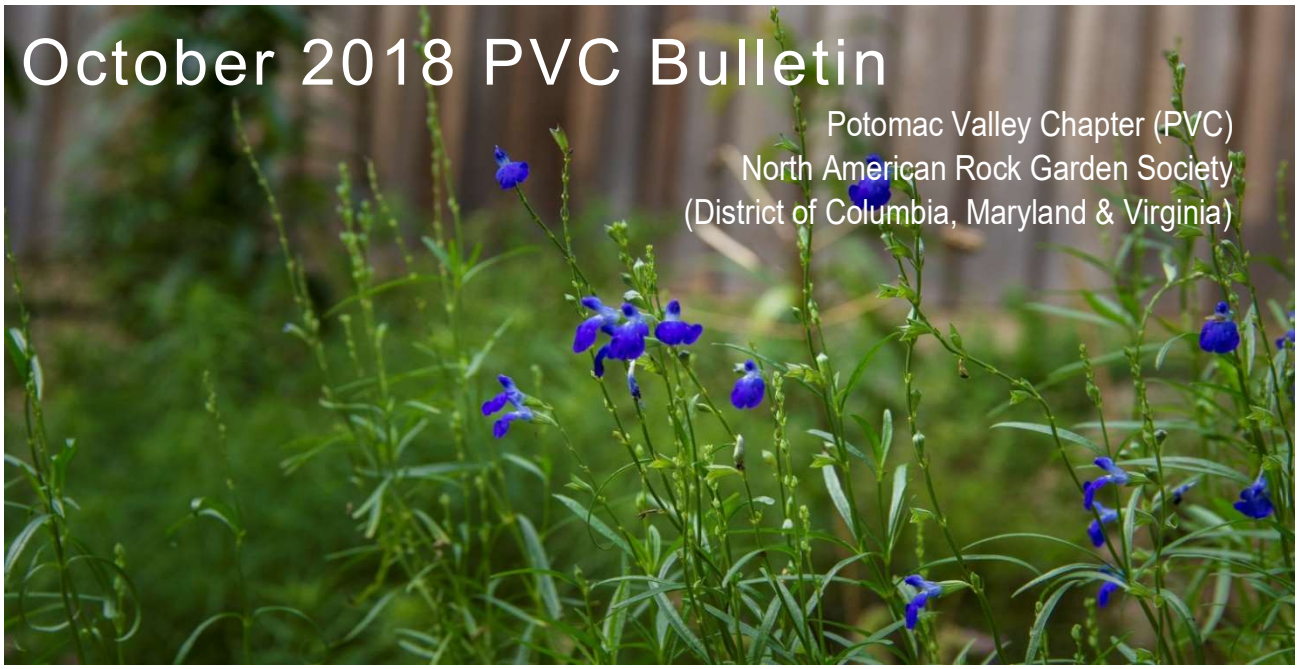

Salvia reptans West Texas Form, photo by S. Strickler

Fall 2018 – Spring 2019 Events Calendar

Programs are Saturdays at 10am (coffee at 9:30 am), unless otherwise noted.

Saturday November 17, **Annual Members' Meeting: SHOW & TELL** – Share images of plants in the wild, in private and public gardens you've visited or from your own garden. Try to keep to 15 minutes.
Where: Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA

Saturday, December 1: **Seed Cleaning/Packaging,** Volunteers will help clean and package seed for NARGS seed exchange.
Where: Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA.

2019

January/ February: (Date TBD) **Quarry Visit, Medford Quarry**, Westminster, MD. A third trip to collect stones – different colored marble -- for the garden, trough, or to build cairns (nice sculpture for the garden). For an overview of last year's visit: http://ofleafandlimb.blogspot.com/2018/02/stoners-what-rock-gardeners-do-in-winter.html

January, February, March speakers to be determined. (Several irons in the fire!)

April 27-28, **FONA/ US National Arboretum Plant Sale**

May 3-5, **NARGS Study Weekend**, Frazer, PA, (west of Philly) Hosted by DE Chapter: https://nargs.org/news/2017-07-29/study-weekend-may-2019-registration-open

May 18, **Plant Sale**, Greenspring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria, VA.

May 25, **Plant Exchange**, VA location TBD

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall is here – humidity is gone, hurricanes have wreaked havoc along the Atlantic, political campaigns are ramped up and PVC has a number of exciting activities on tap for the coming months (See Calendar for details on times and locations)!

