



# **ALPINE LINE** Jan/Feb 2017

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEGHENY CHAPTER of NARGS



## **Botanical Tulips**

Todd Boland, Chair, Newfoundland Chapter, NARGS

Tulips are, without a doubt, one of the mainstay bulbs for the spring garden. Over 100 years of hybridizing has given rise to hundreds of hybrids, most which are far different from their more humble ancestors; in fact, we do not know with certainty who

the ancestors were! The numerous hybrids are now classified into specific groups; single early, single late, Darwin, triumph, double early, double late, viridiflora...and the list goes on. These hybrids are often short-lived in the garden but reasonably cheap to purchase, so they can be treated like annuals if need be.

The focus of this article will be the 'botanical' tulips; the wild species and selections from them. In the wild, there are some 100 or so species, native primarily to the eastern Mediterranean, Asia Minor and east into the Altai region. Most grow in a climate that is cool and wet in winter but baking hot and dry in summer. Such conditions are not easy to duplicate in most gardens, hence those that demand this summer baking are quite rare in the trade. However, there are enough botanical types to keep most of us rock gardeners satisfied. While some of the available types still prefer the summer baking, they are so cheap that gardeners who live in cool, summer-wet climates (such as myself) can grow them as annuals. Thankfully a few are carefree and seem to thrive no matter where they are grown. As long as the soil is reasonably fertile and well-drained and they are planted in full sun, some of these 'botanical' tulips will perform admirably.

Many of the popular 'botanical' tulips are shorter in stature than the classic tulips and often more long-lived. Several bloom before the main tulip season, while others are quite late. Some have very attractive foliage which may be wavy-edged, blue-grey or maroon-striped. In the garden, I plant them in groups of 5 or 7, usually in a rock garden setting or the front of the border.



Among the earliest tulip to bloom is *Tulipa kaufmanniana* (above), often called the water lily tulip.

The wild form is white to cream with reddish shading on the outer petals (botanically the sepals). Today, there are many selections and/or hybrids available (this species, *T. greigii* and *T. fosteriana* have been hybridized among each other). The wild *T. kaufmanniana* has plain green leaves so if pale red veins are seen, then it probably has some *T. greigii* genes. Most grow around 15-20 cm in height. Some of the more popular selections include 'Ancilla' (white, red flushed exterior), 'Concerto'

(cream), 'Corona' (cream-yellow and red), 'Fashion' (orange-red), 'Heart's Delight' (red and pink), 'Johann Strauss' (red and cream), 'Shakespeare' (red and orange), 'Showwinner' (red) and 'Stresa' (red and bright yellow).



*Tulipa greigii* (below) is unmistakable as the leaves are heavily striped in red. The flowers are also huge in relation to the size of the plant, which is usually a bit taller than *T. kaufmanniana*, at 20-30 cm. The wild *T. greigii* has vermillion-red flowers, but modern hybrids are mixtures of red, orange and yellow. Some of the available selections/hybrids are 'Compostella' (yellow, orange and red blend), 'Cape Cod' (yellow and red), 'Chopin' (red and cream), 'Czar Peter' (red and white), 'Dreamboat' (pink and yellow), 'Oratorio' (pink), 'Pinocchio' (red and white), 'Red Riding Hood' (red; most striking foliage) and 'Toronto' (multi-

flowering with lipstick-pink blooms).

Fosteriana or Emperor tulips (*T. fosteriana*) are also quite popular and come closest to looking like the standard tulips except their flowers are more elongated. Their foliage is plain green and the plants reach 30-45 cm. The wild form is bright red but most of today's selections are hybrids with some *T. greigii* or *T. kaufmanniana* genes. The most popular hybrids have the name 'Emperor' attached eg. 'Red Emperor' (aka 'Madame Lefebvre'), 'Pink Emperor' (aka 'Solva'), 'Orange Emperor', 'Golden Emperor' and 'White Emperor' (aka 'Purissima'). Other selections include 'Candela' (yellow), 'Easter Moon' (yellow with white variegated foliage), 'Flaming Purissima' (cream and pink blend), 'Juan' (orange with yellow base) and 'Sweetheart' (yellow with white edge). All three of the above tulips generally flower just before the standard tulips.

