ADIRONDACK CHAPTER
North American Rock Garden Society
Green Dragon Tales

Visit our blog: acnargs.blogspot.com January 2021

IN THIS ISSUE:

JANUARY 16: CULTIVATED NEWFOUNDLAND AND WILD CZECHIA

Terry Humphries, Program Chair

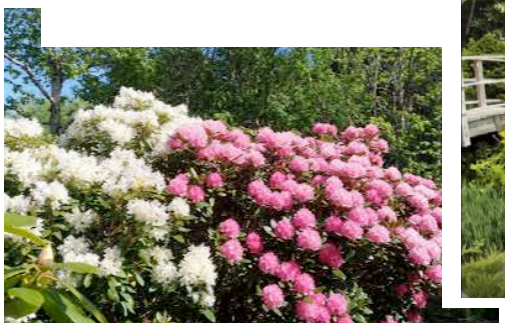
"Tour" to Newfoundland and the Czech Republic

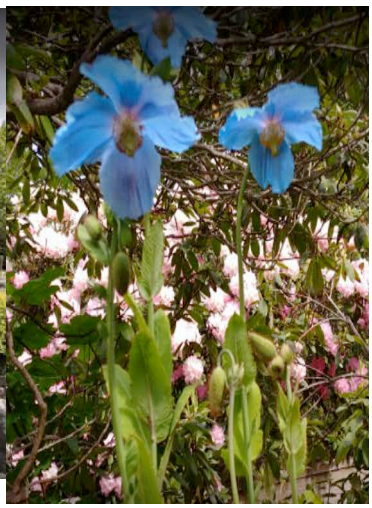
January 16, 2021

1:00 PM

ACNARGS via Zoom

(To join the meeting, you will be receiving a Zoom link by email)





First up, Todd Boland, Horticulturalist at the Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden, will take us on a botanical tour though the "MUN" gardens of St. John's, Newfoundland. Todd is also an active member of NARGS, and has served in leadership roles through throughout the years. He holds a Masters in plant ecology and is an avid photographer, a prolific author, and a frequent tour guide.

Cultivated features of the MUN include Cottage, Heritage, and Pollinator Gardens, a Rhododendron Dell, a Peat Garden, Rhododendron Border, Sorbus Collection, and more. Perhaps our group will be most enamored by the Limestone Rock Garden, the Rock Channel and Boardwalk, the Trough Garden, and the Alpine House. The program will culminate with a look at Potted Alpines, a Crevice Garden and an Asian Garden.

You will see *so many* spectacular plants in this tour that you'll want to refer to the plant list, which will be sent via email along with the Zoom invitation in January.

In the second presentation we will get a brief glimpse of spring by indulging with Vojtech Holubec as he shares horticultural highlights of Spring in Czechia. Like many members of the Rock Garden Club of Prague, Voj is obsessed with crevice rock garden construction. He draws his inspiration from natural outcrops found in the hinterlands and he collects seeds in the wild. He will share some of his favorites in this twenty-minute video featuring galanthus, hepatica, leucojum, pulsatilla, daphne and more growing in the hinterlands of his native country.

Treat yourself to experiencing the natural beauty of spring in the hills of Central Europe! It will act as the perfect early harbinger of spring. Join us for this meeting from the convenience of your own home. You will be receiving an invitation to register for this meeting. Once you register be sure to mark you calendar

Editor's Note: We're still Zooming. Don't be shy; give it a try. We're here to help. And actually we spend some time chatting at these meetings following our program. It's the next best thing to being altogether.

FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair

I hope you had good holidays, in spite of the difficult times and a significant departure from the norm for how many of us spend our December holidays. We have a long way to go before the pandemic is resolved and we're back to normal. One bit of good news is that people are starting to get vaccinated (I know a few), so we're at the beginning of the road to recovery. It seems pretty clear now that we won't have in-person meetings at Cornell before September. We should all plan on the Adirondack Chapter continuing to meet via Zoom (that is, have electronic meetings) for February, March, and April 2021.

An intrepid pansy

Quite a few of our members still haven't joined us on Zoom yet. It's easy to use Zoom as a first time user, even if you are not especially computer savvy, so I would encourage you to join us for these upcoming meetings (including January when we normally don't meet). We'll send you an email message and you only have to open the email message and click on the link (which takes you right to Zoom and the prompts to join the meeting). When using Zoom, you have the option of joining with audio (so we can hear you when you're not muted), and/or joining with video (so we can see you). If you want to participate in Zoom wearing your old tear-around-the-house clothes, washing-the-dog clothes, or pajamas, you don't have to have the video running. But it is nice to at least see the faces of the participants. One big plus for Zoom is the commute time – it should only take seconds for any of use to walk to our computer.

