

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 36, Issue 2

March/April 2023

MARCH MEETING

Tuesday, March 21 at 6 p.m. *In person!*

NATIVE PLANTS FOR SMALL SPACES: ROCK GARDENS, CREVICES AND TROUGHS

Speaker:

Michael Hagen

Curator, Native Plant Garden and Rock Garden
New York Botanical Garden



Hepatica acutiloba



Viola pedata



Penstemon hirsutus var. *pygmaeus*

There is ever-growing interest in creating pollinator gardens and providing ecological services in our garden spaces. How do we address this in urban and suburban settings, with limited space for an expansive meadow or woodland, or when steep and rocky terrain precludes conventional landscaping? Drawing on native plant communities with rich selections of easily-grown species and their select cultivars, we can still easily create aesthetically pleasing combinations for the porch, patio and small yard.



MICHAEL HAGEN is Curator of the Native Plant Garden and the Rock Garden at NYBG, and Institutional Conservation Officer for the Center for Plant Conservation. He previously served for almost thirteen years as Staff Horticulturist for Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, New York and was Garden Manager at Rocky Hills in Mt. Kisco, a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy. He is an adjunct professor at Westchester Community College where he lectures on sustainability, native plant propagation and gardening with native plants.

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.

APRIL MEETING

Tuesday, April 18 at 6 p.m. *In person!*

UNTERMYER GARDENS: FROM THE FIELD

Speaker:

Andrew Schuyler

Assistant Head Gardener
Untermeyer Gardens

A review of the restoration work at Untermeyer Gardens – now in its twelfth season – from one of the gardeners, with special emphasis on horticulture and garden design.



Cascades



Greenhouse



Vegetable garden



Walled garden in the beginning



Amphitheater



ANDREW SCHUYLER is a lifelong resident of Yonkers, and has been involved with Untermeyer Gardens since 2012, joining the staff as a full-time horticulturist in 2016. He graduated from the Longwood Gardens Professional Horticulture Program in 2015, and pursued additional training at Great Dixter House and Gardens in East Sussex in the UK. At Untermeyer, he is involved in many aspects of the garden restoration – managing greenhouse and propagation programs, arbo-riculture projects, and seasonal gardeners. He became Assistant Head Gardener in 2022.

NOTES FROM A BROOKLYN GARDEN

By Judi Dumont, Chair



Members – we need your help finding a new meeting space!

NYBG is giving up its midtown location as of the end of April, and MCNARGS must find a new venue for in-person meetings for fall 2023 and beyond.

Needed is a location

in Manhattan for four to five monthly evening meetings that's convenient to public transportation, seats up to 30, has facilities for PowerPoint presentations and is reasonably priced (which is of course the difficult part). Any suggestions are welcome. Contact us at manhattannargs@verizon.net.

New Tour Director...and Tours!

Member Tara Douglass has graciously volunteered to take on this role, and she is planning a tour or two for this spring, including an April 20 tour at Wave Hill (details to come). Keep an eye out for emails with tour information.

Thank you, Tara!

Hoarfrost Envy

During the month of January my Instagram feed was filled with visions of winter wonderlands – English gardens covered in hoarfrost. The term "hoarfrost" is derived from the Old English meaning of frost resembling an old man's beard, and according to the Royal Meteorological Society, "Hoar frost forms when

water vapour in the air comes into contact with an object that is below freezing. Rather than the water vapour first condensing onto the object and then freezing, the water vapour immediately freezes to form ice crystals. The hoar frost is distinctive due to its feathery structure, and the freezing process is so quick that it traps air, giving it a white or silver opaque appearance."

But wait, perhaps some gardeners on our side of the pond have experienced the pleasures of hoarfrost in their gardens. Wasn't that a photo of hoarfrost on a daphne in Tony Reznicek's "Small Woodies" presentation in a recent NARGS webinar? In response to my



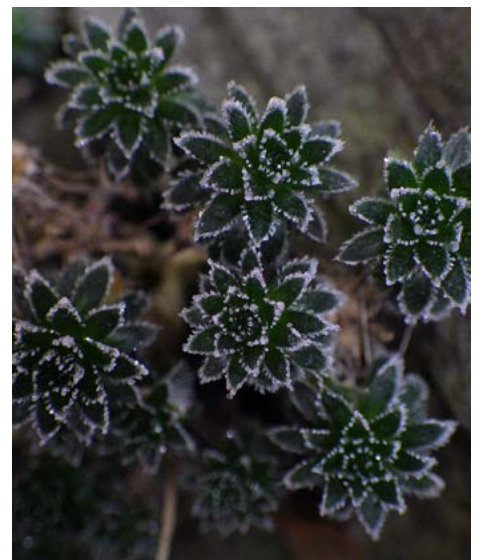
request for the daphne photo, Tony sent these tantalizing hoarfrost photos, along with the note that "hoarfrost is worth admiring if you live in Michigan!"

