

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 29, Issue 4

September/October 2016

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Monday, September 19 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room D (Quince)

BETWEEN A PLANT AND A HARD PLACE: The Trials and Tribulations of an Urban Plant Nursery

Speaker:

Michele Paladino
Gowanus Nursery



Michele describes her talk as inspired by Tony Avent's *So You Want to Start a Nursery* (Timber Press, 2003), but with a New York City perspective. She says, "Three locations in 10 years, whew! As one of the neighbors remarked on our first move: it's like watching a medieval castle being taken apart stone by stone!" Michele will be discussing the plants she likes to grow now, with a look at her favorite plants of the past, and what is popular in the trade. She will also share her thoughts on overlooked plants that deserve greater popularity.

MICHELE PALADINO established Gowanus Nursery in Brooklyn over 10 years ago. She has worked with Martha Stewart's television program, has contributed to Edwina von Gal's horticulture projects, and provides horticultural and design consulting for various residential and local civic landscapes. A background in Art History and Fine Art tempers Michele's wild childhood spent out-of-doors in the shrubbery, and both characteristics inform her design sensibility and plant selections to this day.

Michele in the Gowanus Nursery

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.

OCTOBER TRI-STATE MEETING

Sunday, October 16
New York Botanical Garden
Ross Auditorium

Eleftherios Dariotis

Speaker

MOUNT OLYMPUS

The mythical mountain and its mythical plants

THE BOTANICAL PARADISES OF GREECE

*A presentation of the country's
diverse habitats and their
associated flora*



ELEFThERIOS DARIOTIS (better known as Liberto Dario) is a horticulturalist and botanist from Athens, Greece. He studied plant production in Greece and completed an M.Sc. in Plant Biology from the University of California, Davis and another M.Sc. in Horticulture from the University of Reading in England. He has created two private gardens in Paiania, Greece, featuring a large variety of Lamiaceae and other plants. He has worked in the agricultural and environmental public sectors in Greece and has traveled extensively around the

world, especially in Greece's diverse habitats, to see and photograph native plants. Liberto currently leads plant tours in Greece and maintains a small bulb and seed nursery business. His plant interests include everything in the family Lamiaceae, with a special attraction to Salvias, along with a love for South African bulbs and Mediterranean-climate shrubs and perennials that he is continuously introducing and promoting in Athens' tough local gardening conditions.

Those attending please note:

This event is free of charge and all MCNARGS members are welcome to attend. ***If you plan to join us, contact Steve Whitesell at elysium214@aol.com so NYBG may be given an accurate head count.*** A list of registered attendees and the number of vehicles will be needed for security and parking the week before the event.

Because it is a "Special Weekend" at NYBG, parking will be tight. Please use public transportation or carpool whenever possible. Drivers should enter via the Mosholu Gate (the one closest to the Library Building) NOT the main gate (the Conservatory Gate).

Lunch will be on your own. Dining options include the full-service restaurant **Hudson Garden Grill** and the **Pine Tree Café**, a cafeteria near the Visitor Center. Attendees are allowed free admission to the Rock Garden. Those wishing to visit the *Kiku* exhibit in the Conservatory will have to purchase an All Garden Pass separately.

Metro North trains leave Grand Central at 8:24 a.m., arriving at the Botanical Garden station at 8:47. There is also a 9:24 train arriving at 9:47.

9:15 - 10:30	Arrival, plant sale setup and early shopping
10:30 - 10:45	Greeting and announcements
10:45 - 12:00	"Mount Olympus" and Q&A
12:00 - 1:15	Lunch and sales
1:15 - 2:30	"The Botanical Paradises of Greece" and Q&A
2:30 - 3:15	Raffle and cleanup

WELCOME, JACK KAPLAN

I can't remember whether I first met Jack at a MCNARGS meeting or at my house some cold evening after Thanksgiving where a small group of members gathers every year to process seeds for the NARGS Seed Exchange. In either case, I imagine we have Judi Dumont and/or Ellen Borker to thank for inviting him to join. I do remember that despite his claiming no experience at sorting seeds, he very soon became focused and fast, and, along with Ellen and Loretta Darby, is usually tasked with separating the most requested taxa into 20 to 50 piles.