The board will be discussing tentative plans for a spring plant sale. Right now I like the idea of the chapter doing its own outdoor plant sale at a pavilion in one of the local Ithaca parks. I'm not ruling out participating in the Ithaca Garden Fair Plant sale, I just don't think that looks like a good option at the moment. We'll keep you posted on those plans. Perhaps some or many of us will have our vaccinations done by May 2021.

A welcome indoor bloom, non-hardy Ferraria

A truly white spruce at Heiberg Forest, Tully

The NARGS Seed Exchange is on [1st round ends January 15th]! Don't forget to order your seeds. If you are not yet a NARGS member and want to order seeds, you can join and then order. Thank you to the 14 chapter members who participated in the chapter's seed sorting event to help with the Seed Exchange. Many hands made light work, and we each had only a modest number of seeds to package. I sent on all the seeds we processed to the next phase of SeedEx to the Siskiyou Chapter in Oregon which arrived there today. Those of you who did participate are eligible to get 35 packets of seeds (as opposed to the

normal 25). Why not try your hand at growing your own plants from seed?

Happy New Year & hope to see you in 2021!
John Gilrein, Chair

Editor's Note: The Master Gardener Committee on the Plant Sale/Garden Fair has started meeting and planning. We will have information to offer you about these plans in upcoming newsletters.

AS WE TURN OUR CALENDARS TO 2021, TIME TO RENEW!

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

Time to renew your membership! The ACNARGS membership year runs the calendar year. So, unless you've already renewed or you're a lifetime member, your 2021 membership is due now (Individual @$15, Household @$20, Business with business card listing @$30). If you have not renewed, you will see a reminder message in the email announcing this newsletter.

While it's true that our meetings are free and open to everyone, there are advantages to becoming a member: our members-only plants-of-the-month at discounted prices, 25% discount on May plant sale purchases [*which will surely happen this year and will be covid-compliant]*, participation in the members-only plant sale in August, and participation in the April members-only seedling exchange to name four – any one of which can easily recoup the cost of your dues. So why delay? Print and complete the 2021 Membership form here: http://www.remarc.com/acnargs/join.pdf Questions? Contact Mary at mes2@cornell.edu

NARGS SEEDEX: IS THIS YOUR YEAR TO START SEEDS?

Don't be shy; give it a try. That's rapidly becoming a covid-19 motto. Perhaps this is the year you try growing plants from seed. The NARGS annual Seed Exchange is up and running. The Main Round opened in mid-December and continues until January 31 when payment must be received. However you do have a second chance with the Surplus Round opening on March 1st. Compared to what you will pay for seed through a commercial vendor, the $17 investment is unbelievably reasonable.

The list includes mostly perennials but by no means is limited to rock garden plants. There are even tree seeds. The extensive list of over 3,000 taxa can be a bit overwhelming when you are only allowed 25 (or for volunteers/seed donors, 35) packets. Where to begin your selections? You might want to seek out plants with some familiar names. Others are so organized that they have built a wish list over the year.

How the ordering process works is quite slick. All the information about the Seed Exchange including the Seed List, Order Form, and payment are electronic. While the taxa are listed

alphabetically in Latin, most have clickable links to more information. Since donors come from throughout the United States and, less so, from the world round, plant listings are not guaranteed to be winter hardy for us. That's where the key to donors can be a helpful resource.

Regardless of whether you plan to order or not, here are helpful abbreviations used by NARGS and others for additional designations, often attached to genus and species.

sp = species, exact species not known
ssp = subspecies
v = variety
f = forma
ex = parent plant derived from
flr = flower
frt = fruit
lvs = leaves
(aff) = related to, but not that species
(cf) = compare to, similar to species, may be that species
(ex) = descended from - may differ from parent plant
(hort) = of garden - name not botanically valid; or for plants commonly grown under this name in horticulture
(x) = hybrid cross (listed after name for alphabetizing seed list, normally placed before name)
(nv) = name not verified in references/not a valid name
(op) = open-pollinated (may differ from parent plant)
(hp) = hand-pollinated (should resemble parent plant)
(PI) = Potentially Invasive: do not allow to self sow

And remember the metric conversion:
cm = centimeter to in. = inches
2.5 cm = ~ 1 in.

NARGS PRESENTS 2ND ZOOM STUDY DAY FEBRUARY 6

All about Crevice Gardening! NARGS National has taken advantage of our covid isolation to present wonderful and reasonably priced study days via Zoom. You won't want to miss the next one scheduled for Saturday, February 6, 2021 on the topic of crevice gardening. To quote the *Winter Quarterly*, "Crevice gardening is not new, yet in modern rock gardening circles, it is the catchword of the day. In the past ten years, it seems that crevice gardens are popping up everywhere as more and more rock gardeners learn about their aesthetic and horticultural potential. Simply put: crevice gardens are the best way to grow rock garden plants."

