The Urban Rock Gardener

Volume 39, Issue 5 November/December 2026

NOVEMBER MEETING

November 16 at 6 p.m.
***In-person* at The Center**



TWO CULTURES MEET IN A NEW JERSEY GARDEN

Speakers:

Denise Adams
Ornamental Plant Historian

Moti Kopilovitch
Founder, Botanica Nursery, Israel



Moti will begin by telling us about his background and his experiences establishing a nursery in Israel over twenty-five years ago – a nursery that still thrives, though he moved to the states in 2021. Denise will describe a bit of her garden journey, which includes being a collector of antique varieties of *Iris* and *Hemerocallis* and writing about historic plants.

The main focus of their talk will be what they have accomplished together – namely, the gardens they have created around their home in Ridgewood, New Jersey.







MOTI KOPILOVITCH and **DENISE ADAMS,** a native Midwesterner, met in St. Louis in 2009 at a Perennial Plant Association conference. Fast forward to 2021 and they are making a garden in Ridgewood, trying to incorporate as many plants as possible in a landscape that measures less than an eighth of an acre. They will discuss and illustrate how they have embraced a "no-lawn" approach, building perennial beds, rock gardens and a koi garden, and cultivating fruits and vegetables for the table.

Moti graduated from the New York Botanical Garden School of Professional Horticulture in 1985 and worked as a gardener for Rodman Rockefeller's Winterburn Farm in Sleepy Hollow, before returning to his home in Israel. There, he established Botanica Nursery, a specialty grower of ornamental grasses, succulents, ground covers and perennials.

Denise received her PhD in horticulture from Ohio State University in 1998. Her area of focus is American garden history, and she is the author of *Restoring American Gardens* (Timber Press, 2004) and *American Home Landscapes,* with Laura L. S. Burchfield (Timber Press, 2013).



The Center is located at 208 West 13th Street (between 7th and 8th Avenues) in Manhattan. It is easily reached by subway, and is a short walk from the 14th Street stations of the 1,2 and 3 trains (at 7th Avenue), the A,C,E and L trains (at 8th Avenue), and the F, M and L trains (at 6th Avenue).



DON'T MISS OUR ANNUAL DECEMBER GATHERING!

Monday, December 14 at 6 p.m.

***In-person* at The Center**



ANNUAL MEETING

Our first order of business will be the Annual Meeting wherein members will elect the Board of Directors for 2027. Judi Dumont, Nancy Beranbaum, Jennifer Kalb, Jack Kaplan and Michael Riley are up for re-election, and Scott Vonderheide has been nominated. Nominations can also be taken from the floor.

We always welcome new board members! Please give it some thought. And if you are interested or would like to nominate someone else, we invite you to contact us at manhattannargs@verizon.net.



SLIDE-CHAT: LET'S TALK PLANTS!

Presented by

Laura Powell

Gardener, BBG Rock Garden

In this informal presentation, Laura will be showing a year of photos from Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Rock Garden. She'll bring the photos, and we can all bring plant stories and experiences to share.



We'll round out the evening with our

HOLIDAY PARTY!

Featuring a potluck curated by *you!*

Please bring homemade or store-bought goodies (savory or sweet) or beverages. No alcohol allowed at The Center.

NARGS VIRTUAL WEBINAR – SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2026

THE LIVING ROCK GARDEN

From Dry Ridges and Meadows to Moist Retreats – Microhabitats for Plants and Wildlife

Speakers: Anne Spiegel, Michael Guidi, Ed Snodgrass, Kenton Seth

at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Members $25, Non-members $50/$55

Register at www.nargs.com

"NEW YORK METRO NARGS CHAPTERS MEETING" DEBUTS

Our first NY Metro NARGS Chapters Meeting on Sunday, October 11, had an unexpected visitor – Hurricane Isaias, whose ragged remains blew in from the south, bringing with it winds and heavy rain. Those of us who feared the weather would discourage attendees needn't have worried, because we had a good showing, which included familiar faces and new ones as well.

This premiere event, held in lieu of the long-running Tri-State Meeting, began at one p.m. in The Center's spacious auditorium, where attendees had an opportunity to purchase plants from vendors Lori Chips and Don Dembowski and socialize with other plant enthusiasts. Rick Plate brought a few of home-grown plants to hand out for free, and a table of assorted snacks proved very popular.

