

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 35, Issue 4

September/October 2022

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Tuesday, September 20 at 6 p.m.

In Person!

NYBG Education Center

Room A

PROPAGATION FOR EVERYONE

Speaker:

Gelene Scarborough

Gardener at Wave Hill

Propagating perennials is a very useful skill for the gardener, saving money and allowing for much more creative freedom to design at will...not to mention the added benefit of having plants to share with friends. Gelene will go through a step-by-step explanation on the basics of propagation, so that anyone can understand how to increase their own collection. Propagation has always been one of her favorite garden tasks, from sowing seed to taking cuttings of herbaceous and woody plants, both tender and hardy. Whether propagating alpiners or large garden perennials, the methods are relatively the same, and once becoming familiar with the basic principles, anyone will be able to create the garden they want much more easily.



GELENE SCARBOROUGH is the longest-serving gardener at Wave Hill. Over the past twenty-three years she has curated and worked in every garden, from the Alpine House to the Flower Garden.



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.



The Bangsbo Crevice Bed under construction



Rhododendron camtschaticum



Physoplexis comosa



OCTOBER TRI-STATE MEETING

Sunday, October 16
New York Botanical Garden
Ross Hall

Speaker:
Kaj Andersen

Co-sponsored by the Manhattan Chapter
and the Hudson Valley Chapter

After a Covid hiatus, the annual Tri-State Meeting is back! It will be held on Sunday, October 16 at NYBG.

As part of the NARGS Speakers Tour, our speaker will be Kaj Andersen. Kaj and his wife Minna have been instrumental in developing the Tufa and Crevice Beds at the Bangsbo Botanical Garden in Denmark. The two beds were designed and created in collaboration with Zdeněk Zvolánek and Joyce Carruthers.

Kaj will give two presentations. In the morning he will focus on the Bangsbo Tufa and Crevice Beds. 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 will be offering their plants for sale. In the afternoon Kaj will talk about Dutch alpine gardens.

We hope you'll join us at the first Tri-State Meeting in three years!

KAJ AND MINNA ANDERSEN live in north Denmark, near Frederikshavn, not far from the Bangsbo Botanical Garden. They are volunteers in the garden and have been interested in alpine plants for over thirty years, traveling extensively every year to the European mountains, enjoying Italy, Switzerland, and Austria, in particular. They have thoroughly investigated these mountains and have discovered new species, as well as recovered species that were believed to no longer exist. They often find sites that are rarely visited by other horticulturists.

Kaj and Minna run a small alpine nursery, where they germinate and grow alpiners using only wild-collected seeds gleaned from all corners of the world.

OPEN TO ALL MCNARGS AND NARGS 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) to register and for additional info



Harry Jans' garden



Eucomis spp.



Sedum spp.



Kaj Andersen

NOTES FROM A BROOKLYN GARDEN

By Judi Dumont, Chair



Buttermilk Falls



Plunge pool at Buttermilk Falls



Asplenium trichomanes



Reminder that in-person meetings have returned (with a Zoom here and there)

Our next two events (September meeting and October Tri-State) will both be in person. While most meetings will be in person at the NYBG Midtown location, our plan going forward is to have at least a few meetings via Zoom, particularly during the winter months.

Change in meeting day from Mondays to Tuesdays

NYBG Midtown is no longer open on Monday nights, so we've changed our meeting day to the third Tuesday of the month, including most meetings via Zoom. Any exceptions to the third Tuesday date will be communicated well in advance.

Moss, and ferns, and yes, a waterfall or two

Buttermilk Falls, where the photos to the left and above were taken during one of the Ithaca AGM field trips, is a moss-lover's dream. And I was thrilled to see one of my favorites, *Asplenium trichomanes*, tucked into the rock walls of the gorge. Field trips are always a highlight of an AGM, and this one was a star.

How I spent my summer vacation

No vacation – I just spent much of my summer WATERING THE GARDEN, as I'm sure many of you did, particularly during the dry as dust, hot as Hades month of August.

Why didn't I ... make my garden more drought tolerant?

(See rant above on how I spent my summer vacation.) I've had several thoughts on this topic, and have taken action on some of the resulting resolutions.

No, I don't need lots of rock garden plants in very small pots and troughs when I can make use of some larger, deeper containers and assemble a community of plants with better growing conditions. I'm waiting for cooler conditions to take action on this.

No, I don't need four different cane begonias that, while truly lovely, outgrow their pots at an alarming rate and have to be hauled inside when the weather cools. I've de-acquisitioned one, another is scheduled for composting, and by fall I should be down to a manageable two.

