

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 36, Issue 4

September/October 2023



Platanus occidentalis
Characteristic: It's got a hole in it



TUCKER MARDER is the founder and director of the Folly Tree Arboretum, a cultural archive of trees dedicated to environmental storytelling. Founded in 2013, the Arboretum works to promote an exuberant environmental ethic through art and science. Folly Tree produces projects that address human's relationship to the natural world as well as support the work of others who are developing new and creative methods of environmental storytelling.

<https://follytreearboretum.com>

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Monday, September 18 at 6 p.m.

In-person at our new location:

The Center

208 West 13th Street

(between 7th & 8th Avenues)

THE FOLLY TREE ARBORETUM

Speaker:

Tucker Marder

Founder and Director, Folly Tree Arboretum



Picea omorika 'Pendula Bruns'
Characteristic: Wandering leader with strictly weeping branches

Tucker will present the Folly Tree Arboretum and share the stories of the trees in its unique collection, including a sycamore that went to the moon on Apollo 14, an oak that owns itself, and a variety of charismatic weeping conifers.



Pinus parviflora 'Azuma Goyo'
× *Pinus strobus* 'Angel Falls'
Characteristics: Daisugi, double graft, graft hybrid

The Center 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).

OCTOBER TRI-STATE MEETING

Sunday, October 15
New York Botanical Garden
Ross Hall
Speaker:
Jim Jermyn



C o-sponsored by the Manhattan and Hudson Valley chapters of NARGS and the NARGS Traveling Speakers Program, the annual Tri-State Meeting will be held on Sunday, October 15 at Ross Hall at the New York Botanical Garden.

Open to all NARGS members, and members of NARGS chapters, it is free of charge **but registration is required**. See mcnargs.org for details.

As part of the NARGS Speakers Tour, our speaker will be Jim Jermyn. Jim has had a long career in the horticultural industry, and is a world-renowned expert on alpinists. For twenty years he was the proprietor of Scotland's distinguished Edrom Nurseries, and from 2017 until his recent retirement from the post, Jim was Property Manager/Head Gardener for the National Trust for Scotland's Branklyn Garden. He's authored several books on alpinists, has led tours to the Dolomites and has lectured widely in the US, Canada, the UK and Europe.

Jim will give a morning and an afternoon presentation, and his first talk will be on Japan's finest alpine and woodland plants. There will be a break for lunch, for wandering around the many and varied gardens at NYBG (and especially the rock garden), and for buying plants from the great vendors who'll be offering their special plants there. Jim's afternoon talk will be on Branklyn Garden. Originally developed by John and Dorothy Renton, who were keen to have a garden that featured rare and unusual plants and flowers from all over the world, using seed collected by renowned plant hunters, Branklyn Garden is admired for its outstanding collection of plants.

The New York Botanical Garden is easily accessible by car or public transportation. Please check our website (mcnargs.org) for more information. We hope to see you there!

JUDI DUMONT

A LOOK AT SOME OF JAPAN'S FINEST ALPINE AND WOODLAND PLANTS

In spite of its small size, Japan is relatively rich in plants, notably alpine and woodland species. There are over 550 species represented in the Japanese Alpine zone of which around 180 are endemic. Join Jim on the Alpine Garden Society (AGS) seed-collecting trip to Japan in September/October 1988. While he was unable to enjoy the spring delights of the high mountains, he has been given permission to show slides taken by joint tour leader, Atsushi Kuyama, from trips he has made in the Alpine zone at flowering time.

Many of the most beautiful species endemic to the two main islands of Honshu and Hokkaido are happily cultivated in both the USA and the UK.

Look out for choice woodlanders, from *shortia* to *glauclidium* as well as exciting alpine plants, including *Dicentra peregrina* and *Gentiana algida*.



Shortia soldanelloides



Lillium rubellum

BRANKLYN GARDEN

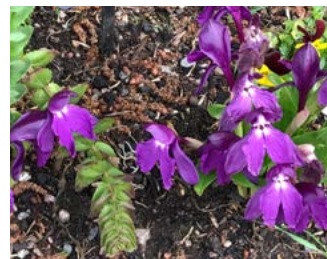
A six-year spell as Head Gardener at NTS Branklyn Garden gave Jim a unique insight into the inspired design and planting 100 years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Renton. The Centenary Year of 2022 enabled many visitors to celebrate the amazing array of plants, many of which are original introductions from the great plant collectors including Forrest, Kingdon Ward, Rock as well as Ludlow and Sherriff. The talk will highlight some of the most memorable plants photographed through the seasons, including Himalayan blue poppies, rhododendrons, exciting alpine plants and autumn-flowering gentians.



