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September 2013

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## SEPTEMBER 28 : MATT MATTUS

*Nari Mistry*

Our September speaker will be Matt Mattus of Worcester, Massachusetts, speaking on non-hardy winter blooming bulbs. Matt is an internationally known plantsman, blogger, and



speaker on topics of horticultural interest. Matt is the third generation member in a family of plant collectors, an explorer and collector of plants across the globe, and is on the board of NARGS. He has a greenhouse in which he grows exotic bulbs. Expect to be wowed at the array of exotic bulbs in his slides, far beyond the common winter blooming bulbs we all have seen. In spite of also having a day job as a creative director at Hasbro, he finds time to maintain an outdoor garden with annuals, perennials, and vegetables. Join us at 1:00 p.m. on **September 28th** in the Whetzel Room (404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University-map at newsletter's end). Optional bring-your-own bag lunch and social time starts at Noon. Drinks provided. Goodies always welcome for sharing.

>>>>\*NOTE: meeting date was changed to 4th Saturday September 28\*<<<<

### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Go to Matt's blog at <http://www.growingwithplants.com> and read a couple of posts, just to get a feel for what he's all about. Bonus points if you use the search box and find a post with "greenhouse" in it. Double bonus points if you find the archives and read a post from last December.

“Autumn - the year's last, loveliest smile.” -William Cullen Bryant

## FROM THE CHAIR

*Carol Eichler*

Hasn't the summer been zooming by? This growing season my resolution was to do less and observe more. As with most resolutions, I was only partially successful. Getting more involved in the vegetable garden this year helped force that practice - watching out for devouring insect pests and harvesting the veggies in their prime (especially zukes and cukes). Inevitably my observations would lead to distractions, i.e. something that needed tending in the garden - staking a plant, pulling a weed, deadheading, etc. Another observation technique I employed was with my camera - trying to capture many of my flowers - especially the rock garden plants - when they were in bloom.

Overall, for me at least, it has been an excellent year. My plants have been happy. The rains came at the right time, followed by warm days conducive to growth. And with many promising days ahead, there's a lot to look forward to.

September signals a return to routines for many of us, including ACNARGS. Following a well-attended member sale and picnic last month, we return to 3 months of speaker programs. We have a great line-up ahead so you'll want to note the upcoming meeting dates (listed elsewhere in the newsletter) on your calendar since 2 of our 3 meetings deviate from the usual "3rd Saturday" of the month.

Speaking of photo documentation, all of us in attendance at the August meeting were so obsessed with the excellent selections of plants and food that no one took any photos. Well, I did take one - and yes, it's of a plant - but not what you might think. I'm including it here.



See you September 28th!~~Carol

## PLANT OF THE MONTH: CYCLAMEN COUM

John Gilrein

Our September POM is *Cyclamen coum* (SIK-lah-men Koe-um--not "coom"). *C. coum* is a hardy plant native to the eastern Mediterranean area from the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia to Iran and Israel. It grows up to 2000 meters in elevation and is hardy to approximately zone 5 (not quite as hardy as its relative *C. hederifolium*).



Cyclamen coum in wet scree just south of the Zigana Geç. Photo courtesy of Martyn Denney, The Cyclamen Society

It typically grows under trees or shrubs and is tolerant of root competition. Like many plants from the Mediterranean, it grows in Autumn through Spring and is summer dormant. In our climate, it blooms between February and April, bloom time being dependent on variables like snow cover and warm days. Blooms are pink to magenta, with a dark blotch at the base of each petal. There are also varieties with white blooms.

*C. coum* is a very small plant, height 2 to 6 inches and width a few times that (my coums seem to be very short). Similar to other cyclamen, flower stalks will be curled up as the round seed pods mature. Leaves are orbicular (round) to cordate/renate (heart to kidney shaped), green, green with silver markings, or solid silver.

