



Corydalis solida

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society APRIL 2014

APRIL MEETING Mark Richardson, Director of Horticulture GITW

The New England Chapter of NARGS has long enjoyed a close relationship with the GITW. Mark Richardson is their present Director of Horticulture. He is guiding the Garden's renovation into a model of sustainable horticultural practices. Their efforts rely on enriching the beds without any chemical fertilizers but only by the addition of compost with an eye to especially boosting the microbial population. They adjust the pH and micro-minerals as well, all combining to make healthy soil. This year the program will concentrate on storm water management to keep the water retention levels high throughout the Garden. The additional water some plants may need will come from captured rain water. The goal will be to stop steady artificial watering that stimulates weaker hyper-growth.

Mark will also bring us up to date on the Trillium Project. The Garden was newly recognized as a certified Trillium Collection with hundreds of individual plants, and with nearly all the species types represented. Be sure to visit the Garden between mid-April and the end of May and see for yourself.

-2014 Calendar-

April 26, 2014 Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA

10:30 a.m. Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies and set up.

11:00 a.m. **Mark Richardson,**
Horticulture Director, GITW

The Trillium Collection, & Sustainable Horticulture.

12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own)

1:00pm RARE PLANT AUCTION.

Put a red circle on your calendar for the **RARE PLANT AUCTION**
There will be surprises galore and plants you can't live without.

Even if you don't have plants to donate, please come and bid, bid, bid!

May 31, 2014 – Garden Tours

Ellen Hornig Shrewsbury, MA

John Trexler Boylston, MA

Trillium Propagation Beds at the Garden in the Woods

Dan Jaffe lifting Trillium rhizomes



Loosening the rhizomes



Dan at the propagating bed

Freeing the roots



Separating the rhizomes



A large rhizome ready for replanting in a display bed

Ed Bowen Advocate for Biodiversity

Ed Bowen came to our March meeting and cheered-up a winter-weary group of gardeners with rollicking stories of plant hybridizing and colorful pictures of unusual cultivars. As the owner of a small Rhode Island nursery Ed specializes in rare plants that he searches for in places as distant as England, the continent or Japan. But he notes that the current gardening culture is a tough niche to occupy faced with the competition from mega-companies who can introduce a patented variety that they have multiplied by the thousands and that they distribute widely through big-box retailers. Consequently, while today we see monoculture waves of heuchera “Caramel,” everywhere, heuchera “Purple Palace” the rave of yesterday is hardly anywhere to be found. Part of the solution is to be more pro-active in educating the consumer. Ed suggested that a larger consortium of plant societies, nurseries, botanical gardens and horticultural institutions need to broadcast the urgency of developing a *diverse* population of plant life in order to survive the coming stresses of climate change.

On a less apocalyptic note, Ed brought plants from his own stock including, Corydalis, Creighton Blue and C. Ranier Blue, some of his own hydrangea crosses, Thalictrum “Ruth Joly” from North Hill, and Bergenia hybrids, and Podophyllum delavayi among other things. But it was the

Podophyllum hybrid stories that delighted this listener. With names like “Spotted Dotty,” “Kaleidoscope,” and “Red Panda,” hinting of new dimension to the Puritan-like demeanor of our New England Mayapple, Ed’s photographs filled the screen with striking colors and star-shaped leaves. The first two plants have been patented and are only available in limited quantities. Thus one’s choice then is to return to *P. delavayi*, which is self sterile and start the hybridizing all over. The Red Panda hybrid has *P. pleianthum* as a parent and Ed is working with two clones of the hybrid. But when it comes to talking to an audience about utilizing a diverse group of plants Ed was “preaching to the choir” or should I say he wouldn’t have to convince the members of NARGS-NE. M. Beaven



Podophyllum “Spotted Dotty”



P. “Red Panda” left & P. “Terra Nova” hybrids



P. Kaleidoscope
Podophyllum photos Dan Heims



Ed Bowen with plants from his nursery

REMEMBER APRIL IS RARE PLANT SALE MONTH

As ever the NARGS-NE Chapter Rare Plant Sale is an event not to be missed. Notable plants that have been auctioned in furious bidding in years past include; *Veltheimia*, *Primroses sieboldi* and *P. vera*, *Jeffersonii dubai*, *Epimediums*, *Erythroniums*, both pink and white, a very dwarf form of *Pee Gee hydrangea*, *Polygonatum “Herold’s Best”* and *Thalictrum purpureum* just to mention a few. As with all good prospectii we have to say that previous year’s selections may not repeat this year but looking over the offerings and being surprised at what does appear is half the pleasure.

Book Review

If you were inspired to add a trip to the New York High Line to your “must do” list after reading Rachel Ross’s description in the February newsletter, you will also find the NARGS book review **Planting: A New Perspective, Piet Oudolf & Noel Kingsbury**, Timber Press (April 9, 2013); worth reading. The following review as written by NARGS contributor Frances Burr a member of the Manhattan Chapter

For some time now I’ve been intrigued by the apparent simplicity and casualness of the "New Perennial" movement. This philosophy is rooted in an admiration of the wildness in nature and seeks to recreate this in landscape design and plant selection. Its leading figure is undoubtedly Piet Oudolf of the Netherlands — designer, nurseryman, and writer. This book was written in conjunction with Noel Kingsbury, writer, designer and ardent advocate of naturalistic planting. To my mind it constitutes the best treatment of the field to date.

The introductory section, “Planting Design for the Twenty-first Century,” effectively discusses the perspective and aims of the "New Perennial" movement. There are numerous illustrations from various projects that illustrate these points. A prime example in the United States is the High Line in New York City. This is a mile-long park built on a section of the former elevated New York Central Railroad spur called the West Side Line, running along the lower west side of Manhattan. It represents an impressive meld of architecture, engineering, and landscape design that has transformed an unlikely site into a beautiful and highly successful public space. The plant selections by Piet Oudolf beautify, but interestingly also retain, a state of wild abandon. Most significant in the book are chapters on how to combine plants. The adopted attitude is that plant *architecture* becomes the primary consideration — the form in winter is therefore as important as the form in high summer. Color is dealt with *en masse* rather than as floral form. There are many informative landscape diagrams detailing the plants used and a well-presented, unique plant directory in chart form listing the majority of plants Oudolf has used and dissecting their architectural merits and growth characteristics.

Variations on a Theme

Because I have lived on the same property for forty-five years I have had the pleasure of seeing plants grow and change over time. A case in point is *Crocus thomasianus* the lovely pale lilac chrysanthus crocus. Originally, I planted a group of twenty or so at the edge of my perennial border. But there they were not long lasting due to either to the voles who run rampant through my garden or because the ground was not suitable. Soon, however, I found that the survivors had seeded themselves into my lawn where they thrived. From then on I gave up the applications of lawn weed killer and switched to hand broadcasting super phosphate to encourage the bulb growth. I now have great swaths of several hundred of what I suppose are the fifth or sixth generation seedlings from my first introduction. In the last few years I have noticed that the color of the crocus is no longer the uniform pale lilac of the originals but has increased to a wide range of colors, the palest is close to white, while at the other end there is a deep purple. Not only have the colors expanded from the primary lilac color but a few crocus now are sporting a rose shade, some that are nearly a true blue and yet others seems only to be

colored on the outer petal edge, picotee-style. This year I noticed that there is also diversity of petal shape, most with the original rounded tip but a few with pointed ends. I have never been tempted to plant the other chrysanthus colors because I see that the happenstance of living here as long as I have has given me all the variation I could wish for.



near white



standard *C. thomasiianus*



solid deep purple



rose



a mixed cluster



a true blue

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 2014

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