Although our Member's Meeting in early September was sparsely attended, the presentations were awesome! I reviewed my "favorites" plant list from 2 years ago (what grew and what died; unfortunately, most died) and discussed the use of *Selaginellas* in the garden and in troughs. Bob Faden presented slides of various plants that grow in the neighborhood around Kew Gardens in southern England (monkey puzzle trees grow like weeds), John Willis showed pictures from the NARGS meeting in Newfoundland last spring and Jim Dronenburg reviewed the trials and tribulations of putting a new addition on his house.

We are saddened to hear the Mason-Dixon Chapter of NARGS will be closing its doors as of October. Although most of the members live a good distance from the Washington, D.C. area, our chapter has offered temporary memberships to them hoping they will join our club and continue to learn and participate in rock gardening. If you meet any of the M-DC members at our meetings, please give them a hearty welcome!

Finally, the PVC board of directors is interested in receiving feedback from the membership. **What changes would you like to make to our current programs?** More/ fewer speakers, workshops, fieldtrips, social gatherings? We know we need to do better updating our Calendar of Events via email and on the website -- we are working on this. But what other changes **would you like to see?** We will be sending you a brief survey towards the end of the year. Please take a few minutes to complete it. This is **your** chance to have a say!

Kevin

Green Spring's Rock Garden
Past and Crevice

photos & text by Judy Zatsick

The rock garden at Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria, VA, was originally designed and created by Don Humphrey, a keen plantsman, skilled propagator and the first director of the Gardens. An active member in the Potomac Valley Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS), he took advantage of their annual seed exchange to procure future plants for the garden. Don loved propagating rock garden seeds and growing the plants on in his elegant rock garden here at Green Spring.

I never had the pleasure of meeting Don (I started working at Green Spring after he retired and moved out of the area), but his reputation was hallowed. Former friends and colleagues speak of his incredible plant knowledge and ability to propagate and grow a vast array of plants from all over the country. He is famous for penstemon, eremurus, and other plants we swoon over, and usually kill, here in steamy zone 7a Virginia. Although his passion for plants was intense and his knowledge impressive, he was extremely personable. At our bi-annual garden day events lines of visitors waited patiently for tips and secrets from Don on growing rock garden plants in our area.

Lining up stones

As a horticulturist at Green Spring, I am responsible for the rock garden Don established. The bones of Don's garden are still evident and some of his original plantings survive today. Don created screes, an alpine lawn, a small meadow, ridges, and an area lined with plastic to hold water for plants needing extra moisture. However, one xeric environment Don did not try was a crevice garden. Avid gardeners in the Czech Republic introduced the idea and perfected the building of the crevice garden. Their inspiration is the formations of rocks in the vertical strata found in mountainous regions.

I was first exposed to crevice gardens in the noble state of Colorado, where rock gardening reigns. My heart quickened at the rhythm and texture of upright stones in the Yampa River Valley Garden, the Betty Ford Alpine Garden and the queen of rock gardens, Denver Botanical Gardens. Acres of rocks grace the state, and these fabulous gardens reflect the area's dramatic terrain. It was all so wonderful, and, well, seemingly unattainable in northern Virginia. But when I visited the amazing and delightful urbanite crevice garden at Plant Delights Nursery (PDN) in Raleigh, North Carolina, during the NARGS 2017 annual meeting, I knew I had to have one. If North Carolina could support a fabulous crevice garden and fill it with cool rock-loving plants in Zone 7b, I could certainly do it Zone 7a Virginia.

We were awarded two grants to build the crevice garden at Green Springs – one from NARGS to purchase materials and a second from the Horticulture Society of Pennsylvania to buy plants.

To research crevice garden construction, I started with an article in *Fine Gardening* magazine by Joseph Tychonievich. A writer, editor of NARGS *Quarterly* and author of *Rock Gardening: Reimagining a Classic Style,* Joseph offers all sorts of tips on creating crevice gardens complete with handy illustrations. Next, I reviewed crevice-garden guru Kenton Seth's videos on creating the crevice garden at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum. Jeremy Schmidt at PDN offered tips in a detailed article on crevice gardening in the Piedmont Chapter's newsletter. And I went back over the classics, looking for information on rock placement and soils.

Pounding in stones with mallet

Armed with measurements of the space I wanted to renovate (11' x 16'), I visited Sisler Stone in Falls Church, VA. Based on my vision of the future garden and with advice from staff, I selected one palette of West Virginia field stone for my base. I also purchased small sharp gravel for mulch.

