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CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

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November 2011

In this issue:

- November 12 program: Trilliums
- 2012 program plans
- A Snapshot of China Gardens
- From the Chair
- News from National
- Why join NARGS?

November 12 program: Trilliums – A Love Affair

Our November 12 program will feature chapter member Robin Bell speaking on Trilliums - A Love Affair. Says Robin:

“This will be a story about Trilliums, a rare single genus talk! I will try to show why I think they are significant for us as gardeners and plant enthusiasts. There will be plenty of coverage of them in the garden. But I'll focus on them in the wild where, around here, only remnant populations can be found. I'll emphasize why I think that this is important what I think we should be doing about it.”



Set up starts at 11 a.m. with dish-to-pass at noon (due to remodeling, no kitchen facilities are available) followed by a short business meeting. The program will begin at 1 p.m.

The meeting will be held at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. (Where Dey St., Willow Ave. and Rte. 13 meet). Need directions? Visit: cctompkins.org/about or call the CCE office during regular business hours: (607) 272-2292.

2012 program plans

The program committee has begun planning next year's programs including (tentatively) a fall speaker provided by NARGS National, a hypertufa workshop, and more in the works. If you have ideas for topics and/or speakers to invite, please contact Program Chair, John Gilrein, JGILREIN@twcny.rr.com. As programs become finalized they will be posted to the blog and listed in the newsletter

A Snapshot of China Gardens

From Carol Eichler,
carolithaca@gmail.com

A mere 80 Million Chinese out of the country's total of 1.37 Billion visit the Forbidden City each year. Fortunately we missed the weekend crowds by a day – enough people to challenge our group of 30 to keep together and avoid getting impossibly lost.

Sure enough, I suffered a momentary separation panic in – where else – a garden, the Emperor's Garden. Nice as this garden was (and at the time of the emperors' reign accessible only to him) my favorite garden on the trip was The Lingering Garden in Suzhou. Both gardens are centuries old and in the Chinese tradition (and it's all about tradition) they combine four important elements: water, buildings, stone, and plants.

There wasn't much in flower in October, but plants duly noted included the tree peonies, magnolias, ginkgos, bamboos, and many more. Unfortunately the season was too early to catch the maples in fall color, as I had hoped.

At Lingering Garden there was an outstanding bonsai collection that I only had time for a cursory pass-through (didn't want to risk getting lost again).

Enjoy these photos. I hope to include more photos, observations, and commentary from my China trip in future newsletters.



The Emperor's Garden inside the Forbidden City, with dormant tree peonies in the foreground.



This view at Lingering Gardens illustrates how Chinese gardens incorporate the 4 elements.

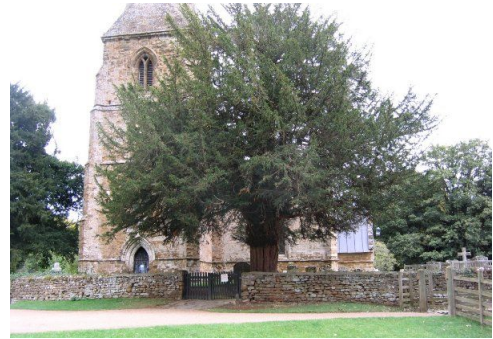


A very old-looking bonsai that most likely is.

From the Chair

From Billie Jean Isbell:

Our November 12th meeting at Cooperative Extension features Robin Bell's 'Love Affair with Trilliums' preceded by a dish to pass lunch and a short business meeting. Many of us have benefited from Robin's fascination with Trillium as he has generously shared these beauties at various plant sales. The program promises to be memorable.



I developed my own love affair while visiting the Cotwolds in Gloucestershire, UK but without the depth of experience or knowledge that Robin has. So you might say my love affair was only a fling. Nevertheless, I became enthralled with the ancient English yew, *Taxus baccata* and learned that these ancient evergreens, commonly found in church courtyards, often predate the construction of the churches. They were considered sacred trees of transformation and rebirth that gave access to the other world for the Celtic and Saxon peoples. They grow new trunks from within the original root ball. The oldest English Yew in Europe is in Fortingall, Scotland and is estimated to be 3,000 years old. The needles and bark of yews produce taxol a drug that inhibits cancer cell growth permanently. Unfortunately, they would not survive our winters. I cannot add it to my garden.

I also visited Hidcote, the garden established by Lawrence Johnston in 1907. Johnston was an American, born in Paris into a wealthy banking family. His mother, Mrs. Gertrude Winthrop bought the 287-acre property for her son. Over 20 years Lawrence Johnston developed the gardens following the ideas of Thomas Mawson, *The Arts and Crafts of Garden Making*. He became an active plant explorer bringing plants from South Africa and Hunan Province to Hidcote to establish the garden rooms at Hidcote, a concept that has guided my own garden development. Below is a view of Hidcote Manor from the Old Garden with a Cedar of Lebanon to the right. One of my favorite vistas was through Pillar Garden of trimmed and shaped yews. I'll bring a book to the meeting to share.