Jack certainly has the focus needed. Over the course of recent years I've also learned that he has a love of opera (me too), a long professional career as an editor, and years of volunteering as a Garden Guide at BBG. He knows his way mentally through BBG's collections like few others, and listening to Ellen and him discuss this garden (that I thought I knew rather well) gives me great respect for their knowledge.

From my limited observation, Jack enjoys the world of plants through BBG, MCNARGS, travel, and the various people, books and articles that he has sought out. And he loves garden history. (Check out his article from several years ago about BBG's Shakespeare Garden for the BBG Auxiliary newsletter.*) All this, combined with his professional background, make him eminently qualified to edit our newsletter, *The Urban Rock Gardener*. With Jack as the new editor and with willing contributors, we will continue to have an exceptional newsletter. It is what reminds us that we have a vibrant chapter.

Bravo and good luck, Jack!

LOLA HORWITZ

*Volume 9, No. 2, February 2009

Thanks, Lola, for the vote of confidence. To set the record straight, my good friend Ellen Borker first met Judi Dumont, who introduced her to MCNARGS. Ellen and Judi encouraged me to come to the meetings, which I was a bit reluctant to do since I was not a rock gardener, especially in my very shady front yard. But Judi gave me a Gift Membership, and that settled the matter.

JK

NEW MEMBERS

MCNARGS welcomes new members:

Barbara Beringer

Jonathan Chan

Robin Robbins

ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

by Brendan Kenney, Chair



A perplexing email from the Horticultural Society of New York indicating that the Manhattan Chapter had “left books there” led me back to our former meeting location a few months ago. “Our books” turned out to be bound copies of *Rock Garden Quarterly* going back to the *Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society & Saxiflora Jan-Feb 1943*, which included an article by Claude Barr, “Jewels of the Plains.” This is also the title of his classic posthumous book about steppe

plants. Returning from the AGM electrified by Kelly Norris's talk, I was compelled to read the new edition revised by James H. Locklear, published last year by University of Minnesota Press. Though 194 of the 566 plant names have changed since 1983, there are other compelling reasons to read this newly edited classic. Detailed explanations of contrasting modern ecosystem terminology with the old and references to newer works add a wealth of information for anyone interested in Great Plains plants. In fact, many of the early articles I perused that day piqued my interest and led me to new discoveries. Intrigued by articles such as “A Landscape Architect Uses *Shortia*” by Fletcher Steele, I kept three volumes while the rest were discarded. The *Rock Garden Quarterly* and its predecessor publications have been digitized and are available to all on the NARGS website. In the digital age information is at our fingertips.

Reading the words of Harold Epstein, Edgar T. Wherry, H. Lincoln Foster and Laura Foster, and other less remembered names, reminds us of the historical importance of the New York area for the international organization. NARGS continues to struggle financially with the burden of its cherished publication.

The importance of the chapters in sustaining the group is clear. If you have not already done so, consider joining NARGS so that you can fully enjoy all the benefits of membership, which include receiving the *Rock Garden Quarterly*.

VIEWING NEW YORK from The Hills on Governors Island provides a new perspective of the city. Only 70 feet tall, covered with native plants and built entirely on fill, yet our newest “natural” area in the city feels like a higher elevation. On a warm day the windy spot is a welcome respite from the city. Climb The Hills by September 25 this year or you must wait until next May to visit.

HOOSIERS HAVE LONG MADE THEIR MARK in Manhattan. Recently I learned that Wyman Adams, the Hoosier artist who painted portraits of my grandmother 100 years ago, frequented the Salmagundi Club while living in New York. Brownstone from the former back steps of the Salmagundi Club was utilized in the construction of my first rock garden. This odd, tenuous connection sounds like something from a Kurt Vonnegut novel. Some connections are meaningless while others, such as NARGS, are full of significance.

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



Erythronium at Dumont Lake

Photos by Brendan Kenney



Wyethia amplexicaulis at Sarvis Creek



Nemophila maculata in Mike Kintgen's garden



Breakfast outdoors with Jonathan and Steve

THE 2016 NARGS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO JUNE 22-27

The NARGS Annual Meeting opened at the outstanding Denver Botanic Garden with a lovely al fresco dinner adjacent to the new Steppe Garden which is still under construction. Indeed, steppe plants were the theme of the meeting. New (returning) member Jonathan Chan, Steve Whitesell and I attended the AGM where amongst the many people we met was Mimi Jorling of Brooklyn, who works at the BBG Library and Gowanus Nursery. After dinner Mike Kintgen and Kenton Seth both gave lectures on Colorado plants. We discovered that Mike is not only a great plantsman but an entertaining and organized meeting host. It was greatly appreciated that all the talks were given in comfortable lecture halls.