The same can certainly be said about my Brooklyn garden in winter, and yet not a hint of hoarfrost do I see. Why? Plenty of cold and garden-variety frost, but not hoarfrost. Was I just not paying attention, or looking in the right spot? Well, the suggestion from a senior AccuWeather meteorologist is to look for hoarfrost on a calm, frigid morning *downstream from a sewage treatment plant*. As much as I admire hoarfrost, I'll give that a miss, and my hoarfrost envy will continue.

March!

"The month of March! Days that are blue and white and boisterous, nights when the stars glisten with a scintillating sharpness that proves

Continued on Page 4



Tony Reznicek's hoarfrost photos. Top to bottom: daphne, dwarf cotoneaster (from Leila Bradfield), *Draba dedeana*. Inset: *Androsace villosa*.



Non Morris (gardener, writer, garden designer, wildflower hunter and past MCNARGS speaker) has continued to delight us with her photos on Instagram, with and without hoarfrost.

NOTES...

Continued from Page 3

how cleanly the wind's broom has swept the last dust trace from the vast dome of the sky. Gray weather, too, bleak and penetrating, spelling more snow or the utter dreariness of a north-east rain. Growing warmth and lingering cold, a swift succession of contrast and paradox, uncertain but positive and always infinitely vital – March!”

(An excerpt from “Borne on the Winds of March – An Editorial” in the March 1940 issue of *Real Gardening*, edited by Robert S. Lemmon.)

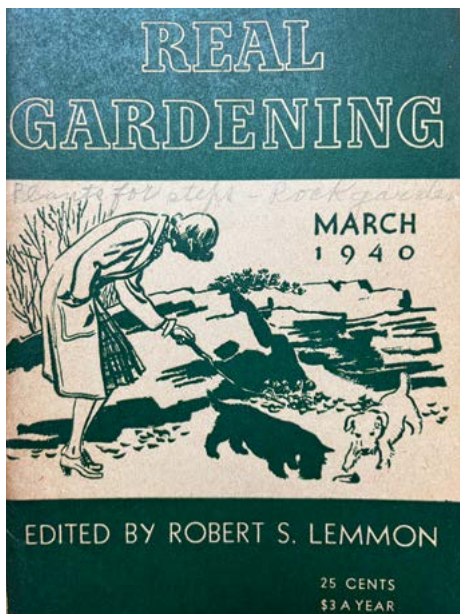
You may not be able to decipher the faint writing in pencil in the photo of the cover below, but my grandmother has written “Plants for steps – rock gardens”. And so I turned to the article titled “Dependable Plants for a Small Rock Garden” by Clarence D. Sutcliffe. Not much exciting or new in the way of plants therein, but I noted in the author's brief bio that at the time he was with the Parks Department of Poughkeepsie, “the city where the Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden is situated.”

Hmm, a public rock garden in Poughkeepsie? Does such a garden still exist? I should investigate...

Down the Rock Garden Rabbit Hole...Part 1

As with most investigations these days, I began with a Google search. (Google immediately suggested that I might mean Clarence lawn instead, which was not promising.)

Among the search results was a 2018 submission to the City of Poughkeepsie by the Revive College Hill Park Coalition to enhance the pollinator garden and the landscaping at the entrance to the park. I wondered what the current status of the proposal was and whether there was any plan by the coalition to also restore the rock garden at any point in the future.



An email to Jennifer Rubbo, the contact person for the coalition, resulted in an enthusiastic and helpful response from her, and from Barbara Restaino (volunteer and landscape architect who has planned the replanting of the garden) who wrote:

“I am very excited by your interest in the Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden! Yes, as Jen described, we have been restoring the rock garden itself. In addition to the native pollinator plants we installed in front of the garden, we have been planting the rock garden area with native rock garden plants. We have been able to save several species that were planted in the original rock garden as well as add many other native short-statured plants. I don't know of another rock garden that has primarily native plants but we are using that as our goal.

Through Jen's help organizing volunteers from the community and Vassar College we have almost finished restoring the garden. Part of the restoration is stabilizing the original rocks and paths. Some amazing rocks have been covered by soil accumulating for over 75 years and we have elevated them. It is a continuous effort battling invasive plants that entirely covered the garden before we started about 10 years ago. We are making some good progress.”