Jim with renowned journalist Robin Lane Fox, *Meconopsis* 'Galloway Skies' in foreground



Early spring at Branklyn



Roscoea humeana 'Rosemoor Plum'



Rock garden at Branklyn

**OPEN TO ALL MCNARGS AND NARGS CHAPTER MEMBERS
FREE OF CHARGE BUT REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED**

Easily accessible by car or public transportation
Please use the Mosholu entrance

Check the MCNARGS website (www.mcnargs.org)
for how to register and for additional info

THE 2023 MCNARGS PLANT SALE WAS A GREAT SUCCESS!

Back again, and at full throttle! After a two-year hiatus due to Covid and a less-than stellar experience in 2022 due to monsoon rains, we all had high hopes that this year's plant sale would be a success, and it was! On Saturday, May 13, we were back in Park Slope, Brooklyn, drawing in customers eager to fill their patios, back yards, tree pits and windowsills with plants. And these weren't for the most part alpine enthusiasts, just your average gardener looking for a good selection of plants.

Last year we were forced indoors due to the rain, but the location proved to be so ideal – with plenty of space, good lighting and even bathroom facilities – that holding it there again this year was a “no-brainer.”

So successful, in fact, was this year's sale that even though it began at ten and ended at one, a majority of the plants were gone in the first hour, and “the cupboard was bare” by noon, leaving latecomers with slim pickings indeed. The sale also proved profitable, netting over \$2,000 for the chapter.

The plant sale could not have happened at all if it weren't for the extraordinary effort of our members. Thanks go to Lola Lloyd Horwitz and Jennifer Kalb for organizing the event and purchasing and nurturing plants; to those who potted and repotted purchased plants; to the team who completed the pricing, labeling and presentation of plants on Saturday morning; to the members and friends who helped spread the word; to Michael Riley and Francisco Correa for handling the cash box; to the many members who chatted with customers and provided plant info and tips; and to those who came early and stayed late to set up or clean up. Lastly, we give thanks to all who supported the chapter by attending, by buying plants, and especially for donating plants – particularly appreciated, since these were 100% profit for the chapter – and to our generous plant vendors, Gowanus Nursery and Arrowhead Alpines, who provided many lovely plants for the sale. Great job all!

Photos by Jack Kaplan and Judi Dumont



People were on line before ten, waiting for the doors to open



Eager customers filled the room



Customers patiently queuing up to make their purchases



The tables were helpfully arranged by type of plant



Brendan Kenney and Jennifer Kalb answering questions



How to care for a plant? John Rommel knows.



Jess Brey helping a customer decide



Abbie Zabar discussing the pros and cons of each plant with Valerie Raffle



Jennifer Kalb contributed this stunning Coleus 'Piñata'



Smart shoppers brought carts and large shopping bags



Lola Lloyd Horwitz waiting for the throngs to descend



The spent plant labels tell the tale



Left: Before the doors opened at ten. Right: an hour later!



NOVA SCOTIA ODYSSEY – NARGS CONFERENCE AND AGM JUNE 8-11



Peggy's Cove

Ten members of MCNARGS wended their way to Truro, Nova Scotia, for the NARGS 2023 Conference and Annual General Meeting, held at the Agricultural Campus of Dalhousie University from June 8-11. The meeting theme was “Nova Scotia – Rocks, Plants and Habitats,” and the conference delivered, kicking off with talks on Nova Scotia plant habitats. Speakers included Gerald Gloade, who discussed the Mi’kma’ki (First Nations) background, and Alain Belliveau of Acadia University’s Harriet Irving Botanical Garden who gave a full account of the local environments and some of their representative flora. (This botanical garden and its re-creations of the local habitats was later toured by many conference attendees). Evening programs also included talks by Esther Wrightman on the background of her New Brunswick family nursery and her thoughts on some outstanding plants; Julia Corden’s whirlwind tour of alpinists from around the world; Jiří Papoušek on the creation of his home garden; and Todd Boland on the environment and plants of the Newfoundland barrens as an inspiration for both the Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden and the Dalhousie Centennial Rock Garden. The latter garden, located at the conference site and a highlight of our visit, was created originally by Dr. Bernard Jackson

using granite stone, to which limestone-based sections, including a crevice garden, have been added more recently.