After driving from Denver and checking into the spacious dorm, we headed straight to Strawberry Park Hot Springs to relax before dinner. Later, Nick Courtens lectured on the new Alpine House at the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, followed by Johan Nilson on "Bulbs and Alpines from Turkey and Iran at Göteborg Botanic Garden." On Friday morning we had breakfast outdoors at Yampa River Botanic Park. In my experience there has never been an AGM with such stunning locations for meals: dinner at DBG, sweeping views of the Yampa Valley from the dining hall at Colorado Mountain College and breakfast at Yampa River Botanic Park were all sublime. There were some transportation issues

for the local garden tours that followed breakfast. At the Chapter Chair meeting later it was clear that the Manhattan Chapter is highly regarded. Our fine newsletter certainly gives a good impression! After dinner on our own, the outstanding young plantsman, Kelly Norris, director of Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, had the audience spellbound by his knowledge, love of horticulture and easy delivery. He lectures around the country often, so do not miss a chance to hear him speak.

The following morning we hiked in the ski area with Nick Courtens. *Aquilegia jonesii* was beautiful and abundant. Somehow we got off the trail which made our moderate hike more difficult. Ed Spar tripped and tore a ligament. Trouper that he is, he hiked on with an improvised splint for another two miles to where he could be picked up. After he left the hospital he asked for a martini and all was well. That evening many rock gardeners could be seen at the rodeo. Steamboat Springs is a ski resort but is also known as a cowboy town.

Sunday morning we headed to Sarvis Creek on a hike led by Kenton Seth (famous for building many crevice gardens) and local Ryan Keating (builder of the extension to the rock garden at YRBP). We saw many plants but a seemingly endless field of *Wyethia amplexicaulis* was a true delight. That evening, after the banquet, Marcela Ferreya astounded us with the incredible plant diversity of Patagonia and her deep knowledge, in a stellar presentation.

On Monday after a fine breakfast at local favorite, Creekside Café, where many of Ryan Keating's admirable paintings were on display, we headed to Mike Kintgen's garden where we saw numerous choice alpines in various crevice gardens; but it was a large patch of *Nemophila maculata*, an annual endemic to California, that really drew our attention. Jody Payne had described fields of *Erythronium grandiflorum* next to melting snow at Dumont Lake which we visited on our way back from Steamboat Springs. It was a fitting ending to the AGM. Many thanks go to Mike Kintgen and the over 60 volunteers who coordinated the meeting in Denver and Steamboat Springs. We are looking forward to Madison, Wisconsin next year and Newfoundland in 2018! As always, it was great to see old friends and meet many new enthusiastic plant people.



Jonathan and Brendan at Denver Botanic Garden

SW

BRENDAN KENNEY

SINGING THE PRAISES OF UNSUNG PLANTS

The May 23 MCNARGS meeting, entitled “The Plant That All Are Praising Is Not the Plant For Me,” was given over to members eager to show-and-tell their favorite unsung plants.

Ellen Borker was first, and spoke of her unexpected success growing the “Lady Banks Rose,” *Rosa banksiae* ‘Lutea’, a yellow climber hardy only to Zone 8. Thanks to a microclimate created by a neighbor’s exhaust vent, some strategically-placed plexiglass, and a Southern exposure, this historic rose is thriving in her Park Slope garden. Ellen also has had success growing the David Austin cultivar, ‘Lady Hillingdon,’ a climbing tea with apricot-yellow flowers. She also touted ‘Veilchenblow,’ a nearly thornless multiflora hybrid with unusual purplish-blue flowers, and ‘Jeanne La Joie’ (commonly pronounced “Jennie La Joy”), a miniature climber. The flowers of “Jennie” may be small, but there is nothing miniature about this vigorous climber, which is scaling new heights in Ellen’s garden. All four roses are highly rated by the American Rose Society.

