

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 30, Issue 2

March/April 2017

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 20 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room A



GARDENING INSPIRATIONS FROM THE SMOKY MOUNTAINS

Speaker:

Kim Eierman

The Smoky Mountains boast some of the healthiest ecosystems and greatest biodiversity in North America. Our Northeastern landscapes have quite a few of the same native plants, but far less healthy ecosystems. Learn how the beauty and the ecology of the Smoky Mountains can be modeled in your own landscape. Boost your own garden ecosystem with these gardening inspirations from the Smokies.



KIM EIERMEN is an Environmental Horticulturist specializing in ecological landscapes and native plants. Based in New York, she teaches at the New York Botanical Garden, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Native Plant Center in Westchester, the Rutgers Home Gardeners School and several other institutions. Kim is an active speaker nationwide on many ecological landscape topics, presenting for industry conferences, "green events," Master Gardener groups, garden clubs, nature centers, Audubon Society chapters, beekeeping groups, and other organizations interested in environmental improvements. Kim also provides horticultural consulting to homeowners and commercial clients.

In addition to being a Certified Horticulturist through the American Society for Horticultural Science, Kim is a Master Gardener, a Master Naturalist, an Accredited Organic Landcare Professional, a Steering Committee member of the Native Plant Center and a member of the Garden Writers Association.

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

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 17 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room A

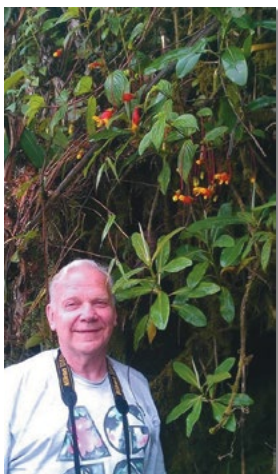
EPIPHYTES IN THE CONCRETE JUNGLE

Speaker:

Michael Riley



After many trips to Central and South America to explore and collect plants for scientific purposes, Michael Riley set about to free his cultivated plants from their proverbial pots in the midst of his home in New York City. Considering the fact that anything and everything growing in Manhattan is in a virtual container bound by rock, concrete, bricks and mortar, the idea of epiphytes growing on vertical cork walls was not the horticultural stretch one might imagine. In fact there are many similarities in meeting the horticultural needs of epiphytes, lithophytes and rock garden plants that enjoy their head in the sun and their feet in a cool, wet place!



MICHAEL RILEY is the immediate past Chairperson of the Manhattan Chapter of NARGS, and is known for growing (or attempting to grow) everything, everywhere. He is active in the Gesneriad Society, the Orchid Society, the Bromeliad Society, the Indoor Garden Society, the Aroid Society and the Clivia Society, and he works with his friends at Ecuagenera in Ecuador in the propagation, distribution and sale of orchids and other tropical plant material worldwide.

MCNARGS ANNUAL PLANT SALE SATURDAY, MAY 6

El Sol Brillante Community Garden

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

East 12th Street between Aves. A & B



Photo by Nancy Crumley

Our annual plant sale will be here before we know it, so be sure to put the date in 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 several specialty wholesale 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. See below for more info.
- Help with publicity by inviting your plant-loving friends, neighbors, fellow community gardeners, etc.
- Post flyers, send emails, and invite Facebook friends. Find the event through the MCNARGS Facebook page.
- Come early to help and stay to buy!

Particulars for plant donors:

- Pot up your offerings in advance so they are well-rooted and settled in their pots on May 6.
- Label your plants, including relevant information about the plant, and if possible, include a photo of the mature plant in bloom from your garden or from a catalogue.
- Bring plants to El Sol between 8:45 a.m. 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 or Mary Buchen to make other arrangements.

Please note: Members have first choice of one purchase from the sale if they bring their own healthy, labeled plant(s) early.

If you'd like to help with the sale, please contact Lola Horwitz, Mary Buchen or Judi Dumont at: llhorwitz@gmail.com, marybuchen@gmail.com, or judi.dumont@gmail.com.

NANCY M. CRUMLEY



WHAT'S MY GARDEN UP TO?

Too tempting are these blue-sky days that draw me outside – in spite of what needs attention inside. If the sixty-degree weather continues, the two leafless *Ficus carica* ‘Brown Turkey’ will be coming up from the basement where they have been hibernating since Thanksgiving.

How different last year when the olive trees had shriveled leaves and I had a pit in my stomach. All because I left them in desiccating winds and single digit temperatures. But the one surviving *Olea europaea* ‘Albequina’ went to my neighbor’s greenhouse in Bedford from late February through April. Thank you, Stephen. Best ever cup-of-sugar favor.