We wish the coalition all the best with their efforts!



The team posing alongside a plaque commemorating Clarence Lown



Down the Rock Garden Rabbit Hole...Part 2

But who the heck was Clarence Lown, and how did the garden come to be named after him?

The same Google search also led me to the bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society (the predecessor to NARGS) published in 1984 on the 50th anniversary of the founding of ARGs.

Attending the annual meeting that year were many whose names are well-known to rock

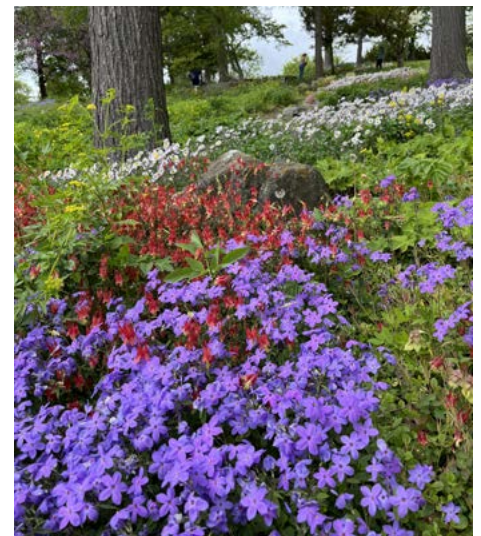
gardeners. The whole bulletin is an excellent read, including a 30-page article recording the speech given by Frank Cabot at the meeting on the history of rock gardening “As it was in the Beginning – the Origin and Roots of Rock Gardening in North America,” and it is within this article, on page 34 of the bulletin, that we meet...Clarence Lown.

Lown, a lifelong resident of Poughkeepsie, lived from 1851 to 1931. According to Cabot:

“Clarence Lown was considered the dean of American rock gardeners at the turn of century. Lown described himself as a plant hunter since childhood... searching the

woods and fields and always growing native plants. From this base he brought in quantities of plants from abroad, establishing an incomparable collection of saxifrages, androsaces, campanulas and gentians, (his favorite); some 1500 species in all.”

So ends my brief trip down the rock garden rabbit hole, but for those readers who wish to burrow further, I direct you a document that Barbara Restaino forwarded to me: “Statement of Significance – Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden,” prepared by Holly Wallberg in 2013 wherein a fuller biography of Clarence Lown can be found, along with an extensive bibliography. Much preferable to Google: <https://www.rchpc.org/historic-lown-garden>.



Photos of the Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden courtesy Jennifer Rubbo and Barbara Restaino.

THE MCNARGS PLANT SALE ROCKS ON! SATURDAY, MAY 13, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

In May 2022 we confirmed that COVID wasn't going to stop MCNARGS folks from getting together and sharing our beloved plants. Despite a horrific rain-storm, we had a successful sale in a new indoor location in Park Slope, and had a lot of fun! In this maybe post-COVID year we are looking forward to building on that success with even more plants and an expanded group of buyers. Our sale will feature a variety of plants, including desirable wildflowers suitable for shady gardens and pollinator-friendly habitats, as well as rock garden specialties, indoor plants, some woodies and more! We hope you are all looking at your collections and gardens and seeing what plants you would love to share with us!

LOCATION IS SAME AS LAST YEAR

The sale will be at the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging at All Saints Church, 7th Street and 7th Avenue in Brooklyn. The entrance is at 673A 7th Street, just down the hill from 7th Avenue.

DIRECTIONS

The church is two blocks from the 7th Avenue F/G train stop in Park Slope, a short bus ride or walk from the 4th Ave./9th St. stop of the R train, and via the B67 or B69 buses which run along 7th Avenue. For drivers, please note that street parking is hard to find but not impossible. Nearby is an [expensive] hospital parking facility, on 6th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues.

A successful sale requires many hands – please pitch in!

DONATE PLANTS

This is the time to divide your plants, pot them up, keep them watered and shaded for a few days, then move to a good spot where you won't forget them and they can grow some more roots before the sale. A well-rooted plant has a much better chance to adjust to a new garden and serve as a beautiful envoy from our chapter.

