

Volume 32, Issue 2 March/April 2019

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 18 at 6 p.m. NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room D

THE ANZA-BORREGO **DESERT IN BLOOM**

Speaker: **Ben Burr**

via Skype

n March 2017, Frances and I spent two and a half days viewing the "super bloom" in different parts of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park with Bob Schmidt, a former colleague, who has made many trips to the park. It was the second year after a four-year drought in the state and there had been unusually heavy rains that winter in Southern California. Conditions for photography were good and we were able to take advantage of morning and evening light and overcast skies.

Anza-Borrego is in the Sonoran Desert. Iconic species are brittlebush (Encelia farinosa), ocotillo (Fouquieria splendens), creosote bush (Larrea tridentata), indigo bush (Psorothamnus schottii), chuparrosa (Justicia californica) and honey mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa). Cacti are represented by many species of cholla (Cylindropuntia) and members of the Opuntia, Echinocereus, Ferocactus and Mammillaria genera. The Agave family is represented by desert agave (Agave deserti), Mohave yucca (Yucca schidigera) and the desert lily (Hesperocallis undulata). The most striking portion of the spring bloom is contributed by the numerous annuals; many species of the sunflower family abound. Other notable annuals include brown-eyed primrose (Chylismia claviformis), desert sand verbena (Abronia villosa), monkey flower (Diplacus bigelovii), four o'clock (Mirabilis tenuiloba) and members of the Phacelia genus.

It has been noted previously that the alpine plants cultivated by rock gardeners often share many characteristics with desert flora. These include short growing seasons in extreme environments with adaptations to temperature, drought and animal predation. Because of these environmental constraints, wide plant spacing is frequently observed, leading to an especially appealing aesthetic. BEN BURR



Desert five spot (Eremalche rotundifolia)



Brown-eyed primrose (Chylismia claviformis)



Fishhook cactus (Mammillaria dioica)





Beavertail (Opuntia basilaris)





Ghost flower (Mohavea confertiflora)





(Monoptilon bellioides)



Devil's spineflower



Bristly langloisia (Langloisia setosissima)



BEN AND FRANCES BURR are retired plant geneticists. They were active members of NARGS and the Manhattan Chapter for many years. They lived and gardened in Bellport, New York for forty years before moving back to California three years ago. Since then, they have begun re-familiarizing themselves with the extensive California flora by traveling to many parts of the state with cameras and plant floras in their backpacks.

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.



Nototriche mackleanii



The alpine bed in Ger's garden

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 1 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room D



Callianthemum kernerianum

THE BEST ALPINES OF MY LIFE

Speaker: Ger van den Beuken



Saxifraga sp. collected at Baltoro Glacier in Pakistan

Photos by Ger van den Beuken



Ger's alpine house



Dionysia afghanica 'Zdenek Zvolanek'

Dionysia collection



GER VAN DEN BEUKEN runs a small nursery in the Netherlands, specializing in rare alpines. His interest in alpines started about thirty-five years ago, during his first treks in the mountains. He found himself drawn to high alpine vegetation, fascinated by the beauty of wonderful genera like *Saxifraga*, *Androsace*, *Dionysia* and *Daphne*. His first impulse, and challenge, was to start growing mat-forming cushion plants. But as he found out, this was not always easy to do in the low land conditions of the Netherlands.

Ger and his wife Mariet have traveled extensively, with trips to many European countries and different parts of the European Alps,

the Sierra Nevada, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, northern and central Chile, the United States, China, New Zealand and Turkey. He has organized nine expeditions to Patagonia, becoming increasingly interested in the fascinating vegetation of Argentina and Chile.

As a lecturer, Ger has been featured on speaking tours in the United States with NARGS, in Scotland with the SRGC and in New Zealand with NZAGS. He has, in addition, lectured throughout the United States, England, Germany, Scotland, Czech Republic and Belgium, as well as in the Netherlands before his own Dutch Alpine Garden Society. Topics have included his many expeditions and various aspects of alpine plant cultivation.

Ger has served as president of the Dutch Alpine Garden Society (NRV) and is an honorary vice-president of the Saxifrage Society in England. In the winter, when not attending his nursery, he spends as much time as possible writing articles for the different societies, while listening to the baroque music of his favorite composer, Johann Sebastian Bach.