A terrific feature of the conference was the opportunity to tour highlighted habitats as well as some superb local gardens. Groups visited coastal barren sites Peggy’s Cove and nearby Polly’s Cove. In addition to its glaciated granite boulders, the latter site contained a peat bog featuring several orchids, typical ericaceous species and bog plants, especially Dragons-Mouth Orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*) and *Cypripedium acaule*. The groups also visited a nearby established coastal garden at Indian Harbour with a delightful collection of rhododendrons, mature conifers and other specialties, showing what is possible in this severe coastal environment. (See Steve Whitesell’s account of this garden, page 5.)

Touring groups also explored the gypsum-based environment at Meadow Pond, which offered additional orchids, including masses of yellow *Cypripedium parviflorum* and the tiny rams-head lady’s slipper, *C. arietinum*; and several forest peat bog environments where the showy lady’s slipper (*C. reginae*) was unfortunately not yet in bloom. Participants were able to view the impressive tidal bore environments along the Bay of Fundy as well as the beautifully-set Tangled Garden in Annapolis Valley.

Additional opportunities were had on the post-conference tour, where Jamie Ellison led participants on a visit to a rare remnant sand barrens environment in the Annapolis Valley as well as to his own extensive gardens and rhododendron breeding operation. MCNARGS post-tour participants were also able to visit the Annapolis

Photos by Jennifer Kalb, Brendan Kenney, John Tweddle, Judi Dumont

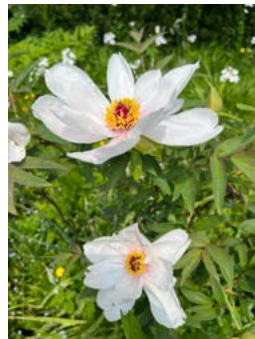
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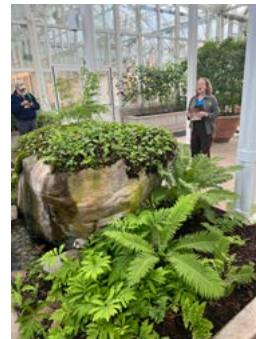
Beverly McClare’s fruit and herb shop at Tangled Garden



Labyrinth and sculpture Tangled Garden



Paeonia ostii Tangled Garden



Harriet Irving Botanical Garden at Acadia University is mostly planted with native flora



Ramonda sp. Centennial Rock Garden



Cypripedium acaule Polly’s Cove



Sarracenia purpurea Polly’s Cove



Rhodiola rosea Polly’s Cove



Drosera rotundifolia (sundew) Polly’s Cove



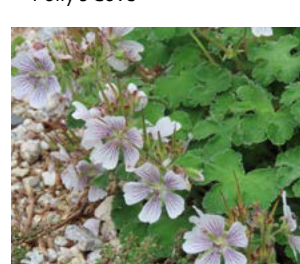
Dalhousie Centennial Rock Garden



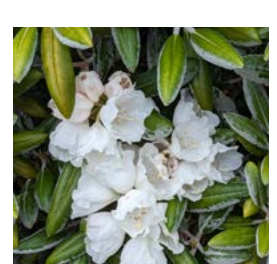
Gypsum environment Meadow Pond



Cypripedium parviflorum Meadow Pond



Geranium renardii Indian Harbour



Rhododendron Indian Harbour

AGM NOVA SCOTIA

Continued from Page 4

Royal Historic Gardens, and to see additional forest, bog, shore and coastal barrens environments en route to and while visiting Brier Island, where, under the guidance of Alain Belliveau, we saw a specimen of the rare *Geum peckii*.

Many thanks to conference co-chairs Jim Sharpe and Roslyn Duffus, the Nova Scotia Rock Garden Club, the Friends of the Garden, the excellent local plant vendors, and the many expert local guides for their hard work hosting and sharing their fascinating Nova Scotia habitats and gardens with us.

