

The Urban Rock Gardener



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May/June 2022

PARK SLOPE HOSTS THE ANNUAL MCNARGS PLANT SALE AFTER AN ABSENCE OF TWO YEARS



Judi Dumont helps a customer

After the pandemic forced the cancellation of the annual MCNARGS Plant Sale for two years, it returned in its full glory on May 7. Even then it wasn't clear sailing – "monsoon" rains forced its relocation from the courtyard of the All Saints Church on 7th Avenue, to the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging around the corner. This spacious, well-lit indoor space proved a perfect setting for the vast array of plants, largely supplied by MCNARGS' own members and Gowanus Nursery. Sales were brisk, as plant-hungry gardeners snapped up these locally-grown treasures. Thanks go to the hardworking people who made this event happen: Jess Brey, Francisco Correa, Kristy Delfausse, Alex Dumont, Judi Dumont, Kean Teck Eng, Patti Hagan, Lola Lloyd Horwitz, Isolde Chae Lawrence, Michael Riley, John Rommel, and Susan Steinbrock. Special thanks to Jennifer Kalb, who arranged the last-minute move indoors.

All photos by Jack Kaplan except where noted



Kristy Delfausse, Lola Lloyd Horwitz and Paula Silver confer



Photo by Judi Dumont

Sales were brisk around the sun and part-sun tables



Michael Riley manning the cashier table



This rain-splattered sign says it all



David Castro, Curator of the Bonsai Collection at BGG, bought this rare *Petunia exserta*



Guess which is trough is heavier: the hypertufa, courtesy Judi Dumont, or the fish box, courtesy Michael Riley?



Gary Vellenzer snagged a viola, cyclamen and a trillium



lochroma 'Royal Queen Purple', donated by Kean Teck Eng



The rare plants table, ready for customers

Photo by Alex Dumont



You're never too young to love plants



The labels from sold plants pile up



Ellen Borker was an early shopper

NOTES FROM A BROOKLYN GARDEN

By Judi Dumont, Chair



In-Person Meetings Return!

I'm very pleased to be able to announce that our next two events (September meeting and October Tri-State) are both in-person, as was our recent Spring Plant Sale. As I've previously written, during the pandemic, our meetings by Zoom have been very successful, allowing us to continue with our programs, and to include

non-local speakers to present, and non-local members to attend. Our plan going forward is to resume in-person meetings at the NYBG Midtown location next September, but to have at least a few meetings via Zoom, particularly during the winter months.

Change in Meeting Day from Mondays to Tuesdays

NYBG Midtown will no longer be open on Monday nights, so we've changed our meeting day to the third Tuesday of the month, including meetings via Zoom. There may be exceptions to this, but we'll be sure to let members know well in advance.

Why didn't I ... plant more *Allium christophii*?



Yes, I'm talking about tree pit planting again. As of the date of this writing, I see plenty of the long grayish foliage of *Allium christophii* arising through the spring bulb foliage in the tree pit, but I find that these delightful alliums do not flower as well as in years gone by, and planting additional bulbs on a yearly basis is a good strategy. While quite colorful during early spring bulb season, the tree pit settles down to

primarily a foliage garden as the season progresses. May-blooming *A. christophii* extends the spring bloom season a bit longer.

Roadside Refugia

On Margaret Roach's excellent podcast "A Way to Garden" (Sunday, April 23 - Trilliums with Amy Highland) I learned that the

five-foot verge on either side of a highway can be a refugia for important native plants, including trilliums, as deer are less likely to browse so close to traffic. Road crews just need to hold off on the herbicides!

Snapdragon?

Friends visiting recently asked about the grey-leaved plant cascading out of my brick driveway wall - "Is it a Snapdragon?" Well no, not now, although *Asarina procumbens* was indeed included in the genus *Antirrhinum* (as *Antirrhinum asarina*) at one point. And that essential resource, the Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder, provides the additional interesting tidbit that the genus name *Asarina* comes from the Spanish vernacular name for an antirrhinum. So, this delightful plant was once a snapdragon and perhaps will become one again in the future.