At two p.m., Michael Riley welcomed everyone and introduced our speaker, Tim Alderton, Research Technician at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina. He had agreed on short notice to step in for Judith and Felix Jones, who had to cancel. Tim's talk, "Outstanding North Carolina Mountain Wildflowers," featured an eye-popping array of gorgeous flowers he had photographed on his hikes to Bluff Mountain, Three-Top Mountain and Elk Knob State Park. While most plants pictured can be found growing elsewhere in the Northeast, some are indigenous to the Appalachians, such as *Lilium grayi* (Gray's lily). (For a complete plant list, go to www.mcnargs.org and then to "Past Programs.") After the house lights came up, several of us were eager for more, so Tom did a quick run-through of another of his slideshows. His presentation whetted our appetites for the 2027 AGM, "Carolina On My Mind," which will be hosted by the Piedmont Chapter next June.

After the talk we continued to socialize and keep the vendors busy. When four o'clock rolled around, it was time to pack up and leave. The rain had gotten even worse, which was tricky for those of us burdened with shopping bags filled with plants. Yes, we got wet, but most agreed it was an afternoon well spent.

A big thank you to Jennifer Kalb, who graciously hosted Tim at her home over several days (see article below), and to the volunteers who helped the vendors unload their cars in the pouring rain. We also thank the Hudson Valley Chapter of NARGS for co-sponsoring Tim's talk.

So was this new event a success? We think so! Will it return next year? Stay tuned...

Jack Kaplan



Lori Chips' table attracted a lot of interest...



... and so did Don Dembowski's



Michael Riley extending a welcome



Platanthera grandiflora (Greater Purple Fringed Orchid)



Tim Alderton held the audience spellbound



Lilium grayi (Gray's lily)



A field of *Liatris spicata*



Nancy Froud, Tim Alderton, Lola Lloyd Horwitz

A WORD FROM THE HOST



Tim at BBG

Tim got a whirlwind tour of local horticultural and natural attractions in four of the five boroughs and further afield. We went to the High Line, Little Island, Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Prospect Park and spent a day on Staten Island visiting natural sites including the beautiful Conference House Park and Clay Pit Ponds State Preserve. Heading north, we visited the New York Botanical Garden and Wave Hill (hosted by Sandy Schaller), and into Westchester to see Untermyer Gardens and Rockefeller State Park Preserve. We even managed a quick stop at Anne Spiegel's monumental rock garden. It was truly a pleasure to host Tim and see our gardens and natural world with such a wonderful interpreter and enthusiast!

Jennifer Kalb



Tim at the Untermyer Estate

Introducing Our New Board Member

NANCY BERANBAUM



Nancy's love of plants began as a child of plant-obsessed and artistic parents, whose gardens spilled into neighbors' yards with their collections of dahlias, iris, dwarf alpines, heirloom tomatoes and countless other plants. Their tiny Levittown house was one of the few originals in the neighborhood, with the only addition being a full-sized greenhouse where they nurtured rare and precious specimens to share at their "Long Island Hort" and "Hobby Greenhouse" meetings. As long-time members of Old Westbury Gardens and Planting Fields, Nancy's parents took her to what would become her first of many plant sales.



Nancy's front yard

Nancy earned a degree in Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts. During that time she took a year off and traveled to Japan to live with an artist's family and study painting with a traditional sumi-e master. She was inspired by the Japanese aesthetic and appreciation of plant forms and nature that has had a strong influence on her work. Nancy started gardening soon after graduating, while living in a six-story walk up in Soho. From a top floor window box on the airshaft of a studio apartment, she started morning glories that eventually cascaded to the neighbors' windows below. Her next garden encompassed the front and back yards of a wooden row house in the South Slope, where she took over perennial gardens begun by a pair of elderly sisters who had grown up in the house. She added a garden of edibles with veggie starts supplied by her father, and planted a grape vine that eventually grew into a wonderful arbor providing shade for outdoor meals, grape leaves to stuff and vast quantities of gorgeous Concord grapes to make jelly every September.

Nancy has been a member of BBG since the first of her three daughters was born, 47 years ago. She has taken all but one of BBG's Certificate in Horticulture classes and has volunteered for plant sales and events, served as a garden guide, and worked in the rose and rock gardens. In 1997 she and her family moved to an apartment on Plaza Street East off Grand Army Plaza. There she started a volunteer garden committee to design and develop a perennial garden that wrapped around the corner apartment building. In 2005 Nancy and her husband John moved to their current home in Fiske Terrace, a charming neighborhood near Brooklyn College where her plant palette expanded as she replaced the lawns in the large front yard, smaller side yards and the "hell strip" along the sidewalk with her ever-growing collection of perennials, shrubs, and rock garden plants. She transformed what had been a parking area in the back and filled it with raised beds and containers with currants, blueberries, a fig tree, a camellia, succulents, tomatoes, herbs and more. Her commitments extend to the entire neighborhood, and for ten years she was president of the Fiske Terrace Neighborhood Association. She and her neighbors do community-building work to enhance the neighborhood's quality of life and the garden committee, which she chairs, cultivates and nurtures the "Flatbush Malls" – the green meridians that stretch along Glenwood Road from the subway tracks to Ocean Avenue and down East 17th Street from Glenwood Road to Avenue H.