I have been on my six-foot ladder – with goggles – pruning out twiggy branches of river birches, *Betula nigra* ‘Heritage.’ Now is the time to eliminate congestion problems, though not the last time. I like their multi-trunk clumps with peeling bark of pinkish overtones in my garden, but birches grow too quickly; they are not the hardwood of my former hawthorns. Nevertheless, they are a cinch to prune with the long-handled shears that at one time trimmed off feathery new growth on *Taxus baccata* hedges.

The *Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica* ‘Morris Midget’ has renewed signs of life in every node and cranny. Two globes of *Buxus microphylla* ‘Kingsville’ that Steve Whitesell dug up for me from his Jamaica garden when he moved upstate remain emerald green and gorgeous. Larry Thomas’ unnamed campanula held its leaves all

Illustration © Abbie Zabar. All rights reserved.

winter. Gary Vellenzer’s fuzzy *Iris reticulata* is lounging over edges. And too Ellie Popper’s 2008 Easter gift, *Androsace studiosorum*. All of the saxifraga are about to have their moment, especially the encrusted ones. It is almost time to add my mulch of Starbucks coffee grinds (<https://news.starbucks.com/news/starbucks-coffee-grounds-for-the-garden>) to the blueberry bushes because their canes are stippled with cerise buds. Same color as the *Euonymus fortunei* ‘Colorata’ that needs clipping back. I shorten each cutting to a pair of leaves before jabbing them into the soil – a no hocus-pocus procedure for covering walls up here, without spending a dime.

I sprinkle additional clay shards around the emerging *fraises des bois* leaves to prevent heaving. I am hoping it is Ernie Cavallo’s *Galanthus* ‘Lady Beatrix Stanley’ sheaths that popped up with the groundhog this year. My *Lavandula* ‘Hidcote’ are buxom with new growth. But I am no longer tempted to prune them until spring is here to stay. I don’t care how they do it in Provence. I learned the hard way. My lavender grows in pots, in Zone 6B, and the branches die back if their freshly-cut tops are exposed to frigid mid-season winds. I rest my case.

Every single orchid plant has been outside for weeks. But it is Abby Jane Brody’s *Albuca spiralis* with the coiled foliage that gets all the attention. Honestly, the bulb is a metaphor for a city that never sleeps. Not only is ‘Frizzle Sizzle’ about to again flower with a gorgeous chartreuse bloom, but I removed two tiny bulblets for our upcoming plant sale.



As I write this, there are twenty-five days until spring and I have not bought – nor ordered – anything for my garden. Buddha says, “I have what I need.” I am practicing my mantra: “I will work with what I’ve got.” I intone that every year. Until I see the *Buxus microphylla* ‘Kingsville’ that Dave has set aside under his tables at the Union Square Greenmarket and I think, “How thoughtful, for me?”

ABBIE ZABAR

A LETTER FROM RALEIGH

We moved last spring from a garden that I had been tending for 41 years to a townhouse and smaller (very tiny) garden—mostly shade plants. And I am still satisfied with good memories and photos and mental images of the old garden.

Spring came here in North Carolina several weeks ago. Only a bit of snow and thin ice in mid-January at 17°F here, with a total of 81 hours below freezing. Then spring, feeling almost like summer, arrived and has stayed. We had three days in February with temps of 80°F and are expecting the same today. Plants are way early in blooming—including the nuisance Bradford pears. Deciduous magnolias, quince, *Prunus mume*, daffs, hellebores, cyclamen, even a few tulips are up. And it has been a magnificent season for *Camellia japonica*. The city is full of them. With the warm weather, the farmers worry about strawberries and peaches, about a month early in blooming. With likely a cold snap that will damage the fruits.

Last Friday I went to Charlotte to attend a board meeting of the Elizabeth Lawrence House & Garden Committee, and the garden was spectacular. To the right is a photo I took of the following in bloom: *Prunus subhirtella* ‘Autumnalis’ (lower left), *Magnolia denudata* (upper left), *Magnolia x soulangeana* and *Magnolia x veitchii* ‘Peter Veitch’. I thought you’d like to see it.

Best,
BOBBY WARD

Bobby Ward is the Executive Secretary of the North American Rock Garden Society.