Next we come to the true species tulips. Some of these are easy to grow, others more challenging. *Tulipa batalini* is an easy, choice species which grows only 10 cm tall. The flowers are on the small side but still very attractive. The foliage is also small, narrow, blue to grey-green and often wavy edged. There are two main selections; 'Red Gem' (bright red) and 'Bright Gem' (yellow with orange flush). *Tulipa dasystemon* (aka *T. tarda* below) is a prolific species that multiplies quickly by bulb-splitting and seed. It has yellow, star-shaped flowers with white tips. Each bulb can produce a cluster of 2-5 flowers. Plants grow about 10-15 cm in height. *Tulipa turkestanica* also has star-



shaped flowers in clusters of up to 12! The blooms are white with a yellow base. Plants reach 20-25 cm with narrow, grey-green foliage. *Tulipa praestans* is another reliable species with wide, grey-green leaves and clusters of vibrant fluorescent orange flowers on 30 cm plants. There are several named selections including 'Fusilier' (bright orange-red), 'Van Tubergen's variety' (bright red) and 'Unicum' (orange-red with striking white variegated leaves). There are two hybrid 'botanical' tulips on the market which have a strong influence from *Tulipa hageri*; 'Little Princess' (magenta-pink with blue center) and 'Little Beauty' (red-

dish-orange with blue center). Both of these reach about 15-20 cm and are among the last tulips to bloom.

The following tulip species are more challenging, requiring a good summer baking to perform well. *Tulipa bakeri* produces a single, glossy, bright green leaf. The flower stems reach 15-20 cm topped by a single mauve-pink flower with a striking yellow center. 'Lilac Wonder' is the standard selection. *Tulipa saxatilis* is very similar but has more lilac-pink flowers. *Tulipa clusiana* is one of the taller species tulips (25-35 cm) with narrow, grey-green foliage and small flowers the shape of Fosteriana tulips. There are two main selections: 'Cynthia' (red and yellow) and 'Peppermint' (red and white). *Tulipa humilis* is a striking species whose flowers are magenta with a bright yellow center. They grow 10-15 cm tall. There are several named selections including 'Eastern Star' (rose-pink), 'Persian Pearl' (magenta with silvery lilac outer petals) and 'Violacea' (purple). *Tulipa linifolia* has very narrow foliage on a 20-30 cm plant. The star-shaped flowers are red or yellow. *Tulipa kolpakowskiana* is a most charming species reaching just 10-15 cm. The flowers are mini yellow stars set atop narrow, blue-grey, wavy-edged leaves. Among the tallest species is *T. margoletii*, with plants growing to 50 cm. The flowers are like a smaller version of the modern tulip. They are creamy-yellow with pinkish-red margins and flush. *Tulipa acuminata* is quite a bizarre species. Plants reach 30-45 cm and have yellow, red-tinted flowers whose petals are very narrow with long-pointed tips.

I have ordered some species from specialist bulb companies in Europe. Alas, these too seem to require a summer baking to thrive but so far, a few are still hanging on. Among these are *T. vvedenski* (bright red; the double 'v' is not a typo!), *T. maxmowiczii* (bright red), *T. biflora* (star-shaped cream flowers) and *T. sprengeri* (bright red).

As can be seen, there are plenty of 'botanical' tulips out there to grace your spring alpine garden. It seems that more species are being offered all the time, especially with the demands of alpine gardeners who read about these bulbed beauties in NARGS, AGS, SRGC and International Rock Gardener articles. So stay tuned for the

newest tulip offerings near you!

Todd Boland, BSc., MSc.

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## Message from the Chair

Karen Schmidt

As I write this message, it is mid-December and boy is it cold outside. I am so ready for spring. I just finished entering my order for seeds from NARGS. I hope I can get them to germinate, maybe at the February meeting I can learn how to do it correctly. I have pictured one of the seeds that I ordered. I just love anything that blooms blue.



Matthiola montana

On December 8<sup>th</sup> we had 17 members get together to do the seed packing for NARGS. We were able to finish them all in the time allotted. Thanks to all those that helped and Trish Abrams for her hard work organizing. The Seed Exchange is one of the benefits of joining the national NARGS group. I hope those that are members ordered some seeds this year. Any surplus seed-grown plants can always be donated to the picnic in August. It is a great way to get alpine plants since most are not readily available on the market. In 2017, which is my last year in office, we will have another exciting year with a great line-up of speakers. We will start the year out in January with our favorite speaker, Len Lehman, presenting “The Truth About Ferns”.

