

October 2023

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- October 21: Botanizing in New Zealand
- From the Chair
- Membership
- POM
- 2023 NARGS & ACNARGS Calendar
- Calendar of Garden Events
- Contacts

**OCTOBER 21, 2023, WHETZEL ROOM, CORNELL**

*Terry Humphries, Program Chair*

### ***Botanizing in New Zealand***

Susan Chater, Hamilton, Ontario

Our October meeting promises to provide inspiration through both gardening and art, as Susan Chater shares her passion for both. Susan Chater is an award-winning painter, specializing in watercolors. She holds watercolor workshops at destinations in rural England and exhibits her art regularly in the Toronto area. She is a member of the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society (ORG&HPS) and will share her discoveries of New Zealand plants with wonderful photography taken from a painter's perspective.

As she describes herself, Susan Chater was born in England with a gardening grandmother who enriched her life with a love of gardening. Before moving to Canada in 1980, she lived in Uganda and Alaska where she was unsuccessful at her attempts to create a garden. On a half-acre in Richmond Hill, near Ottawa, she was determined to put down some roots. Her garden there proved an inspiration for her painting, - and vice versa. She joined the Ontario chapter of NARGS around 30 years ago and was thrilled to find other people as besotted with all aspects of gardening as she was. Susan's most recent move to Dundas, Ontario near Hamilton, six years ago allowed her to take over an established garden which she has worked to make her own. Since then, she has built several large rock gardens in two separate areas and recently built a large crevice garden.

What started as a project to grow plants she wanted to paint, became a deep interest in the discovery and cultivation of unusual plants. Susan credits ORG&HPS with providing her with an education in plants and gardening, as well as a place to share with others her obsession with gardening.

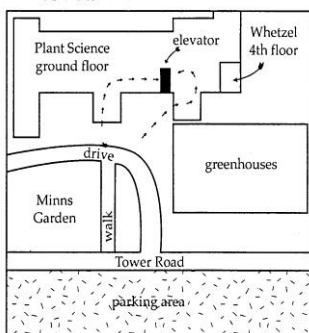


Having long dreamed of taking a trip to New Zealand, Susan discovered that the Alpine Garden Society was planning a four-week venture for January 2020, and she decided to join. She was not particularly thinking she would be deeply interested in the flora but recognized that she would be visiting exciting places with people of like mind. She figured she could happily spend her time painting while the others were exploring for plants. As a small group of 12 people with a very knowledgeable

guide, they were taken up mountains on tracks not open to the public for amazing botanizing. She soon became hooked on the plants and the magnificent scenery. Her talk will focus on both the very different plant life and the dramatic terrain. They travelled to both the North and South islands, but the plants were more alpine in the south - which will form the majority of the talk.



**\*\*\*NOTE: Our meetings are back at Whetzel Room,  
Room 404 Plant Sciences Building  
236 Tower Road, Cornell University! \*\*\***

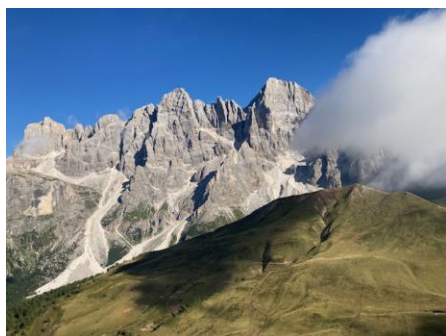


The west wing of the Plant Sciences Building has been shut down for renovations. But those won't start until next year sometime. So other than having those hallways walled off, everything should look pretty much as it did last time you were here. Remember the elevator to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and then exit right down the long hallway. You will be facing the Whetzel Room.

**Just a reminder**, we ask all attendees to be fully vaccinated. Additionally, we will be following CDC, NYS, and Cornell covid protocol, which at this time does not require masks though you may choose to do so. Please do not attend if you are not feeling well.

## FROM THE CHAIR

*John Gilrein, Chair*



As I write this, it's great gardening weather, not too hot or too wet, and I'm trying to get the plants still in pots (seedlings and new acquisitions) into the ground: the annual autumn race against the weather! I've been back just a week from a 2-week trip to eastern Italy - the Dolomites and Venice. We had an exciting, gorgeous, very challenging hike: 9 days, around 100 kilometers, and thousands of feet of elevation gained and lost. The Dolomites are named for dolomitic (magnesium rich) limestone, which was the predominant rock. The scenery was always spectacular, the wildflowers and plants were awesome. Though it wasn't peak bloom

time, it was rainy before our arrival and sunny on our hike. My theory is that the helpful weather encouraged some of the plants to throw new flowers. Early September was however peak bloom time for several species of gentian, notably the beautiful willow gentian (*Gentiana asclepiodes*). It was hard to not keep snapping more and more photos of this lovely plant in peak condition. Though the weather was near perfect, it was a bit warmer than ideal for long steep climbs, and I was pretty much done with long steep (like 1000 meter) descents, which included many switchbacks, some loose gravel, and even a few simple downclimbs/rock climbing (without scary exposure at least).