One of Nancy's gouaches on paper

Naturally, Nancy's professional career involved art. For years she served as a program director of Studio in a School, a non-profit organization that places professional artists in NYC public schools to bring art experiences to students throughout the five boroughs.

Nancy first discovered MCNARGS ten years ago when she was invited to a plant sale on the

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SEED SORTING IS BACK AND YOU CAN BE A PART OF IT!

Are you acquainted with the seeds of the plants you love? Are you intrigued by the idea of participating in a far-reaching system of exchange? Come join your MCNARGS friends as we handle seeds of all sizes (though usually small and smaller) for our annual ritual of seed packaging, a critical step in the decades-long NARGS Seed Exchange.

For those of you who have never participated, here is a brief explanation of what we do and why: NARGS members the world over send seeds to the NARGS seed manager, who sorts them by genus, species, and cultivar into large envelopes called "sleeves." These are alphabetized, boxed and mailed to various chapters – including MCNARGS – who share the responsibility of preparing tidy little packets ("glassines") of seeds which can be ordered (by NARGS members only!) beginning in mid-December (https://www.nargs.org/how-seed-exchange-works). Almost 2,000 taxa were on offer last year.



Last December, Lola's daughter Marni enlisted her colleague Adi to help sort seeds. Adi brought her mother along and we had an especially productive evening.

If you would like to participate, we warmly invite you to spend a cozy evening or two at one of our upcoming sorting sessions (friends are welcome):

- With Lola in Brooklyn on one or more of the following dates: December 7, 8, 10 (7 to 9 p.m.), and Dec. 13 (time to be decided). Her address is 446 6th Street in Park Slope, close to the 7th Avenue stop on the F and G subway. She can accommodate no more than four or five participants on a given evening so RSVP to her by calling or texting her at (917) 608-1018, and please be sure to identify yourself.
- With Michael Riley at his home on 104th Street on the Upper West Side, on evenings or afternoons from December 8 to 18. Exact dates and times to be determined by the interested parties. Please email Michael at riley2362@aol.com.
- With Jennifer Kalb at her home on Saint Marks Avenue in Prospect Heights, if none of the above sessions are convenient. Please email Jennifer at jjkalb@gmail.com.

Seed sorting is a wonderful way to get to know other members and to support this important project!

Lola Lloyd Horwitz

Member Profiles

NANCY FROUD AND SHANNA FORLANO

On the September day before I interviewed MCNARGSians Nancy Froud and Shanna Forlano in the Lotus Garden on Manhattan's Upper West Side, I discovered a little book, *Secret New York: An Unusual Guide* at the New York Public Library Shop. On page 238 appeared "THE LOTUS GARDEN: Suspended above 97th St. New York City's only elevated community garden. Where on Sunday afternoons anyone can enjoy the oddity of suspended nature." MCNARGS was invited to visit the Lotus Garden in the Spring of 2025 and 2026.



Shanna and Nancy in the Lotus Garden

Nancy Froud is an Upper West Side native who grew up as a Window Box Gardener (9th floor) raising petunias and morning glories from seed. In the late 1990s friends had encouraged Nancy to visit the Lotus Garden "up a flight of stairs from West 97th." Finally Nancy did step up. (She recalls "I didn't think it would be nice.")

In the late 20th century she found the Lotus Garden "under a one-person dictator" who tested garden applicants by commanding "Put this plant in the ground!" (NO Trees, Shrubs, Vegetables allowed according to the Lotus Garden "Forbidden List.") Yet to her surprise Nancy was offered a plot – where she "continued growing from seed, inherited a couple of azaleas and many legacy plants. Quite a few things died. It's one big experiment. I'm still learning and I'm really good at weeding!" (In early 2008 Nancy's building super banned Window Box Gardening.)

Meanwhile, in 2002 TV producer Shanna Forlano, who had grown up a suburban non-gardener in Greenwich, Connecticut, moved Uptown from The West (Greenwich) Village to West End Avenue. "For seven years I always walked BY the Lotus Garden. Then one Sunday afternoon the Lotus Garden door was open. I said to myself 'Why don't I walk up?' It was June 2000. It changed my life! One of the gardeners forced me to buy a key! Only $20! Then she followed me around: 'fill out a form? Volunteer? Become a gardener?' I had no intent! Then a month later a Lotus Garden vice president called: 'we have a plot available.'" Shanna replied "I don't know anything about gardening!" The LG recruiter's quick reply "We'll assign you a mentor – Carolyn – an artist and a rock gardener." In 2010 mentor Carolyn asked "Wanta go to a plant sale in the East Village?" Shanna attended the MCNARGS 2010 Spring Plant Sale at the 12th & B Community Garden.