In February we will be bringing back Mark Tebbitt to give a presentation on “Growing Alpines from Seed”, which will be a great introduction for doing our always popular seed starting workshop afterward. In March we will learn about “Vertical Gardening” from Katie Schuller and in April about the “Rock Gardens of Vancouver, BC” from Amanda Haney (this meeting to be held at the National Aviary so everyone can visit our Rock Garden and see what is blooming). Check out the calendar for the rest of the year for meeting and activity dates and places.

The Rock Garden Show and Sale is May 7. I hope more of you will enter plants this year. Remember to enter the Chair’s Choice Corydalis for that new award category. The sale

is always wonderful with a wide variety of plants for your rock garden. I need everyone's help getting this great event advertised. A committee needs to be started to handle getting the event publicized in magazines and newspapers. Please let me know if you are interested in being on the committee or just helping get the information out there for the public. Also please share with any garden group or friends whom you think may be interested. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

At the November meeting, two motions were presented, and since we did not have a quorum (20 members), the vote was done by email. The \$100 donation to the National Aviary was approved by all those that voted. The \$100 donations to the Western PA Conservancy and Horticultural Society of Western PA were both declined. The motion passed for purchasing a \$25 Soergel's gift certificate for the hosta show.

Meeting Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2 PM at Northland Public Library  
 Speaker Len Lehman will present “The Truth about Ferns - Love, Hate, Hostility, and a Gone Gay Generation.

Members I — P are asked to bring snacks. Raffle donations are always welcome!

**MEETING NOTICES**  
**ALLEGHENY CHAPTER ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY**

Date/Time	Location	Speaker	Activity
Jan 15, 2:00 PM	Northland Library	Len Lehman	The Truth About Ferns
Feb 19, 2:00 PM	Northland Library	Mark Tebbitt	Seed Planting Workshop
Mar 19, 2:00 PM	Northland Library	Katie Schuller	Vertical Gardening
Apr 23, 2:00 PM	Aviary	Amanda Haney	Rock Gardening of Vancouver, BC
May 7, 9:00 AM	Soergel Garden Center	Show & Sale	Show & Sale
May 21	Garden Visits	Garden Visits	Garden Visits
Jun 11	DJ's Greenhouse	TBA	Breakfast
Jul	No Meeting	No Meeting	No Meeting
Aug 20, 2:00 PM	Pine Township Park	Picnic	Picnic
Sep 17, 2:00 PM	Northland Library	Paul Zammit	TBA
Oct 15	St. John's Lutheran Church		Awards Banquet
Nov 19, 2:00 PM	Northland Library	Mark Langan	Landscaping with Miniature Hosta
Dec	No Meeting		
Dec 7, 9:00 AM	Northland Library	Trish Abrams	Seed Packaging



## Mystery Plant for Jan/Feb

This month's mystery plant is a native wildflower that most gardeners are unfamiliar with, and yet it is an attractive soil builder and nutrient provider for other plants. A little too tall for most rock gardens, growing 12-18 inches, it is still a valuable plant for the landscape. Yellow flowers and pinnately compound leaves make it both an excellent texture plant and a good yellow flower! A member of the bean family, and as with most bean species, it forms a symbiotic relationship with Rhizobium bacteria which add nitrates and nitrites to the soil. It is easily grown from seed and is found from the middle of Pennsylvania to the deep South, although rather uncommon.

Be the first to correctly identify this plant with both the common name and the scientific name to receive a special prize. Mail answers to Len Lehman at [lcleman1@verizon.net](mailto:lcleman1@verizon.net).



## November 20, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Dianne Passoth

The November 20, 2016 meeting of the Allegheny Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society was called to order at the Northland Public Library at 2:10 p.m. by Chair Karen Schmidt.

Karen introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Mark Tebbitt. Since he was a small child growing up in England, Mark has been an avid gardener with an interest in all kinds of plants. These days he is especially interested in alpine, arid-land, and woodland plants. In 2007 he moved to Uniontown to take a position as a botany professor at California University of Pennsylvania. As part of Mark's job, he teaches, conducts taxonomic research on the genus Begonia, and curates the Biology Department's greenhouse. Prior to moving to Pennsylvania, he was head of the Horticultural Taxonomy Program at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in New York City. Before that he worked on the European Garden Flora project at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

Mark's program contained an overview of his plant collecting experiences in the Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and Bolivian Andes. He discussed begonias as well as the tropical, temperate and subalpine Andean plants that he encountered. His emphasis was on garden worthy plants, especially those already in cultivation. Mark concluded his talk by showing scenes of his own gardens.