Here is the all-star lineup of presenters and topics:

- Paul Spriggs (British Columbia) How did we get here? A Brief History of Crevice Gardening with tips and tidbits
- Kenton Seth (Colorado) Crevice gardening for the Masses and Recent News on boiled down tips as well as what's new and exciting
- Jeremy Schmidt (North Carolina) From Big Rocks to Little Rocks on crevice boulder construction with a Southeast focus

- Susan Sims (Utah) Between Rock and a Hardscape or When Schist Hits the Fans
- Jay Akerley (British Columbia) Crevice Gardens for Small Spaces
- Roslyn Duffus (Nova Scotia) From the Mighty to the Modest on recycled concrete and limestone gardening of Bicentennial Botanic Garden at Truro.

Excited yet? Each presentation is expected to last 45 minutes and will be recorded so you may watch (or re-watch) at your leisure. The cost is only $25 for NARGS members or a special price new member price. Check on the nargs.org website for details.

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT ROCK GARDENING

Carol Eichler

You are all probably a bit sick and tired of my championing the merits of rock gardening. Bear with me. "Rock Garden" is in our Chapter name so naturally I feel we should be promoting rock gardening and rock garden plants. I'm sold on rock gardens myself now that I have not one (why quit there?) but two rock gardens (and I can't figure out why I didn't build one sooner…OK, I do know. It can be a lot of work!). So here are my top reasons for why you might want to have your very own rock garden.

1. You can grow a lot of plants in a very small space. If you have limited space, or are perhaps planning to downsize to a smaller property, a rock garden is ideal.

2. They require very little maintenance (once built that is).
   a. Few weeds: The lean soil mix is not conducive to weeds.
   b. No staking: The scale of the plants mean they don't need staking and that's a big plus. Admittedly, some are a bit over-exuberant and can be trimmed back. Or they may not fit to the scale of the garden and have to be culled. Live and learn.
   c. Forget about deadheading. For the most part you don't need to and may not want to deadhead (although I did this year because I didn't want to add further stress to the heat and drought these plants faced). Your hope is to collect seed to propagate or just maybe, the plant will sow some babies. There is a but, though. Sometimes deadheading results in an extended blooming or re-blooming period.
   d. That brings me to another point. Collect and save some of those seeds to contribute to the NARGS Seed Exchange. And any extra seedlings can be offered at one of our Chapter's plant sales.

4. Rock garden plants are water-wise. Once established their long roots mean they require little watering. If anything, they might appreciate a little shower in the late afternoon simply to cool off. Optional.

5, Your plant knowledge will increase and our Chapter programs will become more meaningful. A logical progression of having a rock garden is that you will want to join NARGS for the member benefits – the Quarterly, annual meetings, and especially the seed exchange, which becomes a very inexpensive way to acquire new plants. Note: many of these plants are not available commercially.

Winter interest in the rock garden

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6. The garden is a true four-season garden. It looks great in and out of bloom. First, you have the stone landscape. Second, you have all these neat buns, mats, and assorted compact plants, many of which are evergreen. And dare I mention the flowers. Most rock garden flowers pack a big bang for the buck so-to-speak. Gorgeous flowers especially in the spring – they start blooming early, with a succession through to June. You will wow your friends with the show AND with the variety of plants – the usual and the unusual - in your garden.

5a. The challenge is to find later blooming species for longer summer interest. In actuality I haven't found this to be much of a challenge (see Green Dragon XX issue for ideas)

6. Rock gardens are extremely satisfying. Yes, they can be challenging but oh the rewards! Oh, the pride in saying "I grew that plant from seed!" As I gaze upon my own rock gardens, I continue to amaze myself at how great they look to me. (Is it beginner's luck or are is it easier than it seems?)

For all these reasons I believe rock gardens are a great way to go as I get older (aren't we all?) and feel like I want to pare down the work that a more traditional perennial border or vegetable garden requires.

AN EASY TO BUILD ROCK GARDEN

Joseph Tychonievich, Editor NARGS Quarterly
Original title "Rock Gardening in a Sauna"
Reprinted by permission from the *Rock Garden Quarterly* Winter 2019/20 issue

[Editor's Note: Lately, I've been on a quest to simplify the construction of a rock garden. Beginning small is probably best (although I ignored this advice myself Below you will find part 1 of Joseph's article that includes the "quicky" rock garden he built at his new home. It is small and yet can accommodate a lot of plants. I challenge you to build a garden using the technique. I may even build one myself. Will my quest never end?]

Joseph's newly planted crevice garden

Two and a half years ago [now three and a half years], after a lifetime of gardening in the Great Lakes Region, I moved with my husband down to Williamsburg, Virginia. I went from Zone 5 to Zone 7, almost Zone 8. The average year down here has about three times as many days with highs over 90 as what I was used to in Michigan. My new home town gets an average of 47 inches of precipitation a year compared to the 36 inches I had known. In short, it is hot and wet down here, not exactly the preferred climate of many alpine plants.