News from National

The November Book of the Month will be Claire Austin's (daughter of the rosarian, David Austin) *Iris: A Gardener's Encyclopedia* was reviewed by Potomac Valley Chapter member Bobbie Lively-Diebold. Read the review at www.nargs.org/

The Seed Exchange seed list will be online December 15. The slick new electronic listing and ordering features should make selecting and ordering seeds a breeze. But if you're uncomfortable with online ordering, request a print copy of the seedlist before November 15: Joyce Fingerut, 537 Taugwonk Rd., Stonington, CT 06378-1805 alpinegarden@comcast.net

Winter Study Weekend and NARGS Annual Meeting, March 9-11 2012 Everett, Wash. Early registration discount available through Feb. 9. Carol Eichler is planning to attend and looking for someone who would like to share lodging: carolithaca@gmail.com

Mark your calendar: The 2012 Eastern Regional Meeting will be hosted by the Allegheny Chapter in Pittsburgh, Pa. and is scheduled for Columbus Day. The 2013 Annual Meeting will be held in Asheville, N.C.

Why Join NARGS?

From Peter George, NARGS board president. You can read "What is NARGS" in the November Potomac Chapter newsletter: http://www.pvcnargs.org/PVC_Bulletin_November_2011.pdf

My previous commentary, "What is NARGS?", seems to have drawn some favorable attention – but it still leaves open the question, "Why should Chapter members join NARGS?" Before discussing the specific benefits of NARGS membership, I need to briefly address the critical, but often poorly understood, relationship between NARGS and its Chapters.

Today we have 38 Chapters that are active in some manner and that provide some direct benefits to their members. Each of these Chapters organized itself and requested NARGS recognition, which means that the Chapter founders recognized some real benefit from NARGS to the Chapters. Today, for example, NARGS provides Chapters with prominent and well regarded speakers through its Speakers Tours. In the past four years alone we've shared with our Chapters people such as Josef Halda, Peter Korn, Harry Jans, Pam Eveleigh, Cliff Booker, Alan Bradshaw and John Grimshaw, and we have Jim Locklear, Fritz Kummert and Nick Turland scheduled for the next two years. The opportunity for members to learn from these men and women is a real bonus to the Chapters.

Each year NARGS sponsors both a Regional and a National meeting, providing the sponsoring Chapters with the financial wherewithal to proceed confidently with the meeting, as well as providing financial guarantees that provide security for the Chapters when they contract with hotels, banquet halls, etc. Again, these meetings are of real benefit to both NARGS members and non-members, since most of the recent meetings have not required NARGS membership for registrants.

NARGS also provides a Web site that each Chapter can use to promote itself, advertise its programs, etc. In short, NARGS provides the Chapters with a variety of valuable resources that make their job of attracting and retaining members much easier.

For individual members of NARGS, the benefits are quite straightforward. First, **membership includes a subscription to the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly**. Under the editorship of Malcolm McGregor, the Quarterly has become an informative, interesting, and beautiful magazine, providing members with articles, photographs and commentary that enhance our lives as rock gardeners. Frankly, the Quarterly alone is worth the \$30 per year NARGS membership dues.

A second major benefit is the **NARGS Seed Exchange**. Each year we offer hundreds of species, including many that are wild collected, to our members at a very modest cost. This year the SeedEx is going electronic, so members will be able to order online for the first time. My garden has over 40 species that I've grown from NARGS seed, and many of my friends in NARGS have had even more success growing choice seed while adding beauty and sometimes even rarity to their gardens.

Third, NARGS is reviving its **Tours and Expeditions Program**, offering our members the opportunity to explore many rarely visited botanical wonderlands at a very modest cost. We expect to have our next trip in late spring or early summer in the Pacific Northwest.

Finally, we are developing the **NARGS Web site** into a portal through which all kinds of rock gardening information will be made available to members. We will be implementing dozens of technological initiatives that will enhance our gardening expertise and will provide members (including, importantly, members who are unable to attend meetings) with access to programs, photographic databases, streaming video of workshops, the entire library of ARG/NARGS's past quarterly publications (searchable too!), and many other benefits.

I do understand why some of our Chapter members don't want to join NARGS. Some have no real interest in rock gardening; some can't afford the \$30; and some simply don't care about the benefits. But I think that, for most chapter members, NARGS membership is certainly worth the money, and I hope you agree. We're more accessible than ever, more responsive, and more interested in what *you* want. So please join us and share your thoughts with me and the other NARGS officers. And please visit the Web site at www.nargs.org.

Contact me at petergeorge@verizon.net for comments and questions.

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