Yes, I'm taking stock of which plants suffered and which thrived, and which areas of the garden were dryer or wetter than expected. I'm ordering new plants for fall with this in mind – we'll see what happens.

Cleome with a difference

At the AGM plant sale I was intrigued by a slender plant in a two-inch pot with a few small lovely flowers at the top and unusual long, slender seed pods. For three dollars, *Cleome hirta* was mine. Planted in my garden in one of the few really sunny spots, this South African native took off, and developed into a sizable, shrubby plant with fine, digitate leaves. (Photos to the right.) It won't be in my garden next year, but it was fun while it lasted. And the bees agreed.



Cleome hirta



Cleome hirta, leaf detail



Bees enjoying the cleome flowers

REFLECTIONS ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN ITHACA, NEW YORK

Several years ago, a friend invited me to a lecture presented by MCNARGS. I hesitated, because while I am an enthusiastic gardener, I'm not really a rock gardener. But I went anyway and found the talk interesting and met the chapter members, who proved to be a diverse mix of city gardeners.

After attending a few more talks, I knew that this was a group I wanted to join.

When some friends from the chapter talked about the 2021 AGM in Colorado, I knew I had missed something that I would have enjoyed. So when it was announced that the 2022 conference would be held in Ithaca, New York, I wanted to attend, because I've visited Ithaca over the years for several events and I enjoy the town and area.

Alpine Visions 2022, sponsored by the Adirondack Chapter, was the first time I went to a national gathering of gardeners. I'm usually anxious in groups of new people but going there with friends made it easier, and of course I was surrounded by fellow gardeners, whether I knew their names or not. It didn't take long before I felt at ease and, it being a national conference, I got to meet people who garden in several different temperature zones and under varying climatic conditions.

The conference offered visits to local gardens, and a number of presentations, some of which were about plant exploration. Kelly Dodson and Sue Milliken gave two talks: one about their travels to the Olympic Mountains in Washington and another about China and the Himalayas. I would like to see their nursery – Far Reaches Farm in Port Townsend, Washington – but I'd rather watch a presentation about their travels. They are very adventuresome!

Eleftherios Dariotis showed photos of his plant explorations in Greece and his new garden in Crete. I think his botanical tours are more in tune with my adventure limitations.

I admire good garden speakers and writers – being able to explain differ-

ent horticultural ideas successfully to an audience helps promote gardening. Talks and writing can encourage people to try new plants, explain why certain practices are better and help people “see” gardens. I also enjoy visiting gardens and talking with the people who created them. In Ithaca, we got to see a wide range of gardening conditions and styles (see photos below).

I was most impressed with two suburban yards because ordinary plots had been transformed into beautiful gardens, showing it can be done. But it was disheartening to hear that a realtor had said that the plants would need to be removed to make the house “more saleable.”

Are too many Americans intimidated by beautiful gardens? We need to change that!

Years ago I attended a lecture where the speaker started by saying: “My name is xxx and I am a plantaholic.” Funny because “I really don't need any more plants” is something I used to say, but if that were the truth, why would I go to such a conference? Now it's Mae West's “Too much of a good thing can be wonderful.”

I think part of America's gardening problem is you go to big box stores to buy plants and there is nothing of interest. I find that depressing. Give me Far Reaches nursery where “the extensive collection of plants is spectacularly unfocused.” As Meg Ryan said in a movie, “Yes, Yes, YES!!!” (Aside from gardening, I enjoy movies.)

So, the conference for me was a horticultural revival meeting. It offered talks, trips to gardens, plant sales, and the opportunity to meet fellow gardeners from around the country. I'm not sure how so much was packed into each day without my feeling overwhelmed.

I got home with lots of optimism and several plants I don't need, but are fantastic. Even with a shoehorn, some went to friends and neighbors.

I'd encourage people to attend next year's conference in Nova Scotia. It will lift your spirits.

JOHN TWEDDLE

Photos by Brendan Kenney except where noted



John Tweddle in the garden of Dianne and Dan Bordoni



Cornell Botanic Garden



The Donna and Jim Kraft garden



Sandy, Judi and Michael at the Len and Cindy Lion garden

Photo by Len Lion



Streptocarpus 'Harlequin Dawn' at Pagoda Hill



The Marlene Kobre and Ron Denson garden



Trough tower at the garden of Bill Stark and Mary Stauble



Moon gate in the Lion garden

ZABEL MESHEJIAN, A REMEMBRANCE



I am sad to report the recent passing of a long-standing member of MCNARGS, Zabel Meshejian, at the age of 84. My acquaintance with Zabel started with plants. Zabel seemed to be involved with every plant society near and far, including the Mycological Society. Every group that I discovered in those days of the late 1970's – she was already there. She served as the president of the Indoor Gardening Society, president of the Cactus and Succulent Society and was

