



Veronica peduncularis

CURIOUS GARDENERS
the Newsletter
of the New England Chapter of
NARGS
September-November 2019

September 14, 2019 **Reuben Hoar Library, Littleton, MA**

- 10:30** Welcome – coffee, tea, A-M please bring cookies
- 11:00** **Summer discussion and photos; social media intro**
- Noon** Lunch – bring your own
- 1:00** **Seedling Sale** – see article for details

October 12, 2019 **Reuben Hoar Library, Littleton, MA**

- 10:30** Welcome – coffee, tea, N-Z please bring cookies
- 11:00** **Cliff Booker: *Outstanding Gardens***
- Noon** Lunch – bring your own
- 1:00** **Cliff Booker: *Cream of Alpines***

November 16, 2019 **Goodnow Library
Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30** Welcome – coffee, tea, A-M please bring cookies
- 11:00** **Annual Meeting**
- Noon** Catered Lunch
- 1:00** **Mark McDonough: “*Garden Lab:
Seedy Experiments: Part 3 – DIY*”**

New Part 3 of Mark’s Garden Lab presentation series is based upon recent firsthand seedy experiments and observations. A special focus will be chronicling a rewarding DIY (Do It Yourself) approach towards creating new plants via hybridization and growing on seeds.

September 14 Meeting 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 contribute seedlings they have saved from their spring and summer bounty. Because the seedlings are small they are favorably priced and it is a great opportunity to fill in the blank spots of your garden. This year we may be 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. You might like to arrive earlier than 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 may 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 Vivien, ybouffard55@msn.com.

From the Chair

Many of us are no doubt still getting in our last summer vacations and activities, but the new students are arriving on the campus where I work (Olin College of Engineering in Needham), and we're off to a new fall semester. We're off to a new season of NARGS meetings as well and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone and always learning more from our speakers and each other.

Meeting space is a perennial issue for us and we keep trying new solutions. So the September and October meetings will be at a new location, the Reuben Hoar Library in Littleton. The price is right (free) and it has the amenities we need. The November meeting is scheduled for the Goodnow Library. We will see how things work out and revisit the issue in the new year. We are fortunate to have many options, but it does seem that there is some drawback to each.

Speaking of the new year, we are wide open for speaker/meeting suggestions! We normally have meetings in February, March, April, and May and we need programming for all of them. Please contact me if you have ideas. We get the best feedback for the presentations that are created by our own members. Individually and collectively, we

have so much to share; please consider presenting on your particular passion, by yourself or as part of a team.

If you're not quite ready to step up to doing that, do consider contributing an article to the newsletter. Jim would love to hear from you at any time! And if you're not quite ready for that, **please bring (on a thumb drive) or send to me just a few photos from your garden or your travels to share at the September meeting.** So far, I have a few spectacular shots of orchids in CO that Franklin Simpson took and also some not quite as spectacular shots from the University of Vienna Botanical Garden from my June trip. I'd love to have contributions from 5-6 people, so let me know if you can pitch in.

Enjoy these waning days of August and be sure to pot up some seedlings/extra plants for the September seedling sale. Bring a friend – the sale is a great way to introduce folks to NARGS.
See you soon, Vivien

From the Editor Who Would Have Thought?

A major part of my summer has been spent battling *Phlox paniculata*! After being a model perennial for some fifty years, it has now seen fit to self-sow fiendishly, to grow like mad this wet spring, and go on to engulf the garden. I've been digging it up all summer, to right now, with little time for the rest of the garden. What a mess!

And now it is August and the pace has slackened and the beds are cleared. What rock garden treasures can I find as consolation?

Let me begin with *Stachys monieri*. I started it from Rocky Mountain Rare Plants seed ten years ago, and for nine years barely noted its impact. Then it dawned on me: this is a low-growing mat-forming plant, barely 10 cm high, and it blooms in July and August! So after paying it more attention I can report that it is easy-going, gently spreading, and quite happy in regular soil and plenty of sun. Wee thing that it is, it is readily over-run. A Eurasian native.