- All donated plants MUST be labeled, with their names (botanic names are preferred) and your initials. If you can designate “sun,” “shade,” “bog,” “indoor,” “annual,” etc., all the better. And notice that when it comes to this sale, we are generalists. All kinds of plants are welcome as long as they're not drooping, invasive, diseased or unlabeled!
- Ahead of the sale (at least by May 10), provide us with a list of what and how many plants you are bringing so Michael Riley can create the lovely picture labels that will show buyers what those green sprigs will become.
- Drop off your plants at the church early on the morning of the sale, so that we can price them. (But no shopping until the sale opens at 10!) Need to deliver your plants earlier? Email Lola at llhorwitz@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEER

We can use extra hands potting up beforehand, and strong arms to help with table set-up, take-down and cleanup on the day of the sale. We'll also need members at the sale who are knowledgeable plantspeople to answer questions. (We expect a lot of passers-by who like plants but don't know much about them!) To volunteer, contact Jennifer at jjkalb@gmail.com.

SPREAD THE WORD

Friends and the general public are welcome at the sale. MCNARGS will be posting announcements on its Instagram and Facebook pages – help us spread the word by sharing this info and our flyers to your own networks and garden-loving friends and colleagues and tell everybody about the sale on your social media – and whatever you do, be there and support the chapter at the MCNARGS PLANT SALE 2023!

QUESTIONS?

Details and a reminder will be sent to members via email closer to the date of the sale, but in the meantime, contact us at either llhorwitz@gmail.com or jjkalb@gmail.com with any questions.

LOLA LLOYD HORWITZ AND JENNIFER KALB



Judi peeking out from behind a bodacious begonia (*B. maculata*). Offspring will be on offer at the plant sale. It's on a table in this photo so no, it's not actually taller than Judi.



A very well-rooted begonia baby grown from a cutting

REMEMBERING LORETTA DARBY



I knew Loretta not as a member of our chapter who attended meetings, but as possibly THE most regular member of the seed processing team that has met at my house every year in late November and December. She and Ellen Borker would appear at my gate, often a few minutes early, wrapped in winter coats and scarves and eager to get to work. They needed few directions – only the targeted

number of glassines to fill for each species of seeds tucked away inside the sleeves that I doled out.

Loretta invariably sat across from me, while Ellen took a chair further down the kitchen table. Jack Kaplan was in between and other volunteers filled around these three according to their available time. I came to appreciate Loretta's quiet, steady approach, particularly when I had a full table of volunteers and I needed to enter numbers of glassines filled, hand out new sleeves and look up the target number. Loretta somehow managed to keep an eye on what I was doing and helped me remain calm. She must have known that if I were flustered, members of NARGS might well receive seed of *Clematis hirsutissima* instead of *Clematis heracleifolia*!

While dividing seed for a high target number, she would sometimes talk about her garden in Pennsylvania. She needed to find the best plants for a steep rocky slope. I hope I made some helpful suggestions. I wish that she could have had more years to enjoy that garden and more wintertime visits to my kitchen table. I will miss her.

LOLA LLOYD HORWITZ

Not only did Loretta and I sort seeds every winter at Lola's for NARGS, as so eloquently described by Lola, but Loretta was also my friend, my neighbor, another enthusiastic gardener, a loving and active mother and grandmother and a fellow reader of mysteries. She was a longtime volunteer at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and a volunteer at the Old Stone House Garden as well as several other organizations.

Loretta was a wonderful, kind, generous woman who was a member of multiple communities and contributed to all of them. Above all, she loved and took care of her family.

She will be remembered and missed by many.

ELLEN BORKER

Loretta Darby passed away suddenly on December 28, 2022 at her home in Park Slope. She was 81 years old.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW TOUR DIRECTOR



TARA DOUGLASS is the owner of Brooklyn Plant Studio, an indoor and outdoor specialized plant installation company. Formerly of Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, Tara worked in the shady woodland garden and Wagner Park for six years before going to Terrain in Philadelphia as a plant buyer. Her love of plants hails from her farm family upbringing in Missouri. She showed state-winning African violets as a 4H-er.

YOU CAN ATTEND THE NARGS ANNUAL MEETING AT A DISCOUNT!

MCNARGS is offering a stipend of \$300 to a member who would like to attend the NARGS Annual Meeting in Nova Scotia. There are two stipulations – this must be the member's first time attending an Annual Meeting, and the member must agree to write an article for the *Urban Rock Gardener* about the conference. (Only one stipend offered per year.) Please email applications to www.manhattannargs@verizon.net.



John Tweddle (far right) took advantage of the stipend last year and attended his first AGM, which was held in Ithaca. Others pictured: Brendan Kenney, Sandy Schaller, Sabine Stetzenbach, Jennifer Kalb, Patti Hagan, Michael Riley, Kathy Gaffney, Steve Whitesell, and Judi Dumont.



