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October 2010

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October 16 program: 'Vertical Gardening'

Elizabeth Zander, program chair of the Berkshire Chapter of NARGs, will speak on 'Vertical Gardening' at our October 16 meeting.

"Most alpines in nature grow wherever the wind takes the seed," she observes. "Many times this can be in a vertical crevice or a slope with loose scree. In these places there is less competition and great drainage." Zander will explore how this translates to crevices and screes in the garden. She will also share construction techniques of her Goshen, Conn., garden – including the raised saxifraga bed built by Zdenek Zvolanek.

Zander directed the NARGS Seed Exchange from 1994-96, edited the Berkshire Chapter NARGS Newsletter for many years and served as president of the chapter.

Our October Plant of the Month will be *Crocus biflorus* ssp. *isauricus* Spring Beauty. (See article later in this issue.)

We'll meet in 404 Plant Science Building (Whetzel Room) on the Cornell University campus. Brown bag lunch at noon. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.

A Taste of Denver Rock Gardening

From Carol Eichler and Donna Kraft, who attended 2010 NARGS annual meeting, July 11-14, 2010 in Colorado. Don't miss the the pictures following the article.

Acclimating to high altitude botanizing when we live at 800 or so feet above sea level here in New York can be challenging. So Donna and I took up the Denver Chapter's suggestion that we arrive a couple days early and enjoy a day of touring members' gardens. Gardens on the itinerary were scattered in and around the sprawling Denver suburbs and with Donna's GPS in hand we fearlessly set out to see as many of them as time allowed.

First on our list was a visit to Panayoti Kelaidis' garden. The man is a legend – influencing the way (literally) millions of people garden through promoting rock gardening and water-smart practices. He's worked at the Denver Botanic Gardens since 1977 and currently serves as President of the Rock Mountain Chapter of NARGS.

Panayoti was also a central figure in organizing the conference this year. His garden did not disappoint. Although he admits his ex-wife was the primary designer, he continues to cultivate and introduce new plants to the garden – altogether claiming 6,000 species. He has a particular love for oreganos, daphnes, and verbascums. I loved the hieraciums (hawkweed) with their wonderful gray-green foliage. To avoid waxing at length here's a great article about Panayoti and his garden.

http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_12879229

Venturing to Arvada we enjoyed Rochelle and Vern Eliason's garden where we were struck by their skillful use of color and texture. I loved the gnarled ponderosa pine and the young bristlecone pine in the front yard – allowing us to see what the tree would like if it were not so challenged by rock, wind, and drought at the high altitudes. We also couldn't resist our first nursery stop at nearby Timberline Gardens after less than 24 hours in Colorado.

We were enchanted even before we entered the front gate of Dan Johnson's older suburban garden. With his sculpture using man-made or found objects, daringness to push hardiness, and strategically placed touches of whimsy, we found unexpected surprises at every turn.

All the distinctive elements were so subtly intertwined that we could not help but feel that there was more to see. It's evident that Dan has the eye of an artist and he gets to indulge his talent not only at home but also as Director of Native Plants at the Denver Botanic Garden. I can only include a "taste" of his garden but you can read more about Dan's garden here:

http://www.denverpost.com/ci_12257126?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com.

On this tour we were reminded that it's easy for a rock garden to look great in spring. The real test of a rock garden is to see how it looks baking in Colorado's mid-July sun as we did. These gardens were truly up to the test and then some! Could it be we saw only 3? We felt so fulfilled but we also wanted to save time to stroll the Denver Botanic Garden before the conference officially opened that evening.

Right: Panning a section of Dan Johnson's garden to illustrate his use of natural and man-made objects, plants and stone, and in the background just a hint of his purple cabana - one of several "rooms" he created on this small city lot.



Panayoti Kelaidis' garden, we admired (actually we were drooling over) the lush daphne uptop, surrounded by pink-purple flowering oreganos and in the foreground multi-stemmed yellow verbascum.





This silver-gray hieracium recurred in Panayoti Kelaidis' garden. The fact that it easily self-sows may be one reason but its attractive appearance would be mine.

Dan Johnson uses the ubiquitous red rock with combinations of agave and palms. Where are we?!



In Rochelle and Vern Eliason's garden, a lovely surrounding rock and smaller plantings. Trained ponderosa pine adds drama to the piece of decaying wood is surrounded by clematis, lavender, scutellaria transitioning to a background of reds, pinks, and oranges.



How can you help but smile at this combo in Dan Johnson's garden?

Dan Johnson's front gate invites the visitor to enter. The plantings have a western flavor reminding us we're not in New York anymore.

Plant of the Month

From John Gilrein, Plant of the Month coordinator

Our October Plant of the Month is *Crocus biflorus* ssp. *isauricus* Spring Beauty. I was captivated by the beauty of this species Crocus. It has white outer petals with dark purple flames and lavender purple inner petals. It's quite a striking flower.

