

The Urban Rock Gardener

Volume 39, Issue 3

May/June 2026

TWO UPCOMING EVENTS

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE LOTUS GARDEN

**"A Little Slice of Heaven"
Above a Parking Garage**

Monday, June 8 at 6 p.m.

(Rain Date: Tuesday, June 9)

Open to MCNARGS and NARGS members only

Registration by June 7 is required



If you missed the tour of the Lotus Garden last year, or would simply like to enjoy it a second time, (along with snacks and camaraderie), here is your chance to visit this very special community garden on the Upper West Side, located twenty feet above West 97th Street, on the roof of a parking garage. This unique, 7,000 square foot urban oasis sits on only three feet of soil and is maintained by thirty gardeners and other volunteers, among them MCNARGS members Shanna Forlano and Nancy Froud. Spearheaded in the 1980s by a group of intrepid Upper West Siders, this beautifully curated garden was lovingly designed and it continues to uphold the spirit of those early days. Named after the lotuses that bloom in the koi pond, you'll also find perennial plants, flowering shrubs, fruit trees and an herb garden, as well as a variety of birds that find sanctuary in the trees and ivy wall. The volunteers are committed to maintaining a welcoming and peaceful spot for the community to enjoy, and we encourage tours of all kinds to explore this little slice of heaven.

To learn more about the garden, please visit the website at thelotusgarden.org.

SHANNA FORLANO & NANCY FROUD

THE LOTUS GARDEN is on the south side of West 97th Street, between Broadway and West End Avenue, just east of the parking garage. Look for the large wrought iron gate with a small Lotus Garden sign on it. Please arrive by 6 p.m. and wait at the gate to be let in. Note one must go up a flight of stairs to access the garden.

The number of attendees is limited, and registration by **June 7** is a must. Be sure to provide your name if it isn't part of your email address. Email manhattannargs@verizon.net.

Thanks to Shanna and Nancy for arranging this tour!



GARDEN TOUR - PLANT SWAP PICNIC - POOL PARTY

Hosted by Rick and Jackie Plate

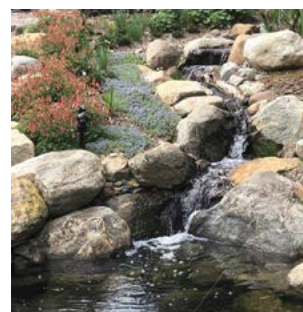
Sunday, June 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

69 Longstreet Road in Holmdel, New Jersey

Open to members of MCNARGS and the
Hudson Valley and Watnong chapters of NARGS

Rick and Jackie moved from a quarter-acre lot in Larchmont, New York to 1.6 acres in Holmdel, New Jersey, in 2021 and have had a busy five years! The day after closing, a 26-foot moving truck and four men delivered plants from the collection Rick and Jackie had developed for over thirty-four years. They have been actively expanding the Holmdel gardens and plant collection these five years.

As a former tree farm, half the property is a mature spruce forest. Prominent features are a large boulder-gravel garden, a turtle and koi pond with stream and waterfall and a tropical landscape pool-side.



RICK SAYS:

- Bring lunch and we will supply beverages and rhubarb-based dessert! (Anyone having a great time will not be chased out of the pool at 2 p.m.)
- Accessible via New Jersey Transit to the Hazlet Station on the North Jersey Coast line, 3.1 miles away from our home. Uber/Lyft and cab services available from station.
- Plant Swap: We will have a table set up, so bring a plant, take a plant.
- Please let us know at rick.p5283@gmail.com or call (917) 375-9605 if you plan to attend.

THE MCNARGS PLANT SALE JUST KEEPS GROWING

Over the years, the MCNARGS Plant Sale has grown in size and changed location a number of times – from the earliest days at the Merchant's House, to the community gardens of the Lower East Side, and, more recently, to our present spacious indoor venue at the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging at All Saints' Church in Brooklyn.