**Cultivation:** plant in well drained soil in partial shade. Leaves are more frost tolerant if not planted in direct sun; plants in shade may recover from wilted leaves related to cold. Directions usually suggest planting corms at the surface; alternatively plant up to 3 inches deep. Surface planted corms may be covered with a layer of grit. Corms develop roots from the center of their base.

*C. coum* prefers slightly alkaline soil, and is tolerant of other pH conditions. This plant does not want woodland conditions; excess moisture could be a problem. Soil drainage could be improved before planting with grit or sand (I would avoid too much compost). Reputedly does not self-seed as much as *hederifolium* - tis a pity!

**Plant Source:** K Van Bourgondien

**Information Source:** Cyclamen Society website

**Other sources for *C. coum*:** Arrowhead Alpines, Fowlerville, MI; Brent & Becky's Bulbs, Gloucester, VA; Hansen Nursery, North Bend, OR; Sunshine Farm & Gardens, Renick, WV.

Plant of the Month is a member benefit, partially subsidized by your dues, to provide additional encouragement to attend meetings and expand the horizons of our members. The goal is to coordinate the plant of the month to the meeting topic, though sometimes that is not possible. Please send suggestions for Plant of the Month to John Gilrein.

## CYCLAMEN AND ME

*Nari Mistry*

I have successfully grown a few plants of three species of Cyclamen: *C. purpurascens*, *C. hederifolium*, and *C. persicum*, the last being a house-plant in our area, but reputedly survives down to 20F. *C. purpurascens* has been the most successful in the garden, flowering profusely in July and August. *C. hederifolium* seems to be less robust, although planted right next to *C. purpurascens* in the same environment. It starts blooming now, in September.

I have tried *C. coum* a couple of times, starting the corms in pots, but they did not survive – pot cultivation is a bit tricky, the main trick being when and how much to water. In all cases, to avoid destruction by chipmunks, I kept the new plants in pots for at least one year. The secret is to water *very little* if at all during the dormant period, i.e., summer. You start watering sparingly when the new growth points start to appear on the corms. This brings me to the point that the corms should be planted at the interface of soil and grit (I use pea-gravel) as the new growth will rot if it is in soil that is wet.

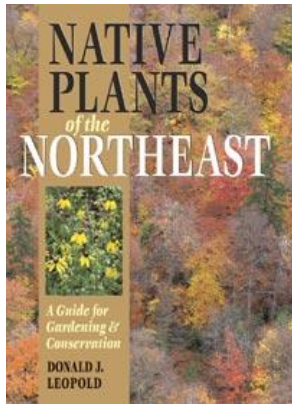
I first planted out my *C. purpurascens* and *C. hederifolium* in small pots immersed in the garden (well-drained mix and gravel mulch), the whole row covered by a wire cage to avoid destruction. When the corms grew to about a half-inch in diameter, I replanted them without pots but still protected with a cage. Now they are a couple of inches in diameter, and are left uncaged. I water these adults only rarely, if the weather is very hot and dry for a week. But they are all *planted at the surface*, or they would have rotted in the heavy rains of summer.

None of my plants in the garden have self-seeded (actually through ant action) and I attribute that to chipmunk-action!

Two winters ago I started *C. hederifolium* from seed, in covered pots, and have had four single-leaved seedlings until they went dormant this spring. I have just started re-watering, and hope they awake. Small seedlings grow very slowly and need some water even when dormant; I hope I gave them enough. The same treatment worked very well with *C. persicum* in pot culture—these grow quite fast into robust large corms. (I had some that had grown to 5" diameter, until all my indoor plants froze once when we were away.) Last winter's seed starts have produced a few *C. hederifolium* leaves and even two tiny starts of *C. coum*. We shall see how they prosper—a delicate touch is needed.