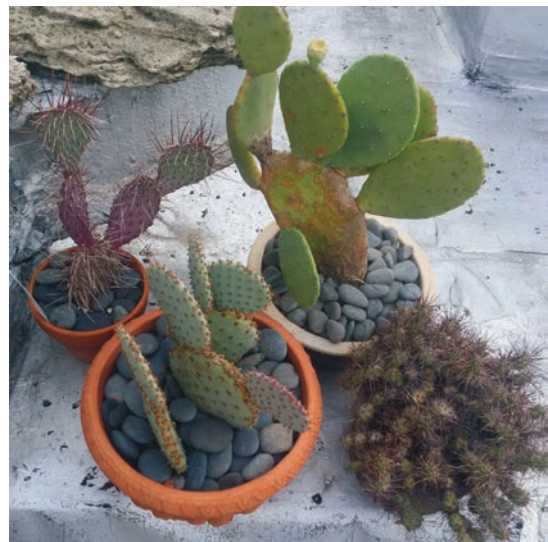
Lola Horwitz sang the praises of the rarely-grown *Codonopsis lanceolata*, commonly known as the bonnet bellflower, which makes an impressive show in her Brooklyn garden. This member of the Campanulaceae bears large, bell-like flowers on a vine that in her garden has reached 15 feet. The chartreuse flowers are creamy green on the outside with a maroon and chartreuse interior – very lovely. As if that isn’t enough, it has fall color. According to Lola, “it turns early, going from apple green to chartreuse to gold, then gone.” Its cousin, *C. pilosula* is an important plant in traditional Chinese medicine.

Finally, Michael Riley expounded on his collection of Opuntias. Not content with photographs or slides, he schlepped in four specimens from his rooftop garden on the Upper West Side. They

included the diminutive *O. fragilis*; the Eastern native *O. humifusa*, with its large pads; *O. rhodantha*, making an attractive display with its purplish pads, but bearing long, sharp bristles; and finally *O. violaceae* ‘Santa Rita,’ bearing new-growth “ears” with a distinctly purplish tinge, looking very appealing in a clay pot. All are hardy in this climate, except for the Southwestern native *O. violaceae*, which must be brought indoors when the temperatures slip below 30°. But growers beware – these plants are something of an occupational hazard. (TIP: to remove the spines from your finger try scotch tape!)

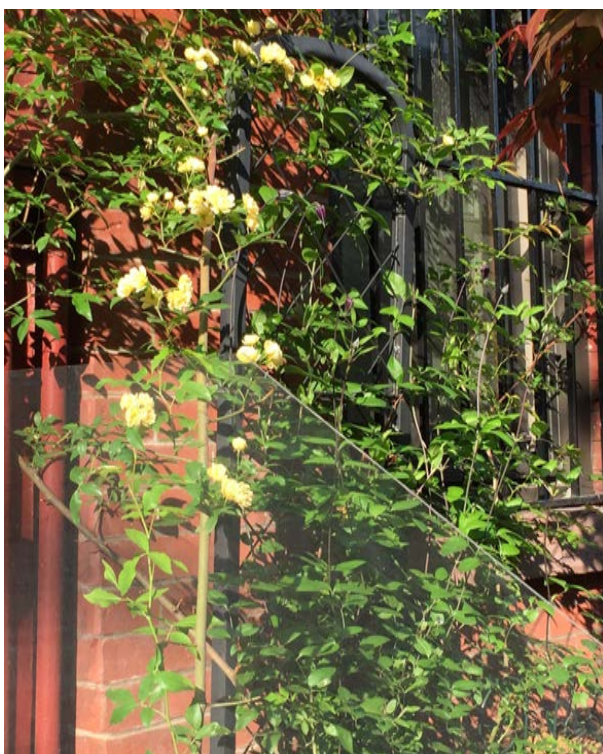
As an extra bonus, Michael brought a cello-wrapped package of *nopales*, opuntia pads, a favorite vegetable in Mexican households. These were distributed gratis for any takers.