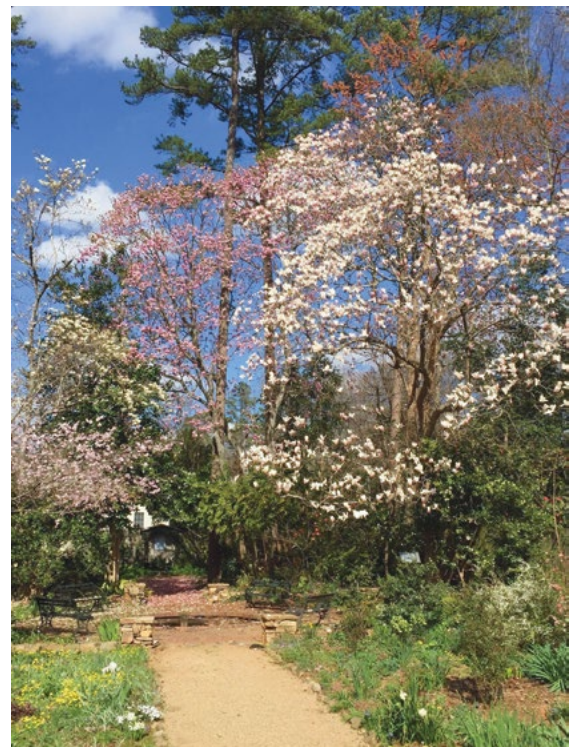


Photo by Bobby Ward

A LETTER FROM THE NEW EDITOR OF THE NARGS ROCK GARDEN QUARTERLY

Dear Members,

I am excited and honored to be taking over as the new editor of the NARGS *Rock Garden Quarterly*. Under the leadership of Malcolm McGregor, the Quarterly has been one of my very favorite gardening publications, and I hope to carry on Malcolm's legacy and keep making the Quarterly even better. I will certainly have big shoes to fill; but I'm excited and looking forward to the challenge.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm a life-long gardener and have been rock gardening since college. I'm an alumnus of the great nursery, Arrowhead Alpines, and have written a couple of books—one on rock gardening and one on plant breeding. But you are all plant nerds, so here is what you really want to know: I'm currently obsessed with growing hardy cacti from the genus *Echinocereus*, collecting as many species of *Onosma* as possible, and trying to figure out why I can't keep *Gentiana acaulis* alive. (If you can grow it beautifully, I don't want to hear about it. Everyone keeps telling me that and it is driving me crazy.) But my deepest alpine love is the genus *Daphne*. They thrive in my climate in southeast Michigan and I simply cannot get enough of them.

As I take over the editorship, I'm doing a lot of brainstorming about what sorts of articles I want to include, new features to add, and how the Quarterly can continue to grow, evolve and become even better. I hope that you'll join in that process with me. If you are reading this and thinking, "I hope he does X" or "I'd love to see more articles on Y" or even, "I wish they'd stop publishing Z,"

please shoot me an email directly (gsparrowgardens@gmail.com) or through the contact form on the NARGS website (<https://nargs.org/user/6119/contact>) and share your thoughts. This is a brainstorming period; so if you have an idea, no matter how wacky, please share! I'm excited to hear your thoughts, and if you don't send me a comment, you officially forfeit your right to complain if I screw everything up.

I also want to bring new voices to the Quarterly, so I hope you will consider writing an article. You don't need to be an expert — beginners often have a fresh perspective and you might have valuable insights for other rock gardeners who are just getting started. Please don't feel like you have to be a professional writer to contribute. Part of my job as editor is to help you through the writing process. So if you have an idea — even just a piece of an idea — please get in touch and we can talk through how to make that idea into a terrific article. And if you know someone who is a great writer or has great ideas and you think they should write an article, send me their name so I can harass them until they give in and start writing.

So, thank you in advance for all your thoughts, articles, and hopefully a little patience as I learn the ropes of this new job. I'm looking forward to working for and with all of you.

JOSEPH TYCHONIEVICH

gsparrowgardens@gmail.com

2731 International Drive Apt. 1724A
Ypsilanti, MI 48197-3131

A FEW VIEWS OF KEW

Every February Ernie Cavallo visits Kew Gardens in London and this year was no exception. Here is some "eye candy" he'd like to share with his fellow gardeners.

Daubenyia aurea



Bird's eye view of trough



Photos by Ernest Cavallo

Dionysia tapetodes



Galanthus 'Ginn's Imperati'

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) or Yukie Kurashina (Treasurer) at a chapter meeting.

Or, mail a check with the form to:

Yukie Kurashina 3217 Hull Avenue Apt. 8D Bronx, NY 10467

Please check one:

Individual \$20 Individual - 3 years \$50 Student \$15

Gift Membership \$15

Current members may give a Gift Membership to a new member.

PLEASE PRINT NEATLY:

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please 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?

Plant Sale Committee Contribute to our presence on Social Media

Help plan October Tri-State meeting Contribute articles to the newsletter

Other: _____

ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

By Brendan Kenney, Chair



GARDENING CULTURES OF NEW YORK

A broken pipe in the apartment above mine led to a month shuttling between West 74th Street in Manhattan and the far reaches of Brooklyn, which exposed me to a different garden culture. The aesthetic and concepts of what a garden should be covers a broad range in our diverse city. Small urban gardens are ideal for rock gardens. Many of us have known the joys and tribulations of tree pit gardening.