JENNIFER KALB



Iris versicolor
Brier Island



Rhododendron groenlandicum
Brier Island



Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*)
Brier Island



Geum peckii
Brier Island



Mertensia maritima
Brier Island



Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens



Black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia*), Hanging Rock



Cornus canadensis



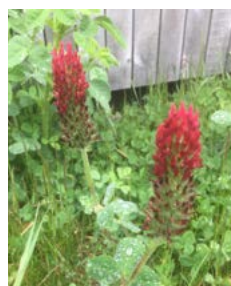
Lupines are found throughout Nova Scotia

A private garden at Indian Harbour on the coast south of Halifax was a high point of the Nova Scotia trip. John Weagle and Ken Shannick have worked on the garden, separately and together, for decades with a succession of owners and the combination of their stellar plantsmanship, design skills and the friendly climate have collaborated to create a wonderful garden experience. There is an emphasis on foliar texture, including several dwarf conifers to provide evergreen interest, and plants are beautifully pruned to create mounded forms that complement clumps of choice herbaceous plants like *Paris quadrifolia* and various epimedium species and hybrids.

Coastal Nova Scotia, generally cool and moist in summer and relatively mild in winter, similar to the west coast of Scotland, permits cultivation of some of the Himalayan and Asian rhododendron species and hybrids with spectacular foliage that are only a dream in New York, particularly the smaller leaved lepidotes. John has been hybridizing rhododendrons for decades and many of his best selections are widely distributed and appreciated in Nova Scotia. Brendan Kenney, Larry Klotz and I were fortunate to spend a couple days post-conference with John and Ken at their house in Halifax and admire other gardens they've contributed to and the rich collection of choice woody and herbaceous plants they propagate for various garden projects. At one of the gardens I was amused by a visiting neighbor who dropped by to discuss his favorite rhododendrons, an experience I've never shared with neighbors!

The Indian Harbour garden was approached by a long drive bordered with a surprising mixture of willow species and other interesting large shrubs and small trees like South American *Nothofagus antarctica* that provided a windbreak against strong coastal gales. The shingled house, greenhouse and outbuildings are nestled into the dunes, which have been supplemented to increase protection for the garden, though openings in the vegetation provide glimpses of the broad Atlantic beyond. Three clumping evergreen bamboos, the *Fargesia* species *F. nitida*, *F. rufa* and *F. murielae* were all present and the latter was planted closest to the shore and seemed to weather the harsh conditions best, showing the least foliar burn. Berms were created close to the shore to provide shelter and a deck platform is perched atop for evening gatherings and views to the water and rocky promontories beyond. The cumulative effect was brilliant.

STEVE WHITESSELL



The AGM offered a well thought-out agenda of activities. We saw plants, but in different settings: a college with an impressive rock garden, a garden that grows fruit and herbs for salable products, and a wild/natural landscape.

I was most impressed by the careful and thoughtful planning. For instance, someone checked who was getting on a bus, then checked again to make sure everyone was on board before leaving a site.

I liked our tour of the three gardens near the campus, which demonstrated different approaches to gardening, the use of a variety of plants, and an enthusiasm for gardening and sharing.

The AGM was a gathering of people who are eager to help the larger public understand the importance and benefits of creating beauty and preserving the natural habitat.

JOHN TWEDDLE

John was surprised to see this showy red clover "growing wild"

NOTES FROM A BROOKLYN GARDEN

By Judi Dumont, Chair



New Meeting Venue!

Members, please note that our first meeting of the season – in-person on September 18 – will be at our new meeting location. All the information is on page one of this newsletter and on our website at mcnargs.org.

Boggy Delights

I'll leave it to others to describe their favorite memories of the NARGS Annual General

Meeting in Nova Scotia, and to Jennifer Kalb for a fuller overview. The peak experience for me was the bog field trip. As with any field trip, having a great guide is key, and ours was Todd Boland (aka “the bog whisperer”). Not only did Todd lead us to, and identify, an astounding array of plants but he made it special with an explanation of the interrelated pollination of the three “red orchids” of the bogs of Nova Scotia, all by the same bees.