"SNOWDROPPING" IN THE U.K. WITH ERNIE

As many of you know, I go to the U.K. every February to enjoy the snowdrops. I frequently send emails to my friends who share an interest in these small white beauties, and have adapted my reports into the following article. I hope you enjoy reading about my adventures (and misadventures). – Ernie Cavallo

London to Daylesford to Ashwood

Most people go to the U.K. to see Big Ben and the Crown Jewels. I go to the U.K. to see 'Little Ben' and the Ground Jewels (i.e., snowdrops). There is only one problem: I must drive. In Arizona I have a 93-year-old mother with a bad hip, who has reached the point where she will walk only for food. In the U.K., this 69-yearold with a good head will drive only for snowdrops. So, on my second day in the U.K., faced with the need to go from London to Kingswinford, a distance of 100 miles, I visited the local Avis office and picked up a Ford Kuga. Remember when cars had names with real words from the dictionary? There were animals, such as the Impala, the Mustang and the Cougar. There were glamorous places evoked by the Eldorado or the Riviera. I am sure I do not know what Kuga is supposed to evoke, and at the time I picked up the car, I did not care. The terror of right-hand drive, which actually means that the steering wheel is on the right side of the car, and the car travels on the left side of the road, filled me with dread. Even my muse Beyoncé ("to the left to the left") would have shaken her head at me when the agent gave me the keys and I promptly got in the passenger seat. Oh yeah.



Cake topped with G. fondantus



Just a small sampling of Ashwood's extensive selection of alpines



John Massey leads a tour of Ashwood Nurseries

No steering wheel. How did I get out and get in the right side? Sheepishly.

Despite my dread and a downpour, I managed to get out of London without incident. There was heavy rain on the M40 to the Cotswolds but, as I drove through Chipping Norton, the sun appeared and lit my way to the Oz of food: Lady Bamford's country market-cum-restaurant, Daylesford, with its spas and shops.

I got the best possible seat overlooking the courtyard and ordered a hamburger made with beef that once lived across the road from the restaurant. I asked the server for "medium rare." She told me that Daylesford only served its burgers "well done." Since I did not want quinoa salad or kale frittatas, I ordered the burger. Sadly, a cow died to create that burger.

My trip continued with no delays, no mishaps and no confusion until I got off the motorway, drove the last six miles in rush hour through twelve roundabouts, and found the Premier Inn. It was no more an "inn" than the adjacent McDonald's was a "restaurant." Nonetheless, my friends, the MacLennans, were waiting for me in the lounge, with Alan Street of Avon Bulbs and John Massey, owner of Ashwood Nurseries. I exhaled and enjoyed the good cheer and surprisingly good dinner (take that, Lady Bamford!) with this circle of friends in the snowdrop world.

By Tuesday morning, 9 a.m., I was at Ashwood Nurseries for a lecture by Alan Street.



Ashwood specializes in hellebores. Here is an outstanding example: *Helleborus* × *hybridus* 'Reanna's Ruby'.



Ashwood cultivates hepaticas. This is their Hepatica × schlyteri (Ashwood Hybrid Blue)

This is a dinosaur in the world of nurseries in that it only sells plants it grows on site. The lecture was fun and informative, and best of all, was followed by a snowdrop lunch featuring a cake sporting an extremely rare *Galanthus fondatus*. Afterwards, John Massey took us on a tour of the nursery. At the end of the day, it was worth a hundred roundabouts.

Galanthus Galore

If I had the choice between taking over Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory or the National Collection of Snowdrops, I would say goodbye to the world of "Pure Imagination" and hello to the world of "Hi Ho, Hi Ho, It's Off To Work I Go." A National Collection is a lot of work, but my dear friends, David and Margaret MacLennan, are up to it. They started collecting snowdrops in 2007, three years before I did. They now have over 1,800 different cultivars in their back garden in Carlisle, and are the Scientific National Collection Holders for snowdrops in the U.K. Invitations to visit are both rare and coveted

To give you an idea of what a mecca Carlisle has become, I was scheduled to visit in February of last year, but the MacLennans had to cancel for the best reason ever given by anyone who has ever canceled: Prince Charles wanted to meet them on that same day to discuss snowdrops in his garden at Highgrove! I took a rain check, and like any smart holder of a garden visit rain check, I cashed it in on a sunny day.

The logistics of obtaining and propagating, cultivating and recording this collection

Continued on Page 4



The raised display beds seen from my third floor bedroom window



The seedling at Avon that Ernie admired

"SNOWDROPPING"

Continued from Page 3

are mind-blowing, but Margaret has it all under control with up-to-date spreadsheets, color-coded markers and perfectly arranged beds designed and built by David. For a small sampling from their collection, see page 5.

