

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 32, Issue 4

September/October 2019

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Monday, September 9 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room A

GREENHOUSE PROGRAM ON RIKERS ISLAND GROWING GARDENERS – "YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO REMAIN PLANTED"

Speaker:

Mechthild (Hilda) Krus

Director, Horticultural Society of New York's GreenHouse Program



When we picture Rikers Island, a garden or greenhouse is probably not the image that comes to mind. Yet here, under the guidance of trained horticultural therapists, people who are incarcerated are taught how to grow delicious vegetables, useful herbs and beautiful flowers. The GreenHouse Program is run by the Horticultural Society of New York in collaboration with the NYC Department of Corrections, and serves over 400 students, operating six days a week, year round. The first program of its kind in the country, it is a proven success, helping significantly reduce recidivism.

Hilda will describe how this groundbreaking program not only instills a love of gardening, but also helps participants relate to their lives while strengthening their entire being – creating a sense of hope and building self-esteem. The program also helps participants develop a re-entry plan for the time when they return to the community, or, for those heading to upstate prisons, the skills needed to sustain themselves in a challenging environment.



MECHTHILD (HILDA) KRUS is a registered Horticultural Therapist and Licensed Social Worker, holding an MSW from the University of Essen, Germany. She has served on the board of the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) and gives presentations at local, national and international horticultural therapy conferences, including an EU symposium in Tulln, Austria in 2013 and a 2015 conference in Jakarta. In 2012 Hilda received AHTA's Rhea McCandliss Professional Service Award, and in 2017 the GreenHouse Program received the "Program Excellence Award" from the Mid-Atlantic Horticultural Therapy Network.

Hilda has gardened all her life, initially with her parents in the family garden, though it wasn't until she reached adulthood that she discovered gardening as a true passion, and came to recognize the restorative and inspirational qualities of green spaces.

NYBG Midtown Education Center is located at 20 West 44th Street, 3rd floor, between 5th and 6th Avenues (General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen Building). This location is two blocks from Grand Central Terminal and near several subways.



Soldanella alpina

OCTOBER TRI-STATE MEETING

Sunday, October 13
New York Botanical Garden
Ross Auditorium

Speaker:
Cliff Booker



Ranunculus alpestris



The new Booker garden



Gentian extravaganza, Tromsø Botanic Garden, Norway

Photos by Cliff Booker

CREATING AN ALPINE HAVEN

“Creating an Alpine Haven” follows the journey my wife Sue and I took when we moved two years ago, leaving a small, packed townhouse garden in Whitworth, Lancashire, for a larger blank canvas, one and a half miles away, where we speedily constructed a completely new “haven” for our existing (and many new) plants. Rock and woodland areas, raised beds, steep slopes and troughs all were created and planted within an eighteen-month window that also included pre-booked trips around the world.



CLIFF BOOKER has been consumed with the study, cultivation, propagation, exhibition and photography of alpine plants since 1984 and, with his wife Sue, has travelled to many mountain locations around the world to feed his passion. His penchant for fine photography has resulted in lecture tours to New Zealand, Canada, the USA, Holland and Belgium, and to many Alpine Garden Society and Scottish Rock Garden Club groups around the UK. He is co-author of two well-received books: *Mountain Flowers – The Dolomites* and *Mountain Flowers – Pyrenees and Picos*. Cliff is a Gold Medal and triple Farrer Medal exhibitor at the national level and, with his “right arm,” Sue, has led wildflower holidays to the Dolomites for British-based Collett’s Mountain Holidays for nearly twenty years.

Please note:

All MCNARGS members (and members of other NARGS chapters) are welcome to attend, free of charge. **If you plan on coming, please RSVP to Judi Dumont at judi.dumont@gmail.com by October 3** so she can provide NYBG with a list of attendees, drivers, and the number of vehicles.

Please use public transportation if possible. A Metro-North train leaves Grand Central at 8:42 a.m., arriving at the Botanical Garden station at 9:05. The 9:42 train arrives at 10:05. Please check the MTA website to confirm train times.

Those driving should enter via the Mosholu Gate (the one closest to the Library Building), NOT the main gate. Parking is always tight, so carpooling is encouraged.

We suggest you bring your own lunch. For those who prefer to purchase food, options include the full-service restaurant, Hudson Garden Grill, and the Pine Tree Cafe, a cafeteria near the Visitor Center.

Attendees are allowed free admission to the Rock Garden.

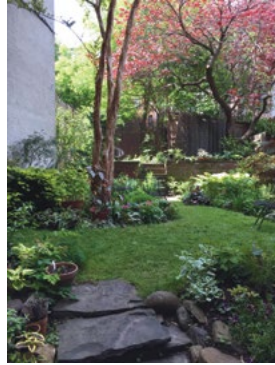
Please join us for a wonderful day of plants and plant talk!