This year the planning began in February with Lola, Jennifer and myself drinking hot tea together in Lola's kitchen, reviewing last year's sale and perusing catalogues. Our first purchase was from Mountain Crest Nursery out west. At Lola's suggestion we bought forty tiny sempervivum and succulents that we would later pot up into sale-size beauties ready for May. We were off and running!

The process of purchasing plants from wholesale growers is always a bit of a gamble. We have to guess the kinds of plants that might appeal to urban gardeners, while never being sure of the availability and "retail readiness" of our choices.

The most exciting part of putting the sale together was anticipating the offerings from everyone's gardens. We were pleased to receive treasures from so many of our members, some of whom were donating for the first time, and we must give a special shout-out to Kathy Gaffney and Don Ohl who hauled two or three table's-worth of plants all the



The Plant Sale Committee:
Jennifer, Lola and Nancy B.

way from their Long Island gardens.

By April the logistics for the actual sale were underway. It wasn't all smooth sailing. For example, we had to work around a small wedding that was held in the space during our planned Friday afternoon set-up time, and then later needed to shift plans on the spot to accommodate the large plant delivery that arrived hours later than expected. It was challenging, but we had plenty of helping hands.

When the doors opened on May 2, eager customers poured in, some with babies in strollers, older kids, and even dogs on leashes. While most were seeking just the right plants for their gardens or containers, at least one

person came for another reason: she was getting married that very day and needed colorful annuals to decorate the tables (and found them)!

The sale was a tremendous success thanks, in no small part, to the generosity, flexibility and good cheer of all the MCNARGS volunteers. You arrived on time and stayed until it was done! You set up the space, unloaded, schlepped, and priced all the plants (which kept on arriving till just an hour before the sale began). You made I.D. tags, categorized and set out the plants and then became hosts, horticultural consultants, and impromptu cleaning staff, right up to the end. So three cheers to all who helped make this a very enjoyable, memorable and profitable MCNARGS event!

NANCY BERANBAUM

THE NIGHT BEFORE...



Lola and Alex cross-checking plants from Glover Perennials with the order lists



Moving plants off of the stage, onto the tables



The Friday night crew

... AND THE DAY OF THE SALE



Homemade signs got the attention of passersby



The pool table put to use for our annuals display



"Miss Wallerstein's Trilliums" courtesy Judi, Lola and Judi's neighbor Annette



Don Ohl pondering a question



Shanna-as-shopper studying the plants closely



Judi collecting price tags to facilitate check-out



Connor gives advice



Checkout crew: Brendan, Francisco and Michael

Photos continued, Page 3

THE PLANT SALE (continued)



Nancy C. collects names for our ever-growing email list



Kathy Gaffney talking plants with a shopper and her little "consultant"



Jackie and Rick Plate chat with a shopper who already has her hands full



Happy with his haul



Shopping for plants is a family affair



Two heads are better than one



John Rommel on the job



Connor cheerfully wipes away the evidence of the sale



The cupboard is getting bare



It's over and we can finally relax!

SCENES FROM THE PHILADELPHIA FLOWER SHOW

On March 2, three of our members attended the Philadelphia Flower Show with the BBG Auxiliary, and a fourth was there on business. The theme was "Rooted: American Gardening History." Here are some exhibits that caught our attention. (Photos by Judi Dumont, Jack Kaplan and Michael Riley.)



An award-winning Wardian case, with oranges



The Delaware Valley Chapter's eye-catching display of troughs



Flower arranging meets *haute couture*, and wins a blue-ribbon



Michael Riley serving as a judge for the horticulture submissions

A TOUR OF THE NYBG ROCK GARDEN IN ITS SPRING SPLENDOR



Michael Hagen in his element
(Photo by Brendan Kenney)



Iris 'Flirtin' Skirts'



Scott Vonderheide, Michael Hagen, Patti Hagan, Nina Reznik, John Tweddle, Jeanne Lapsker, Brendan Kenney, Michael Riley