Ever since, both MCNARGS Lotus Gardeners continue elevated community gardening on the West 97th hallowed ground where Mae West, Sarah Bernhardt, Bob Hope, Bette Davis, the Marx Brothers, and other noted performers acted in two historic theaters designed by Thomas Lamb in 1911 and 1912. The elegant theaters were demolished in 1976 during an Upper West Side fit of "urban renewal" Robert Moses style. The UWS community by a miracle of horticultural persistence persuaded developer William Zeckendorf, Jr., that an elevated community garden (atop a one-story parking garage) would add to the sales appeal of the condo towers he would put up there. (His son later said the senior Zeckendorf counted his approval of the Garden-To-Be as "a personal mitzvah.")

According to a New York Times article, around 1980 after the coming elevated community garden had been mapped and included two ponds "one of the original Lotus Gardeners gave the garden its name when a man from Manchuria growing Lotus plants in a tub in his living room" asked to summer his lotuses in the garden.

In 2024, at a plant sale at Lyndhurst Mansion, Shanna picked up a NARGS flyer from Don Dembowski, googled the flyer and read that a Manhattan Chapter existed. Fourteen years after her first MCNARGS encounter, Shanna decided to join. She invited Nancy Froud to the 2024 MCNARGS Christmas gathering. Nancy decided to join. She says of MCNARGS "It's just nice to be in the company of gardeners in New York City."

When I got back to Brooklyn from the Lotus Garden I treated myself to a cup of TAZO Lotus Green Tea. "with the subtle essence of lotus blossoms."

Patti Hagan

We will be profiling more members in future issues.

NANCY BERANBAUM

Continued from page 4

Lower East Side, where she found herself surrounded by an astonishing selection of exceptional plants and wonderful "plant people" who shared their knowledge, experience and encouragement. She soon began to attend meetings and in April 2023 decided to join this group of plant enthusiasts who she found tremendously inspiring. Nancy considers the tour she took with MCNARGS to Governor's Island in June of that year a turning point, when she decided to make make more of a commitment to the chapter.

Nancy is happy to have been invited to become a member of the board and she looks forward to working with all the brilliant folks at MCNARGS and enjoying the many opportunities for plant and garden learning and exploration. Her next adventure will be the NARGS Swiss Alps Tour in June!

Nancy Beranbaum

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The end of the year is approaching and yup, it's that time again!

Renewal time seems to come faster every year and many of our members find that a three-year membership is convenient, not to mention economical. Consider this option for yourself!

- $30 for a one-year membership
- $75 for a three-year membership

Please renew by December 31st.

If you are unsure of your dues status or have any other questions, contact Nancy Crumley at nancycrumley@gmail.com or text/call her at 347.907.2382.

There are several ways to pay:

- PayPal via our website – www.mcnargs.org. Go to the JOIN US page and scroll down to the PayPal menu.
- Check, payable to MCNARGS. Mail to Nancy Crumley at: 324 Seventh Avenue #4R, Brooklyn, NY 11215
- Pay at our November or December meeting with credit card, debit card, cash or check. (look for Nancy Crumley or Michael Riley)

Don't let your membership expire!

MCNARGS LEADERSHIP

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Judi Dumont*

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Michael Riley*

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Jennifer Kalb*

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Nancy Beranbaum*
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*Board Member

NEWSLETTER FOUNDING EDITOR
Lawrence B. Thomas

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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

Monday, January 18 (via Zoom)
CHRIS DIXON
Vesca Rock Gardens, British Columbia

Monday, February 8 (via Zoom)
JO WAKELIN
Mt. Pisa, New Zealand

WANTED: TECH HELP

Wanted! Volunteer(s) to be part of our Zoom and In-Person meeting hosting team. All that is required are (1) simple Zoom hosting skills and/or (2) experience hooking up a computer to AV equipment (with assistance from Center staff) and (3) willingness to have a brief orientation session with speakers ahead of a meeting. If you can help with this important task, please contact Jennifer at (manhattannargs@verizon.net)

WE URGENTLY NEED SOMEONE TO HOST THE JANUARY ZOOM MEETING WITH CHRIS DIXON



MCNARGS WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS

Antje Seiffert-Murphy
Krystine Summers

MCNARGS MEMBERSHIP

For information about joining MCNARGS or renewing your membership, please visit our website: www.mcnargs.org.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

Submission deadline for January/February: December 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY
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New York, NY 10025



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