JACK KAPLAN



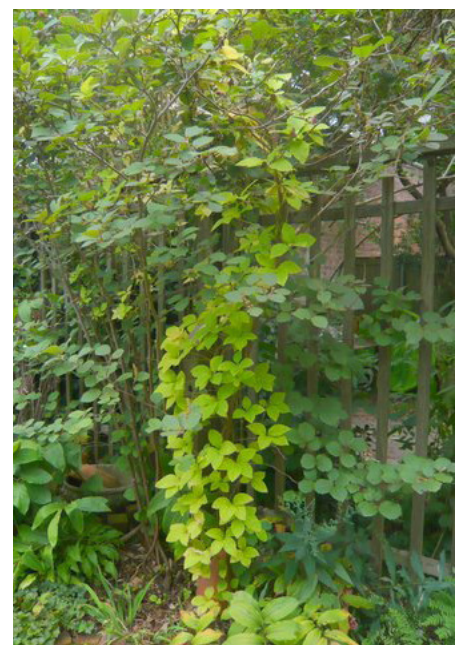
MR

Left to right: *O. rhodantha* ‘Dark Knight’, *O. violaceae* ‘Santa Rita’, *O. cacanapa* ‘Ellisiana’ and *O. fragilis* ‘Dufresne Yellow’



The Lady Banks Rose, with plexiglass

EB



Left: The flowers of *Codonopsis lanceolata* on the vine and decoratively arranged in a bowl. Right: the vine itself.

LH

MCNARGS Field Trip – June 12, 2016
LONG ISLAND GARDENS,
PUBLIC & PRIVATE

On Sunday, June 12 several MCNARGS members carpooled their way to the seventh Chapter garden tour organized by Brendan Kenney. We stopped at three destinations on Long Island's North Shore and were introduced to a wide range of inspiring horticultural experiences.

The group first converged on Martin Viette Nursery in Muttontown, long a haven for selective gardeners, featuring a wide range of woody and herbaceous plants, annuals and horticultural supplies. After stocking up we proceeded a short distance to the home of Gabrielle and Luke Kreye. Luke had recently spoken to Metro Hort on the development of the garden and other work constructed by three generations of his family over many decades and it was a treat to actually experience his creation after seeing slides.

Enormous and carefully chosen rocks had been transported to the site from family property in northeast Pennsylvania and placed to create craggy cliffs, scenic overlooks on the edge of the pond whose shores lapped the walls of the house and formed a bridge spanning the pond, providing access from the kitchen door to the garden. The shallow pond precluded the need for a railing or fence, yet still provided sufficient depth to overwinter enormous koi and catfish languidly coursing through the clear water. The gentle sound of moving water from a rocky waterfall masked the sound of the busy highway immediately adjacent to the garden. After absorbing the sensations of the garden and peppering our hosts with questions and exclamations of admiration, we were treated to a lavish bagel breakfast and shown plans of several elaborate projects constructed by the Kreyes in several states.

The last stop was Planting Fields Arboretum in Oyster Bay, the former Coe estate, now managed by New York as a state park and historic site. The park consists of over 400 acres and our first stop was the Synoptic Garden, where small trees and shrubs are

grouped alphabetically by genus. A group photo was staged on the bench dedicated to John Bieber, adjacent to the Daphne Garden he and other Long Island Chapter members created. We also saw many late-blooming shrubs in the famous Rhododendron collection, many grown to enormous size. Long vistas across sweeping lawns to the mansion were framed by clumps of enormous beeches and other shade trees, though several large beeches were lost to Phytophthora in recent decades and have been replaced with thriving young trees. We continued through the walled Pool Garden and the Camellia Greenhouse containing the largest collection in the northeast before convening for refreshment in the café, staffed by a single mysteriously absent employee. It was a memorable June day for all who participated.

STEVE WHITESELL



MCNARGS members seated on the John Bieber Memorial Bench adjacent to the Daphne Garden at Planting Fields Arboretum

SW

WHY DON'T YOU?
 by Steve Whitesell



Resolve to undertake garden renewal projects when the temperatures cool down a little? Top-dress pots and garden beds with organic matter. Renew gravel mulch in pots, troughs and rock garden beds. Make repairs to furniture and structures. Replace or repair cracked or damaged containers.

Collect gravel from the beds of creeks and streams to top-dress pots and troughs? Color and size gradations are generally good and the washed gravel is clean. Collect a few larger stones to embellish containers while you're at it. If you don't have access to a gravelly stream, aquarium gravel will do in a pinch.

