

# Alpine Line

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

**JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2019**

**OFFICERS**

**CHAIR**  
David Amrhein .....

**VICE CHAIR**  
Sandra Ciccone .....

**SECRETARY**  
Joanne Burzese .....

**TREASURER**  
Patty McGuire .....

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

**AWARDS**  
Al Deurbrouck .....

**BANQUET**  
Sandra Ciccone .....

**FACEBOOK**  
Lyn Lang .....

Bobbi Diller .....

**HOSTS**  
Bonnie & Steve Plato .....

**LIBRARY**  
Patty McGuire .....

**MEMBERSHIP & PROOFREADER**  
Lyn Lang .....

**NEWSLETTER CO-EDITORS**  
Al Deurbrouck .....

Len Lehman .....

**PLANT SHOW & SALE**  
Debra Meyer .....

Lyn Lang .....

**PUBLICITY**  
Peggy Dimperio .....

**SEED EXCHANGE**  
Trish Abrams .....

**WEBMASTER**  
Amanda Haney .....

**MEETING**  
**Sunday, January 20, 2019**



*Shady rock garden at RHS Wisley, UK*

Winter is the time when gardeners find a comfortable chair and browse the seed catalogs—or the NARGS seed list—and make plans for the next year. Looking forward to the Chapter's first rock garden photography contest next spring, this is also a good time to peruse your photographs of rock gardens and plants to see what you have to show.

Our meeting at Northland Library on Sunday, January 20, will be an opportunity to share our favorite rock garden photos and talk about the April 28 photography contest. So pick out 3-5 of your favorite rock garden photographs and send them to Lyn Lang by no later than Monday, January 14. They will be put into a slide show for presentation at the January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. Please include the location where the photograph was taken and the name of any featured plants, if known.

The proposed exhibit categories include individual plant portraits, natural and manmade rock gardens, and rock garden plants in containers.

Enclosed is one of my favorite photos of a manmade rock garden. Please submit photos by email attachment so we can have a colorful and splendid presentation to enjoy on January 20.

The 2018 NARGS Annual Awards Banquet was held on Saturday, October 20 at Bravo in Cranberry Township. Our speaker this year was Janet Novak who is chair of the Delaware Valley Chapter of NARGS. She gave a very interesting presentation on the Plants of Newfoundland which included a beautiful and informative slide show.

Forty-five members and guests enjoyed a very tasty buffet luncheon followed by a traditional "Pittsburgh Cookie Table". Thanks to all members who provided yummy homemade cookies and candy. Bravo provided take-home containers so the buffet and cookie tables were whisked clean. The food was a great success.

The awards which were won at our show in May were presented as well as two special awards: one to Dennis James, the Carl Gehenio Plantsman Award, and one to Len Lehman, the Life Membership Award.

Al Deurbrouck is our awards chair, and I will use his words to describe why these two individuals deserved these awards. Dennis James: "Anyone who has ever visited his wonderful nursery had to come away wondering why he had not received this award sooner. Dennis has displayed extraordinary skill in the growing and display of a wide variety of plants in general, including rock garden plants. I think it is fair to say his garden is to die for." Len Lehman: "This is the highest award presented by our Chapter, and this year it is presented to Len who has devoted his time, knowledge and abilities for the benefit of our Chapter. His talks on rock gardening are a staple for Western Pennsylvania garden clubs and have resulted in many new members for our Chapter." Congratulations to all the recipients!

I would also like to thank everyone who donated items for our door prize giveaway. A special thank you goes out to Deb Meyer for going above and beyond in the making of over a dozen lovely concrete leaves and bowls and to Randy Soergel for donating \$100 worth of Soergel Garden Center gift certificates. All donations are greatly appreciated and go a long way toward making the banquet a memorable occasion. Be thinking about what you might donate next year.

I would like to thank my two co-chairs, Deb Meyer and Lyn Lang. The banquet would not have been as successful or as fun without your generous help, suggestions and hard work.