## NATIVE PLANTS BOOK FOR SALE

Carol Eichler



I would be hard-pressed to find a person more knowledgeable about the native trees, shrubs, vines, ferns, grasses, and wildflowers in our region than Donald Leopold. Leopold is a distinguished teaching professor at SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. He has devoted his career to researching, writing, and teaching others about native plants - and he offers his first-hand experience at growing many of these plants. Professor Leopold will be our speaker in November.

Starting with the September meeting, we will be offering his book, **Native Plants of the Northeast**, for sale to our members at a highly discounted price.

You can read more about his book at the [Timber Press website](#).

## GARDENING ON MARYLAND'S EASTERN SHORE

*Reprinted with permission from the Delaware Valley chapter's newsletter, The Dodecathron, March/April 2013 issue. More pictures at the end of this issue.*



*Presented by JOHN RAY, OCTOBER 20, 2012 Submitted by Joan Schmitt*

Micro and macro gardening on Maryland's Eastern Shore was the topic of a most eagerly anticipated talk by John Ray of Chestertown, Maryland. The micro portion referred to the alpine plants that John and Betsy propagate, both by seeds and cuttings and grow on in several alpine houses for planting throughout the gardens and in many troughs. The macro portion of the Ray garden is the original acre and a half, expanded to seven acres and includes many shrubs, trees and a croquet court on the

edge of the summer house.



The hypertufa troughs, including John's prize winning entries in the Philadelphia Flower Show, were of great interest to the audience. Several contained choice alpines grown from both seed and cuttings, often planted in tufa rocks placed within the troughs.

Obtaining and propagating plants requires careful attention and John discussed various means for both methods. The advantage of rooting cuttings is that you know exactly what you are going to get, and the cuttings

usually have a sufficient root system within little more than a month's time. The more choice plants from seed are normally harder to germinate (unless fresh, many times seed is dead), and takes longer to develop a sufficient root system. Also, seed is often mislabeled. Once you have a suitable rooted plant, it is recommended that the hole drilled in tufa should be about 5/8 inch diameter; a small hole forces the roots to grow into the tufa.

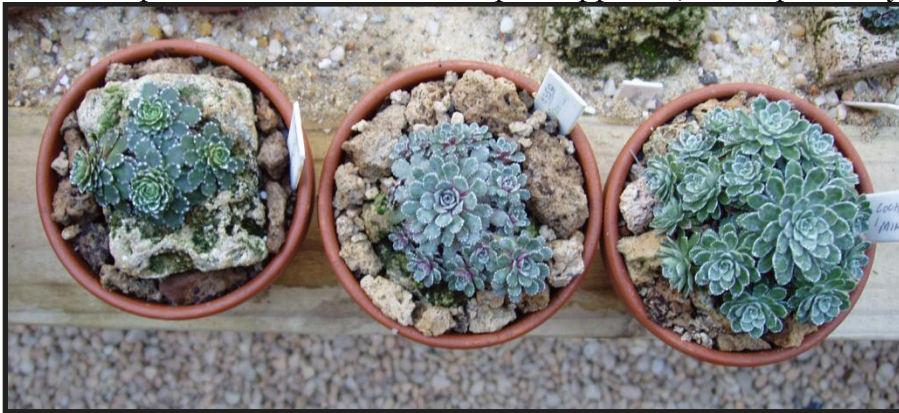


In addition to troughs, we viewed both south and north facing greenhouses, plunged sand beds, crevice gardens, raised beds and the rock garden. The sand beds, especially effective for moisture control, are particularly efficient for growing western plants. Soil cloth was recommended for use under the sand beds for control of worms.

Several plants were mentioned, including the true alpines such as *Physoplexis comosa* and *Saxifraga minutifolia*. Also discussed were some special favorites such as *Gentian acaulis*, which John suggests moving every three years to fresh soil. *Arenaria* sp. 'Wallowa Mts.' was another favorite and one which grew well in my Downingtown gravel bed as well.