First up is the lovely dark pink *Arethusa bulbosa*, a nectar rich plant which was blooming throughout the bog during our trip in early June. The bees, having happily gorged on the arethusa nectar, are of course drawn to the flowers of *Calopogon tuberosus* in mid-late June, similarly pink and with a superficial resemblance to arethusa. But wait! No nectar is provided by the calopogon (although its false anthers make it so appealing!) It's of course pollinated as the bees sample it again and again. If bees can be pissed, they are. Come July, *Pogonia ophioglossoides*, the last of the pink bog orchids, begins to bloom. The annoyed bees are determined not to be fooled again by a nectarless flower. Hmm, but there's a tantalizing scent to this flower,

so maybe there is nectar after all? Nope. Scent, but no nectar. Fooled again!

So Many Tours, So Little Room!

We've run out of room in this newsletter for a description of the June tour of Governors Island gardens. A huge thank you to Director of Horticulture Andi Pettis for the tour, and for her excellent explanation of the work so far, and the plans (and challenges) ahead for this historic and unique island. And a thank you to our Tour Director Tara Douglass for arranging the tour.

Second Acts

Plenty of ornamental plants provide flowers throughout the season (angelonias for example), or flower in flushes throughout summer (many roses), but there's a more limited group that provides a different season of interest, whether it's seed heads, fruits or fall color. And in a small garden, where every detail counts, that “Second Act” is particularly appreciated.

Certain plants are known for their Second Acts – think about the gorgeous fall color of *Itea virginiana* following its early summer flowers – but with others that attribute is not as common. When searching Brushwood Nursery's website a few years ago for a large-flowered clematis to fill a spot in the garden, I spotted this description of *Clematis* 'Daniel Deronda': “It has very large (up to eight inches across!) flat, blue, star-shaped flowers and a long bloom season in summer. Also has beautiful seedheads!” Sold!!

Crape myrtles, which are quite hardy here in Brooklyn and seem to love our increasingly hot summers, come in a variety of sizes and flower color, but only certain ones have the bonus of fall color.

To get that extra bang for your buck in the garden, it's worth searching out “Second Act” plants.

Todd Boland in the bog
Right: *Arethusa bulbosa*



Clematis 'Daniel Deronda', flower and seedhead
(Photo of flower: Brushwood Nursery)



Crape myrtle, flower and fall foliage (right)

THE BEST GAME IN TOWN

On June 25, Gowanus Nursery closed its doors, and its owner, Michele Paladino, moved to northwestern Connecticut. Lola shares her thoughts.

Why was Gowanus Nursery so popular with MCNARGS and particularly with Brooklyn members of MCNARGS? Easy question! But the answers are not as obvious as you might think and they get into defining what makes an urban rock gardener.

Yes, Gowanus was “the best game in town.” There were other nurseries, and they might have had more open hours, but were they owned by someone with Michele Paladino’s knowledge of plants, who was always there, greeting shoppers and ready to answer questions and was already a member of NARGS? In addition to being knowledgeable and nice, she was extremely determined to establish a first-rate nursery in Brooklyn. Only such a person could pick up and move her plants, pots, and bags of soil to three different locations over the years. And some of us remember all three of those locations, each one bigger and better, further from Park Slope and closer to the winds off New York harbor. (You had to add layers when you went shopping early in the season.)

If we appreciated her choices of plants, I think she appreciated us as pretty savvy gardeners. She would invite us (usually two members of the plant sale committee) to shop on opening day in early spring, when she would offer her ‘littles’ (2” x 2” x 2” pots) to be potted on for our May sale. They could include such goodies as hepatica, trillium, pulsatilla and cyclamen. We were free to pick and choose what we wanted, including

Photos by Judi Dumont



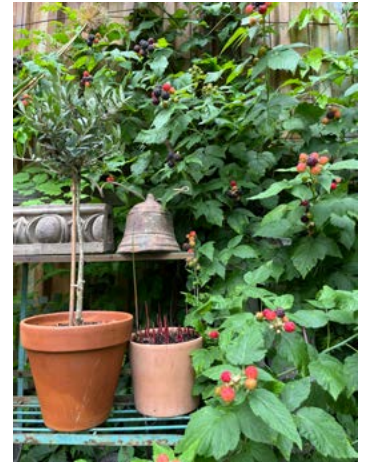
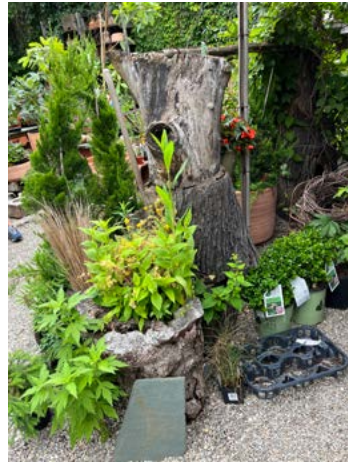
from her own seed-grown plants and pots carried over from the fall. She was good enough to provide us with an excellent discount.