# A NEGLECTED SEASON - PLANTS THAT GIVE COLOR TO THE WINTER ROCK GARDEN

by Len Lehman

A rock garden in winter is often a neglected garden. First, many times it is snow-covered with only rocks showing--not terribly bad as rocks contrast with snow. Second, people are generally not out and about, and the rock garden is furthest from the forefront of the mind! And then there is a general lack of flowers and colors in winter. But we can change all that with some choice and easy to grow plants that definitely fill that void. All are easy to grow and definitely add that much needed interest in winter.



## 1. *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina'

This commonly available sedum is yellow during the growing season but gold with red highlights in winter. It can be a nuisance as it spreads so fast, but it is easily controlled.

## 2. *Cornus sericea* 'Kelsey's Dwarf' (Red Osier Dogwood)

Red Osier dogwoods are noted for their bright red stems. (Recent breeding now offers yellows, pinks, pastels, purples, and striped forms.) They are noted for their vivid color contrast between snow and red stems. 'Kelsey's Dwarf' dogwood is a true miniature growing 20 to 24 inches tall. Like miniature conifers, it is simply slow growing and, with time, reaches the same height as other forms of dogwoods; however, they can be easily pruned to a desired height.



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## 3. *Helleborus* 'Sunmarble'

*Helleborus niger* is the Christmas rose--so named because they bloom at Christmas time. Roman mythology stated that you could only pick the flowers (hellebores were considered a medicinal plant) when an eagle was flying overhead or you would die! Thankfully this is just a myth. 'Sunmarble' is a hybrid between *H. niger*, *H. lividicus*, and *H. foetidus* with beautiful cream colored flowers with pink highlights. Mine does bloom on or about Christmas time.

## 4. *Galanthus* 'Three Ships'

*Galanthus* are the heart throbs of winter, and a person could do a complete garden of *Galanthus* that would bloom from February through June and then again late September through January. *G. reginae* o'gae 'Three Ships' is one of the winter blooming *Galanthus*. As named, mine comes into bloom around middle December and lasts into early January. A slow grower, it does not clump as fast as other varieties, and it is hard to find in the market place.



## 5. *Cyclamen hederifolium*

Both *Cyclamen hederifolium* and its spring blooming cousin, *C. coum*, make ideal plants for the winter garden not only for the wonderful flowers but also for the wonderful variegated foliage. *C. hederifolium* blooms in late fall while *C. coum* starts blooming in late winter.

## 6. *Calluna* (heathers) and *Erica* (heaths)

Say Scotland/Ireland. Say moors. Say heathers and heaths. With the myriad colors of heathers and heaths ranging from red, orange, yellow, yellow-green and purple, one could do an

entire winter garden in various colors of these plants. And, of course, it has been done. Note, not only does the foliage offer color but the bell shaped flowers in pink, white, and light lavender offer additional winter color. Pictured here is *Calluna* 'Foxfire'.



## 7. *Thymus* (Thyme) particularly variegated forms.

All Thymes give good winter color. *T. 'Doone Valley'* is a great green, white, and yellow lemon thyme. Many varieties form a beautiful ground cover.

## 8. *Ilex vomitoria* 'Nana'

The possum haws or vomit berries are a group of deciduous hollies that have bright red berries in winter. The 'Nana' form is a dwarf growing only 18 inches tall. Plant berries are enjoyed by birds for winter feeding.



# ANNUAL SEED PACKAGING WORKSHOP

Sixteen members of the NARGS Allegheny Chapter gathered at Northland Public Library on Thursday, December 6, to package seeds. NARGS members collect seeds around the world and donate them to the NARGS Seed Exchange each year. We had fun working with seeds from Lavatera to Nolina, including some familiar names such as Lewisia, Lobelia, and Lilium.

After seeds from A to Z are packaged and the list is completed, the main round of seed orders usually opens before the end of the year. Last year's seed list is available online at NARGS.org. Many of the same seeds will be listed this year. NARGS members can use last year's list to choose potential purchases in advance by looking up images, researching hardiness and cultural requirements. Many helpful resources on growing plants from seed are listed on the NARGS.org site



## NATIONAL AVIARY GARDEN REPORT

by Alan Peacock

It's that time of the year when many things are coming to an end including the year itself; soon it will be 2019. December 20<sup>th</sup> is the last day of fall when all the brightly colored leaves will be replaced by shriveled remnants and bare branches. Then there's the end of mowing the lawn (there are some benefits).