Planting Companions

In my early gardening days, in the late 1990's, I was much influenced by books featuring gorgeous mixed borders; it apparently not penetrating my consciousness that a true mixed border would not become a reality in my tiny garden. One book in particular (*Planting Companions* by Jill Billington) caught my interest, and its teachings have stayed with me. Yes, the text was important but the photos (by the great Clive Nichols) truly demonstrated the book's teachings of how form and shape, texture and pattern, growth, size and habit, and of course color made for striking planting partners.

While I've tried to take these lessons to heart, I do find that some of the best groupings are serendipitous, and the role of a gardener in that case is to step back, admire and encourage those planting companions.



Hosta spp. with *Corydalis malkensis*



Primula spp. with *Corydalis buschii*



Geum 'Pretticoats Peach' with *Semiaquilegia ecalcarata*

SOME SMALL APRIL FLOWERS

As spring winds down and early summer is on the horizon, I wanted to take a moment to remember some of the small flowering delights of my garden in April – small flowers that have made a big impact in my tiny garden.

JUDI DUMONT



Jeffersonia dubia



Hepatica americana



*Thalictrum thalictroides** 'Cameo'



*Thalictrum thalictroides**
'Pink Pearl'



Hepatica nobilis



*Thalictrum thalictroides**
'Shoaf's Double'



Primula x pubescens 'Boothman's
Variety'



Primula auricula 'Chehalis Blue'



Houstonia caerulea



Gentiana verna

*Formerly *Anemone thalictroides*

WHY DO WE ROCK GARDEN?

By Panayoti Kelaidis

You never know what reaction you'll get when you tell people you're a "rock gardener." "Do you try and grow rocks?" is one of the stranger responses. Most everyone becomes infatuated with stones at some point in their lives, and most people have a little gathering of pebbles they've amassed on trips hither and yon – a stone from Italy, a rock from Wyoming. I've even seen gardens planted among these heterogeneous heaps of stone – not what most of us like to have associated with our art!

In the course of my travels, I've seen all manner of rock gardens that range from vast landscapes with carefully-crafted outcrops, waterfalls, and pools lined with masses of Himalayan primulas, to intimate nooks on a terrace or an enchanting patio with artful troughs. Yesterday, I was shown pictures of a small property in Berkeley, California, that had steep little mountains on both sides of the winding sidewalk leading to the entrance encrusted with rocks, but not in the Czech style of upright, parallel flat slabs of limestone. These were volcanic, angular and irregular, knit together like a jigsaw puzzle and planted densely with all manner of South African and American succulents: echeverias, agaves, aloes, haworthias and strange crassulas and mesembs – and, oh yes! cacti. It was as dazzling as a jeweler's window glowing on a rainy night.

And so the permutations of rock gardening move on, like a kaleidoscope – sometimes a raised bed filled with bulbs and cold frames filled with pots of treasures. Or Margery Edgren's extravaganza in Woodside, California – her garden consists of several refrigerators full of seed, germinating pots, and plants in various stages of dormancy in zip-lock bags she pots up and grows under lights – enjoying

primulas in autumn, shooting stars in winter or snowdrops in the summer months.

Some rock gardeners grow miniature hostas, gesneriads, and no end of trilliums in shady gardens, and in Colorado, most gardeners have "xeriscapes" with boulders interspersed with dryland shrubs, penstemons and buckwheats with big clumps of *Agastache rupestris* and hybrids for late summer color. More and more are experimenting with prairie-type plantings to replace a boring lawn.

I know rock gardeners who live in apartments far above street level, who enjoy going to meetings to watch travelogues, or go on trips and come back to a few troughs on their balcony (or none). They may just belong for the camaraderie of fellow plant lovers.

This May the Rocky Mountain Chapter will tour three gardens: one filled with choice alpinines – *Gentiana acaulis* in large drifts of cobalt color, huge mats of *Daphne arbuscula* and *Lewisia tweedyi* studded

with apricot roses. The next garden is all woods, with mossy rocks and waterfalls and dozens of species of fern, huge clumps of cyrtopodium in various species and hybrids, and Japanese maples. The last garden is several acres tumbling down a steep hill overlooking the Great Plains, with massive rock work of limestone in one area, studded with Western dryland plants – buckwheats and penstemons, but also Central Asian acantholimon and bulbs. There is a meadow of native grasses and wildflowers, and more rock work along the fringes of the yard with prairie treasures – a forest of *Liatris ligulistylis* with monarch butterflies flitting about. I doubt that there are any plants in common between these three gardens, and yet all are masterworks of rock garden art. Where does your garden fit on this spectrum?