Regarding the European limestone Alps, the climate is not too dissimilar from ours, so many plants were familiar, and many of them are growable in our local climate, given the right conditions of course. I was able to identify many plants at least by genus, some by species. I've long been a convert of seeing plants in the wild to see how/where they grow, and this was heavily in my thoughts as my companions were likely engaged in taking in the scenery. This principle of seeing plants in their habitat applies equally well here and could even be applied to internet research, which would at least work some of the time. Now if only I had been able to transport plants back home!



Seeing plants growing in strange places nurtured ideas of creative garden projects. In the Dolomites there were plants growing on rocks, in rock cracks, under overhangs or in little cave like hollows. Probably none of us, except the Stark/Staubles have huge limestone boulders, but many of us have rocks. I'm growing fringe cups (*Tellimia grandiflora*) on a large rock with a hollow on top, in partial shade. It does beautifully with a just a few doses of water during dry spells. The Adirondack Chapters hopes to encourage us to be creative, expand our plant palette (or at least our plant knowledge) and we're hopeful that sharing new knowledge will benefit us all.

Hope to see you this autumn.

John Gilrein

## PLANT SALE

Carol Eichler, Plant Sale Coordinator

Here's cheers to a very successful August plant sale. We had great attendance – the most in recent years. We had great plants – thanks to all who brought them. We had great food – thanks again for all the delicious food. We also had great fun – isn't that part of our definition of success?

Welcome new members who joined that day and those who recently joined. Please come back for our extra special September meeting (details in this newsletter) and where you can expect more plant sales (see the Plant-of-the-Month article). We may even have some plants as door prizes – who knows?

I love our member sales because they are very laid back. Sure, we are often vying for the same plant, all in friendly competition. It might even involve a bit of strategy. Frankly, because of our system of giving first pick based on arrival, I think that's why I got so many helpers this year.

With so many helpers to set up, we actually had some down time to chat (and cruise the plants) until our publicized start time of 10:30. Likewise, the sale was over in no time and gave us even more social time before lunch began.

I for one went a little bit crazy at the auction table, which netted \$180. Many thanks to those who brought such special plants. Our grand total for this important fundraiser according to our treasurer Marlene Kobre was \$1,314 – that might be a record compared to recent years as well.

As a reminder, this and other plant sales through the year go a long way to bringing such highly respected speakers as Jim Jermyn and others to present at our meetings. Whether you ever intend to rock garden or not (and hypertufa troughs count), you have to admit we get to see some truly gorgeous and unusual plants from around the world – from places many of us will never visit in person. If you're a plant person, ACNARGS is THE place to be.

## MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

Don't miss out on the plant of the month and all of our other benefits! If you still need to renew for 2023 the renewal form is at <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf> or join at a meeting. Check my email announcement of the newsletter link for your membership status. Contact Mary Stauble at [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu) if you have any questions.

## WHAT IS NARGS

by Peter George

Ever since I joined NARGS in 1996, I have observed that many members (and even more non-members) have an extremely narrow, and therefore fundamentally mistaken, concept of what the organization represents. A lot of people think of NARGS as an “alpine plant” society. Others believe that if something grows more than a foot tall, it’s “not a NARGS plant.” I have heard that chapters in the South and the Midwest are convinced that their members cannot grow “rock garden” plants, so they increasingly view themselves as garden clubs focused on hardy “perennials.” Of course, this leads to fewer and fewer chapter members joining NARGS or, having joined in the past, keeping their memberships active.

So, what's the truth about NARGS and rock gardening?

Our Web site describes NARGS as an organization “for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials. It encourages the study and cultivation of wildflowers that grow well among rocks, whether such plants originate above tree line or at lower elevations.” I looked up “saxatile” and found that it means “growing on or living among rocks.” We all know what alpine means, and no one can misunderstand “low-growing.” Thus, we are an organization of people interested in perennial plants that grow well among rocks and that are relatively short. That sounds pretty inclusive to me, and it certainly doesn't in any way imply that the plants must be alpine, or tiny, or even particularly rare. It certainly *does* include plants that are native to every region of the world. For example, I grow *Townsendias* native to Kansas, *Campanulas* native to Turkey, *Epimediums* native to China, a *Calceolaria* native to South America, and alpine plants from the Alps, the Rockies, the Caucasus, and the Adirondacks among others. I have lime lovers, ericaceous plants, and plants that ask only for some sun, some water, and a bit of soil. I also grow all over my property tall plants, such as *Echinacea* and asters and bushy plants like *Buddleja*. So, what am I? Well, my major interest is growing plants that like to live among rocks, which makes me a rock gardener as far as I'm concerned.