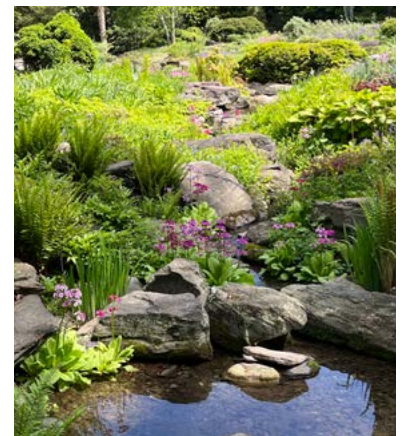


Narcissus 'Chit Chat' amid *Phlox* and *Aquilegia*

On the lovely, sunny morning of May 8, a group of us toured the Rock Garden at NYBG with its curator, Michael Hagen, who gave a compelling summary of the garden's history up to the present. He described the ongoing restoration of the garden, including planting plans and other changes grounded in his extensive research into NYBG's archives, and his years of experience with the garden.

The rock garden looked glorious in what we were told was the third flush of spring bloom. Repeat trips are obviously required to see it all! Some of us stayed around to peruse the gift shop and have lunch, and Patti Hagan made a full day of it, roaming around NYBG's full 250 acres!

JUDI DUMONT



Primula grace the rivulet



Clematis montana at the gate



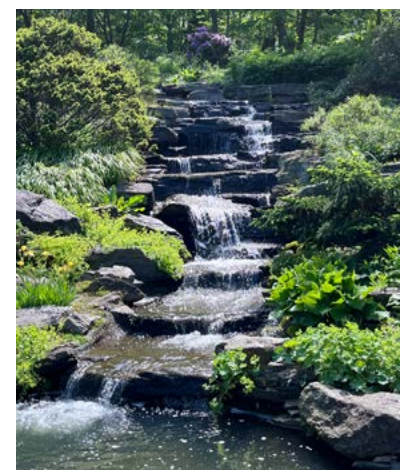
Iris 'Ginger Treat'



Rock gardening at its finest



Iris and *Amsonia*



Cascade

SPRING BULBS AND A LOT MORE ON LITTLE ISLAND

Last fall, Orrin Sheehan, Director of Horticulture of Little Island, treated us to a tour of this dramatic park that rises out of the Hudson River. Experiencing the island in its fall splendor was a memorable experience, and as our visit was coming to an end, Orrin invited us back for a second look, this time to see the spring bulbs. And so, on the brisk, sunny morning of April 16 we got to take a very different look at the 2.4 acre park. Sure enough, yellow and white daffodils dominated the hilly landscape, but we were also treated to a great variety of choice spring-blooming plants. As always, we MCNARGS folks had plenty of questions and Orrin was, as always, very generous with his answers. (Photos by Jack Kaplan, Nancy Beranbaum and Nancy Crumley.)

JACK KAPLAN



Pulsatilla vulgaris



All eyes and ears on Orrin



Narcissus



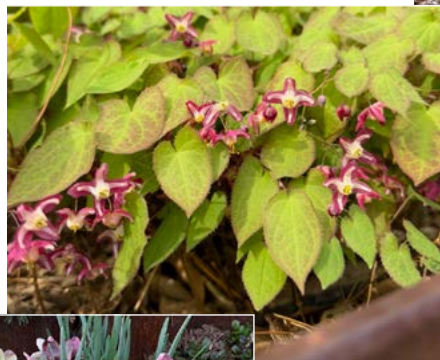
Narcissus, *Carex* 'Silk Tassel'
and *Fothergilla*



Phlox overlooking the lawns and lanes



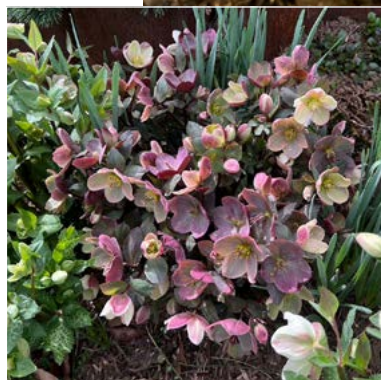
Phlox 'Snowflake'



Epimedium



Potentilla neumanniana 'Nana'



Helleborus HGC 'Pink Frost'



Phlox subulata and *Veronica pectinata*



NOTES FROM A BROOKLYN GARDEN

By Judi Dumont, Chair



Stop and Smell the Daphnes

Daphnes get a bad rap. No, they don't live forever but then what does? I know I'm tempting the plant gods when I make this statement, but Daphnes fare better in my garden than some much more ordinary plants. Dark-leaved and variegated Jacob's Ladder, I'm talking about you!

