

Alpine Line

Newsletter of the Allegheny Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2018

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ANNUAL PICNIC Sunday, August 19, 2018



Lorraine Duffola Sandy Ciccone Al Deurbrouck

Well the weather cooperated again. Members showed up armed with great food and exciting plants. Patty McGuire brought the main dishes from T Bones - this year chicken and ribs. As always the food was excellent. We do have a number of gourmet cooks who make the picnic a real gastronomical delight. Thanks to all who make the luncheon so special!

Forty-one members attended the picnic including five new members - Kathie Davis, Dave Kosy, Dolores and Terry Nypaver, and Keith Portka.

As always, the 50-cent plant sale was a bit of a madhouse as members continue to bring in some choice plants including some primulas that were planted in February at the Seed Germination Workshop. Other available plants of note were Hosta 'Stiletto', some clematis, and a number of good looking succulents. And, of course, Len Lehman, auctioneer supreme, managed to bleed some of us out of just a few more dollars for some choice plant material.

An unfortunate down-note - the Trough Show was a real disappointment; in 2014 we had 17 entries in the

Show, and this year only five troughs were entered in the Show, three of which were entered by Sandy Ciccone. The first place winning trough entered by Lorraine Duffola was a clever, lovely, seashell-shaped hypertufa container made by Lorraine. The second place winning trough, made by Sandy was a Styrofoam container. The third place trough entered by Al Deurbrouck was a hypertufa container made at least ten years ago by our own "Trough Lady" Audrey Rauch. Again succulents were the most common plant in the show. Please plan to enter a trough or two next year. The entries are really a part of the educational process the Chapter members benefit from. The entries contain some well grown and often unique plants that we can try to grow knowing others have grown them successfully. A word of caution - as we get older it is prudent to plant smaller troughs, use lighter soil mixes, and consider lighter trough making material such as Styrofoam if you plan to bring your troughs to the May Show or the August Picnic.

Hopefully everyone had a good time and went home with some exciting new plants for their rock gardens.

By Al Deurbrouck & Len Lehman

AVIARY GARDEN REPORT

by Alan Peacock

During a recent visit to the rock garden our Chapter of NARGS maintains at the National Aviary, accompanied by Al Deurbrouck and Len Lehman after the obligatory breakfast to ensure we are well sustained for the effort ahead, I was able to take a photograph without anybody in the picture, as it was a visit between regular maintenance, to give you an overall impression of the pleasant aspect of the garden adjacent to the road leading to the visitors parking lot.

Upon closer examination, it was apparent that the coming of fall would soon be upon us.

Most of the blooming was over, although there were still some plants that were persistent and able to delight us with their ability to show us how versatile and delightful they are. Of special beauty and interest is the *Lagerstroemia* sp. (Crepe Myrtle). It has been in our garden through two winters with no ill effects.

There are just a couple more scheduled maintenance visits to the garden this year; however, weather permitting a visit or two in November is possible followed by leaf cleanup sometime in early December. Then the garden will be left to its own devices until next spring.



Thinking of You

If you would like to let Allegheny Chapter members know of a serious illness, death in the family, or help needed by a fellow member, you may send your message to the membership chair for communication to all members. **Please contact Lyn Lang.**

THE GOLDEN RULES OF SUCCESSFUL ALPINE ROCK GARDENING IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

As I look back over 40 plus years of rock gardening I find truths that I learned because they were self-evident and others that were the fall out of significant mistakes often repeated over the years. Rock gardening in Western Pennsylvania is not easy. We are trying to grow alpine plants that are at home above the tree line, grow at 1,300 feet above sea level. We fight high temperatures and high humidity that practically eliminate our chances of growing some of the really choice alpiners of our western states. However, there are a LOT of really choice alpine plants that we can grow successfully—some surprisingly easy, some requiring a little extra effort.

1. Drainage – If one aspect of my approach to rock gardening has changed over the years it has been my march to a coarser, more open and somewhat richer planting media. A wag once said the three keys to successful rock gardening are “Drainage, drainage, drainage.” Believe this and follow this simple rule to a more pleasant rock gardening experience.

2. Aspect – A facing in a given direction (from Webster). Give me a good eastern exposure on a hillside and a lot of difficult plants all of a sudden thrive. Dr. Norm Deno, a former member of our Chapter and the author of “Seed Germination Theory and Practice”, gave a talk to our Chapter on what he called the “Magic Angle” in the planting and growing of alpiners. The “Magic Angle” provides maximum afternoon sunlight to the growing surface of plants but little direct sunshine to the soil surface. The result is a cooler root system, reduced watering, and a happy plant. This is typically an exposure sloping to the east.