With the help of volunteers, existing plants were cleared from the area and the surface was smoothed. We then brought in several wheelbarrows of builder's sand to construct berms into which the stones would be laid. The berms were formed to create a rounded topography with high points roughly in the

center. I decided to create a curved path through the space for easier maintenance and to break up the large area we were trying to cover.

Laying the stone was a very organic process, selecting stones for their shape, color and size. I found it easiest to remove all the stones from the palette and sort them roughly according to size.

Moving some of the heaviest stones

Then the work began. We lined up the rocks on edge and placed them close together end to end. When I was happy with the arrangement, I dug a narrow trench into the soil to accommodate the stones. Ideally, about 1/3 of the stone remains above the surface. Once the next row is laid, a deep pocket is created where plant roots can grow in between the rocks. The narrow pocket limits the amount of soil around the roots of each rock plant, promotes good drainage and forces the roots to grow deeply to find water and protection from the heat of the sun. Digging into the base soil of clay and gravel and packing it tightly around the stones helped to support the heaviest ones.

Since the garden is on a slight slope, I selected particularly large and heavy stones to support the lower slope and hold the soil layer. We also anchored the ends with larger pieces as the area is heavily trafficked.

Heavy stones at bottom of slope

After the work was completed, I let the garden cure for a few weeks. Crevice garden experts recommend hosing down the garden several times to help the soil flow into spaces and fill pockets created during construction. Because mother nature took care of rain for us this August, I didn't have to spray it after all. The soil settled in nicely with natural precipitation.

A highly permeable soil mix of two parts sand to one part gravel allows water to drain quickly in our new garden. Water slows as it reaches the base material, which contains clay, sand and gravel. Although I plan to do most of the planting next year with specimens grown from NARGS seeds, we planted a few things this Fall. I am eager to see how plants perform in our soil mix; it is hard to wait to let the entire garden settle over the winter before planting! In some pockets, we played with the soil mix, adding a small amount of compost if the plant required a more nutrient rich soil. One inch of fine sharp-edged gravel mulch helps to keep the crowns

Done!

of sensitive rock garden plants dry as well as to suppress weeds. I put in *Globularia cordifolia*, *Scutelaria resinosa*, *Draba cretica*, *Dianthus microclepsis*, and *Sempervivum*. I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

Don Humphrey left a legacy of great horticultural leadership at Green Spring Gardens, and a beautiful rock garden. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work in his shadow. But the garden also evolves: 'Dwarf' conifers that have outgrown their space have been removed and replaced with smaller specimens, the rock wall was rebuilt, and now a crevice garden graces the space.

I look forward to experimenting with low growing plants in the new garden and hope to do a bit of zone pushing. Remember, it just takes two rocks to make a crevice. Make sure you don't miss NARGS' seed exchange. Order some hard to find seeds and start your own crevice garden.

A Bulb Grower's Appreciation of Vojtech Holubec's Talk on the Tian Shan

Photos & text by Jim McKenney

Those central Asian mountains with "tau" in their name provoke potent fantasies for bulb growers, in particular those bulb growers who know the literature. Some of the ranges which make up the Tian Shan (a system of mountains stretching 1,500 mile west-southwest to east-northeast, bordering Kyrgystan, Kazakhstan and northwest China) have names based on that word "tau", which means mountain in the Kazakh language. Kazakh is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. Did you notice the sign in Cyrillic in one of Holubec's images?

At the end of the nineteenth century there was a steady flow of new bulbs coming from ranges such as Kara Tau and Alta Tau going primarily to Holland, where the firm Van Tubergen hired German plant collector Paul Graeber and others to work in and around Tian Shan. Patrick Synge, author of the 1961 *Collins Guide to Bulbs* (published in 1964 in the US as *The Complete Guide to bulbs)*, mentions Greaber's work and quotes the nineteenth-century German botanist and collector Regel, who described the landscape this way: "Every ravine of the red sandstone slopes reveals new forms which break the monotony of the leathery leaved pistachia and almond scrub. From the first days of spring there sprout here anemones, crocuses, irises, tulips, fritillaries and long shafted eremuruses." I've been reading that passage now and then for over fifty years, and it still gives me a thrill and a longing for the season of sprouts in late winter.

Crocus alatavicus

Seeing some of the plants I've grown from this region in Holbec's presentation brought back lots of memories. *Crocus alatavicus* from the Alatau range (Cyrillic алатау),--it has this "tau" in its name-- I grew decades ago and it remains a great rarity. *Allium karataviense*-a not uncommon garden plant—*is named for the* Kara Tau mountain range.