A refreshment break followed.

The Business Meeting began with a motion by Lyn Lang and a second by Steve Plato that the October 16, 2016 minutes published in the recent issue of the Alpine Line be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Patty McGuire gave the Treasurer's Report. Al Deurbrouck moved and Lorraine Duffola seconded that the Treasurer's Report be accepted as received. The motion unanimously passed.

Lyn Lang reminded everyone that dues should be paid by the January meeting. Fees have not changed.

On December 8<sup>th</sup> we will be packaging seeds for the NARGS Seed Exchange at Northland Library from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. A sign-up sheet was passed around. Our February meeting will consist of a seed starting workshop. Maintenance is still needed at the Aviary Rock Garden. Karen thanked everyone for their hard work. She also expressed appreciation to Al Deurbrouck and Len Lehman for volunteering to handle the newsletter. Al Deurbrouck moved and Lyn Lang seconded that Trish Abrams be elected Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously. It was suggested that a job description for the various offices be provided.

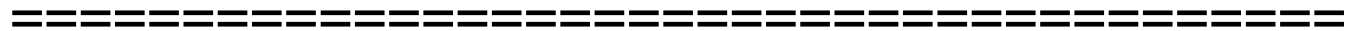
Len Lehman, Patty McGuire, Karen Schmidt and Al Deurbrouck volunteered to review the Chapter Bylaws. Lyn Lang will proofread the finished product.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding donations for 2017. Since there was not a quorum of members present at this meeting, voting will be done by email to Karen Schmidt. The deadline is November 28<sup>th</sup>.

It was suggested that the Chapter sponsor a Trough Award at the annual leaf show of the Daffodil & Hosta Society of Western PA. Once again, because there was not a quorum of members present, voting will be done by email to Karen Schmidt. The deadline is November 28.

Lorraine Duffola moved and Len Lehman seconded that the meeting be adjourned. There were no dissenting votes.

A raffle ended the afternoon.



## **JOIN NARGS TODAY.**

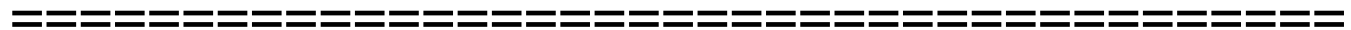
NARGS is for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials and woody plants. Annual dues in the US and Canada are \$40, payable in US funds. VISA/Mastercard accepted.



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](http://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 <https://nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly>.



# What Is Corydalis: Growing and Propagating Corydalis Plants

By Jackie Carroll

Bright colorful flowers rising above neat mounds of delicate foliage make corydalis perfect for shady borders. The foliage may remind you of a maidenhair fern, and both the flowers and foliage look great in cut flower arrangements. The plants have a long flowering season that may last from spring until frost.



## What is Corydalis?

Corydalis plants are close relatives of bleeding hearts, and you can see the resemblance in shape between corydalis flowers and small types of bleeding hearts. The genus name “*Corydalis*” derives from the Greek word ‘korydalis,’ which means crested lark, referring to the similarity between the flowers and spurs to a lark’s head.

Of the 300 or so species of corydalis – with differing colors available, the two types that you see most often in North American gardens are the blue corydalis (*C. flexuosa*) and yellow corydalis (*C. lutea*). Blue corydalis reaches a height of 15 inches with a similar spread, while yellow corydalis grows a foot tall and wide.

Use corydalis plants in partially shaded beds and borders. It also works well as a ground cover under shade trees. The bright flowers brighten shady areas and the delicate foliage softens the landscape. It does well when planted among rocks and makes an attractive edging for walkways too.

## Corydalis Care

Both blue and yellow corydalis needs full sun or partial shade and moist but well-drained, organically-rich soil in USDA plant hardiness zones 5 through 7. It prefers a neutral or alkaline pH soil as well.

Water often enough to keep the soil moist and feed the plants with a shovelful of compost or a gentle organic fertilizer in spring before the buds begin to open.

These plants don't generally need pruning other than removing spent flowers to prevent unwanted self-sowing and prolongs the bloom season.

Corydalis plants may die back where winters are cold or summers are hot. This is normal and not a cause for concern. The plant regrows when temperatures improve. Planting them in a moist, shady area where summer temperatures are hot may help prevent summer dieback.