- 9:45 – 10:30 Plant sales begin
- 10:30 – 10:45 Greeting and announcements
- 10:45 – 12:00 First talk: "Creating an Alpine Haven"
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch. Plant sales continue
- 1:00 – 1:30 Auction
- 1:30 – 2:45 Second talk: "Cream of Alpines"
- 2:45 – 3:30 Raffle. Plant sales continue
- 3:30 Meeting ends

THE TREASURES OF ST. MARKS

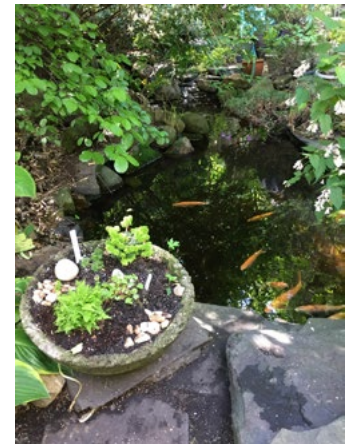
On Saturday, May 18, seventeen MCNARGS members gathered on St. Marks Avenue, in the Prospect Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, to have a look at several exquisite private gardens, all on the same block. Cultivating a patch of land on the terminal moraine is not easy; it took painstaking work and persistence – tackling hidden boulders, hilly terrain and jungles of weeds – to create these backyard jewels. We thank Jennifer Kalb, Barbara Oldham and Marcia Garibaldi for inviting us into their homes and sharing with us their beautiful gardens. A special thanks to Patti Hagan for organizing the tour, and who not only showed us her own unique streetside garden, but opened the gates to the St. Marks Avenue/Prospect Heights Community Garden for a private tour of this impressive and important community resource.

JENNIFER KALB
110 St. Marks Avenue



Photos by Jack Kaplan except where noted

BARBARA OLDHAM
116 St. Marks Avenue



MARCIA GARIBALDI
120 St. Marks Avenue



Photo by Judi Dumont

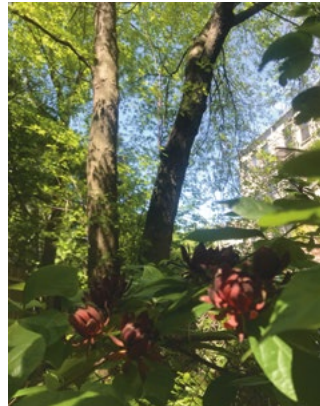


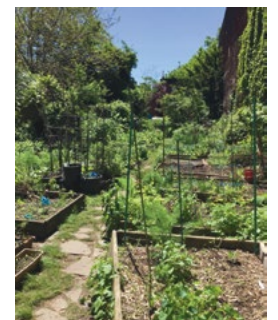
Photo by Brendan Kenney



PATTI HAGAN
117 St. Marks Avenue



**ST. MARKS AVENUE/PROSPECT HEIGHTS
COMMUNITY GARDEN, 207 St. Marks Avenue**



THINKING OF SEEDS AS THE SUMMER SIZZLES

Am I ever anticipating September! How fitting that with the easing of scorching temperatures, our MCNARGS meetings will resume. We'll see old friends and talk of plants and summer travels. And hopefully, we will have new faces to welcome.

Gardening changes its pace in late July and August, especially if rain is less frequent. I am not digging and dividing at this time. I think my plants deserve better than to undergo that blast of dehydration! However, I *am* collecting seeds and preparing to start sending them to the NARGS Seed Exchange. Late summer and fall is when seed collection goes into high gear, so I hope many of you will collect a few packets' worth, even if you are not a member of NARGS.

Here are my steps for collecting seed:

- 1) Save envelopes, i.e. those provided in mailings requesting contributions.
- 2) Choose seed that is ripe. If possible, work alongside someone who can advise you, but you will learn from the plants themselves.
- 3) Remove seeds from their capsules or pods or shake directly into an envelope.
- 4) Label each envelope with the plant's name, height and flower color.
- 5) Barely seal the envelope. Store envelopes upright in a dry place until you are ready to send them to the seed exchange. Once you've finished collecting seeds (I'm still harvesting certain aster species well into October!), it's time to proceed to step 6.
- 6) Spread contents of each envelope on a blank white sheet of paper.



This is the tricky part: you must separate seed from chaff – the dusty, lightweight matter that often accompanies seeds. Light blowing on the sheet will hopefully leave most of the seed in place while sending the chaff elsewhere (to the floor?)

- 7) Discard any seed that has bugs or evidence of decay.
- 8) Siphon remaining (good) seed into small seed packets (glassines are available from NARGS). Re-label and bring to a chapter meeting or send to Laura Serowicz if you're a member of NARGS.

