring in seedlings from the abundance of this year's garden experiments. Because the seedlings are small and are favorably priced it is a great opportunity to fill in the blank spots of your garden. This year we are also able to offer a few larger plants available at auction.

## **How to Prepare your Seedlings for the Plant Sale**

Plants for the seedling and plant sale should be potted and individually labeled with the plant's botanical name and variety or cultivar, if applicable. A short length of slat from vinyl window blinds works well as labels, if you have them available. At the top of each label, **please write the first letter of the genus** name; this makes it much easier to sort plants into alphabetical groupings. Please try to make your labels legible.

We recommend you arrive between 10AM and 10:30AM if you're donating plants to the sale. This will help us get everything set up before our meeting begins.

### **Rules for purchasing seedlings**

When our plant sale begins, donors will get first choice (one plant per ten donated). We will then open the sale to all other members. Most plants will be priced at \$1 each; when sales slow to a crawl at that price, we'll go to \$.50, then to \$.25, and finally to \$0. This year we will auction off a few special things, such as some larger or rarer plants depending upon the donations.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO HELP SET UP. If you're able to help with this, please e-mail Ellen Hornig at <[hornig@oswego.edu](mailto:hornig@oswego.edu)>.

## **OCTOBER MEETING** Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>



Eleftherios Dariotis - more easily known as 'Liberto Darios' - is a plant biologist employed by the city of Papagou, a suburb of Eastern Athens. He holds a Masters of Science in Plant Biology from the University of California Davis and a Masters of Science in Horticulture from the University of Reading, England. He is a personal friend of Panayoti Kelaidis, our NARGS colleague from the Denver Botanic Garden who has traveled and studied with 'Liberto and with his assistance is visiting NARGS chapters across the country.

Greece has the largest number of plant species of any European country and few field botanists have traveled as much to survey them as 'Liberto. He has a strong interest in xeriscape and natural gardens as well as a special fondness for plants of the mint family and bulbs.

While the hot sunny summers featured in the lecture may remind you of 2016 in New England, the beautiful alpine wild flowers will show you a distinctly Grecian culture.

NB Dariotis information adapted from the Red Butte Garden, Utah web site Ed.

**Morning Session 11:00 am:** *Alpine Flora of Greece: from the Peloponnese to Macedonia, a tour of the alpine and pseudo-alpine habitats of the Greek mountains.*

**Afternoon Session 1:00 pm:** *Mountains of Rumeli: the spectacular flora of the seemingly endless chain of peaks in central Greece that connects the Aegean Sea with the Ionian Sea.*

## **The Chelsea Flower Show May 2016: A photo tour**

Didn't get to the Chelsea Flower Show this year? No need for regrets. Our member Helen du Toit purposely made plans to see her London-based daughter, Catherine, in May and they visited the show for us. Here are their impressions of the *Best in Show* of the alpine and rock garden sections. So pull up your armchair and enjoy the photos that Catherine du Toit took for us. **Eds.**



## One member's view of the Chelsea Flower Show 2016

Firstly, I have to say the day of our visit, despite it being May, was cold, damp and drizzly. I wore thick jeans and raincoat and still I was cold. However, I was there with my daughter, celebrating in advance my 80th birthday. We were both incredibly excited to be surrounded by other members of the RHS and all those gardens and flowers, so it was a wonderful day, regardless of the lack of sunshine.

We started with the outside garden exhibits and saw one that instantly made me think of George Newman and the program he gave our Chapter on *Sarracenias*. It was the Hartley Botanic Garden display, which featured a glasshouse structure attached to a walled garden. As the designers said, "It was both folly and retreat, and housed tropical, aquatic and carnivorous plants. Views of the surrounding woodland garden could be appreciated and enjoyed from within the glasshouse.."



As we went into the Grand Pavilion, which covers 2.9 acres, we were nearly overwhelmed because the exhibits abound with such a wealth of plants. So we first concentrated on seeing those that had an alpine theme. Rotherview Nursery had an amazing display of troughs and crevice planting. The nursery apparently grows a wide selection of alpines suitable for trough and sink planting. To my mind this was the outstanding alpine exhibit.



Rotherview Nursery exhibit with details of trough plantings and a crevice planting.



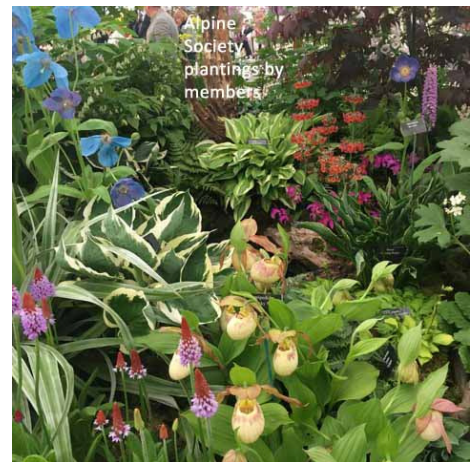
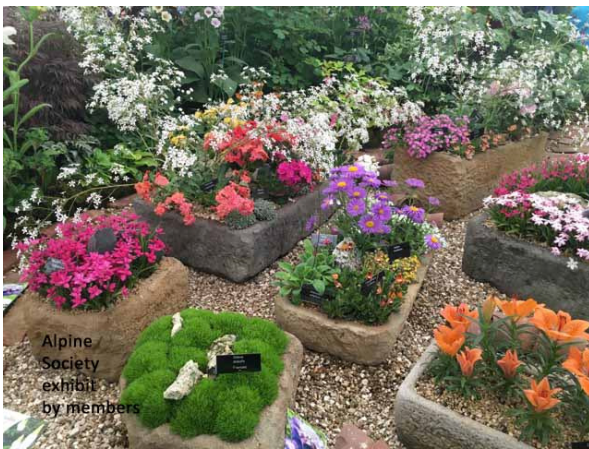


Next we visited the exhibit of Kevock Garden Plants, which featured alpine, bog and woodland plants, which was also excellent.



Kevock Garden Plants display with a large assortment of primulas.

After this we found the Alpine Society's stand, where all the troughs had been planted by member Katie Price, who was on duty to answer any questions. I have to say that as a non-professional member of the society, she did a splendid job.



Finally, we came to the exhibit that touched our hearts the most. It was put on by the National Botanic Gardens of South Africa and featured the Harold Porter Reserve in Betty's Bay, at which place my parents and I spent just about every vacation. I suppose we will never lose our South African roots, but to us that exhibit was something REALLY special and absolutely captured the feeling of the place. As Roy and Helen Herold have given several talks about South African flowers I'm including some photos for them to enjoy as well.



After cups of reviving rooibos tea we reluctantly dragged ourselves homewards out of the Show, still cold, but with wonderful warm memories of a day spent together in the company of countless other keen gardeners.

**Helen and Catherine du Toit**

## 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 the first meeting of the year.

**Local Chapters:** –There are thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Chapter events include lectures, an email 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), publishes a newsletter in email format, 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 \$30.00 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.

## Reminder: BE GREEN Bring Your Own Mug

**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 1495:* 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 2016*

Chair: Ellen Hornig: [hornig@oswego.edu](mailto:hornig@oswego.edu)  
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The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is published 3-4 times a year. In 2016 expect February-March, April-May, September-October, November issues and occasional notices of special events.





*A Corylopsis* bonsai with spring racemes  
in the Larz Anderson Bonsai Collection of the Arnold Arboretum