You'll have no trouble propagating corydalis by division in fall after the last of the flowers fade. Corydalis is a bit fussy to start from dried seeds, but freshly collected seeds germinate readily. They grow best if kept in the refrigerator for six to eight weeks in a dry, air-tight container. After chilling, sow them at 60 to 65 F. (16-18 C.) on the surface of the soil. They need light to germinate, so don't cover them. You'll have better luck sowing the seeds directly in the garden.

Corydalis self-sows readily. You can transplant the seedlings to a better location when they have several true leaves. They may become weedy if left to re-seed themselves, but coarse mulch around the plants can prevent them from becoming aggressive.

***Just a reminder*** - *You have all received Corydalis tubers to be grown for the Chair's award at our May Show and Sale. Above are growing instructions and a nice article on the plant itself whether you enter them in the show or simply plant them in your rock garden.*



## **Time to Renew Membership**

NARGS Allegheny Chapter membership renewals are due for 2017. Annual dues remain \$10 for individuals and \$15 for family membership. The Chapter depends on dues to help fund the great line-up of workshops, presentations, and field trips. Also, membership provides access to the Chapter's extensive lending library of rock gardening books as well as rare and choice rock garden plants and seeds.

Please make your check payable to NARGS Allegheny Chapter and mail to: Lyn Lang, 4042 Valleyvue Drive, Gibsonia, PA 15044-9501. If there has been any change in your address, phone number, or e-mail, please complete the enclosed membership form and send it with your payment.

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### **2017 MEMBERSHIP**

#### **NARGS Allegheny Chapter**

**Name**

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**Address**

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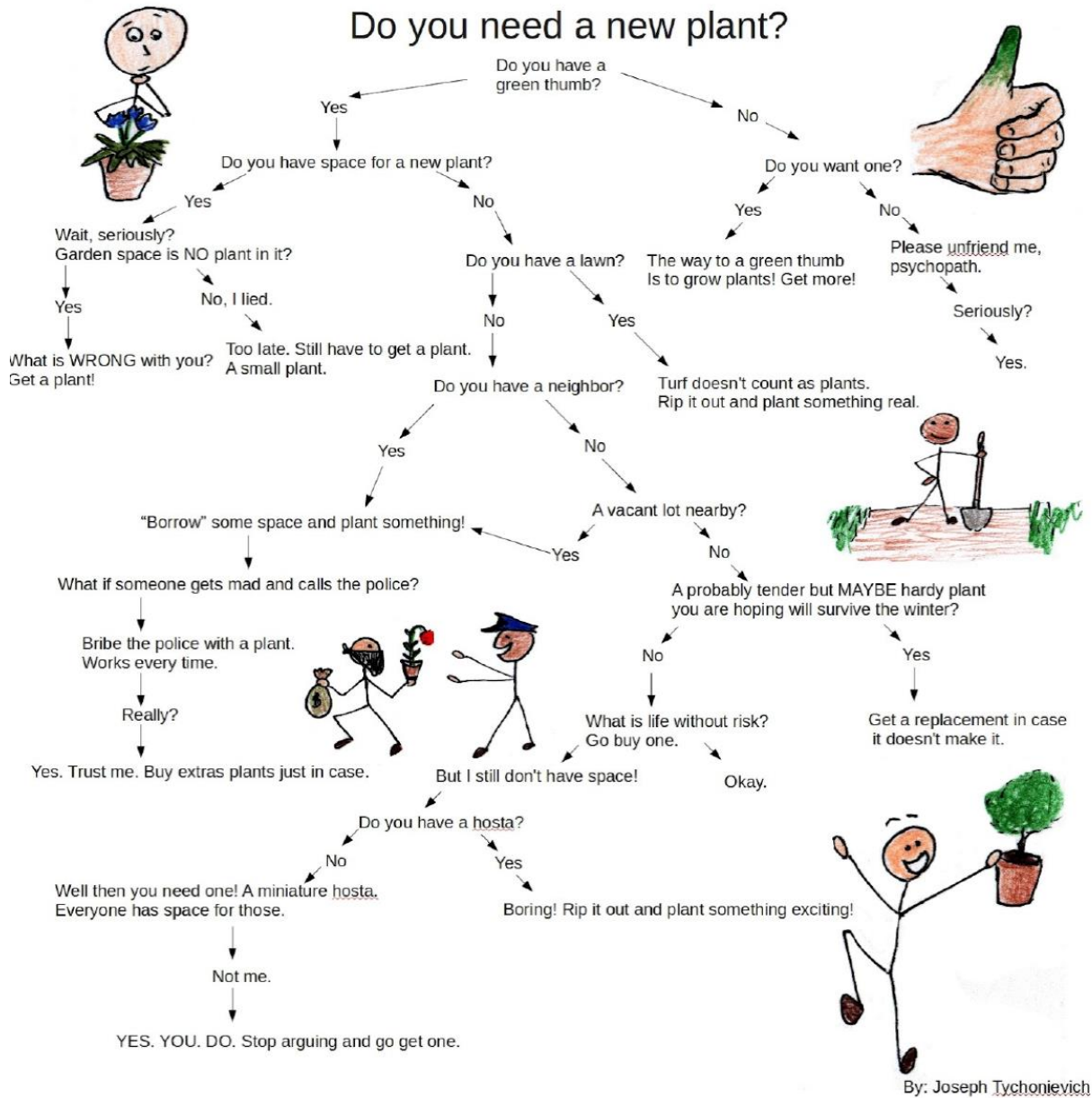
**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual - \$10 Family - \$15**