2023 NARGS ANNUAL MEETING DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Truro, Nova Scotia, June 8–11

Speakers include

GERALD GLOADE, ALLAN BELLIVEAU, ESTHER WRIGHTMAN, JULIA CORDEN, JIŘI PAPOUŠEK

The program will feature the very rich diversity of plant habitats in Nova Scotia, including coastal barrens, gypsum deposits and the Acadian forest

Online registration now open!

See the NARGS website for info: www.nargs.org

WEST SIDE COMMUNITY GARDEN TULIP FESTIVAL RETURNS IN APRIL



Want to impress your friends at your next swanky cocktail party? While others talk of walking the carpet at the Met Gala, how about casually mentioning you attended the Tulip Festival? Conversation will stop – canapes frozen in hand. *What Tulip Festival?* Why, the West Side Community Garden Tulip Festival of course. Admittedly, you didn't see the Kardashians there, but you did see over 13,000 tulips and a rock garden featuring hundreds of minor bulbs. "How on earth did you get an invitation?" they ask. That's the best part, you say, it was *free* – and you can see it this year from **April 15 through May 5!**

For more information go to www.westsidecommunitygarden.org. The garden is located at 123 West 89th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues. (Photo by Robin B. Langsdorf)

MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS

MEMBERSHIP & RENEWAL FORM

Please complete this form (or just include a note with the relevant information) and mail it with a check* payable to MCNARGS, to:

Nancy Crumley 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
☐ Contribute articles to the newsletter
☐ Other: _____

UPCOMING NARGS TOURS



Northern Patagonia

DENVER GARDENS & ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDFLOWERS

June 13-20, 2023

with C. Colston Burrell and Panayoti Kelaidis

Post-Tour Trip to Vail and Steamboat Springs, June 20-24

NATIONAL PARKS – THE MIGHTY FIVE

September 18-29, 2023

with Troy B. Marden

BOTANIZING PATAGONIA NORTHERN LAKES DISTRICT

November 26-December 7, 2023

with Marcela Ferreyra

A Southern Patagonia Extension is planned

TURKEY – LYCIA AWAKENS

February 25 -March 3, 2024

with Chris Gardner

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

See the NARGS website for more details: www.nargs.org

Again, the garden is morning fresh

Always, the garden is moving on to a dead was

– FROM "THE GARDEN POEMS" BY JOE DiMATTIO

FINANCIAL STATEMENT (as of 12/31/2022)

The Manhattan Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society's assets for the following fiscal years:

	2021	2022
TD Bank Account:	\$4,670	\$6,554
Columbia Threadneedle Balanced Fund:	\$42,808	\$35,595
Total Assets:	\$47,478	\$42,149

Income to our operation derives primarily from plant sales (60%) and the collection of membership dues (30%). Our major expenses are programming and space rental for in-person meetings.

Respectfully submitted, Michael A. Riley, Treasurer

*Dues can also be paid by PayPal and there are two ways to do it:

(1) Go to your PayPal account and send payment to mcnargsweb@gmail.com. Be sure to provide your name and email address.

(2) Visit our website – www.mcnargs.org. Go to the JOIN US page and scroll down to the PayPal menu.

MCNARGS LEADERSHIP

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Nancy M. Crumley

NEWSLETTER FOUNDING EDITOR

Lawrence B. Thomas

Website: www.mcnargs.org

Email address: manhattannargs@verizon.net

Submissions to newsletter: jkaplan1313@gmail.com

THE MANHATTAN CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society, founded in 1987, is a group of gardening enthusiasts who are interested in an eclectic range of plants, with emphasis on alpine and rock gardening selections. Our programs cover a broad spectrum of special interests such as rock and alpine, succulents, woodland, bog and planted walls, as well as trough and container gardening. While we're based in New York City, we welcome members in any location!

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 EVENTS

Thursday, April 20 at 4 p.m.

Wave Hill

Tour of the Alpine Collection & Wild Garden

WITH SANDY SCHALLER

Further details to be announced.

Those interested in attending should email Tara Douglass at Taradouglass@gmail.com.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Urban Rock Gardener welcomes contributions from everyone – new members and old, whether you have a garden (rock or otherwise) or simply a solitary plant on a windowsill. Be it a photo, story, adventure, misadventure, thought or opinion, don't keep it to yourself – share it with us! While we can't promise to print your contribution, we guarantee it will be given our due consideration.

Please send whatever you have to the editor,
Jack Kaplan at jkaplan1313@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: *The Rock Garden Quarterly* with articles on alpine 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 available online and members have free access at www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

Submission deadline for May/June issue: April 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

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New York, NY 10025

FIRST CLASS MAIL



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