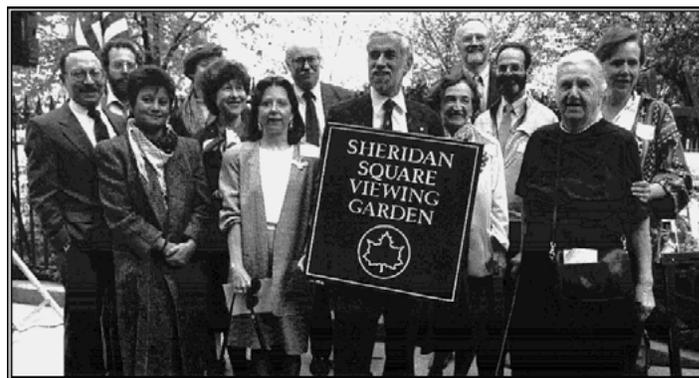
on the boards of the Begonia Society, the Gesneriad Society and MCNARGS. I'm sure there were others. Zabel organized our trips and tours for several years while I was president and her objective was to "do it just like Steve (Whitesell)" because she enjoyed the visits to outside gardens so much.

Zabel was an eclectic plant grower who followed her passion – any plant that she wanted to grow, she found a way. There was an article in the *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/08/garden/living-in-a-nutshell-living-large-in-little-apple.html>) about her small apartment where she cooked dinner in the closet (I was there!) with windows full of glass shelves, laden with plants of all shapes and sizes.

When it came to "eclectricity" among plant groups, there was one that topped them all: The Pits, and Zabel was right in the middle of the pit! This small group grew plants from the pits and seeds of edible fruits and vegetables and herbs and spices and anything else that came along. One member once dressed up as a fig tree to give her program! We also ate a full meal at every meal of whatever the members brought to contribute. Zabel often cooked and brought unique Armenian food true to her heritage. She was a food stylist by profession.

Zabel relished her work in the Sheridan Square Viewing Garden and worked there with Patricia Mason and the famous and fierce British gardener Pamela Berdan since its inception in 1989. She grew a prized *Ramonda myconi* between the rocks, just out of reach of "touchy-feely" viewers. I smiled every time I passed the garden to visit and look up at Zabel's window in thanks. She was active in her local Senior Center where she was taking classes in Tai Chi and art. She seldom missed a meeting or plant sale of any group, often bringing her own contribution for sale or swap. She brought a begonia to a recent Gesneriad Society meeting – just because it was beautiful and she wanted to share. She shared her knowledge, her wit, her humor and herself, and will be well-remembered for those contributions to our lives.

MICHAEL RILEY



Zabel is third from the left with Parks Commissioner Henry Stern holding the sign. This was somewhat of a controversial "public park" in that it was fenced off from the public on all three sides of the triangle in Sheridan Square, and not truly accessible to the public. The Commissioner stated that "not all public spaces need to be walked on" in order to be appreciated and due to the small space and intricate nature of the planting, this viewing garden was deemed appropriate, although it was noted that from time to time, people did scale the fence and take up brief residence in the sanctity of this lovely space.

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE AGM



Judi presented Sandy Schaller with the Frank Cabot Award, which she accepted on behalf of Wave Hill.



The MCNARGS delegation: Brendan Kenney, Sandy Schaller, Sabine Stetzenbach, Jennifer Kalb, Patti Hagan, Michael Riley, Kathy Gaffney, Steve Whitesell, Judi Dumont and John Tweddle.



Paul Spriggs and Kenton Seth displaying the last copy of their book, *The Crevice Garden*, which was snapped up by Brendan.

OUR GARDEN IN MAINE— FROM BROOKLYN TO BROOKLIN

My husband Pat and I bought a house in Brooklin, Maine in October of 2021 and at long last, I finally have a garden of my own. The two-acre property is partially wooded and includes several raised beds, one along a rain-filled stream edged by large boulders and the other bordering the front of the house. My first task was removing dense plantings of evergreen trees and Japanese spirea in the front bed but leaving numerous peonies (which seem to thrive in this climate), an Asian crabapple and two European birches.