Why are so many people convinced that *Drabas* are *real* rock garden plants and that *Epimediums* are not? Or that *Salvias* and *Hellebores* are forbidden because they are not included in some mythical list of approved “rock garden plants”? Far too many of us seem to think that, because the British named *their* organization the Alpine Garden Society, this limitation somehow applies to us. It does not. We are the North American Rock Garden Society, and our approach to

what we love and what we grow is inclusive, not exclusive. We understand with absolute clarity that many gardeners cannot grow *Astragalus utahensis*, but that almost all of us can grow *Gentiana acaulis*, or *Penstemon ovatus*, or *Sedum kamtschaticum*. And those, among literally thousands of rock garden plants, can be grown in all climates, at almost all altitudes, and on virtually every continent.

Furthermore, for most of its history, NARGS has published a journal that has focused on plants that far too many of us may have considered inappropriate for rock gardens. Before sitting down to write this, I pulled out two old issues of the NARGS publication at random, just to see what they contained. The spring 1991 issue was dedicated to primulas, and the lead article is entitled “Primulas for the Southeast,” by Nancy Goodwin. Nancy is from Hillsborough, North Carolina, a part of the United States not commonly associated with rock gardening. The second issue I selected was the fall 1985 issue, which featured an article called “Native Plants of Vermont.” Anyone who is not familiar with the botanical wealth of New England, and who subscribes to the narrow view of what a “rock garden plant” is, will be surprised to learn that the article focused on what we call “woodland” plants, including *Claytonia caroliniana*, *Erythronium americanum*, *Trillium erectum*, *Asarum canadense*, and *Asplenium ruta-muraria*. Are these rock garden plants? Some would say they are not, but I vigorously disagree, and – more to the point – so does the NARGS journal.

So please, let’s keep NARGS as inclusive as possible. To be sure, we are not simply a garden club (we are not interested in growing vegetables, annuals, roses, etc.); but neither are we an elite group of the wealthy and powerful who want to keep their organization small and exclusive. We are a large, geographically diverse body of people who simply love gardening with rocks. Let’s focus on that and work a bit harder to find commonality in purpose; by doing so, we will strengthen our organization and enhance its ability to provide valuable services to rock gardeners.

*[Peter George, a past president of NARGS, lives and gardens in Massachusetts. This article was originally written in 2013. It still has relevance today.]*

### **Benefits of Being a NARGS member:**

- **Fellowship** - the opportunity to belong to an international association of individuals who have an abiding love of gardening and the study of rare and unusual plants, thus creating a forum for sharing ideas with others for creative and successful ways to grow them.
- **The Rock Garden Quarterly** – a high quality journal for the novice and expert, targeted at rock gardeners, but of broader interest and rich in color photos. Particular attention is given to the different needs of rock gardeners across the diverse geographical regions of North America. Included are notices of meetings and special events, book reviews, as well as many nursery advertisements.
- **Seed Exchange** – an annual selection of seeds, rich in rarities, donated by members worldwide, many of which are rarely obtainable elsewhere. In addition to the initial distribution, members may order surplus seeds, with leftover seeds sent to local chapters. Ephemeral seeds are also now available with new storage methods.
- **Website** located at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org) with electronic copies of all back issues back to 1938 of The Rock Garden Quarterly and its predecessor titles.
- NARGS is also represented on Facebook and Instagram, a must for the modern young gardener!

- An electronic copy of the "**Beginners Handbook**" sent to all new members. (And each spring, leftover seeds from the Seed Exchange sent to members in the U.S. only.)
- **National meetings** – a national meeting that is entertaining and highly educational, hosted by local chapters. These meetings have outstanding speakers from all over the world, occasional workshops, and opportunities to hike in alpine areas, and visit public and private gardens. There are also sales of rare and desirable plants, and most especially they are a chance to discuss plants and gardens with other keen gardeners.
- **Virtual Meetings** during the winter for all NARGS member ticket holders.
- **Local Chapters** – 32 NARGS affiliated chapters are active in North America. Chapter events include lectures, garden visits, field trips, demonstrations, and plant sales. Besides a wealth of information, these friendly gatherings also offer a source for unusual plants plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners in your region.
- **NARGS Traveling Speakers Tour** – internationally known speakers brought to all chapters. This provides local chapters the opportunity to hear and visit with outstanding plants people from around the world presenting talks and workshops.
- **Book Service** – Some gardening books are available from NARGS and book reviews are posted monthly on our website.
- **Rock Garden Plant of the Month**, a long-time feature is posted monthly on our website.

