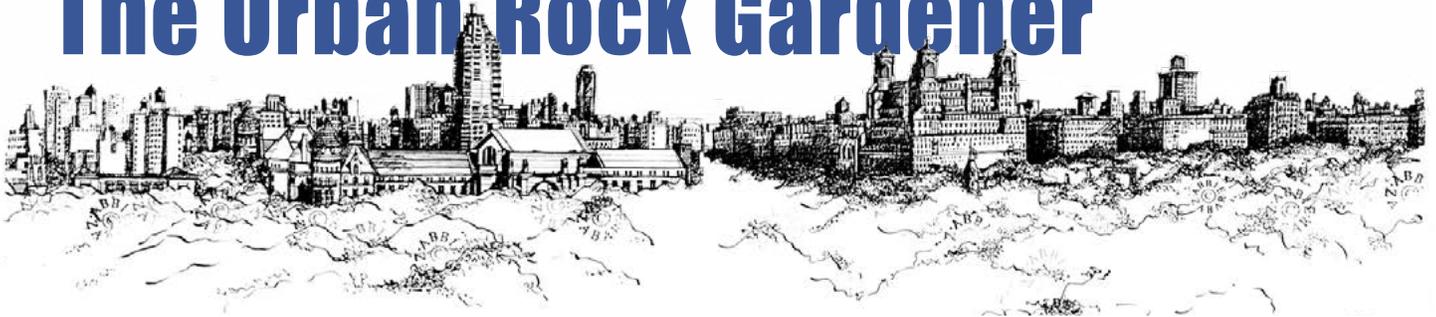


The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 35, Issue 5

November/December 2022

NOVEMBER VIRTUAL MEETING

Monday, November 21 at 6 p.m.

A Zoom link will be sent to members prior to this event

THE MAKING OF A GARDEN ON A HILL

Speaker:

Chris Young

Author, Editor and Publisher

will be going through three stages of discussion:

- High design: what we learn from the Chelsea Flower Show.
- High horticulture: what working for the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) teaches you about gardens.
- High life: how the combination of my Chelsea experiences and what I learned at the RHS helped me form my garden in Northamptonshire.

C.Y.



CHRIS YOUNG is one of the leading publishers in the British gardening industry. Having originally trained in landscape architecture, for the past twenty years he's been in the gardening media world, firstly as editor of *Garden Design Journal* and latterly as both editor of RHS's *The Garden* and head of publishing for the RHS – overseeing books, magazines, podcasts, websites and specialist publishing. He has written two books: the *RHS Encyclopedia of Garden Design* (DK) and *Take Chelsea Home* (Mitchell Beazley). He now runs a gardens consultancy business which specializes in garden design and business advice, and he is also consultant gardening publisher to Dorling Kindersley books. He lives in Northamptonshire with his family, dogs and self-made swimming pond.





DECEMBER MEETING

Tuesday, December 20 at 6 p.m.

In Person!

NYBG Education Center
Room A

ALPINE FLOWERS OF THE SWISS BERNESE OBERLAND

Speaker:

Jennifer Kalb

Chapter Member

Clockwise from top left: *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, *Campanula barbata*, *Pulsatilla alpina* ssp. *apiifolia*, *Ranunculus glacialis*, *Saxifraga paniculata*, *Soldanella alpina*, *Anemone narcissiflora*, *Gentiana bavarica*

Botanizing on First Mountain, above the village of Grindelwald



Join Jennifer Kalb on a virtual hike through the alpine meadows, peaks and valleys of the Bernese Oberland of Switzerland, botanizing all along the way. Along with her sister, Leslie Kaplan, and twenty-three other NARGS members, Jennifer was fortunate to participate this past June in a ten-day NARGS expedition. June is the perfect time to see the blooming alpine flora – after the snows recede and before the cows are brought up from the valleys to graze the meadows.



JENNIFER KALB is an Ohio native and retired lawyer. A lifelong garden enthusiast from a family of avid gardeners, she currently cultivates her own backyard, sporadically volunteers in Prospect Park's butterfly meadow and has become increasingly focused on wildflowers and other native plants *in situ* in connection with birdwatching and her travels.

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.