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

**Mail to: Lyn Lang, 4042 Valleyvue Drive, Gibsonia, PA 15044-9501**



**HEY** If you would like to share an interesting/informative article about gardening, send it to the *Alpine Line*. The deadline for contributions is the **20th of Feb., Apr., Jul., Sep., and Dec.**

Please email your article to Len Lehman <lcleman1@verizon.net> or Al Deurbrouck <adeurbrouck@verizon.net>

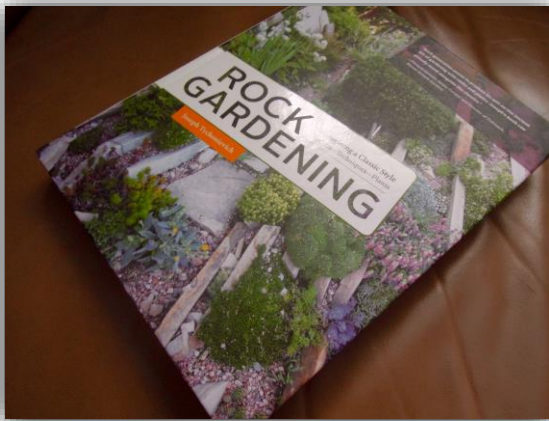
Thank you for your interest and support of *Alpine Line*.

From the Bug Catchers Net (with Al Deurbrouck Holding the Net)

## Book Review: Rock Gardening - Reimagining a Classic Style

Joseph Tychonievich  
Timber Press, 2016

At our November meeting, our speaker, Joe Tychonievich, mentioned that he was in the process of publishing a new book on rock gardening. Well, that book is now available, and what a wonderful addition it is to a sparse landscape of books on our favorite style of working with plants. Joe is a talented writer, and the book flows so nicely from example to techniques to 20 suggested plants for both entry level starters to old veterans such as myself (Len Lehman) and Al can



grow. In the first section, the author describes various forms of rock gardens which he has visited and photographed which permits me to praise the quality of the photographs in the book. The gardens range from small private gardens to large public gardens. I particularly like the first person approach as he has personally visited all of these gardens, and his comments on design are excellent. The next section, techniques, contains valuable suggestions on building, maintaining and care of plants. I particularly like his comments on

such unthought-of topics such as "should you hire a designer", "siting" and "soils" in which he gives great suggestion for alkaline and acid loving plants. Joe's take on climate, including various environmental factors such as hardiness, humidity, and winter and spring wet and snow cover offers sound solutions to dealing with these factors. The section on suggested plants is well balanced between common and easily obtainable species to those that one can obtain only through garden society seed lists. He notes the reason these are good for rock gardens and describes why they are a valuable addition to the area. Finally, a series of appendices listing metric conversions, sources, and societies fills in needed information for those who want to "dig" deeper.

Sadly, the only weakness in the book is that not all pages are numbered and when using the index, it is sometimes difficult to find the info if it is on an unnumbered page.

This is a book that should be on every rock gardener's bookshelf, be they "newbie" or "old salt" since the information will constantly be useable.

~Len Lehman