We miss out when we don't learn the etymology of plant names and, worse, are content to mispronounce them. What looks like a "v" in both of these names (alatavicus and karataviense) is not an English "v" (remember, this is not English); it's the semivowel form of the Latin letter u. The semivowel is pronounced like an English w. Try pronouncing the name ka-ra-tau-ee-en-se. If you say it fast enough, the "w" sound comes out between the au and the e of -ense.

Alliium karataviense

The image of *Gymnospermium albertii* reminded me of the day PVC member Paul Botting visited my garden, saw it in one of my cold frames and finally asked "Is that a seedling peony?" In fact, that's what it looked like, not a seedling of a garden peony but a seedling of a wild peony (it was not in bloom). I might not have been the only one trying this plant in the Washington, D.C. area. My plant came from the bulb distribution conducted for years by Jane McGary (former editor of the NARGs *Quarterly* and active in the Pacific Bulb Society). I know that Alice Nicolson and the Fadens also bought from Jane; did they try the *Gymnospermium*? Has anyone else been able to keep it?

During the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century the atypical-looking *Rosa persica* (*Hulthemia persica)* was one of the holy grails of the rock garden world. However, in cultivation in England it proved no easier than the also popular but often short-lived oncocylcus irises. Modern hybrids known as Eyeconic roses have this species in their background – it is the source of their distinctive eye spot. Thus these hybridized *R. persica* descendants brought the family genes from regal isolation in the

deserts of central Asia to fight it out with Knock Out roses in hell strips of urban and suburban America. Chris Herbstritt tells me that the Eyeconics lost the fight in his garden.

Another rose, this one with a very odd name--*Rosa ecae*-- is an eponym for Mrs. E.C. Aitchison, the wife of the botanist who named it. I parse it as her initials E and C and the Latin first declension feminine singular genitive ending -ae. With respect to pronunciation, you're on your own!

Iris aucheri, a Juno iris

Irises Holubec showed us: *Iris orchioides*, one of the Juno (or Scorpiris) irises, is a close relative of the readily available *Iris bucharica. (*In the past they have been lumped occasionally*.) Iris bucharica* is a good starter Juno – kept reasonably dry during the summer, it persists. And the species named for the German collector Graeber, *Iris graeberiana*, is available, too. *Iris korolkowii*, a long famous arillate iris and often used to raise intricately veined hybrids, I've had briefly.

Two of the Fritillaria shown, *F. sewerzowii* and *F. stenanthera,* (Holubec used the alternative genus names Korolkowia and Rhinopetalum)*,* I've also grown. I smiled broadly at John Willis when the image of the latter came up as John has shown us his images of his well grown plant in the past. I learned about Korolkowia from Patrick Synge's book – he too used the name Korolkowia. The eponym for the name Korolkowia was a Russian general – for him is also named *Crocus korolkowii.*

Fritillaria stenanthera

Something exciting happened when Holubec talked about one of the Fritillaria relatives, something which gives some insight into the high level on which speakers like this function, not just botanically but linguistically. I would be surprised if anyone else noticed, but when Holubec started to say the name Rhinopetalum, for a flash he reverted to the European pronunciation of the word. He caught himself immediately and said it again with the pronunciation an English-speaking audience would expect. Something like this also happened when Greek botanist Eleftherios Dariotis spoke to us last year: during his presentation he used the pronunciations we English-speaking people expect. But talking to him afterword, I heard the ancient sounds which have persisted in the Greek language for thousands of years slip into Dariotis's pronunciation of Greek-derived botanical names. It was a real thrill for me to hear this.

Think about it for a moment: both Vojtech and Eleftherios, throughout their early lives, learned to pronounce botanical names in a way significantly different from the way we do. If you have ever given a talk about plants, one of your main concerns was probably getting the names right and using the "correct" pronunciation. Now try to imagine what it's like to not only have to remember the correct plant name, but to pronounce it differently from the way you have all your life. You may not have realized it at the time, but during these talks you were in the presence

of men who were as gods among mere mortals. Or, as Henry Mitchell described the presence of Maria Callas here in Washington during her 1974 farewell tour, like a phoenix in a henhouse.