If you've gotten this far you should be congratulated! And if you haven't already done so, it's time you joined NARGS so you can benefit from the perks of the SeedEx. Check out the seed collecting directions AND benefits at www.nargs.org/seeds. Get started right away! Those seeds won't be hanging around forever. Mother Nature will do her own job of spreading them around where she pleases. I prefer to redirect seed of my best plants to gardeners who want to grow them.

LOLA HORWITZ

NOTE: My admonition not to "dig and divide" notwithstanding, please consider which plants in your garden you can divide and pot up in September, for inclusion on the MCNARGS Plant Sale table at the upcoming October 13 Tri-State Meeting. Let's make it a table that our friends from Westchester, Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut flock to because of the richness of our offerings! Contact me at llhorwitz@gmail.com if you can contribute something or have questions about your plants.

WHY DON'T YOU?

by Steve Whitesell



Grow hardy summer-flowering bulbs. There are several attractive species of *Galtonia*. *G. candicans* is long-lived and has dramatic 3-4' spikes of lightly fragrant white bell-shaped flowers. There are several hardy species and cultivars of *Gladiolus* hardy to zones 6 and 7, including apricot-colored 'Boone' and white-edged red 'Atom'. Some *Zephyranthes* species may winter over in a protected spot. Try hardy aroids like

Sauromatum venosum, with mottled stems and divided leaves, but mark their locations, since they tend not to emerge until June.

Keep weeding regularly to improve your garden's appearance and prevent accumulations of ripe seed that will compound your work next season. Consider the time spent as close interaction with your garden, watching for disease and insect infestations and just enjoying the seasonal evolution of your plants.

Continue collecting choice seed of favorite plants to submit to the NARGS Seed Exchange as well as other plant societies you may belong to. Most offer additional seed packets in exchange for donations.

Try slipping some select culinary herbs into your rock garden. There are many ornamental *Thymus* and *Origanum* species and cultivars that would add good shape and form to troughs and rock gardens and can withstand occasional trimming for the table.



Photo by Brendan Kenney

Lola Horwitz and Richard Faraino at MCNARGS' annual plant sale. (Richard will speaking at our December meeting.) The sale was held this year on May 11 at El Sol Brillante Community Garden. The perfect spring weather brought out the shoppers. Thanks once again to all the members who pitched in to donate plants, transport them, set up and do all those unheralded tasks that make for a seamless and successful event.

ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

by Brendan Kenney, Chair



A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN but an alpine grows on Rikers. When Hilda Krus, our speaker on September 9, recently led a Metro Hort tour of the GreenHouse Program on Rikers Island, hypertufa troughs planted with alpine plants were a surprise. The ample space on the island allows a wide variety of plants to be grown. Beauty, hope and joy exist on Rikers due to this important program.

Surplus seeds from the NARGS seed exchange will be propagated in the Rikers greenhouse for addition to the troughs. Perhaps like Johnny Appleseed (William Chapman, 1774-1845; buried in Fort Wayne, Indiana), the Manhattan Chapter can spread NARGS seed to troughs and rock gardens throughout the tri-state area. The Randall's Island Park Alliance has already had great success growing our seeds. The results can be seen in the rock garden at the ferry landing on Randall's Island.

AN INSPIRING VISIT to the Nicholas Roerich Museum on West 107th Street, with its many beautiful paintings of the Altai and Himalayan Mountains, is a perfect antidote when the longing for alpine habitat becomes too great while in the city. Nicholas Roerich (1864-1947) was a Russian-born artist as well as a writer, archeologist, theosophist and philosopher. The free concerts at the museum are a delightful way to enjoy his mountain paintings.

Nicholas Roerich Museum
319 West 107th Street
Saturday and Sunday, 2-5 p.m.
Tuesday to Friday, noon-4 p.m.
Closed Monday
www.roerich.org



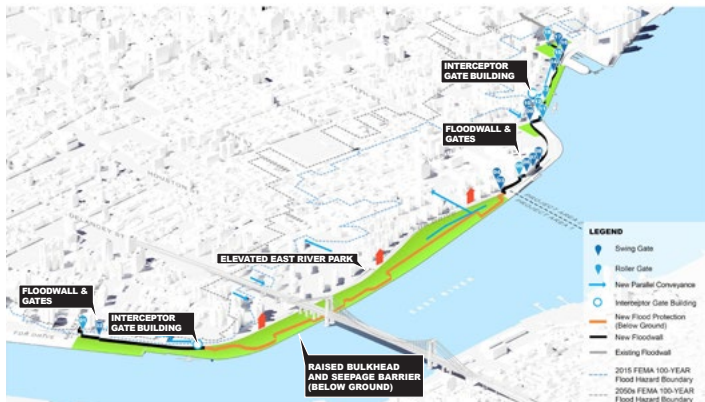
Devita by Nicholas Roerich (1932)

Back to the reality of living at sea level...