I'm used to the ground being covered with snow in February, not daffodils, and I'm certainly not used to people using the word "blizzard" to describe a snowfall of four inches. My whole gardening life I've made an annual routine of checking over the garden in the spring to see what survived the cold winter. Down here, winter doesn't kill much. Instead, I'm checking to see what managed to avoid rotting during the hot, rainy summer.

My strategy to learn how to rock garden down here has been pretty simple. I built a simple crevice garden as a test plot, planted everything I could, and watched to see what died. There have been a lot of surprises, a lot of dead plants, and some successes.

My Crevice Garden: Design and Technique

I chose to start with a crevice garden based on the reports, published here in the Quarterly, of the giant urbanite (recycled concrete) crevice gardens down at Plant Delights nursery. Crevice gardens are not just beautiful and trendy, they seem to be one of the best ways to keep a wide range of finicky plants alive. The structure of crevice gardens can be works of art on their own, but I didn't have a lot of spare time or money, so I just built something simple. I'll apply what I've learned in my simple crevice when I get around to building a big, beautiful version. Instead of stones, I bought a box of the cheapest one foot by one foot (30 x 30 cm) ceramic tiles I could find. I set each tile vertically in the soil one to two inches (2.5 to 5 cm) apart. The tiles in the center I sank just a few inches into the soil. The outer tiles I buried deeper to make a mound-shaped crevice garden about ten inches (25 cm) tall in the middle and six inches (15 cm) tall at either end.

Tiles in place

Mix in place, mulched with gravel, and ready for planting

To fill, I bought a bag of coarse sand labeled "concrete sand" at the hardware store. I filled all the spaces between the tiles with sand, then topped the whole thing with a layer of gravel mulch. Plants have thrived in the nearly pure sand, quickly putting down deep roots to access additional moisture and fertility in the native soil below.

When planting, I bare-rooted everything before tucking it into a crevice. I didn't wash the roots off, but I did break apart any circling roots and shake off the potting soil. I was worried that some plants, particularly the daphnes, would resent that much disturbance to their roots. I was more worried that the peat-based potting soil would hold too much moisture, leading to rot, and that roots would just stay circling in that rich, moist peat, rather than growing deep through the drier sand below.

What's Still Alive

Just over two years in, I'm happy to say that a lot plants are thriving, including several that I fully expected to die. I've killed a lot of plants and there remains a long list of plants to try in the future, but

I'm thrilled with the range of rock garden plants I've been able to cultivate in my cheap little crevice garden in this sauna-like climate.

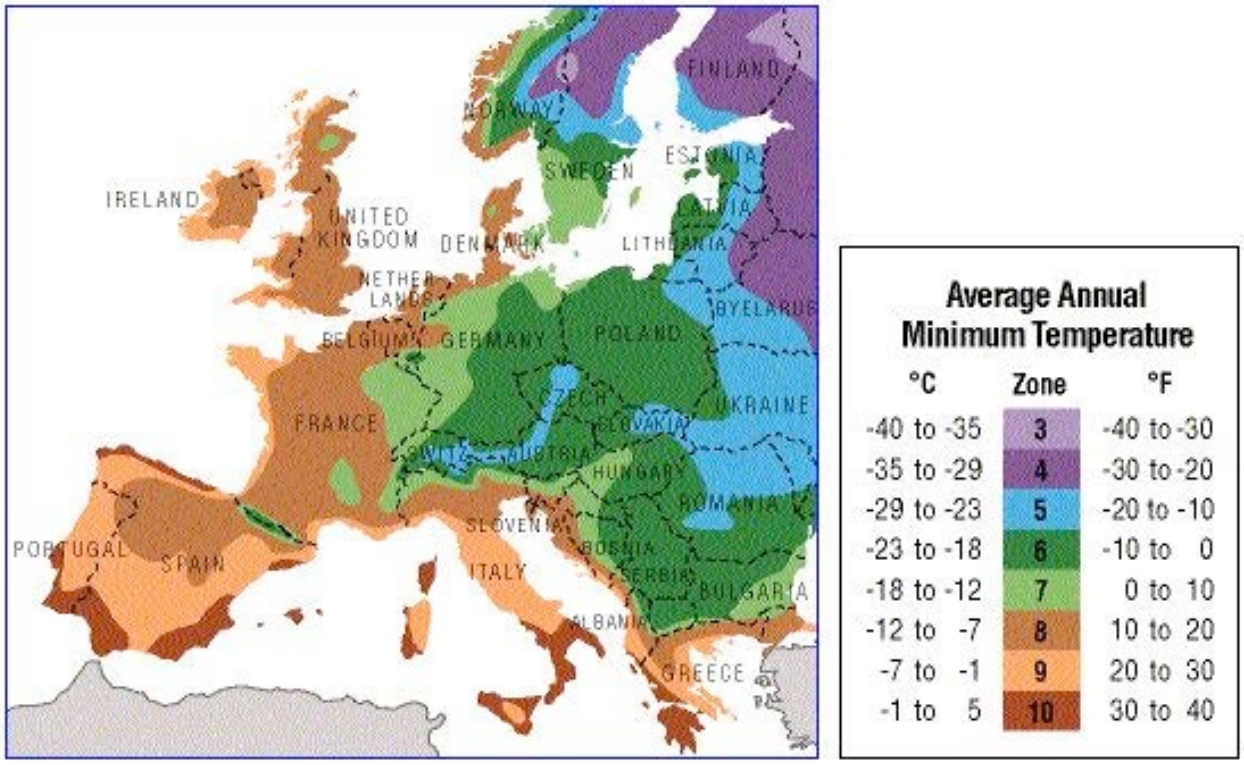
Next month: Part 2, Joseph's list of plants that performed well for him.