Before I began to pen my thoughts about Daphnes in my garden, I would have said that *Daphne x hendersonii* varieties are my picks for

their small size, in most cases suitable for troughs. But as I began to check the varieties I am growing, I realized that I have several other small Daphnes to recommend. *D. x hauseri* 'Leila Haines' has stayed small. It's a bit twiggy but it flowers well, in a true pink color. *D. porteous* is a cneorum variety, and after a couple of years it's only reached three inches in total!

But on to the *x hendersonii* types, which truly are the best picks for troughs. Most have wonderful compact growth which remains evergreen in all but the worst weather, so even out of bloom they are handsome specimens.

Arrowhead Alpines and Edelweiss Perennials are excellent mail order sources for Daphne species and hybrids.

Did I mention that Daphnes are wonderfully fragrant? Several of mine are in pots along the steps leading up to our house, making it easy to "stop and smell the Daphnes."



D. x hendersonii 'Fritz Kummert'



D. x hendersonii 'Fritz Kummert' in bud. Almost as pretty as in flower.



D. x 'Maisy Larae' (*circassica* x *arbuscula*)



D. x hendersonii 'Kath Dryden'



D. cneorum 'Porteous'



D. x hauseri 'Leila Haines'

Some Anemonellas

Yes, I know that *Anemonella* is now *Thalictrum*, and I've already complained about this diminutive, lovely plant now being stuck with the name of *Thalictrum thalictroides*. *Anemonella* trips off the tongue – I love the name and for purposes of this short article I'm sticking with it. And I say article, but it's really just a collection of photos of Anemonellas in my garden this spring. Enjoy!



First is 'Pink Pearl' which I bought from Karen Perkins' sadly departed Garden Visions Epimediums nursery but originated at Mt. Cuba Center. It's actually much pinker than in the photo. The second is a fully double white. It may be naturally occurring as the throw off semi-doubles with some frequency.



First is the straight species, then 'Cameo', then 'Schoaf's Double' (aka *f. rosea* 'Oscar Schoaf', aka 'Schoaf's Double Pink'). The doubles bloom for a long time.

Short(ia) Story

Thanks to some fellow plant geeks and NARGS members on Long Island, our spring plant sale was graced with the addition of TWO beautifully grown *Shortia galacifolia*, a rare and beautiful native wildflower. This plant, commonly known as Oconee Bells, has a fascinating history. If you'd like to read about the discovery and rediscovery of our native *Shortia*, and how it came by its common name, here's a link to an NYBG blog on the topic, along with two clarifying comments:

<https://www.nybg.org/blogs/plant-talk/2012/12/tip-of-the-week/oconee-bells/>

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS



If you watched Spectrum's *Mornings on 1* on March 15 you would have seen Roger Clark interviewing MCNARGS member **Jess Brey** at Wave Hill, where she serves as the Ruth Rea Howell Senior Horticultural Interpreter. The backdrop was the Flower Garden (situated in front of the Conservatory), which was a sea of blue, thanks to thousands of "Glory of the Snow" (*Scilla sarden-*

sis, formerly classified as *Chionodoxa sardensis*). Jess credited the Perkins family, who owned the property in the early 1900's, with planting the bulbs, which have since spread everywhere among Wave Hill's twenty-eight acres. But she reminded viewers that this was only the start of the spring show. The blue *Scilla* would be followed by magnolias, cherries, tulips, lilacs and more. Roger, a history buff, pointed out that over the years Wave Hill House had had some famous tenants, such as Mark Twain, Teddy Roosevelt and Arturo Toscanini.