Outstanding examples abound, though the initial enthusiasm to maintain a tree pit oneself usually wanes after a few years. The discovery of a pit full of unusual healthy plants in a beautiful composition always delights the horticulturally-inclined flâneur. Charles Dean's efforts on the Upper East Side were admired for many years before I met him. Tree pits are the ultimate in public gardening, as they are viewed by the passing multitudes.

Dwarf conifers of Queens have long fascinated me. Why is there a Queens garden style that is unique to the borough? Aside from



Photo by Brendan Kenney

Laundry basket troughs. Creative gardeners in Bath Beach, Brooklyn.

WHY DON'T YOU?

by Steve Whitesell



Add organic and gravel mulch to planting beds and containers early, before the explosion of spring growth when you'll be overwhelmed by other pressing tasks. If any vertical surfaces need paint, try to apply it on warm days before growth starts to prevent inevitable paint splashes on new foliage.

Braided stainless steel picture wire tethered to screw eyes at either end is an easily installed and visually discreet support for vines and climbing plants. Install them in wood or masonry surfaces before growth begins.

Try to stay off lawns and garden beds as much as possible until soil has dried out, to prevent compaction. Add stepping stones as necessary to provide access for pruning and spring clean-up. Limiting foot traffic will also help prevent trampling of emerging foliage.

Make a map of locations in your garden that could use more spring bulbs, noting species and quantities. Otherwise, when it's time to order bulbs, you'll have forgotten.

the conifer collection on the roof garden of the Arsenal in Central Park, a stroll through many neighborhoods in Queens is the best way to view dwarf conifers in New York City. Brightly-colored azaleas are another favorite that will soon provide a garish display emblematic of that distinctive style.

Brooklyn, the largest borough by population, is not defined by one gardening style, but distinctions between neighborhoods. Riding a bike from the southern shore back to Manhattan, the diversity becomes apparent. The aesthetic of Bath Beach and Bensonhurst front gardens can be shocking and would often be judged to be "wrong." There is an apparent lack of understanding of the possibilities of a small garden.

The Bronx, with its many rock outcroppings, is fertile ground for rock garden enthusiasts. The often dramatic landscape is situated for horticultural grandeur in the imagination. If Joseph Tycho-nievich's prediction of a Rock Garden Renaissance is truly on the horizon, New York City in all its diversity should be in the forefront. Small front gardens cry out for better solutions while varying aesthetics inspire us.

KURT VONNEGUT'S WORDS ABOUT HOOSIERS could be paraphrased concerning our favorite Hoosier, Michael Riley, and horticulture... I don't know what it is about Michael Riley, but wherever you go there is always Michael Riley doing something very important there. His talk on April 17th is a highlight of our Spring 2017 schedule.

Brendan Kenney

Note: Jane Allison, who lived in the Village for 60 years, wrote a newspaper column called "A Hoosier in Manhattan" for many decades.

NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY UPCOMING EVENTS

NARGS STUDY WEEKEND

May 19 – 20, 2017, Madison, Wisconsin

Registration form available in the *Rock Garden Quarterly* (Winter 2016/17), pages 28-29.

Additional dates have been added for two upcoming tours:

PLANTSMAN'S TOUR OF WYOMING

6-Day Tour

June 14 – June 19, 2017

For information contact Tour Committee co-chair Jody Payne at jodycpayne1@gmail.com or call her at 201-314-6685

THE ITALIAN DOLOMITES

8-Day Tour

June 21 – June 28, 2017

For booking and inquiries, please contact David Phillips at davidphillips@naturetrek.co.uk or Malcolm McGregor at mmcg@mmcg.karoo.co.uk

See the *Rock Garden Quarterly* (Winter 2016/17) for details on both tours.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2017

CHAIR

Brendan Kenney ManhattanNARGS@verizon.net

TREASURER

Yukie Kurashina ykurashina@hotmail.com

SECRETARY

Lola Horwitz llhorwitz@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Nancy M. Crumley nancycrumley@gmail.com

PROGRAM CHAIR

Vacant

DIRECTORS

Michael Riley riley2362@aol.com

Judith Dumont judi.dumont@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER

Jack Kaplan, Editor jkaplan1313@gmail.com

Nancy M. Crumley, Proofreader

Michael Riley, Printer

Lawrence B. Thomas, Founding Editor

TOUR DIRECTOR

Brendan Kenney nycbeard@gmail.com

WEBMASTER

John Rommel jrommelnyc@gmail.com

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 alpine and North American wildflowers, illustrated in color photographs and pen and ink drawings; 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, USA.

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 May/June issue: April 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

101 West 104th Street
New York, NY 10025

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Monday, May 15

The Challenges of Urban Gardening
From the Randall's Island Park Alliance:

PHYLLIS ODESSEY

Director of Horticulture

EUNYOUNG SEBAZCO

Horticulture Manager

KEVIN WIECKES

Head Gardener

June (Date to be announced)

Brooklyn Garden Tour

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.

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