Left: Joseph's rock garden in its second year.

HARDINESS ZONES OF EUROPE OR WHY CAN'T I GROW PLANTS FROM THE UK?

John Gilrein

Why can't I grow many of the plants that gardeners grow in the United Kingdom? The climate in the UK is extremely moderate, with the summers not getting too hot and the winters generally mild with little snow. The prevailing westerly winds and the Gulf Stream are the reason for the very moderate winter temperatures throughout much of Europe. The Gulf Stream is a warm ocean current originating in the Gulf of Mexico, moving along the east coast of North America, becoming the North Atlantic Drift and heading to Europe. Winter temperatures in most of Europe, especially western and southern Europe, are significantly warmer than areas of North America at similar latitudes. Consider that Madrid is a similar latitude to New York; Rome, Italy to Chicago; and London, England is similar latitude to frigid Labrador. In recent years with climate and weather changes however, Europe has experienced heat waves and droughts that fall outside recent past experience.



I was initially surprised that parts of the coast of Ireland, Scotland, and Cornwall, England are frost-free and one can grow palm trees there. That does not mean these areas have warm winters, just that they don't experience freezing weather. Due to such mild winters, gardeners in the UK can grow a large range of plants that cannot tolerate our cold winters, like tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*), *Gunnera manicata*, and *Schizostylis coccinea* (now Hesperantha). I'm a bit envious but I am not currently thinking of moving. The warmest winters in Europe are in the coastal Mediterranean and Western Europe, with winter temperatures getting progressively colder further from the coast and at higher elevations. Western (European) Russia is far enough from the moderating oceanic influence to have winter temperatures more similar to eastern North America, i.e. a continental climate.

Here are current zone ratings for some of the major cities in Europe and a few other areas with their respective hardiness zone, using standard USDA hardiness zones [with a US city in the same zone for comparison]:

Zone 10: Lisbon, Portugal; Rome, Italy (on the edge of 9/10)	[Miami, Florida]
Zone 9: Athens, Greece; Dublin, Ireland; London, England	[Jacksonville, Florida]
Zone 8: Paris, France; Amsterdam, Netherlands; Milan, Italy	[Charleston, South Carolina]
Zone 7: Berlin, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Stockholm, Sweden	[Washington, DC]
Zone 6: Warsaw, Poland; Oslo, Norway	[New York, New York]
Zone 5: Moscow, Russia	[Syracuse, New York]

High elevations in Europe of course experience significantly colder winter weather, with the Pyrenees, mountains of Scotland, and Alps getting into Zones 5 and 6, similar cold temperatures to our winters. My experience with many of the European mountain plants is that many are easily growable here, except some of the very high alpine ones.

SOME ONLINE GARDEN RESOURCES

Linda Uhll

2020 was a challenging year and, like most people, I cobbled together activities to keep mind and body together after everything came to a halt in March. Cooking more elaborate meals, hiking familiar and newly discovered trails and, of course, gardening provided essential outlets during a time when the usual connections with people and community were lost. Now that the garden has been put to rest for the next few months, what can fill that gap?