The open field and garden beds are surrounded by tall mature trees such as *Quercus rubra*, *Acer rubrum*, *Populus tremuloides*, *Pinus strobus*, *Picea rubens* and *Abies balsamea*. At least four species of solidago and aster surround the property. The *Monarda didyma*, already planted in the garden, has been a favorite of the hummingbirds. (I've never been a red flower person but have given over to the needs of the birds and the bees.) There are woodlands and a rain-fed pond (no water now, due to this very dry summer). Trails will be cleared and woodland gardens will be planted with ferns and spring ephemerals. I've only just begun to identify what lies in the woodlands.

My vision is for an ecological landscape planted with indigenous plants. I've been meeting the local community of plant propagators and have started buying perennials and shrubs at small independent farms including 5 Star Orchard in Brooklin, Northern Bay Organics in Penobscot, and After the Fall Nursery in Montville, where I purchased three *Cephalanthus occidentalis* and planted them along the stream.

Other new plantings include *Viburnum dentatum*, *Viburnum lantanoides*, *Clethra alnifolia*, *Myrica pensylvanica*, *Agastache foeniculum*, *Echinacea purpurea*, *Rudbeckia hirta*, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, *Penstemon digitalis*, *Actaea racemosa*, *Lobelia siphilitica* and *L. cardinalis*, *Verbena hastata*, *Eutrochium maculatum*, *Actaea pachypoda*, *Chelone glabra*, *Aronia melanocarpa* and *Scrophularia marilandica*. I purchased four *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Haas' Halo' from a New Jersey nursery after hearing of its star rating from Mount Cuba for attracting pollinators. I added *Phlox paniculata* 'Jeana' for the pollinators as well. After admiring *Callirhoe involucrata* blooming over walls from the summer to fall at BBG, I brought some in to drape over the boulders. I was thrilled to find *Asclepias syriaca* in full bloom in early July (enjoyed by the hummingbirds) seeded into one of the beds and extending into the unmown grass. The result has been a haven for butterflies and moths. Monarch caterpillars are munching away at and decimating leaves of the milkweed. The caterpillars are crossing over to the grasses and forming chrysalises in the field. A simple change in the way to manage the land, and the birds and bees find a new home.

The work has just begun and new projects throughout the woods and sunny fields will fill my days. Maybe a future visit for those of you who want to head to "Down East" Maine is in store.

SUSAN STEINBROCK



View of house through meadow



Rocks from the property form garden "walls" thanks to Pat and Simon Smith



Gladiolas, a Maine favorite



Section of front bed with granite slabs



Open field after the rain

WATER FINDS ITS WAY

I have looked at the same space behind my house for forty-some-odd years and have witnessed many changes: some that I made, some wrought by time, and many that nature made. I will describe the newest change, definitely an instance in which nature “forced” my hand.

A leaking downspout and a clogged pipe in the basement precipitated too many floods, not only in my greenhouse and basement but also in the garden (there’s a picture in the May/June 2021 issue of our newsletter). I finally faced reality (got off my butt) and called the appropriate contractors. No more eco-conscious fantasy of keeping my excess rainwater out of New York harbor while reducing my use of upstate water to nourish my garden.

I needed to carry water off my greenhouse roof away from the house wall – way away. So I found a pipe (a “leader”) that would be both functional and acceptable to the eye. With the indispensable help and insight of Ali Madassalia, I now have an 8-foot downspout connected to a 21-foot leader, both made out of copper. The terminus is a large copper bowl with many holes drilled into its sides and bottom, placed to reduce the erosion likely resulting from a heavy rain pouring out of the leader. But I wanted to hear and see the water in that last stage, thus the need for a minor waterfall. The pipe is set in such a way that a heavy stream of water will land in the pot. *Voila*, my home-made waterfall!

The shrub benefiting the most from this abundance of water is a *Clethra alnifolia*, or sweet shrub, which I believe will not be harmed. Ironically, I have not yet witnessed a heavy downpour similar to those we had in the fall of 2020. We are all waiting for rain, several long, gentle rains that will restore the water table, farms upstate, city parks and our gardens. Whether I get my waterfall remains to be seen.

LOLA LLOYD HORWITZ



MCNARGS WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS

**Carolina da Nobrega
Pamela Moulton
Nina Ritter**

*Again, the garden is dry
Always, the garden faces an intruder*

– FROM “THE GARDEN POEMS” BY JOE DiMATTIO



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 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

Monday, November 21 (via Zoom)

The Making of a Garden on a Hill

CHRIS YOUNG

Author, Editor and Publisher

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

Tuesday, December 20 (in Person)

Botanizing the Bernese Oberland –

NARGS Tour of Switzerland, June 2022

JENNIFER KALB



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 alpine 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 November/December: October 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

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New York, NY 10025

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