Many recommendations for obtaining plants were also offered, along with several books that John has used for reference. Notable among these were Wrightman Alpines and Wild Ginger Farm. In addition to Norman Deno's book of germination requirements, Rex Murfitt and Joyce Fingerut's Trough book was cited.

The presentation concluded with pictures and discussion of John's many entries in the PHS flower show. Transporting the troughs and plants is a major challenge and John acknowledged help from various members. The photo of a particular award winning trough contained seventeen plants in one tufa rock! Gasps of approval, accompanied by sighs of envy!



### SAND BEDS

Southeastern Pennsylvania and Maryland have somewhat similar summer conditions: hot and humid. Articles written by Norm Deno, Mike and Jan Slater (*Rock Garden Quarterly*, Volume 56, Number 2, Spring 1998) and Rick Lupp convinced me that sand beds were the best way in our climate to raise western alpine and bun type plants.

In constructing sand beds, it is important to locate them in the sun and away from tree roots. The beds

should be a minimum of twelve inches deep, and eighteen inches is even better. Before placing the coarse sand, remove any weeds (Roundup) and then cover the surface with a permeable liner to prevent earth-worms from carrying humus into the bed. Once established the plants should not require much water. In spring, a half strength low nitrogen fertilizer is desirable.

### PLANTS FOR SAND BEDS

Plants that have lived for more than three years on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in sand beds are listed below. Except for *Asphodeline lutea*, most of the plants on the list are less than two inches high.

*Acantholimum armenum*  
*Antennaria* sp. 'Bear Mountain'  
*Achillea* ex. 'King Edward'  
*Artemisia pedemontana* v. *assoana*  
*Arabis androsacea*  
*Arenaria* sp. 'Wallowa Mts.'  
*Asphodeline lutea*  
*Cactus* (many)  
*Dianthus freynii*  
*Dianthus simulans*  
*Dianthus* 'La Bourboule'  
*Eriogonum umbellatum*  
*Eriogonum kennedyi*  
*Erigeron leiomerus*  
*Erigeron compositus*  
*Ephedra minima*  
*Erysimum kotschyianum*  
*Genista delphinensis*  
*Globularia cordifolia*  
*Gypsophila aretioides*  
*Heterotheca jonesii*  
*Hymenoxys acaulis*  
*Hypericum olympicum*  
*Iberis candolleana*  
*Lesquerella arizonica*  
*Orostachys boehmeri*  
*Penstemon caespitosus*  
*Penstemon pinifolius*  
*Petrophytum caespitosum*  
*Phlox* 'Sileneflora'  
*Sedums* (many)  
*Sempervivums* (many)  
*Silene acaulis*  
*Veronica oltensis*

## WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBER

Mary Stauble

Please welcome new member Mary Ann Turek! Bill Stark and I met her at the June Open Days at her lovely garden in King Ferry, NY!

## 2013 PROGRAM PLANS

*Mark your calendars! Unless otherwise specified, all local events start with a brown bag lunch at noon with the program following at 1 pm, and take place at the Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (see map on the last page).*

**September 28:** Matt Mattus (<http://www.growingwithplants.com/>) on non-hardy bulbs.

**October 19:** Kathy Purdy on *Colchicums*

**November 9:** Don Leopold (<http://www.timberpress.com/speakers/author?id=61>) on **Native Plants for Difficult Garden and Landscape Settings**

Details as we learn them will be included in future newsletters, our blog, [acnargs.blogspot.com](http://acnargs.blogspot.com), and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

## CALENDAR OF GARDEN EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER

**Gathering of Gardeners** Sat. Sept. 14, Rochester (tickets still available)

**Tom Whitlow, Cornell, (topic TBD)** Wed. Sept. 18, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, second floor

**Gardeners' Trail** Sat. Sept. 21, tour local nurseries, enjoy special events, see [website](#) for details

**Fall Creek Plant Exchange** Sunday, Sept. 22, 12-3 pm, CCE parking lot

**Judy's Day** Sunday, Sept. 22 at Cornell Plantations

**Sycamore Hill Garden** Sun. Sept. 22 is open to the public in Marcellus

**Spring Bulbs: Three Months of Bloom** Thurs. Sept. 26, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, CCE

**Matt Mattus on non-hardy bulbs** Sat. Sept. 28, 1 pm, Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, Wetzel Rm., Plant Sci. Bldg, Cornell – (NB: this meeting is on the **FOURTH** Saturday, not their usual third Sat. meeting date)