The genus *Eriogonum* is decidedly an American one—western America, one might tend to think, but thanks to George Newman we have access to a useful one, from the shale barrens of Virginia and West Virginia. I hasten to say that it doesn't have the class of the best of the western ones, but useful it is, providing an arresting acid-yellow tone to the July-August rock garden. And the rock garden is definitely its place – less than full sun and fast-draining soil will kill it in short

order. The plant can grow 20 to 50 centimeters high, depending on conditions, I assume. The one pictured is a spreading 20 cm, very convenient in that spot.

Eriogonum is tap-rooted and can't be divided, but there are always seedlings that are readily moved. Backing it up is a rather nice *Lagerstroemia indica*.

Leaving the strict confines of the rock garden, we come to *Coreopsis pulchra*, native to Florida and Alabama and yet hardy here. Pretty hardy: it took me a while to find the right spot, somewhat protected and with normal garden soil. And there it has been thriving, joined by other natives: *Pycnanthemum*, *Asclepias*, and *Euphorbia*, and a real gift of color so late in the season. It can be readily divided or raised from seed; it does not seem to self-sow. The seed came from ARGS.



We're on Social Media!

There's a certain cachet in being perhaps the most awesome plant society that no one's ever heard of, but really we love welcoming new members and guests. Helping such folks find us is a challenge. Many of us don't spend much/any time on the major social media outlets, but lots of people do and we need a presence there if we want to be more "findable". To that end, Cheryl Monroe has created Facebook and Instagram accounts for our

chapter. She will do a show and tell at the September meeting, explaining why we're doing this and how you can participate if you like. If you open www.facebook.com and search for New England's Curious Gardeners, you'll find the page. You should do it if for no other reason than to see Jeremy Franceschi's *Gentiana acaulis*!



Random photo from this summer:
Triteleia (Brodiaea) laxa 'Queen Fabiola'.
I swear I planted the corms many years ago and never saw anything from them until a couple years ago and now they bloom reliably every year in June. The foliage comes up first and is grassy and rather messy and the first time I noticed it, I thought I had missed the floral part, but then the blue flowers appeared. If you're into taxonomy, *Triteleia* is a tangled genus; see <https://www.pacificbulbsociety.org/pbslist/2003-January/cbvrcmmfnbdsvgilm0u7m379f0.html#> for a discussion. – V.

Helpers needed for SeedEx Sorting

NARGS National has again reached out to us to help re-package seed donations for the SeedEx. We will receive the seeds after Thanksgiving and have till about Christmas to finish our work and send them back. Everyone who helps gets donor status, which means that you can order an extra 10 packets of seed in the first round.

The work can be done in two ways: we can gather at someone's house and have fun working together (and I make soup), and/or you can take a pile of packets home and do them at your convenience, once you are comfortable with the process. The seeds come with full instructions and the materials are nicely set up for us. We did 200 taxa last year without undue stress. Please let me know if you are interested in participating so I can figure out how many taxa we can commit to this year. I'm thinking either 200 or 300.

Thank you,
Vivien

October Meeting Saturday, October 12, 2019

Reuben Hoar Library, Littleton, MA (Directions Below)

Cliff Booker, a widely travelled author, gardener, and frequent speaker from Rochdale. United Kingdom, will give us two talks:

Outstanding Gardens looks at twenty gardens, famous and unknown, from around the world and includes mostly alpine gardens (but with exceptions).

Cream of Alpines is slightly different and is described at the start in this way: everyone can look back over their years involved with these magnificent plants and can select moments, people, species, locations, gardens, genera, etc, that have had a profound and lasting influence on their passion, their knowledge, their enjoyment of this amazing hobby ... if we were to place all these experiences into a bottle of milk, then these will be the 'cream' items that will flood to the top of my bottle. A fascinating mix of a talk that the Dublin Group of the AGS described as 'the cream of alpine lectures'.

Cliff and his wife Sue have travelled to Italy on many occasions and have made frequent visits to the mountains of France, Spain, Switzerland, Crete, Slovenia, and Austria; they have vacationed in the Balearics, Canada, the Canary Islands, Iceland, Madeira, Norway, Portugal, Tunisia, Turkey, St. Lucia, and the Burren in southern Ireland. They have gone flower-hunting in Colorado, Utah, and California. They have also led holiday wild flower walks in the U.K.

Cliff has lectured to many of the local groups of the Alpine Garden Society (including delivering the Roy Elliott Memorial lecture in 2011) and to many other organizations, and was the featured speaker for a NARGS tour of the eastern USA and of Canada, visiting Chapters in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Newfoundland, Wisconsin-Illinois, Washington DC, and North Carolina.