NOTES FROM A BROOKLYN GARDEN

By Judi Dumont, Chair



Changes to our Board

The bad news is that Susan Steinbrock, a current board member and Program Chair for the last several years, is in the process of moving to Maine and will no longer be a board member at the end of her current term. Bad news for us, as we will lose a valued partner, but good news for Susan and Pat, and we wish them well with their new house and garden. Susan is not deserting us completely; she'll remain a member and she's agreed to give a talk about her Maine garden as part of a Pecha Kucha night in the spring. (More on that in an upcoming issue.)

The (very) good news is that two members – Jennifer Kalb and Jess Brey – have agreed to run for election to the board at our Annual Meeting in December. Jess is the Ruth Rea Howell Senior Horticultural Interpreter at Wave Hill, and a brief bio of Jennifer is on page 2, in the description of the talk she'll be presenting to us in December. More information on both Jess and Jennifer will be in the next issue.

Reader, I bought too many plants... tales from the Tri-State Meeting

Great talks by a world-class speaker? Yes. Greeting old friends and new? Yes. Tour of NYBG's fabulous rock garden? Yes. Entertainment courtesy of auctioneer John Rommel? Yes.

But really, nothing can beat acquiring rare and wonderful plants via the plant sale, the raffle and the auction. Among the plants donated to the auction was a *Shortia galacifolia*, a plant I've lusted after (and acquired at the auction in spirited bidding). NARGS past president and current webmaster Elisabeth Zander donated this plant, along with advice

to grow it under a pine tree, with the falling pine needles as mulch. I have no pine tree, but have planted it near a *Rhododendron keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' with some peat and pine fines mixed into the soil. It will get morning sun, and I can keep it sufficiently watered. Elisabeth was kind enough to bring along another *S. galacifolia* for Michael Riley, who has tried this lovely native plant before, but without success due to the harsh rooftop conditions he gardens in. He'll again be growing it in his peat block on the rooftop but "with some other not-so-tuff stuff where it will receive some protection from wind and sun and be kept more moist than before." Wish us both luck!

Clematis viorna – from seed to seed

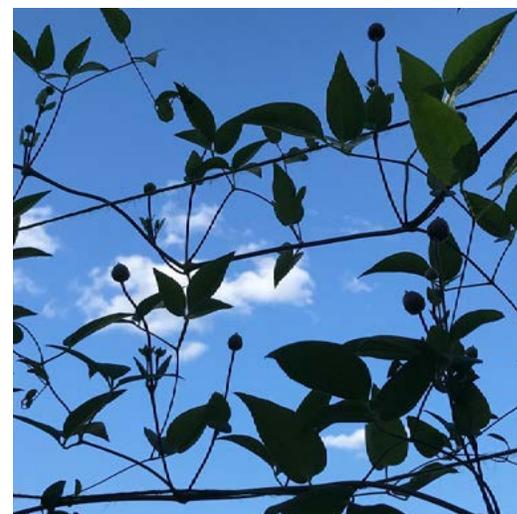
This year, as usual, my seed donation to the NARGS Seed Exchange will include *Clematis viorna*. This reliable, floriferous, native clematis is lovely from bud to flower to seed. Even the delicate tracery of foliage is delightful, reminding me of art nouveau-inspired calligraphy when viewed against the sky. Plenty of seed is set, so plenty will be donated. Join NARGS so that you too can grow this plant from seed, as did I.

"Sigh of a Gardener's Wife"*

From the garden notebook of my grandmother, Stella Owen, and attributed by her to "author unknown":

*With what devoted tender toil
He strives to give his garden's soil
The ideal balance; how he heeds
Each indication of its needs
With ardor nothing can divert—
I wish he treated me like dirt*

*husband, in my particular case.



Clematis viorna: the flower, the seed head, the calligraphy

THE TRI-STATE ROCKS AGAIN!

You could not have asked for better weather on Sunday, October 16 when, for the first time since 2019, members from NARGS chapters in the tri-state region gathered at the New York Botanical Garden. It was like old times – we eagerly gobbled up hard-to-find plants from our favorite vendors, bought raffle tickets by the score and bid on plants grown and donated by our own members.