Seeing *Colchicum luteum*, I'll bet many of you had one of two reactions: Either "I didn't know there were yellow colchicums" or "It looks just like a yellow crocus." That's not surprising as it has always been rare in western gardens since its introduction to sixteenth century Europe. Clusius probably never saw it in bloom, but he did know about it. In fact, in his *Historia* of 1601 he records that one of his gardening correspondents sent him a corm (it died before blooming). Collected for medicinal purposes in its native Kashmir, *C. luteum* wild-collected corms have been in and out of commerce for centuries. I've had it twice in my garden, but this was before I really understood how to grow these summer dormant plants. If you are as old as I am, perhaps you remember that seeds of yellow Colchicum were offered (throughout the late fifties and sixties as I recall) in the Park seed catalog. That was back in the days when Park was also offering seed of *Worsleya procera* !

Colchicum luteum

A lifetime of growing and reading about bulbs did not prepare me for Holubec's image of *Tulipa regelii*. I've known the name for decades, but I had never seen a good photograph of that astonishing foliage. Now I won't rest until I see the name on a catalog list!

And to think I almost didn't make it to this talk. Thanks, Vojtech, so much!
(Vojtech Holubec's website: (http://holubec.wbs.cz/

Salacious *Selaginellas*

photos & text by Kevin McIntosh

I've always enjoyed growing ferns in my garden but never gave much thought to growing *Selaginellas* - also known as spikemosses and clubmosses - until I went half-way around the world to Borneo where I saw several magnificent species. Some of these plants had iridescent scaly leaves that seemed to glow! Here in the U.S. I only grew one species, the common *Selaginella braunii*, and never really paid much attention to this plant until recently when many garden visitors pointed out the large clump and told me how nice it is! I've since purchased a number of different species in the past three years and love them all. This article is a brief description of ones that are performing well in my zone 6b (z6b) garden. The jury is still out on several marginally hardy species that have not yet weathered a winter.

Selaginella braunii, (z6a), previously mentioned, is commonly called “Arborvitae fern,” although it is not an Arborvitae or a fern. I have had this native of China for 15 years; it spreads slowly in dappled shade and appreciates average soil and moisture, anything a fern likes. Divisions have taken nicely in several locations around the yard. Leaves are about 18 inches high and turn a bronzy color in winter. So far, the plant is deer proof (hope I’m not jinxing it!). It is readily available.


Selaginella braunii leaf detail


Selaginella moellendorfii?

Selaginella moellendorfii (z7a) may be another Chinese Selaginella I grow. Putnam Hill nursery (Forest Hill, MD), where I bought it about three years ago wasn’t sure of its identity. Apparently, it was collected locally and propagated for sale. I have temporarily identified it as *S. moellendorfii* based on a purported height of six inches. The fronds of this species should produce plantlets, though I haven’t seen any yet. This plant has grown so slowly in a shady spot, I plan to move it next year where it will get more sun.


Three *Selaginellas* in a specialized garden

This year, I acquired three Selaginellas of dubious hardiness for my Ellicot City, MD, location. Consequently, I planted them last spring in a protected mini-garden, which I cover with plastic sheeting in winter. This is also where *Pleione* orchids (z8) have survived the past two winters. The garden gets moderate sun (3-4 hours/day) and has a base soil of pine fines mixed with sand and “planted” with rotting tree stumps. We’ll have to wait and see how these plants do in this specialized, protected garden until spring of 2019.


Selaginella tamariscina ‘Golden Sprite’

I bought *Selaginella tamariscina* ‘Golden Sprite’ (aka: *Selaginella* ‘OJ Gold’) (z7b) from Plant Delights Nursery of Raleigh, NC, where it has proven hardy. This Japanese selection is highly revered as a container plant. Described as slow-growing, reaching just 2 inches high, my plant is at least twice that size in height and width!

Selaginella tamariscina 'Snow Top' also came from PDN. It has similar cultural requirements as 'Golden Sprite' though it differs morphologically in shape (not globe shaped) and the fronds have whitish tips.

The third plant in my protected garden is *Selaginella erythropus* 'Sanguinea'. This one I purchased from Black Jungle as a terrarium plant. When I noticed someone claimed to grow it in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, (see "Dave's Garden" website), I tried it in the ground. It is spectacular but temperamental with fronds of iridescent bluish-green on top and brilliant red on the underside. I saw no outward signs of growth until recently when it sent out new fronds, so I think it's getting happier.