Whatever the nature of your rocks, or gardens – I think rock gardening (like the nations of Canada and the United States) derives much of its strength from diversity – no two rock gardens are even vaguely alike. But all are utterly captivating.



Anne Smith alpine garden



Scott Boulder Steppe garden



Radebaugh woodland garden

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We love and appreciate our regular contributors, and we hang on every word... BUT... we know there are many other members of our chapter whose voices are rarely heard.

We cannot stress this enough – *The Urban Rock Gardener* is a newsletter for its entire membership and we welcome contributions from everyone – new members and old, whether they 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

NO SPRING TOURS?

Private gardens, public gardens, natural areas ...we love to visit them all, and MCNARGS has traditionally hosted a spring tour or two. So why are there no MCNARGS tours this spring?

The simple answer is that to host tours, **WE NEED A TOUR DIRECTOR.**

The MCNARGS Board currently has only *five* directors, which is the bare minimum required by our By-Laws, and the lowest number of directors in recent memory. Each of us has taken on several different roles, and none of us can take on the additional role of Tour Director. (Lest they be forgotten, the Board is also ably assisted by Jack Kaplan, the Newsletter Editor, and Abbie Zabar, Assistant to Program Chair.)

MCNARGS is a volunteer organization, and to make it work we need our members to get involved. If any of you would be willing to be our next Tour Director (or even to consider taking on that role), we'd be happy to discuss with you what this entails, and our membership would be very grateful, with something lovely to look forward to next spring!

If you're interested, or would like to explore what the role involves, please contact us at manhattannargs@verizon.net.

DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION – MAY 25!



2022 NARGS ANNUAL MEETING CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Ithaca, New York
June 14-17

Speakers include

**F. ROBERT WESLEY, ELEFTHERIOS DARIOTIS,
SUE MILLIKEN AND KELLY DODSON**

Field trips to Cornell's gorges, private gardens
and the Cornell Botanic Gardens

Optional Pre-Conference Tour:

SYRACUSE AREA GARDENS

Tuesday, June 14

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

TRI-STATE MEETING RETURNS!

Good news! The Annual Tri-State Meeting is back! It will be held on Sunday, October 16 at Ross Hall at New York Botanical Garden. The speaker will be Kaj Andersen from the Bangsbo Botanical Garden, Tufa and Crevice Garden in Denmark. He'll give a morning and an afternoon talk, and his first presentation will focus on the Bangsbo Garden. We're in the process of choosing the topic for the afternoon talk from a varied list that Kaj has provided. There will be a break for lunch, for wandering around NYBG (and especially the rock garden), and for buying plants from the great vendors who've confirmed they'll be selling their special plants there. We hope you'll join us at the first Tri-State Meeting in three years!



NORTHERN PATAGONIA

November 28 – December 9, 2022

The 12-day main tour will start in the Northern Lakes District of Patagonia, travel north by van through alpine and forest venues, and then to the grasslands and semi-desert at the northern end of Patagonia.

SOUTHERN PATAGONIA

December 10-14, 2022

The Southern Lakes District of Patagonia is one of the most beautiful places in Argentina. Mountains, huge lakes, glaciers, and the immensity of a landscape with few people and scattered *estancias* attract people from all over the world.

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

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: _____

PLEASE NOTE!

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

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

(2) Visit our new 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.

MCNARGS LEADERSHIP

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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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UPCOMING IN-PERSON EVENTS

Tuesday, September 20

Propagation For Everyone

GELENE SCARBOROUGH

Senior-most Gardener at Wave Hill

**PLEASE NOTE: This talk will be held at the
NYBG Midtown Education Center, 20 West 44th Street**

Sunday, October 16

ANNUAL TRI-STATE MEETING

Ross Hall, New York Botanical Garden

Guest Speaker:

KAJ ANDERSEN

Crevice and Tufa Gardens,

Bangsbo Botanical Garden, Denmark



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 alpines 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 now 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 September/October: August 27

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

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New York, NY 10025

FIRST CLASS MAIL



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