3. Maintenance – Because our soil mixes are ideally coarse, watering of alpiners needs to be done more often than is generally realized. However, deep soaking of the alpine garden is not required as the water drains through the soil quickly. Finally, most true alpiners do not require much feeding. An ambitious fertilizing regime can lead to soft non-characteristic plant growth that will likely not be as hardy as would be expected.

4. When you buy a plant the first thing you should do is look at it and determine how to propagate it. Carl Gehenio dropped this tip in a talk he gave to our Chapter. I do this to the point where I'm often able to split a plant, as I get it from the nursery, into three or four smaller plants that can then be placed in different places in my garden. Very commonly I do this with plants I get at Dennis James' nursery because of the generous size of the plants he sells.

5. Plant placement – An interesting rule on plant placement if you have multiples of a plant. First, plant them where the book recommends they be planted; second, plant them where the book says not to; and third, plant them wherever you choose.

6. Always put your plant labels in the same place in relationship to your plants. I always put them to the right and somewhat above the plant. This sure helps when you forget the name of a plant that has been in your garden a number of years and has grown substantially in spread completely covering your label. This is a little trick I learned on a visit to the alpine garden of Geoffrey Charlesworth and Norman Singer. To expand on this—when Alan Peacock and I attended the 100 year anniversary of the Royal Horticulture Society Chelsea Flower Show in 2013 we also visited a number of other choice English gardens including Kew, where we discovered that plant labels were both above ground and below ground for most plants. A great way to assure that plants are properly identified if the above ground labels are moved (an uncool joke) or simply lost over time.

By Al Deurbrouck

New Members / Lyn Lang, Membership

Welcome, new members! Our programs, public garden, and knowledgeable members will offer many opportunities for you to learn more about rock gardening and alpine plants.

Kathy Amrhein
Ron Berman
Kathie Davis
Laurel Dittman
Karen Dorow
Pinky Fredericks
Lindsay Haslett

Laurie Kilkenny
Daniel Mace
Sharon McAllister
Dolores Nypaver
Terry Nypaver
Keith Portka
Joseph Raught

Linda Schwartz
Tony Seethaler
Karen Stuthers
Shoba Tiwary
Camille Venturo
Paul Worona
Kirk Wicker

Thank you to our members and friends who have encouraged 21 gardeners to join the Allegheny Chapter this year.

Message from the Chair *David Amrhein*

Hello everyone,

I hope you all enjoyed one of the few summers I have experienced in not having to do any watering. It is always a relief for me not having to water my baskets and potted plants from my well. The really nice thing about this growing year was the balance of sunny to overcast days which seemed perfect for growing on the seed exchange starts and seedlings I had from our winter workshop. I witnessed my monarch project flourishing with my milkweed really taking off from the eight plants I had last year (anyone want some seedpods)? Trish Abrams, our seed packing guru, will soon be sending out the call to arms and distributing sleeves as we again help out the national with our seed packing day. This past year I walked away from our get together about three pounds heavier with images dancing in my head of all the neat plants I was helping to facilitate into the world. We will be packing NARGS donations this year on December 6th, so hoping to see everyone there, the more the merrier.



In our more immediate future we are looking forward to the Awards Banquet that Sandy Ciccone has planned for us at Bravo on October 23th when our Awards Chair, Al Deurbrouck, will present to our deserving winners a variety of hardware which anyone would be proud to obtain. As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, the field of competition at our May Show & Sale seemed even better than usual with a nice selection of entries and some new faces. Janet Novak is our banquet speaker this year and will be talking about plants of Nova Scotia which is, of course, where the NARGS national was held and where Carol Przyborski and Deb Meyer found themselves in July. Sandy did a great job of representing our Chapter in August at the North Park Master Gardeners Garden in the Parks Field Day which has become a very nice vehicle by which local garden clubs can get publicity at the North and South Park Demonstration Gardens. Len and Al again represented our Chapter at the South Park Demonstration Garden during Garden in the Parks. I'd also like to thank Sandy for taking the reins at our annual picnic and making certain there were no glitches while I was buried, washed over, and again buried in the sand by the small screaming grandkids at Broadkill Beach in Delaware.

As of today, I am not certain where we will be meeting, but we will have an additional program on October 23rd with Kelly Dobson and Sue Milliken from Far Reaches Farm Nursery, located in Port Townsend Washington. They will be returning from the Perennial Plant Conference at Swarthmore College and will discuss some of the new plants they discovered during their world travels and must haves which we may not already have.

At our November meeting we will welcome Bob Mulvihill of bird banding and National Aviary fame as he discusses one of my favorite topics, attracting birds to the backyard. You know they aren't all just little brown jobs.