As the plant sale is our primary source of income for rent and speakers, Michele supported us in growing our chapter. And our gardens grew with the addition of her plants, many of which we had potted-on and sold at the sale! Although she didn’t showcase alpine plants or rocks, she loves eastern wildflowers and made a point of offering them for sale, as well as some western and European species familiar to our chapter members, such as lewisia, saxifrage, cyclamen, sempervivum and orostachys.

I believe Michele is, at heart, the “essential rock gardener” – striving to grow a wide range of plants in a variety of locations and to observe and learn more about them. Now, without a nursery to run, she will have the time and space to create her own garden and she has begun propagating regional native plants from local seed. Whatever she creates in Connecticut, we will be curious about the results. And she has hinted that she may have some of those “results” in time for next year’s plant sale. Fingers crossed! (Gowanus Nursery will continue, but in a different form; she plans to hold occasional “pop-up” sales in Brooklyn and/or will have an online ordering system.) And maybe she will give us a discount on those bags of her special soil mix that we can sell as “Michele’s Rock Garden Mix.”

Let’s keep in touch, Michele!

LOLA LLOYD HORWITZ



Gowanus Nursery was beautifully curated, highlighting new pottery, architectural findings and plants, all displayed with Michele’s unique artistic touch

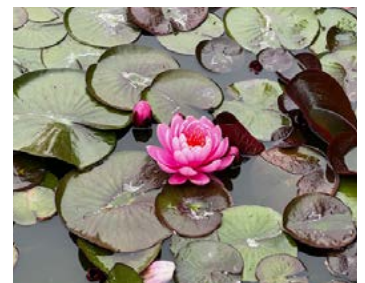
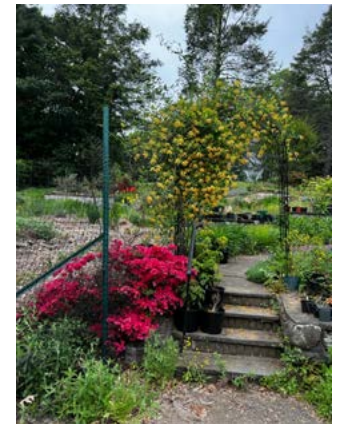
HUDSON VALLEY GARDEN TOUR HAD MCNARGS MEMBERS "SINGING IN THE RAIN"

Anyone who has attended the annual Tri-State meetings knows Ernie DeMarie and Don Dembowski from the plant sale – people flock to their tables, eager to stock up on hard-to-find, home-cultivated offerings. So when the Hudson Valley Chapter announced a tour of their private gardens, MCNARGS members could not resist. On May 20, we braved a rainy forecast and headed up to Westchester County, primed for a special treat – and we were not disappointed. Their gardens were, in a word, spectacular! Don even hosted a plant sale of his own. And as an extra bonus, Alex Kenner invited us to see her dramatic hillside garden dotted with alpines. These photos can only begin to capture the excitement these gardens generated.

ERNIE DEMARIE'S GARDEN



Photos by Jack Kaplan, Brendan Kenney, Gresham Lang



HUDSON VALLEY TOUR

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ALEX KENNER'S GARDEN



DON DEMBOWSKI'S GARDEN



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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 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

November 13

THE CHANTICLEER GRAVEL GARDEN

LISA ROPER

Gravel Garden & Ruin Horticulturist

Chanticleer Garden

December 18

TBA



MCNARGS WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS

Denise Adams

Elizabeth Eustis

Ashley Lloyd

Laura Marsh

Paul Sartori



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 alpiners 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 November/December issue: October 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

101 West 104th Street

New York, NY 10025

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