The speaker was Kaj Andersen of Denmark, who presented two talks. He proved to be a lively and entertaining lecturer, eschewing the podium and keeping his audience enthralled with his rapid-fire narration. His first talk covered the development and construction of the crevice and tufa gardens at the Bangsbo Botanic Garden in Denmark. This ambitious project was designed and supervised by Czech alpine expert Zdeněk Zvolánek, and utilized limestone, peat blocks and tufa to accommodate a variety of plants. After the lunch break, Kaj gave us a tour of various alpine gardens in the Netherlands. Due to space limitations the gardens tend to be small, but the inventive gardeners manage to pack in a tremendous variety of plants making great use of imported tufa. Kaj covered about nine gardens, both private and public, including those of those of Ger van den Beuken and Harry Jans, and the Utrecht University Rock Garden, one of the largest in Europe. One gardener, Karel Lang, has made a specialty of hybridizing saxifrages, including – as Kaj proudly pointed out – *Saxifraga × concinna* 'Kaj Andersen'.

As an extra bonus, during the lunch break, many of us took advantage of Michael Hagen's offer to show attendees around the NYBG Rock Garden, which he is trying to replenish and return to its former glory. Others went for a bite to eat or simply strolled the grounds, enjoying the fall foliage. All in all it was a great day for one of our favorite fall events.

JACK KAPLAN



A rare moment when Kaj Andersen was actually behind the podium



Rick Plate learning that Don Dembowski knows how to hold onto a customer



The auction table, loaded with goodies



Kaj Andersen was impressed with Ernie DeMarie's eclectic selection



Michael Hagen discussing the NYBG rock garden with Elisabeth Zander

Photo by Brendan Kenney



Kristy Delfausse taking her chances with Michael Riley



Patti Hagan was John Lonsdale's best customer



John auctioned off not one but two *Tricyrtis* 'Empress'



Phyllis Milano, a member of the Hudson Valley Chapter, examines the raffle table



Judi Dumont, Lola Horwitz, Abbie Zabar and Kaj Andersen were drawn to John Lonsdale's "jewel case" display of cyclamens

WHY DO WE SORT SEEDS? THE SEED-SORTERS SPEAK UP!



I love viewing seeds in their containers (fleshy fruit, capsule, etc.) before I open or clean them for the NARGS seed exchange. Left: *Fritillaria verticillata*. Middle: The two bright orange seed capsules belong to Jack-in-the pulpits, *Arisaema ringens* (left) and *A. triphyllum* (right). The black seeds above are of the blackberry lily, *Belamcanda chinensis*. To the left of the bottle is the seed case of an annual poppy. Right: the blue berry is blue cohosh, *Caulophyllum thalictroides*, with *Smilacina racemosa* (now renamed *Maianthemum racemosum*), False Solomon's Seal.

Lola Lloyd Horwitz

Although Covid put a big damper on our group seed processing, our chapter has managed to process a hundred sleeves annually, thanks to dedicated seedaholics who have been doing this since Larry Thomas' days (the '80s and '90s). We didn't fit into his kitchen (it barely accommodated him!) but he secured a big room at nearby Mercy College. That was how I caught the bug. It is truly a sort of contagious love affair/obsession!

I will leave it to John Tweddle, Patti Hagan and Michael Riley to share their words of affection for seeds and what we do with them:

Sabine gave me some of Lola's pawpaw seeds. That was at the Metro Hort Governor's Island tour. I was chatting with someone from the Bronx River Alliance and he wants to plant trees there – so I gave him the seeds. Will people pick fruit along the river in the future???

Sorting seeds in the Merchant's House basement:

How classic.

–John Tweddle

Why do I look forward to the annual NARGS Seed-Sorting Ritual? Because by December my garden is cold and to bed and I am impatient for seed catalogs – plus Lola is a warm seed-sorting host. [Lola's comment: how many hosts can claim that distinction?]

Around Lola's kitchen table we sort thousands of near-microscopic seed grains (using giant human fingers): tiny seeds collected worldwide – each a tough-coated mini-embryo of some flowering plant somewhere on earth – ancient

miracles of perfect design and packaging, reliable promises of Spring!

– Patti Hagan

In general, seeds represent the promise of a new life and the challenge of growing. However, intrinsically I find the distinction along the seeds of various species to be fascinating – the size, shape, coat, and hairs are visibly distinct – and it is amazing to think how this may be relative to climate and germination. Imagine!