On a more somber note I would like to extend our sympathy to Bob Dietz and his family for the loss of his mom, who only a month before celebrated her 100th birthday.

See you at the next meeting,

Dave

Upcoming Meetings

October 20 @ 1:00 pm - Banquet at BRAVO Cucina Italiana, 20001 Rte. 19, Cranberry Township., PA, Awards Banquet, **Janet Novak**, Chair of the NARGS Delaware Chapter, will be our speaker and will discuss the "Plants of Newfoundland."

November 18 @ 2:00 pm - We will welcome Robert Mulvihill, National Aviary Ornithologist, he will present "What's Good for Birds is Good for Your Backyard."

December - No meeting

December 9 @ 9:00 am - Seed Packaging @ Northland Public Library

Mystery Plant for October/November/December

This month's mystery plant is a member of the largest genus of the Plantain family (Plantaginaceae). Despite its relationship to the obnoxious broad-leaved plantain, a weed in lawns and gardens, it is a beautiful perennial with some species having spike-like flower stems and others having flowers lying flat against the low growing foliage. Many make excellent ground covers and are ideal for the rock garden. The square blue or, in one case, red/pink flowers are stand outs against the often grey foliage. In England, it is highly regarded as a medicinal tonic for diuretics, expectorants and, when used as a wash, good for skin ailments. Recent medical investigations reveal that it prevents ulcers. The name refers to its regenerative properties. In fact, the badge of the Royal British Air Force Squadron 541 contained a flower of this plant. In Italy it is known as "Occhi della Madonna" or "Madonna's Eyes".

Our specific plant is a western native and is particularly adapted to dry areas making it an ideal filler between stepping stones. Foliage is evergreen and flowers are blue with a white eye and a gray hair cover! An easy to grow plant that more people should be using!

A unique and beautiful plant.

Email answers to Len Lehman. **You must have the correct species for this one!**



DJ's Greenhouse & Gardens

1004 East Lake Road * Transfer, PA 16154 * 724-962-1230 * www.djsgreenhouse.com

2018 Schedule of Events

This schedule is not complete. Please check the web-site during the year for additional classes.

October 8, 2018 - Farm to Table Fund Raiser \$75 / 4 to 9 on Facebook@ Our hometown to table!

We are open until mid-late October. Our hours of business are listed on the website.



August 19, 2018 Minutes Joanne Burzese, Secretary

The Allegheny Chapter of NARGS held its annual picnic at 2pm on August 19th at Pine Township Park. Forty-one members enjoyed a delicious meal. After eating, Sandy Ciccone conducted a brief meeting. Lyn Lang discussed changing the extra watering days at the Aviary from the Saturday to Thursday. However, Dave

Kosy volunteered to assist Kathie Davis with the Saturday watering. It was decided to let them go on the day that suited their schedule and those interested in helping could contact Kathie.

Dot Sims spoke about the invasive Asian jumping worm. Fact sheets about them are available online at the Cornell Cooperative Extension website. These worms decimate gardens and are impacting plant exchanges and sales.

Winners of the trough show were: 1st place - Lorraine Duffola, 2nd place, Sandy Ciccone, and 3rd place, Al Deurbrouck. Sandy Ciccone expressed disappointment at the small number of troughs entered and encouraged more participation at next year's picnic. A plant sale, raffle and auction were held.

The next meeting will be September 16th at 2 pm at Northland Library. Cindy Tibbetts will give a presentation on clematis and will have plants for sale.

September 16, 2018 Minutes Joanne Burzese, Secretary

The Allegheny Chapter of NARGS met on September 16th at 2 pm at Northland Library. Cindy Tibbetts, from Hummingbird Farm, gave a presentation about growing clematis. She spoke about the various types of clematis and how to grow, prune, and care for them. She gave out her web address and said she would be happy to assist anyone with problems or questions about clematis.

Dave Amrhein conducted the business portion of the meeting. He reminded members of the talk to be given by Joseph Tychonievich on September 20th at Fellows Riverside Garden in Youngstown. Len Lehman reported that Kelly Dodson and Sue Milliken from Far Reaches Farm will be speaking at the Perennial Plant Conference at Swarthmore College on October 19th. He said they are willing to speak to our group on October 23 at Soergel's at a time to be determined. He made a motion that the club provide a \$75 honorarium for this. Jim Adams seconded the motion and it was approved. Dave Amrhein gave the Treasurer's report since Patty McGuire was unable to attend the meeting. Joanne Burzese read the minutes from the August 19th meeting and they were approved.

Sandy Ciccone spoke about the banquet to be held October 20th at Bravo in Cranberry. She reviewed the menu and asked that anyone with special dietary needs contact her.