The supplier reports that deer do not usually eat Crocus, but I suspect this may not be true in areas with more intense deer pressure. Planting in more than one site is good insurance if you have critter problems.

Plant crocus 4 to 5 inches deep, in sun to partial sun, 3 to 4 inches apart. Height is around 4 inches, but I've observed the leaves on all my other Crocus species continue to grow to at least 6 inches after blooming. They're hardy in zones 4 to 8.

Crocuses can be naturalized in lawns and be forced, for other horticultural options. Bloom in our area should be expected in March or early April, depending on the weather and the site. It's possible to have staggered bloom times by planting in cooler and warmer microclimates.



Photo used with permission from Van Engelen Inc. www.vanengelen.com

We'll have plenty of bulbs. Come 'n get em!

From the chair

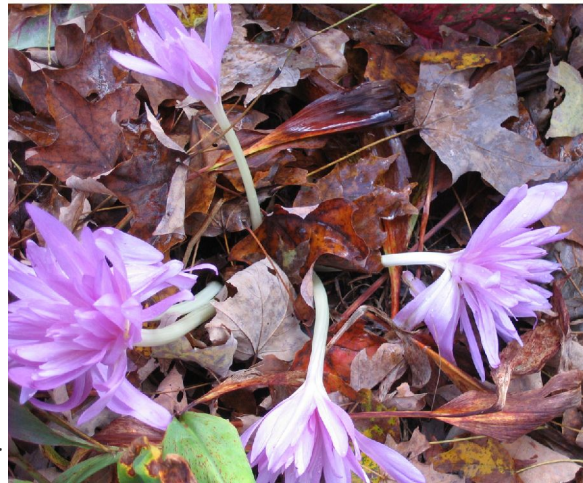
From Billie Jean Isbell, chair.

Colchicum - Autumn Crocus: Thanks to Marcia Meigs' donation of Colchicum to our plant sales, many of us have these beauties in our gardens. I am always delighted by the seemingly magical appearance of autumn crocus. The leaves come up and disappear and I often forget about them until the amazing blossoms appear in the fall among the fallen leaves. Thanks Marcia. I wish I had many more. My garden is a map of our members who have provided plants during our plant sales. Thanks everyone, let's keep exchanging plants.



Program Chair and Committee Members

Needed: Thanks go to Donna Kraft for arranging excellent programs during this last year. She is stepping down as chair of the program committee and we need a new chair. It's really fun to do and puts you in touch with the members of NARGS national. If anyone is interested in serving on the committee, please contact me by email bjj1@cornell.edu or by phone 539-6484.



Message from NARGS national – nominations

by Jan. 10: Alice Nicolson (Potomac Valley) chair of the NARGS nominating committee writes that this year we have elections for the four Officer positions as well as one-third of the nine elected Board Directors. Her committee is tasked with finding candidates for President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer. These officers, plus one of the elected Directors whom the officers choose, constitute the Administrative Committee, which runs the day-to-day business of the Society.

The committee is looking for three new Directors of the Board to help support the NARGS Administrative Committee and keep our society running smoothly, adapting to members' changing needs and goals. "Most of you are already contributing your time and ideas to your local chapters, but you may know members who might be interested in doing the same for our umbrella group, NARGS, or you may be interested in such a role for yourself," she writes. "Please suggest a couple of people whom you know who might be able to contribute to the continued development of NARGS. Send us their names and email addresses or phone numbers as soon as possible, at least before January 10. Don't worry - they won't be nominated unless they consent! We'll contact possible candidates to ask if they are willing to serve, and if so, that they prepare a short gardening bio that can be published in the spring Rock Garden Quarterly."

Send me your suggestions and I'll forward them to the nominating committee: bjj1@cornell.edu

2010 program plans

Program line up for the rest of 2010. Details in future newsletters or: acnargs.blogspot.com

- October 16: **Elisabeth Zander**, Berkshire Chapter-NARGS, "Vertical Gardening."
- November 20: **Program to be announced.**

Need a plant stand?

Free plant stand, four tiers, large enough for at least two flats lengthwise on each tier. Knocks down for storage or transportation. Contact Ken Walkup at 279-1440 or krw25@cornell.edu.

People

- Chair: Billie Jean Isbell, bjj1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484
- Vice chair/program: Open
- Secretary: Harold Peachey, hlpeachey@gmail.com,
- Treasurer/plant sales/trips: BZ Marranta, mmm10@cornell.edu
- Plant sales: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu, 607-342-3660
- Plant of the Month/program: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, 315-492-0844
- Membership/trips: Susanne Lipari sel3@cornell.edu 607-387-9308
- New member hospitality: Judy Fogel jfogel@twcny.rr.com 607-275-3332
- Newsletter editor/Webmaster: Craig Cramer, cdcramer@gmail.com

Green Dragon Tales

Published eight times a year (Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Craig Cramer: cdcramer@gmail.com. Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be in November 2010.