THE FATE OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER is uncertain. (Executive Director Christine Datz-Romero spoke to our chapter a few years ago). The East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, covering 2.4 miles from Montgomery Street to East 25th Street, currently proposes to add eight feet of fill to raise the level of East River Park. Better access will be provided but all of the trees will be removed and the entire park will be closed from

IMPROVED RESILIENCY FOR COMMUNITY

INTEGRATED FLOOD PROTECTION & INTERIOR DRAINAGE SYSTEM



East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, as of July 31, 2019 (New York City Planning Commission)

March 2020 until full completion at the end of 2023. No provision has been made for the LES Ecology Center in the interim or for its return to the park. The original city plan was to build berms, floodgates, and other barriers along the FDR Drive which would have had the appearance of hills. Under that plan, flood waters would have inundated the park. One wonders if that water is now proposed to flood Brooklyn and Queens!

The LES Ecology Center was founded in 1987, offering community-based recycling and composting programs as well as environmental education. In 1994 it started free public compost collection at the Union Square Greenmarket and in 2003 the Ecology Center began an electronic waste (e-waste) recycling program. Rising sea levels are a fact but one hopes that the important ecological progress of recent decades in New York will be given due respect.

Perspective is critical as we face climate change and new pathogens and insects attacking our plants. Sycamore anthracnose (*Apiognomonina veneta*) has been a growing concern in New York City. The London plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia*) in East River Park will succumb to clear cutting instead of this fungus. Appreciate the joy of alpine plants in unexpected places and gorgeous mountain paintings. Who would have thought of Rikers as a place where plants provide respite and hope for a better future!

Brendan Kenney

2020 NARGS ANNUAL MEETING CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Ithaca, New York, June 18-20

EXPLORATION & INNOVATION

Optional Pre-Conference Tour:

BOTANIZING THE ADIRONDACKS

June 15-17

Optional Post-Conference Tour:

GARDENS OF THE LOWER HUDSON VALLEY

June 21-23

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN (for tours only)

See NARGS website for info: www.nargs.org

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2019

CHAIR

Brendan Kenney ManhattanNARGS@verizon.net

PROGRAM CHAIRS

Brendan Kenney ManhattanNARGS@verizon.net
Susan Steinbrock ssteinbrock@gmail.com

TREASURER

Vacant

SECRETARY

Lola Horwitz llhorwitz@gmail.com

DIRECTORS

Nancy M. Crumley nancycrumley@gmail.com
Judith Dumont judi.dumont@gmail.com
Michael Riley riley2362@aol.com
Susan Steinbrock ssteinbrock@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Nancy M. Crumley nancycrumley@gmail.com

TOUR DIRECTOR

Brendan Kenney nycbeard@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jack Kaplan jkaplan1313@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER PROOFREADER

Nancy M. Crumley

NEWSLETTER FOUNDING EDITOR

Lawrence B. Thomas

THE MANHATTAN CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society, founded in 1987, is a group of gardening enthusiasts who are dedicated to the propagation and promotion of an eclectic range of plants, with emphasis on alpine and rock gardening selections. Our Chapter programs, designed for a sophisticated mix of professionals and amateurs, cover a broad spectrum of special interests such as rock and alpine, woodland, bog, raised bed and planted walls, as well as trough and container gardening.

The Urban Rock Gardener is a newsletter published by the Manhattan Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society.

© 2019 Manhattan Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society

No material published in this newsletter, printed or virtual, can be reproduced without the express permission of its author.

Cityscape artwork used with the permission of Abbie Zabar. All rights reserved.

Our gratitude to Michael Riley for donating the printing and mailing of the *Urban Rock Gardener*.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Monday, November 18

**Survival in the Darwinian Garden:
Strategies for Planting the Fittest**

KAREN BUSSOLINI

Photographer, Writer, Teacher

Monday, December 16

Present Moment Past:

The Irish Hunger Memorial

RICHARD FARAINO

Horticulturist, Irish Hunger Memorial

Battery Park City

THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



JOIN TODAY. NARGS is for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials and woody plants. Annual dues in the U.S. and Canada are \$40, payable in U.S. funds. VISA/Mastercard accepted.

Benefits of membership include: *Rock Garden Quarterly* with articles on alpiners and

North American wildflowers; annual Seed Exchange with thousands of plant species; study weekends and annual meetings in either U.S. or Canada; and book service.

Join online at www.nargs.org. Or write: Bobby J. Ward, Executive Secretary NARGS, P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604.

The NARGS *Quarterly* is now online and members have free access at www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL THE UPCOMING MEETINGS

Submission deadline for November/December issue: October 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

5½ Jane Street #4R
New York, NY 10014

FIRST CLASS MAIL



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK,
TWITTER & INSTAGRAM