The Hardy Plant Society Galanthus Group Goes To Avon Bulbs

Remember class trips? The anticipation? The preparation? The moment when you found a seat on the bus next to a friend?

I experienced the joy of the jaunt as I got into the minibus with my friend Susan, and we made the two-mile trip down a single track road to Avon Bulbs in Somerset. Alan Street, Avon's Head Nurseryman and Galanthophile Extraordinaire was our guide.

Alan took us to the dell where he has planted hundreds of different cultivars in hope that they will make unusual but beautiful offspring. He showed us a unique example, with horizon-



Here is 'Angel Flight', which has just passed all the tests and will soon be flying high on everyone's wish list. Notice the prostrate leaves and the poised but diminutive flowers. The quarter is for scale.



Avon's refrigerator room

tal bars on the outers (see photo). I admired it, and Alan said that he would put me down for one when he has vetted it.

In case you wondered how Avon keeps its snowdrops pristine and available for the tenweek season of shows, galas and meetings, they have a refrigerator room where the sales stock is held at 35.5 degrees for ten weeks. The snowdrops go into suspended animation while they wait for their moment on the sales bench.

N.B. To all who desire the rare cultivars: Avon publishes an export list for American customers in the summer, and although I put out my own list, I am more interested in exciting you at the prospect of obtaining the rarities than I am in making a profit. There are enough to go around to make everyone happy.

A Visit to East Lambrook Manor

Do you ever wonder what happens to special gardens when their owners die? The U.K. has the National Trust. We only have the Garden "Observancy, which is really the Garden "Observancy." (Yes, I just made up that word.) Perhaps the ephemeral nature of a garden is part of its art. More likely it is akin to the Banksy painting that self-destructed the minute it was sold.

East Lambrook Manor is the rarest of gardens. Created by garden writer Margery Fish between the 1930s and the 1960s, the Manor, through its three subsequent owners, has retained its esthetic. Mrs. Fish would not



The manor house with "tommies"



The Manor's tiny stream running through the garden behind the barn is home to thousands of early spring bulbs, ferns and hellebores



Hellebores and snowdrops happy together at the Manor

only recognize it, she would love it. So when the Hardy Plant Society Galanthus Group announced that it would be open to the participants of the Colesbourne Snowdrop Study Day, I was thrilled for the chance to visit.

I personally thanked the current owner, Mike Werkmeister, for his generosity in inviting us to come to his garden. I did find one flaw, though I said nothing: no *Galanthus* var. 'Margery Fish' anywhere to be seen. I think I shall send one next fall as a token of my appreciation to him and an expression of honor to her.

Breathless in Colesbourne

I am grateful for every breath I take every day in this world, but I am also hopeful every day that this world will take my breath away. On February 14, my wish came true. The Colesbourne Snowdrop Study Day has always been the highlight of my winter trip, eagerly anticipated from the day I receive the announcement sometime in December. The first two years I came, the weather was cold and damp with occasional snow. I loved hearing

the lectures, meeting the people and sipping my tea with lemon drizzle cake made by Lady Elwes, but I always felt I had missed something. When the sun finally came out during my third year, I was content. However, not in my wildest snowdrop dreams did I ever hope for a day like today. Cloudless blue skies with bees buzzing in the 50 degree air and snowdrops everywhere lifting their heads and spreading their tepals to release their perfume into the perfect day. And I was there, breathless.

The two lectures were informative. Dr. John Noakes had many interesting companion plants for snowdrops. And I can heartily recommend The Galanthophiles, the new historical retrospective on the people behind the plants, written by our two morning speakers, Jane Kilpatrick and Jennifer Harmer.

Ten years ago I came as a stranger, but each year since, I have left as a friend. I may have a "same time next year" friendship with the people I have met, but the admiration and respect I feel for them and they have all shown to me, convince me that what I have found is real. As you can see, I love the plants and the people. I can't wait for the "same time next year."



In every direction, snowdrops!

Photos by Ernest Cavallo

FROM THE COLESBOURNE COLLECTION







'Finchale Abbey'



'South Hayes'



'Windmill'

FROM THE THE MACLENNAN COLLECTION



'Margaret Biddulph'



'Starling'



'Mordred'



'Green Fingers'



Yes, the orange tip of 'Joy Cozens' is for real



The spathe and ovary of 'Carolyn Elwes' are bright yellow



'Pagoda'



'Glenorma'



One of the "must have" bulbs of the last decade, 'E. A. Bowles' was glorious in its abundance

ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN by Brendan Kenney, Chair



TRUTH IS IN THE SOIL. The land connects us all. Arcadia, a British documentary film (2017) beautifully illustrates this message as it combines historical film clips of people and landscape in Britain. As the vernal equinox approaches, it is a good time to reflect on our own relationship to the surrounding landscapes and reconnect.