In just two minutes, Jess and Roger made a strong case for visiting this hidden gem in the Bronx. MCNARGS members, of course, need no such encouragement.

JACK KAPLAN



The Flower Garden at Wave Hill (Photo courtesy Wave Hill)

NARGS MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION



For a limited time, the North American Rock Garden Society (our parent organization) is offering free one-year memberships for **NEW members under age 40**. NARGS also is offering \$20 memberships to chapter members who have never joined. If you are interested in either of these offers, email

Bobby Ward nargs@nc.rr.com and include your mailing address. Put "Membership Promotion" as the subject line.

Benefits of membership include a subscription to NARGS's *The Rock Garden Quarterly*, access to botanical tours around the world, Zoom webinars presented by leading horticulturists, participation in the seed exchange, and the opportunity to join other garden enthusiasts at annual meetings held throughout North America.

New Member Profile STEPHANIE PACE



Stephanie in the Cuxa Cloister

Stephanie Pace is among the newest MCNARGS members, coming last year, via the same Stonecrop route as her friend Connor Bush. Upon seeing *Aconitum columbianum* (a poisonous North American monkshood) on the NARGS Seed List she recalls saying: "We should join MCNARGS for seed access!"

Stephanie grew up in Plano, Texas – a city famous for generating sports stars – the daughter of "non-gardening parents. I was kind of an indoor kid – not gardening at all!" Stephanie majored in "Developmental Biology" at

St. Edwards University in Austin. "I was studying fruit flies. I had friends who were studying plants."

By 2015, after college, she had arrived in NYC and was "teaching kids about plants" at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. In 2016, through friends teaching at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Children's Garden she got her "first hands-on gardening experience teaching middle schoolers there, Community Garden-style: plots: vegetables, herbs. "Through that job I enjoyed teaching, but I enjoyed gardening more."

In 2019, in the BBG Internship program she was one of nine interns working in the Cranford Rose Garden and the Italianate Osborne Garden. She took Horticultural Certificate Classes. By 2020 she was a seasonal gardener in Brooklyn Bridge Park working on the Pier 3 Meadow.

By 2022 Stephanie was teaching adults at the BBG: "Herbaceous Landscape Plant I.D." – "a fun class – mostly walk around. Students are expected to learn Latin names. In Biology there's so much Latin memorization." (Botanically speaking, having been raised Catholic gave Stephanie a Latin binomial advantage.)

"In Science and Biology I liked being in the lab and the hands-on physical and practical gardening." She has found: "A garden is a place for experimentation and learning – trying things."

In July 2024, Stephanie moved Uptown, becoming the Medieval Gardener at The Cloisters!

"I had long been a fan of the Unicorn Tapestries there and was familiar with many of the ornamental plants depicted in them, but less familiar with the herbs that aren't as showy – like mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*). Fortunately, the Metropolitan Museum's Medieval Gardener from Texas has a 12th Century herb tutor, the German Benedictine abbess Hildegard von Bingen. Stephanie's bedtime reading is "Hildegard's Healing Plants" – treating 230 plants from Von Bingen's Medieval Classic *PHYSICA* – written on parchment 1151 - 1158.

In this 21st Century of insidious hands-off A.I. – Modern Medieval Gardener Stephanie Pace lives a wonderfully improbable, wonderfully refreshing hands-on gardening life – with MCNARGS seed access.

PATTI HAGAN

We will be profiling more new members in future issues.

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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

We are hoping to organize one or more informal garden meet-ups this summer. *Watch your email for updates!*

Monday, June 8

TOUR OF THE LOTUS GARDEN

See page one for details

Sunday, June 14

RICK AND JACKIE PLATE'S GARDEN TOUR AND POOL PARTY

See page one for details

Monday, September 21 (in person)

TBA



MCNARGS WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS

Agnes Chen

Marian Knowles

Anna Kuo

Sam Lewis

MCNARGS MEMBERSHIP

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



Flora of Anatolia, Turkey

October 18-26, 2026

For more information go to www.nargs.org

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

Submission deadline for September/October issue: August 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

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