For what it's worth, I've tried growing another hardy woodland *Selaginella* in the open garden without success. *Selaginella uncinata*, the Peacock Spikemoss, is widely available, has beautiful bluish fronds and a creeping habit. I've killed it at least 3 times. It is easy to grow as a terrarium plant but there is something I'm doing wrong in the garden. It shouldn't be a winter hardiness issue as it is rated z6a.

The last two *Selaginellas* I'm recommending are poikilohydric, meaning they can withstand drought conditions by rolling up their leaves and going dormant. Remember the Resurrection Ferns you buy and bring back to life by just adding water? Both of these spikemosses do that! Offered by PDN, these have a creeping habit and reach only a half-inch to an inch in height. These characteristics make them ideal candidates for the rock garden or trough.

Selaginella rupestris 'Bald Knob' is a North American native from Franklin County, VA, hardy to z4. ' 'Bald Knob' appreciates sun and a well-drained growing medium. My plant has persisted through the last two winters in my rock garden without any dieback and through periods of drought without any supplemental water. In fact, during the first winter, I found the plant dislodged and laying on top of the ground heaved by frost or by an animal digging it up. I don't know how long it was exposed to the elements (I don't go out into the garden that often during winter), but I plugged it back in the ground and all was well!

Selaginella peruviana ‘Burnet’ is a drought-tolerant spikemoss from Burnet County, TX. Though PDN gives it a rating of z7a “at least”, I think it is hardier as it has sailed through the past two winters in my rock garden. It looks similar to ‘Bald Knob’, except maybe a little tighter and lower growing.

Since ‘Bald Knob’ and ‘Burnet’ are both “low and slow,” I figured they would make great trough subjects so I have planted them in multiple troughs--ones that get different winter care, i.e., some are left out in the elements and some are protected in cold frames. I’ll let you know the results of this experiment next year. In the meantime, I am propagating both species and to give away at the next plant exchange and to sell at our Green Spring plant sale!

Hardy South of Washington, D.C.

Jim McKenney

“Hardy south of Washington, D.C….” is a phrase which appears in many pre-WWII American garden books. It’s a reflection of the fact that the biggest markets for garden books during this era were the major cities and suburbs between Boston and Philadelphia. (If it was hardy south of Washington, it had to be hardy between Boston and Philly.) And it also reflects a major concern of American gardeners in that area: how hardy were the plants? Literate gardeners were strongly influenced by the British experience, despite the difference in climate between the U.K and the eastern U.S. It took a long time to figure out what really would grow in the mid-Atlantic and northeastern states. The primary concern was cold hardiness; later generations began to deal with the issue of “summer hardiness”.

House and Garden’s Second Garden Book (1927) contains an article titled “Twelve Shrubs for Ten Regions”. Among the ten regions treated is Washington, D.C. This area was evidently viewed as a relatively mild climate, but cold hardiness was not the main criterion for this list, the author or editor was citing shrubs that are "distinctive, satisfying flowering kinds."

Here are the twelve shrubs recommended for Washington, D.C. The names are printed as they appear in the article, and where names have changed the current form is given in parentheses.

Azaleas, Kurume
Ceanothus hybridus – Ceanothus
Cistus ladaniferus – Gum Rockrose (Now *Cistus ladanifer)*
Cytissus multiflorus -White Spanish Broom (a parent of *Cytisus* × *kewensis*)
Deutzias in variety
Forsythia intermedia spectabilis – Goldenbells (Now *Forsythia* × *intermedia* 'Spectabilis'; the famous clone 'Lynwood Gold' is a bud sport of 'Spectabilis')
Hydrangea macrophylla – House Hydrangea
Magnolia parviflora – Oyama Magnolia (Now *Magnolia sieboldii*)
Philadelphus microphyllus – Littleleaf Mockorange
Prunus triloba – Flowering Plum
Pyracantha coccinea – Scarlet Firethorn
Viburnum fragrans – Fragrant Viburnum (Now *Viburnum farreri*)

Today we know that of the twelve, seven are reliable in this area. The other five are poor choices indeed for our gardens: there are many Ceanothus hybrids, but only one or two are of any use locally; the Cistus isn't hardy here; the Cytissus might be available as seed (in Californians it's considered invasive); the Magnolia is fussy here; and the Viburnum suffers winter damage which often destroys the buds and blooms (I don't grow this species, but Phil Normandy confirmed this for me).

Now, here's what is so surprising to me about this list -- it was put together by none other than Ernest H. Wilson, then assistant director of the Arnold Arboretum. Evidently, he did not spend much time in Washington, D.C.!

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