Exploring 'Hudson Rising,' a new exhibition at the New-York Historical Society (through August 4), with its overview of 200 years of ecological change and environmental activism, provides

perspective on our local region. We learn how the Hudson River has been an incubator for ideas about the environment and our relationship to the natural world.

George Perkins Marsh's ideas about ecology in Man and Nature (1864) were instrumental in the creation of the Adirondack Park, though it was two years later that Ernst Haeckel coined the term "ecology." The advocacy of Verplanck Colvin, known as the "Great Surveyor of the Adirondacks," for a state forest preserve and the "Forever Wild" clause in the New York State Constitution in 1894, was also critical. The clause states, "The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed."

This means that all of the land in the state forest preserve, including the Adirondacks and Catskills, will be kept "forever wild." Any physical alterations to the land must be approved via a constitutional amendment, subject to a statewide vote by New Yorkers.

Truly, we are indebted to the foresight of these men and many others who have been stewards of the land. The defeat of the proposed power plant on Storm King Mountain in 1980 is a more recent example of continuing efforts to preserve the Hudson River landscape. Another example is the rebuilding of the Rock Garden at Untermyer Gardens in Yonkers. The Rock Garden was added around 1931 to William Welles Bosworth's original 1917 garden design. It had deteriorated to the point of disappearing until Timothy Tilghman and Stephen Byrns rediscovered it in 2012. The Untermyer Gardens Conservancy reports that the firm Glencar Water Gardens has now completed the hardscape. This future garden of woody and herbaceous sun-loving plants promises to be the equal of Untermyer's Temple of Love.



Verplanck Colvin's sketch of Mount Haystack, third highest mountain in New York State



President Polk's White House china bore this image of Primula vulgaris, reflecting a closer connection to the land in the 19th century

THE LAND CONNECTS US ALL, even when landscape memory is painful for some. On March 20, 1948, just a few months before his death, Hoosier James Baskett received an Oscar as a special award for his portrayal of Uncle Remus in the 1946 Disney feature film Song of the South. He was the first black man to receive the award, having headed to Hollywood after success on Broadway. Yet Baskett did not attend the film's world premiere at Atlanta's Fox Theater in 1946. None of the black cast members were there because segregation laws would have restricted them to the balcony. The NAACP boycotted the movie due to its idyllic portrayal of slavery, which is never mentioned in the film. In New York, a picket line formed outside Manhattan's Palace Theater soon after the film's premiere. Signs read, "We fought for Uncle Sam, not Uncle Tom." Baskett was

praised for his acting but criticized for accepting the stereotypical role. The nostalgic portrayal of the "Land of Cotton" as a benign terrain appealed to many whites.

Truth is in the soil. The significance of plants and landscape memories reaches our souls. Virginia's first lady recently insensitively handed out cotton to black children on a slave cottage tour. The meaning was clear. The land connects us all. As the vernal equinox approaches on March 20 at 5:58 p.m., take time to reflect on plants and landscapes meaningful to you. Brendan Kenney

Photo by Brendan Kenney

WHY DON'T YOU? by Steve Whitesell



Plan to mulch or top dress planting beds, pots and troughs early in the season, before you become overwhelmed with weeding and planting. Use whatever organic matter or gravel is appropriate for the situation.

Plant a tree to commemorate a loved one. What could better bring joy and stir good memories than a favorite tree growing and developing into something more beautiful every year, especially a species that may have a special association with your loved one? If you don't have the room for even a small

tree, maybe a friend or relative could accept the gift and provide a space for it. There is still time to order a fine specimen for spring planting.

Take note of spring and fall bulbs you admire and want to grow, while the former are blooming and the latter's foliage is in full growth and before they go dormant. If you don't keep a list of quantities, species and locations, you won't remember when you place orders and plant later in the summer and fall.

Sign up for a plot in a nearby community garden or volunteer time in a public park or community open space. There are so many ways to improve your immediate environment, and you will be the main beneficiary.

Begin dividing and repotting for the upcoming MCNARGS Spring Plant Sale on May 11 (see article, page 7). The selection and quantity of offerings is due to donors like you. If you are unable to donate plants, then donate your time. There are many tasks that need to be done and a slim list of dedicated volunteers to perform them.