Cost is \$25 and should be sent to her. She suggested starting a tradition of having a "Pittsburgh cookie table" for dessert at the banquet. She said that 6 people would be needed to provide 2-3 dozen cookies each for this. Six volunteers were obtained, and she said anyone else wishing to contribute would be welcome to do so. It was decided to proceed with this on a trial basis. She also reported that the speaker will be Janet Novak, chairperson of the Delaware Valley Chapter of NARGS. There will be door prizes at the banquet, and she is accepting any items members may have to donate for this. She reminded members that the annual Show and Sale in 2019 will be held on the last Sunday in April instead of the first Sunday in May. This is to enable members to attend the National NARGS study weekend outside Philadelphia on May 3-5.

Lyn Lang reported that our chapter gained 21 new members this year. After the raffle, the meeting adjourned at 4:10pm.

JOIN NARGS TODAY



NARGS is for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials and woody plants. Annual dues in the US and Canada are \$40, payable in US funds. VISA/Mastercard accepted.

Benefits of membership include: *Rock Garden Quarterly* with articles on alpines and North American wildflowers, illustrated in color photographs and pen and ink drawings; annual Seed Exchange with thousands of plant species; study weekends and annual meetings in either US or Canada; and book service.

Join online at www.nargs.org or write: Bobby J. Ward, Executive Secretary NARGS, P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604, USA.

The NARGS *Quarterly* is now online and members have free access at www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly.

Soergel's Garden Center - Educational Series

2573 Brandt School Road, Wexford, PA 15090

724-935-2090

Date / Time	Speaker	Activity
October 18 / 7:00 PM	Randy Soergel	All About Apples
November 15 / 7:00 PM	Aspen Song Wild Bird Feed	Bird Feeding

2018 MEETING NOTICES / ALLEGHENY NARGS

Date/Time/Refreshment Group	Location	Speaker	Activity
JAN 21 / 2:00 PM / F-O	Northland Public Library	Membership lead by Len Lehman	Roundtable Discussion of Favorite Plants
FEB 18 / 2:00 PM / P-Z	Northland Public Library	Sandy Feather	Seed Starting Workshop
MAR 18 / 2:00 PM / A-E	Northland Public Library	Matha & Charles Oliver	The Small Phlox Charles is Hybridizing
APRIL / 2:00 PM / F-O	National Aviary	Mark Langan Mulberry Creek Herb Farm	Companion Plants for Mini Hosta
MAY 6 / 9:00 AM	Soergel's Garden Center	Show & Sale	Show & Sale
MAY 19-20 / 10:00AM-6:00PM	Trish & Joe Abram's	Open Garden	Open Garden
JUN 10 / 9:30 AM	DJ's Greenhouse	Dennis James	New Outstanding Plants
JULY	NO MEETING	NO MEETING	NO MEETING
AUG 19 / 2:00 PM	Pine Township Community Park	Picnic	Raffle, Trough Show, Plant Sale, auction
SEP 16 / 2:00 PM / P-Z	Northland Public Library	Cindy Tibbetts Hummingbird Farm	Rambling Through the Rock Garden
OCT 20 / 1:00 PM	BRAVO Cucina Italiana	Janet Novak	Plants of Newfoundland Awards Banquet
NOV 18 / 2:00 PM / A-E	Northland Public Library	Robert Mulvihill National Aviary's Ornithologist	What's Good for Birds is Good for Your Backyard
DECEMBER	NO MEETING	NO MEETING	NO MEETING
DEC 6 / 9:00 AM	Northland Public Library	Trish Abrams	Seed Packaging

2018 Allegheny NARGS Annual Banquet



Buffet
Saturday
October 20, 2018
1:00 pm

\$25 per person
Speaker Janet Novak
“Plants of Newfoundland”