I discovered a wealth of garden-related resources on the internet, well beyond the occasional article or podcast that I took advantage of in the past.
Here's just a sampling of what's out there:

The New York Botanic Garden has a wonderful website that includes virtual garden tours, recordings of their lecture series and symposia, the 'Garden News' magazine and so much more. https://www.nybg.org/

Chanticleer is a garden beloved by everyone who has visited it in Wayne, PA. Known as a 'pleasure garden', their website is worth visiting this winter to find inspiration for the upcoming gardening season. Glimpses of their various gardens and plant lists can be found on the main website but look for the short videos they post weekly about their latest activities in the gardens.
https://www.chanticleergarden.org/

Chanticleer's Cup Garden

A Way To Garden is my favorite weekly email that arrives every Sunday. Margaret Roach's newsletter includes a host of garden-related topics that include podcasts of discussions with well-known experts such as Ken Druse and Doug Tallamy, how-to articles, lists of favorite plants, recipes and so much more. I highly recommend signing up for her newsletter. It's one that you'll read from beginning to end.
https://awaytogarden.com/

The New York Times has great gardening articles in their 'At Home' section. For example, here's one that gives a glimpse into the historical background of how and why some plants were given their names.
www.nytimes.com/2020/10/28/realestate/yes-you-can-learn-to-speak-the-language-of-plants.html

And, for some incredible nature photography, if you're a Facebook user, I highly recommend Joan Herrmann's page, whereiwander. [Joan is a former ACNARGS member] While she includes some photos of her garden and favorite native plants, most are from her explorations of the Adirondacks during all seasons of the year.

Finally, if you haven't already seen it, 'The Gardener' is a documentary about Frank Cabot that was filmed at Les Quatre Vents towards the end of his life. It's one of the very few times he was interviewed and includes reflections on his goal to create the perfect garden. It's available on Amazon Prime but can also be rented on YouTube.
So, while we all wait to start our seeds and for spring to return, let's find ways to keep the winter dark at bay and remember that a new year is coming.

Be well!
Linda

GROWING FROM SEED: A THOROUGH EXAMINATION

Nari Mistry
Reprinted from Green Dragon Newsletter February 2015 issue

Well folks, January-February is seed starting time! This is when we all have a bundle of seed packets, usually too many, optimistically ordered from NARGS or elsewhere. When to start? NOW! Where to start? To encourage and help us all get started I have compiled some notes and references which I have found useful.

The first thing you find out is that not all seeds can be coaxed into germination the same easy way, e.g., "Sow directly in garden". One encounters mysterious words such as "stratification" and "scarification" and terms like "Germination is successful only when GA-3 is used" and scary instructions like "Sow @ 20°C for 6 weeks, then place @ 4°C for 6 weeks, then slowly raise temperature to 10°C for 6 weeks!!! (All quotations are from the ORG&HS Seed Germination Guide referenced below).

I quickly found that not all references agree on a successful method for a particular species! Frequently there is conflicting information in the same book! I found a very useful down-to-earth explanation of seed germination mysteries in the blog "The Science of Seed Germination" by Nancy Ondra (http://hayefield.com/2013/02/15/the-science-of-seed-germination).

Ondra's s blog also contains very useful links for downloading the monumental treatise (three booklets) written by Norm Deno, now easily downloadable as PDF files from the USDA. And to use this as a reference, you will need another link provided in the Ondra blog. Here is the direct link for downloading the INDEX file made by Tom Clothier for looking up species in the three Deno volumes: http://tomclothier.hort.net/page15.html. So if you download or have already the Deno.pdf volumes, you will find this index immeasurably useful.

The Ontario Rock Garden & Hardy Plant Society (ORG&HS), a NARGS chapter, has a really nice Seed Germination Guide available on their website http://www.onrockgarden.com. Click on Germination Guide at the top of the home page or here's the direct link: http://www.onrockgarden.com/germination-guide/plants. The species list provides germination tips for over 4,600 seeds with a single click. Check the Germination Guide Overview page to see how these tips are chosen & to find a key to the

symbols used in their SeedEx list. It is worth downloading the pdf file of the Seedex list, (even though non-members can't get seeds) because it has amazing quick-click links to Google images and info on the species.

I have found their website to be very useful in quickly sorting out the seeds that need special treatment. Seeds in starter pots, top dressed with snow to let nature take its course (GREEN DRAGON TALES · FEBRUARY 2015)

Once you have successfully started some seeds, it is immeasurably useful to have kept notes, so that you can go back and see what worked and what failed! It also helps in deciding between conflicting tips. Now I can describe a few of my experiences having tried various techniques for various types of seeds. Refer to the germination guides above to decide what treatment is needed.

First, for those seeds that can be sowed at 20C (~70F) and germinate quickly, it does not pay to sow them in mid-winter unless you have a spot with enough bright light to raise strong seedlings. Wait till spring and sow them outdoors. If they take 3 months to germinate, then you can sow them now and keep them at room temperature until they germinate.

Cold stratification, a misleading term, refers to holding the seed at 4C (~40F) in a moist environment. It is convenient to place a bunch of seeds in moistened vermiculite or seedstarting mix in sealed baggies in the refrigerator (NOT FREEZER.) This is necessary for seeds that are naturally dormant in soil through the winter and need the cold period to break dormancy. It is important to moisten the seeds in the baggie thoroughly at 20C for a day or two before refrigerating them. Most of these will germinate when you sow them later at 20C after the cold period. Some may require repeated cycles of 4C – 20C – 4C – 20C !!!