MCNARGS ANNUAL PLANT SALE SATURDAY, MAY 11

El Sol Brillante Community Garden 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

522-528 East 12th Street between Avenues A & B

ur annual plant sale will be here before we know it, so be sure to put **Saturday**, **May 11** on your calendar. The Plant Sale is a wonderful event for urban plant lovers and an important fundraiser for our chapter. In addition to plants provided by chapter members (YOU!), the Plant Sale Committee will select and purchase a variety of reasonably-priced rock garden plants and other uncommon perennials for sun and shade from Gowanus Nursery and other specialty nurseries.

Enthusiastic member participation is key to the success of the sale. Here are some ways you can help:

- Donate plants from your garden (see below for details).
- Help transport plants to El Sol Brillante early the morning of the sale or to one of our plant-holding locations a week or two before the sale. Contact Lola Horwitz (llhorwitz@gmail.com) if you can help with this.
- Help with publicity by inviting your plant-loving friends, neighbors, colleagues and fellow community gardeners.
- Post flyers, send emails, tweet, and invite Facebook friends. Find the event through the MCNARGS Facebook page.

For plant donors — please read:

- All types of well-grown plants are needed not just rock garden and alpine plants.
- Pot up your offerings well in advance so they are well-rooted and settled in their pots by May 11.
- Label your plants with the name of the plant. Please note that plants without labels will not be accepted for the sale. Additional information (name of donor and growing conditions) is helpful but not required. A photo from your garden or a catalogue showing the mature plant in bloom can really boost sales. Michael Riley has generously offered to make photo labels of donated plants, so please contact him directly (a week or more in advance of the sale, if possible) at riley2362@aol.com if you'd like photo labels for any plants you're donating.
- Bring plants to El Sol between 8:45 and 9:30 a.m. We need time to price each plant before the sale begins.
- If you have plants to donate but can't come the day of the sale, please contact Lola Horwitz to make other arrangements.

Please note: Members arriving early with their own healthy, labeled plants will have first choice of one purchase at the start of the sale. ***No plant shopping before 10:00 a.m., please!***

If you'd like to help with the sale, or have any questions please contact: Lola Horwitz at llhorwitz@gmail.com
Judi Dumont at judi.dumont@gmail.com
Susan Steinbrock at ssteinbrock@gmail.com



MCNARGS WELCOMES ITS NEWEST BOARD MEMBER SUSAN STEINBROCK

painter by training, Susan Steinbrock has always had a flair for artistic design, be it in the home or garden. In 2004 she started Susan Steinbrock Design, producing scarves,

quilts and rugs, all displaying her unique color sense. More recently she has been producing wallpaper and fabrics based on her striking paper collages. In 2010 she earned her Certificate of Horticulture from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the following year began designing, planting and maintaining gardens throughout Brooklyn. Susan joined MCNARGS in 2015 and has been a valued member ever since, helping with our annual plant sale and participating in many of our activities. We are delighted that Susan has joined the Board of Directors, where her talent and dedication will surely prove an invaluable asset to our chapter.

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2019?

We value your involvement in MCNARGS and hope you plan to re-up for 2019. Renewals were due in December, so please do not delay any further!

If you have a multi-year membership and aren't sure of your status, feel free to contact Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) at 718.788.3306 or nancycrumley@gmail.com.

MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS MEMBERSHIP FORM Date:						
Please complete this form and give it with your payment (cash or check payable to MCNARGS) to Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) at the next chapter meeting. Or, mail a check with the form to Nancy Crumley at: 324 Seventh Avenue #4R Brooklyn, NY 11215						
Check one: ☐ 1-year Membership \$30 ☐ 3-year Membership \$75						
PLEASE PRINT NEATLY: Name:Address:						
City: State: Zip: Phone: Email:						
Check all that apply: ☐ I am renewing my membership ☐ I am a new member ☐ I would like to receive a paper copy of the newsletter ☐ I would like my newsletter via email only						
We are a volunteer organization and would like your participation in our activities. How can you help? ☐ Help with Plant Sale ☐ Help increase our presence on Social Media ☐ Serve as Webmaster ☐ Contribute articles to the newsletter ☐ Other:						

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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.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 11 MCNARGS Annual Plant Sale

El Sol Brillante Community Garden

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Saturday, May 18 Prospect Heights Garden Tour

Details to follow



MCNARGS WELCOMES
OUR NEW MEMBER

Lisa Shufro

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 alpines 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 EVENTS

Submission deadline for May/June issue: April 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY
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FIRST CLASS MAIL							