**CCE 100th year celebration** Mon. Oct. 14, events at 4H Acres, CCE, Neighborhood Pride Store

**Ron Raguso, Cornell, (topic TBD)** Wed. Oct. 16, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, second floor

**Kathy Purdy on Colchicums** Sat. Oct. 19, 1 pm, Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, Wetzel Rm., Plant Sci. Bldg, Cornell

**Getting Your Landscape Ready for Winter** Mon. Oct. 21, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, CCE

**Gardening Day** 4 sessions of gardening classes, Sat. Oct. 26, CCE

**Pick a Durable Tree for Your Site** Mon. Nov. 4, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, CCE

**Don Leopold, Native Plants for Difficult Garden and Landscape Settings** Sat. Nov. 9, 1 pm, Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, Wetzel Rm., Plant Sci. Bldg, Cornell (NB: this meeting is on the **SECOND** Saturday)

**David Werier, Field Botanist, Rare Plants of Westport NY** Wed. Nov. 20, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, second floor

**Evergreen Wreath-Making Workshop** (for those who have participated before), Friday Dec. 6, 6:30-8:30 pm, \$10 special MG price, limited to 15, CCE, taught by MG volunteers, pre-registration AND PREPAYMENT required.

**Evergreen Wreath-Making Workshop** (*how-to instructions by MG volunteers, for those who have not participated before*), Sat. Dec. 7, 10 am-12 noon, \$10 special MG price, limited to 15, pre-registration AND PREPAYMENT required.

**Solstice Celebration** Wed. Dec. 18, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, check [website](#) for location

## RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE/2013 BOARD MEMBERS

*If you want to volunteer, we'd love to hear from you!*

Chair: Carol Eichler, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)

Program: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)

Program Committee Members: Nari Mistry, [nbm2@cornell.edu](mailto:nbm2@cornell.edu)

Secretary: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)

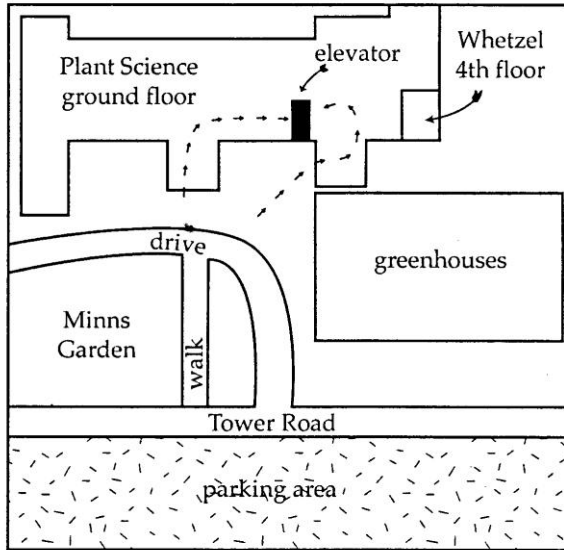
Treasurer: BZ Marranca, [mmm10@cornell.edu](mailto:mmm10@cornell.edu)



Plant Sales Chair: David Mitchell, [dwm23@cornell.edu](mailto:dwm23@cornell.edu)  
Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranta  
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## HOW TO GET THERE: MEETING ROOM MAP

This is on the Cornell University Campus.



## 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 Kathy Purdy, [kopurdy@gmail.com](mailto:kopurdy@gmail.com).  
Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be in October 2013.