He is co-author with David Charlton of *Mountain Flowers – the Dolomites* as well as their latest publication *Mountain Flowers – Pyrenees and Picos*.

***Species Clematis*; Report on the April Presentation by Cheryl Monroe**

Though not particularly interested in clematis, I was blown away at how informative and entertaining Cheryl Monroe's talk was in so many ways. She shared many secrets on clematis care from 'cradle to grave', such as most clematis seeds not needing stratification; keeping plants well watered their first year out; growing them on in a partially shady spot in sandy, well draining soil; and finally, shovel-pruning any plant that keeps getting clematis wilt. As for maintenance pruning, she doesn't slavishly follow the frankly intimidating 3-category system. Instead she just treats them like other plants and cuts back what looks dead in the spring. As for the advice of 'feet in the shade, head in the sun', clematis actually likes being in at least part shade.



Clematis viorna

Some other clematis pearls from the talk:

- The easiest one to start from seed and grow on is *C. tangutica* 'Bill McKenzie', which can potentially bloom the first year. *C. 'Betty Corning'* is a good doer. Avoid *C. 'Ernest Markham'* as he is handsome but so hard to keep happy.
- *C. viorna* and *C. crispa* need more moisture in the soil, while *C. heracleifolia*, a shrubby clematis, is super drought-tolerant. (Incidentally,



***C. tangutica* seedhead**



C. fremontii

C. heracleifolia makes a good ground cover plant in the shade.) Actually, most clematis are drought-tolerant after their first year out. *C. fremontii* and *C. addisonii* are two xeric species, suitable for rock gardens.

- Give your clematis a good shot of lime if it looks tired.
- Foot-long commercial tree-growing tubes can protect the vulnerable spring growth from the bunnies.
- Try not-quite-hardy clematis as a house plant! *C. florida* var. *normalis* will bloom inside during the winter. Cheryl also encouraged us to try out hardy end-of-season bargains indoors – a low-cost gamble that might pay off well in winter enjoyment and eventual life outdoors.

The talk was not all clematis-specific. Cheryl started off with a discussion of an experiment she had with winter sowing and milk jugs. In this process you cut the jugs in the middle $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around. Fill the bottom with soil, sow the seeds, duct-tape the jugs back together, put outside in the shade for the winter, and wait. In the spring, despite her skepticism, in all but two of her jugs, she got not only robust germination but young sturdy plants. She is now a believer in winter sowing in milk jugs, although she says the sight of them makes her sad. Maybe it's the duct tape.

More lively clematis information is available at Cheryl's website at www.gardenintheburrow.com and some recommended plant sources follow.

www.farreachesfarm.com
www.brushwoodnursery.com
www.silverstarvinery.com
www.plantdelights.com
www.hummingbirdfarm.net

Estelle James

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 a meeting. **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 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.

Reminder: BE GREEN Bring Your Own Mug

Directions to the Reuben Hoar Library in Littleton, MA

From Rt. 95, take Exit 29B, Rt 2 West toward Acton/Fitchburg. In 8.4 miles bear right onto Rt 2 West/Rt. 2A West/Concord Tpke/Elm St. At roundabout, take 3rd exit onto Rt. 2 West/Union Tpke. In 7 miles, take Exit 40B for I-495 North toward Lawrence/Lowell. In 1.3 miles, turn right onto Rt 110/Rt 2A/King St. In half a mile, turn left and the library will be on the right. Park in the back of the building.

From the north: take Rt. 495 South to Exit 31, take ramp right for Rt. 119 toward Acton/Groton. Turn right onto Rt. 119/Great Road. In .4 mile, turn right onto Rt 110/Rt 2A/King St. In half a mile, turn right and the library will be on the right. Park in the back of the building.

Directions to Goodnow Library, 2 Concord Road, Sudbury

From Route 95/128 and the East: Take Route 20 West through Weston and Wayland into Sudbury. At the first light in Sudbury turn right onto Concord Road. The library is on the left.

From Route 27 and the North: Follow Route 27 south into Sudbury. At the traffic light in Old Sudbury Center turn right (south) onto Concord Road. Follow Concord Road approximately 1 mile and the library is on your right.

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