This is far too cumbersome! So here is the instruction I like best: "Expose to fluctuating outdoor winter temperatures including freezing for 3 months. Gradually increase light and temperature in spring." I found that this works! Lately I have sowed the seed in moistened pots or trays and after two days @ 20C to absorb water I placed them outdoors in a holding box through the winter, with a styrofoam cover (and wire-mesh all around to exclude rodents.)

Seeds that need light to germinate will not do so in the dark, though, so they need to be open to light. I have put those pots in the cold porch through the winter, keeping them moist under transparent cover. Cyclamen seeds require absolute dark to germinate. They also need to be soaked in warm water for 48 hrs. before sowing at 20C. The germination tip says "stratification may be fatal"! I just received some cyclamen seeds in moist vermiculite "for stratification" – a good thing I remembered they should NOT go in the refrigerator!

Another hint from my experience about cyclamen-- after germination, keep the cyclamen seedlings in the pot for at least two years as the bulblets are very fragile and also, if planted out, rodents will eat them. But they need careful nurturing throughout the year, not allowed to dry out, even though mature plants need a dry dormant period.

Some species need a warm period at 20C in soil when they form an embryo or a bulblet & send out roots; then they need a moist cold period before starting the cotyledon. So

(20C -- 4C -- 20C) in moist starter. Scarification: some large seed with hard coats need to be sanded or scored to break the coat & let in water. In nature, the seed coat is worn down by springtime, and then they germinate.

One advantage of holding seed pots outdoors through the winter is that seedlings that have germinated do well on their own left to themselves until spring when they can be potted. I leave small potted alpines and plants similarly in the holding boxes where they can grow and strengthen at their own pace. I hope these brief tips will encourage you to go ahead and start sowing seed!

A SIMPLE WAY TO START SEEDS OR HOW TO START THE GARDENING SEASON IN JANUARY

Carol Eichler

Growing plants from seed, especially rock garden plants it seems, can get complicated, as Nari's article has indicated. I used to sow indoors with trays arranged with custom-built shelving and shop lights that could be adjusted in height (See Green Dragon, February 2014). This method certainly required a lot of work – monitoring, watering, moving pots and lights around as germination occurred (or not). Overall I don't believe I had any great success but it did offer the advantage of my being able to offer small seedlings at our April seedling exchange. I figure most of the seedlings that were offered probably were too fragile and small to handle the transplant well and thus failed to survive.

Since then, over the last few years, I've gone to a simpler technique. With upwards to 100 seeded pots, I've been playing the odds., meaning I win some and lose some.
For me the first question comes before sowing. What should the planting medium be? For rock garden plants that want especially good drainage, In this case, I haven't found a lot of information about soil mix formulas (and even if I did, I would expect lots of different opinions). I have been a bit haphazard with my own technique. Some seeds take weeks or months to germinate, so while a well-draining medium is needed, you also want one that doesn't dry out too quickly. So this is what I do: I use commercial soiless mix (preferably one without perlite) in a ratio of 2 or 3 to 1 with coarse sand, then top off the pots with about ¼ inch of starter chicken grit filling the pots to the top. The grit should help to keep the mix from caking and drying so quickly. For most seeds (unless they are really large) I sow on top of the potting mix then cover with the grit. For tiny seeds, I sow on top of the grit and let the seed naturally settle. My thinking also is that the grit should allow enough light to penetrate for those seeds that need light to germinate.

The next issue it when to sow the seed. Here's my latest technique. I sow the seeds as soon as I receive them in January and February. It feels good to be gardening at that time of year! The flats then go outdoors. I had a bad experience one winter when the pots were exposed uncovered to the elements; when the snow melted on the top of the pots, it turned to water that I feared would rot the seed. So now I cover the flats with a clear plastic cover that is sold at garden centers to fit over them. Those seeds that need a cold period get that; nature provides the light; and in theory the seeds will sit there until

the optimal time/temperature for them to germinate. My first seedlings start to appear when daytime temperatures are consistently 40°.

Let me reiterate, I am playing the odds here. This method is not optimal for all plants. I get a relatively low germination rate of about 1 out of 3 pots. But even to, those that do germinate have provided me with plenty of interesting plants that now populate my rock gardens, with plenty of extras to contribute to others.

However, now, I feel ready to take the next step and take the extra effort to research what specific species need. (As Nari points out in his article, there are some good, if sometimes contradictory, resources available). My stay-at-home "covid days" seem to be allowing me extra time to take this further step. Some have suggested provideing winter protection (like placing the trays under a roof covering during the winter months, then removing the covers as the days heat up). I'll also probably wait for warmer days to sow those seeds that clearly don't require a cold period (since I'm only growing perennials, I don't have to worry about freezing temperatures). I'll have to wait and see if these changes result in greater success. Uh-oh that could mean even more young plants to transplant and tend until they are of garden-worthy size.