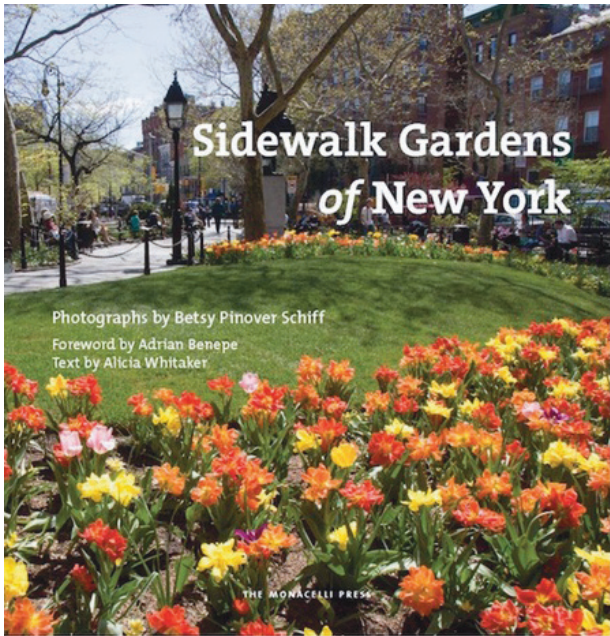
Finalize and submit bulb orders if you haven't already? Try a few new genera, species and cultivars you've admired in other gardens or a few unfamiliar things from specialty bulb nurseries like Odyssey Bulbs. Protect newly planted bulbs from squirrel and rodent depavation if that's a problem. Lots of methods are described online.



The Kreye Garden. Luke Kreye, upper left.

LH

Congratulations to MCNARGS member Alicia Whitaker on the publication of her new book, *Sidewalk Gardens of New York*



To quote the publisher, “Fall in love with New York again with *Sidewalk Gardens of New York*, which reveals the City’s explosion of greenery over the last 15 years. Featured are gardens and plantings that can be enjoyed by simply strolling the city’s sidewalks – new pocket parks, glorious waterfront gardens, residential plantings, community gardens, tree beds and medians – all of which offer pedestrians both respite and beauty.”

Available from Monacelli Press, \$40.



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, 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.

Iris reticulata available from bulb-grower Alan McMurtrie

Odyssey Bulbs is one of the companies selling my bulbs in the U.S. They sell Mars Landing, Orange Glow, Sea Breeze, Velvet Smile.

At the moment there is a big wholesaler in Canada distributing six of my hybrids via a couple of mail order firms and starting to get garden centres interested. I am trying to get wholesalers interested in the U.S. but it’s quite an uphill battle.

Jacques Amand Intl. ships to the U.S. They do a bulk shipment to the U.S. and then individual orders are sent on from within the U.S. People can contact: bulbs@JacquesAmand.co.uk for details.

The big advantage people get by buying this way is the best selection of my hybrids: Beautiful Day, Dance On, Darkness, Evening Twilight, Eye Catcher, Mars Landing, North Star, Orange Glow, Regal, Scent•Sational, Sea Green, Sea Breeze, Splish Splash, Spot On, Storm, Summers Day, Sunshine, Velvet Smile, Vivacious Beginnings, White Caucasus.

People can find out more about my work at www.reticulatas.com.

–ALAN MCMURTRIE



Orange Glow



Scent•Sational



Sea Green

An article by Alan about his iris breeding appears in the March 2016 issue of *The Plantsman*. Here’s a link:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/about-the-rhs/publications/magazines/the-plantsman>

MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS

Membership Form

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

(When renewing, you may give a Gift Membership to a new member.)

Membership renewal is due in January.

Send your check (made payable to MCNARGS) with this form to:

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

We do not use your email for commercial purposes.

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Name _____

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Do you want to receive your newsletter via email only?

- Yes No

MCNARGS is a volunteer organization. We would like your participation in our activities. How can you help?

- Annual Plant Sale Newsletter Hospitality at meetings

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Lawrence B. Thomas



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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.

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

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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Monday, November 21

**The Everett Memorial Rock Garden:
Past, Present & Future**

Speaker:

MICHAEL HAGEN

*Curator of the NYBG Native Plant Garden
& Rock Garden*

Monday, December 19

Epimediums: Jewels of the Shade

Speaker:

KAREN PERKINS

Garden Vision Epimediums

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE ALL THE UPCOMING MEETINGS

Submission deadline for November/December issue: October 20, 2016

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

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