– Michael Riley

If you want to be involved, check out the dates below, and please email me at llhorwitz@gmail.com to let me know when you can make it. Both seed-sorting veterans and newcomers are welcome. If you have processed seeds in the past, there is the option of working from home. Email me to make the arrangements. All others please remember: seed processing isn't the only thing that is contagious! Bring your masks in the event anyone in the group requests such protection. It might be advisable to wear a mask anyway – if the smallest seeds could speak, they would tell you that your sneezes can scatter dozens of them on the floor! So come help process seeds this winter, but please don't sneeze!

The tentative dates for those who want to work in a group of four or five are **November 30, December 4, 9, 12 and 15 from 7 to 9 p.m.**, though these dates are open to change. My address is 446 6th Street in Park Slope, Brooklyn. If you plan on coming, please contact me by November 20. "At-homers" likewise.

Thank you!

LOLA LLOYD HORWITZ

**THE CASE OF
THE MYSTERIOUS DAPHNE
A QUESTION OF IDENTITY
CHALLENGES MCNARG'S TEAM
OF CRACK DETECTIVES**

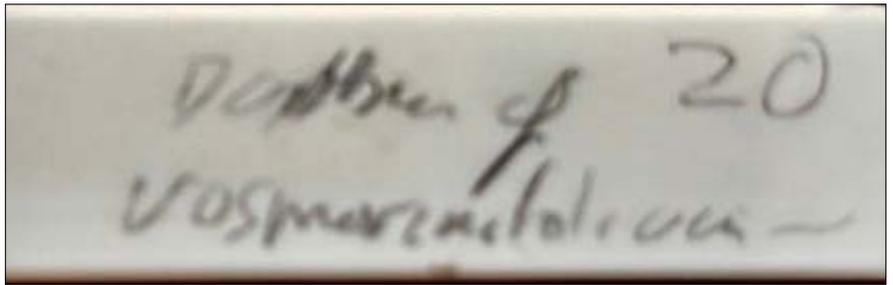


Exhibit A

It's happened to all of us – we buy a coveted plant at a sale and somehow in transit the label gets separated, or worse, disappears altogether. But what happens when you have the label, only you can't figure out what on earth it reads? That happened recently to Marc Porter, a friend of Abbie Zabar, who purchased a small potted plant at the recent Tri-State Meeting bearing the label above. Marc knew it was a daphne, but did not recall the vendor, so he asked for Abbie's assistance. She obligingly sent an email to Matt Mattus, Judi Dumont, Lola Horwitz, Steve Whitesell, and Michael Riley, asking if anyone could help with the label.

Matt Mattus responded quickly:

I'm guessing without a pic, that it might be D. mezereum var. alba and they were trying to write something like "D. alba or Pos. mezereum" and spelled it wrong?

The fact that this is a daphne that often self-seeds or is easy to propagate at home adds to the chances that it's one that another gardener might bring in. But just guessing right now.

A photo of the plant will help. And a clearer pic of the label in focus. Even if we can pick out one more letter, it will help. Or see if there is a question mark or three species suggested.

Marc obliged by sending a photo of the plant and Matt responded:

Possibly (if I rearrange the letters...) it still could be D. pseudomezereum, but its habit and size seems off point, unless it's very young, or it was kept in a pot too long. I guess the best way to ID it might be to try and contact whoever donated it? Sorry! (Now I am curious, though). Any other thoughts, folks?

As for the identity of the vendor, Abbie, using her skills as a graphologist, ventured a guess that the handwriting probably was that of Ernie DeMarie, ruling out Don Dembowski. But to be sure, Judi sent emails to both, asking if they recognized the label.

While waiting for a response, Lori Chips wrote to Abbie:

So the only "V" daphne I can find is D. velenovskyi. It is a Josef Halda plant, Wrightman carries it. They have pictures on their site. To me tho' the specific epithet looks like "vosmarimoldiva" which doesn't seem to exist, or

anything close to it. If anyone has Halda's daphne book, that would be a good place to look.

HOWEVER. ALL bets are really off as this label carries "cf" in front of the species name. It is a catch-all that means "confer" or see "also" sometimes translated as "compare." Basically it is just noting that there are/may be similarities between the species named and what you have in your hand.