20001 Rte 19, Cranberry Township, PA 16066 • www.bravoitalian.com • 724-772-8150

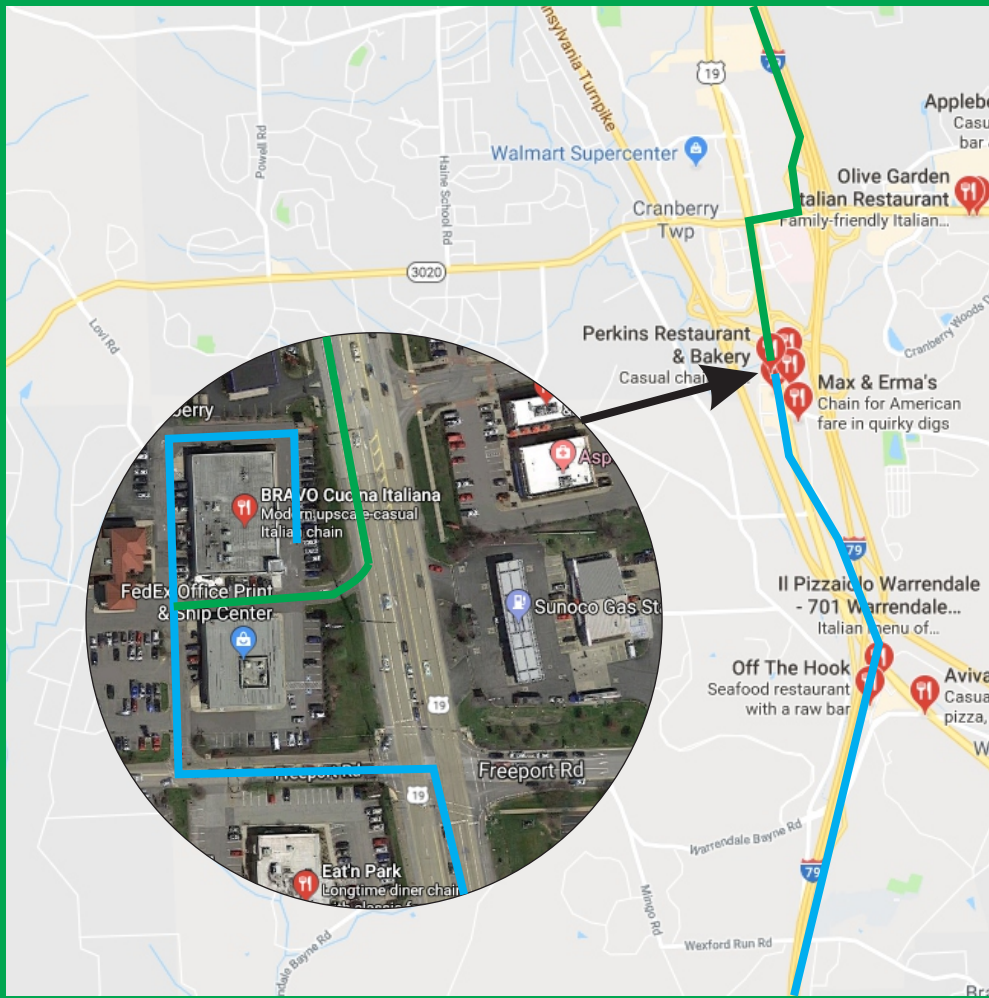
INCLUDES:

- **Focaccia bread** with dipping oil
- **Caesar Classica** with focaccia croutons
- **Insalata Della Casa** - chopped greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, bacon, crispy pasta, Parmesan dressing
- **Seasonal Vegetables**
- **Pasta BRAVO** - grilled chicken, mushrooms, rigatoni, red pepper cream
- **Shrimp Scampi Pasta** - Capellini, tomatoes, lemon, white wine, chile flake, pesto bread crumbs, garlic crostini
- **Mama's Lasagna Bolognese** - Signature meat sauce, alfredo, ricotta, mozzarella
- **Dessert**
- **Coffee, Tea or soft Drinks**
- **Cash Bar**
- **Gluten-free & Vegetarian meals available**

Banquet Speaker - Janet Novak

Janet is an amateur botanist and gardener living in Philadelphia. She is proud to be a member of NARGS, and is chair of the Delaware Valley Chapter. She also belongs to 11 other plant-related societies, ranging from the Philadelphia Botanical Club to the Eriogonum Society. She created the web site of the Connecticut Botanical Society and contributed many of its photographs. Janet's photos have also appeared in Horticulture magazine and Peterson's Field Guide to Ferns. Her educational background, however, is not plants but molecular biology, and she works as a medical editor.





DIRECTIONS:

FROM NORTH via I-79S - Merge onto Route 228 / PA-228W via Exit 78 toward US-19 / Cranberry / PA-76. Turn left onto Route 19 / US-19S. Your destination is on the right. See insert for details.

FROM SOUTH via I-79N - Merge onto US-19 via Exit 76 on the left toward Cranberry. Make a left onto Emeryville Rd / Freepoint Rd. See insert for details.

**2018 Allegheny NARGS Annual Banquet
BRAVO! • Saturday, October 20, 2018 @ 1 PM**

Name _____

Guest Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Buffet \$25 x _____ = \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Dietary restrictions _____

Please send form and check to Sandra Ciccone by Monday, October 15, 2018.

Please make checks payable to: **NARGS Allegheny Chapter.**