Last minute note: The NARGS 2020-21 Winter Quarterly *just came out with an article by Kenton Seth on seed sowing. He all but reiterates my recommendations. It's worth noting he advises not setting the trays directly on bare soil but to use some kind of critter protection* (such as pavers, concrete, bricks, gravel, weed fabric, any polyester fabric, or even tight hardware-cloth mesh underneath the seed trays.

What remains uncertain in my mind is the best location to winter flats here, given our winter conditions are very different than those in Colorado. Unlike us, Colorado has abundant winter sun and daytime temps frequently in the 50's, 60's and above. Also it is much drier out west and what snow they get disappears quickly and often sublimates rather than creating the melting and freezing conditions we often experience. I'll probably place them in the potting area in my garage where they will have some protection yet still be exposed to the cold period that many seeds need.

I'd love to know others' techniques. Join the discussion; join the ACNARGS Member Forum. Not a member yet? The Forum is limited to ACNARGS Members. Send a request to Carol Eichler, carolithaca@gmail.com. Then simply respond to your email invitation to join this Google Group.

ACNARGS UPCOMING 2021 PROGRAMS

NOTE: Due to covid our meetings will take on a different format for the forseeable future. We will hold live meetings via Zoom and are currently in the process of booking speakers, hopefully on our "usual" meeting dates. For those of you unfamiliar with Zoom, contact Terry Humphries for assistance.

January 16: Zoom recorded presentations of the MUN Botanical Gardens in Newfoundland and Czechnia's Native Spring Bulbs

February 6: NARGS study day. Go to NARGS.org to register and for more details.

February 20: Members' Share. We want your participation! This will be organized much like past years. Please consider sharing a few special slides - photos of your garden or a special natural site you have visited or most anything related to gardening. More logistical details to follow in the February newsletter.

March 20: Meeting via Zoom to be determined

April 17: Meeting via Zoom to be determined

May TBD: Plant Sale covid style, date and format yet to be determined

June 17-20: NARGS Annual General Meeting in Durango, CO. As of press time, registration has not opened.

Stayed tuned as we finalize our 2021 program schedule.

CALENDAR OF SELECT GARDEN EVENTS

For the latest information, visit these websites of these gardening organizations.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Online class information:
http://ccetompkins.org/gardening

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society monthly meetings postponed until further notice.
https://flnps.org/

Cornell Botanic Gardens: no on-site events at this time; visit Cornell Gardens at home:
https://cornellbotanicgardens.org/explore/events/

Liberty Hyde Bailey Garden Club: http://www.hort.cornell.edu/LHBGC/

To have a garden event in your area listed send all pertinent information to David Mitchell at david_mitchell_14850@yahoo.com

2020 ACNARGS BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

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

Chair: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu
Program: Terry Humphries, terryehumphries@gmail.com
Program Committee Members: Could this be you?
Secretary: Currently rotating amongst "Responsible People"
Treasurer: BZ Marranca, mmm10@cornell.edu
Plant Sales Chair: Carol Eichler carolithaca@gmail.com
Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca, David Mitchell
Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, mkobre@ithaca.edu
Membership: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu
New Member Hospitality: Graham Egerton
Newsletter Editor: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu and sometimes Carol Eichler. Looking for a new editor!
Calendar: Pat Curran, pc21@cornell.edu
Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, cdcramer@gmail.com

ABOUT US – ADIRONDACK CHAPTER NARGS

We are an all-volunteer organization and one of thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Our annual Chapter activities include 6 program-speaker meetings, the Green Dragon newsletter, web and Facebook pages, garden visits, overnight garden trips, hands-on workshops, two plant sales a year, and frequent plant giveaways. Our meetings are informal, friendly gatherings that provide a wealth of information and offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners.

The public is always welcome [our Zoom subscription limits participants to 100]. Chapter membership starts at $15 a year based on the calendar year. Membership includes these benefits: newsletter sent to you electronically (or option by mail for an extra fee), opportunity to travel on our planned overnight garden trips, annual membership directory, and plant sale discounts and member only sales, including Plant-of-the-Month sales.

Download the 2021 membership form at acnargs.org/join. 2021 memberships are now due.

ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at www.nargs.org) for only $40 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication focused on rock gardening, and an online website featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS National also conducts winter study weekends and holds its Annual Meeting in interesting places where attendees have the opportunity to visit gardens and take field trips, often to alpine areas, as well as hear talks by outstanding plants people from around the world. More recently, NARGS is offering botanical tours each year, both within the US and abroad.

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 David Mitchell, david_mitchell_14850@yahoo.com Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be February 2021.