In response, Matt wrote:

Harvey Wrightman used to carry a couple of Halda's yellow species that he collected in Yunnan. Halda even [gave] us one when he stayed with us, but I think it was D. aurantiaca or another species, as it was shrubby, tender and kept in our greenhouse for about ten years but bloomed every spring. D. rosmarinifolia appears to be more prostrate.

Matt also helpfully included a link: www.seidelbast.net/rosmarinifolia and attached a beautiful plate from Josef Halda's book *The Genus Daphne* (see below).

Meanwhile, Abbie's guess regarding the vendor identity proved correct when Judi got this response from Ernie DeMarie:

It might be from me if it came in a small plastic pot. It is Daphne cf rosmarinifolia, a species I collected in China. It has yellow five-petal flowers off and on from spring to fall with flushes when it's cooler. I think I am near its hardiness limit here in Briarcliff Manor, but it does self-sow from tiny green seeds that come up the following season.

It can lose its foliage when it gets really cold but will try to keep its leaves if winter is very mild. Either way it grows back fine. Not a very large plant either, the only negative I can think of is the flowers are not fragrant but otherwise it's a nice species.

Marc wrote back: *That sounds like the winner! And there was a Briarcliff hardiness discussion when I was bleary-eyed on Sunday. We'll go on that assumption and I'll report if She survives the winter!*

Let's hope She does, because it would be a shame to lose such a treasure – just one of many great and unusual plants that Ernie offers to our Tri-State members every year.

JACK KAPLAN



The plant in question



Left, a page from *The Genus Daphne* by Josef Halda
Above, detail of *Daphne rosmarinifolia*



During their stay in New York, Gelene Scarborough treated Kaj and Minna Andersen to a tour of Wave Hill's Alpine House. Left to right: Sandy Schaller, Kaj, Gelene, Michael Riley, Minna. Photo by Cathy Deutsch.



NARGS ROCKS
GEOPHYTES
Saturday, November 19, 2022
Virtual Study Day
 Starting at 10 a.m. via Zoom
 Moderated by Peter Zale and Elisabeth Zander
 Guest Speakers:
TOM FREETH
The Bulbous Collections at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
JOHN GRAHAM
Species Peonies
PETER ZALE
Geophytes from a Plant Collector's Garden
 Register online at www.nargs.org
 NARGS members: \$25
 Non-members: \$50/\$55



**MCNARGS WELCOMES
OUR NEW MEMBERS**

Liman Cheng
Chad Longmore
Nina Reznick
Tamara Somasundaran
Lindsey Testolin
Joshua Werber

**IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR
MCNARGS MEMBERSHIP**

Please renew for 2023 by December 31. If you have a multi-year membership and are unsure of your status, please email Nancy, our membership secretary, at nancycrumley@gmail.com or call or text her at (347) 907-2382.

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: _____

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

- (1) Simply 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.

To pay by check, please use the form above.

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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

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Tuesday, December 20 at 6:00 p.m.

(before Jennifer Kalb's talk)

MCNARGS members will elect the Board of Directors.

Please contact a board member if you are interested in being nominated, or want to nominate someone who would like to serve.

Up for election are: Jennifer Kalb & Jess Brey

Up for re-election are:

Nancy Crumley, Judi Dumont,
Lola Lloyd Horwitz, Michael Riley

Monday, January 16 (via Zoom)

Crevice Gardening

KENTON SETH

*Founder of Paintbrush Gardens, Author of
The Crevice Garden, Blogger*

Tuesday, February 21 (via Zoom)

Spring Alpines of the Spanish Aragonian Pyrenees

TODD BOLAND

*Author and Horticulturist, MUN Botanical Garden,
St. John's, NL, Canada*

A Zoom link will be sent to members prior to these events

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

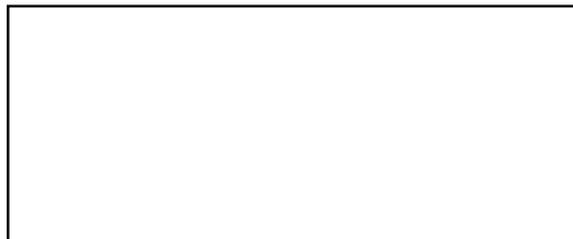
Submission deadline for January/February: December 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

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