Join NARGS at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)

## PLANT OF THE MONTH :

Marlene Kobre, POM Coordinator

### OCTOBER 2023 PLANT OF THE MONTH: ERYTHRONIUM

Before Ian Young had even concluded his Zoom presentation last January, I resolved to make Erythronium one of the POM selections in 2023. His knowledgeable and passionate celebration of this genus made me wonder how I had managed to overlook it for so long. A member of the Lily family, the Erythronium genus includes 20-30 species that are native to Europe, Asia, and temperate North America and that are known by various common names, such as Dog's Tooth Violet (suggesting the bulb resembles a "dog's tooth"), Trout Lily and Fawn Lily (both based on the mottled markings on the foliage), and Avalanche Lily (the origin of which remains a mystery).

Sourced from John Scheepers, the two plants we are offering represent two species originally native to our Pacific Coast forests: *Erythronium californicum* 'Pagoda' and *Erythronium revolutum* 'White Beauty.' Both are said to be easy to grow, provided they are **planted as soon as possible after arrival** because the bulbs dislike being out of the soil and sulk if allowed to dry out.

#### DESCRIPTION AND CULTIVATION REQUIREMENTS

##### *E. californicum* 'Pagoda'

**HZ:** 4-8

**Bloom Time:** April/May; dormant in summer

**Height:** 12"-14"



**Foliage and Flower:** Mottled maroon markings on broad glossy foliage; up to 10 2" yellow flowers with recurved petals and variable reddish center rings. Characterized as a "vigorous" and "robust" grower.



***E. revolutum* 'White Beauty'**

**HZ:** 5-9

**Bloom Time:** April/May

**Height:** Smaller than 'Pagoda', only 8"

**Foliage and Flower:** Marbled foliage; long-lasting white lily-like flowers up to 2" wide with variable reddish center rings.

**Planting and Cultivation Advice Applies to Both:**

Plant bulbs as soon as they arrive, 4" deep and 4"-6" apart. If planting is delayed, be sure to keep them moist (but not soggy). Handle the bulbs carefully as they can be easily damaged and be sure also to place the pointed end facing up.

**Light, Moisture, and Soil:** Filtered sun to light shade to full shade. Rich, moist, but well-drained soil; in late summer a covering of top soil or leaf mold is beneficial. There is some difference of opinion about the water needs during summer dormancy: some say no watering is necessary; others say the bulbs will suffer if allowed to dry out for too long. A middle ground is probably best.

**Propagation:** By division but wait at least 3 years before dividing or transplanting.

**Benefits:** Beautiful flowers, interesting foliage, deer and rabbit resistant\*, pollinators are strongly attracted.

If you want the expert's advice about growing this lovely spring bulb, remember that Ian Young has generously made his book a free download on the SRGC website.

\***Note:** Regarding deer resistance, the Rutgers' website gave it a "**B**" rating, which means "rarely damaged severely by deer."

## NARGS & ACNARGS UPCOMING 2023 PROGRAMS

**NOTE: As of now, we are meeting in-person at Cornell in the Whetzel Room and not recording the sessions.**

October 21: Program meeting, Susan Chater

November 11: Program meeting, speaker to be announced Note this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

## CALENDAR OF SELECT AREA GARDEN EVENTS

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

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Online class information:

[ccetompkins.org](http://ccetompkins.org)

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society monthly meetings – a hybrid of in-person and zoom: <https://flnps.org/> Recordings of past programs are available to view online.

Cornell Botanic Gardens: <https://cornellbotanicgardens.org/explore/events/>

Habitat Gardening in CNY, local Wild Ones Chapter: <https://www.hgcnny.org/>

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

To have your garden event listed send all pertinent information to Carol Eichler [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)

## 2023 ACNARGS BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

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

Chair (aka head honcho): John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)

Program Coordinator: Terry Humphries, [terryehumphries@gmail.com](mailto:terryehumphries@gmail.com)

Program Committee Members: Would you like to help? Share your speaker suggestions!

Secretary: Currently rotating amongst “Responsible People”

Treasurer (aka CFO): Marlene Kobre

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

Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, [mkobre@ithaca.edu](mailto:mkobre@ithaca.edu)

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

New Member Hospitality: Graham Egerton, Anne Redfern

Newsletter Editor: Susanne Lipari [sel3@cornell.edu](mailto:sel3@cornell.edu)

Wurster Garden Coordinator: Carol Eichler

Wurster Volunteers: Elaine Caso, Ellen Lane, Sheila Stone; Others always welcome! Contact Carol Eichler if you wish to be added to the email list.

Book Order Manager: New NARGS program to offer NARGS’ members select books at deeply discounted prices. New Chapter position. Looking for a volunteer!

Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, [cdcramer@gmail.com](mailto: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, occasional 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. 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), invitations to our garden day trips, 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.



## ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at [www.nargs.org](http://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 a wealth of information including current and archived of Quarterly's, recordings of past study days and more. NARGS National also 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 (Jan./Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec. Submit articles no later than the fourth Friday of the month preceding the monthly publication to Carol Eichler, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com). Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be November 2023