And the Aviary garden is no exception. Our bi-weekly maintenance visits have ended for the year. Most of the flowering plants have come to an end and succumbed to the colder temperatures and the onset of snow by becoming dormant for the winter.

Fortunately, memories do not come to an end and here are some photographs taken just a few weeks ago to remind us that soon there will be a new beginning, the Aviary garden will become resurgent and our intrepid maintenance team will be at it again, after indulging on the prerequisite sustaining breakfast of eggs, bacon and pancakes – which illustrates that some things never come to an end.



## Message from the Chair *David Amrhein*

Hello everyone,

Welcome to the frozen tundra everyone. The average temperature for this time of year is 42 degrees F. As a natural born procrastinator I thought I still had some time to plant bulbs and finish painting my porch...wrong. I did however get to participate in Trish's seed packing project on December 6 and enjoyed some quality time with members and world seed dispersal. The idea that some of these seeds might end up in the steppes of Russia makes one marvel at our NARGS community and the good that it does. I'm certain that if you attended meetings this year you came away inspired by at least one of our programs or our rock garden at the Aviary to try growing out something new for your garden. We are hoping you may have photographed some of your acquisitions you are particularly pleased with and send them to Lyn so we may include them along with a brief description of their assets.

Last January I thought the program led by Lenny was excellent but relied on his hard work at locating examples of our favorite plants, whereas this year we would like you to submit the pictures if you have them and a brief description of why you enjoy growing the plants in your garden. I just had a chance to review some of the programs Sandy is lining up for 2019 and as usual am impressed with the variety of topics we will be exploring. Just in the last 6 weeks we had Janet Novak talk about plants in Newfoundland, many of which we can grow here; Sue and Kerry from Far Reaches Farm Nursery discussing exploration of plants around the world and conserving at-risk species, and Bob Mulvihill's mini-class on helping the songbirds in our region to thrive. On top of that we have a truly class newsletter with well written articles and of course our mystery plant identification and book review. I think if we entered our newsletter in competition we would get the blue ribbon. We can all look forward to hopefully at least as good a 2019 as the 2018 we are wrapping up. I hope you all have a chance to spend time with family and friends enjoying this magical time of year when you may awaken, look out the window at the glistening snow, and wonder that we can start over with a clean slate.

*Dave*



## A Few Tips on the Growing of Hostas

Because of the popularity of hostas within our Chapter, especially the smalls, the following pieces of advice are from Bob Solberg's recent talk to the Hosta Society.

1. Keep plants root-bound in troughs. Small hostas, small troughs; larger hostas, larger troughs.
2. Fertilize once in the spring, then twice again, one time each in the next month to six weeks.
3. Use a high nitrogen fertilizer. Also, be sure to include magnesium when you fertilize. A good source of magnesium is Epsom salts.
4. Give them protection and keep them dry in winter. Your good old cold frame should be a perfect winter home.

# Mystery Plant for January/February

Our mystery plant this month is an unusual, poorly understood and little grown plant. A monotypic genus (meaning only 1 species), it is a cousin to African violets in the family Gesneriaceae and a relative to Sinningia. (It looks like one!) Growing on only a few peaks in the Balkans and northern Greece, it is endemic to those peaks. The plant sends up dark green violet-like leaves to form a cluster from which flower stalks of 2-3 flowers arise. It likes dark shade with moist, well-drained slightly acidic soil. The Alpine Garden Society of England suggests growing it on vertical slopes. A truly unique little plant, it deserves wider recognition and growth.

**Email answers to Len Lehman.**



## PROPOSED RULES FOR PHOTOGRAPHY DIVISION

The Alleghany Chapter, NARGS, celebrates Rock Gardens with A Photography Division. Photographers are encouraged to take photos of rock garden plants and rock gardens with attention given to accepted principles of 2-dimensional design!

### RULES

1. Photographs may be entered in the following categories:
  - a. A single flower of a rock garden plant
  - b. A photo of an entire rock garden plant in a natural setting
  - c. Any natural rock garden
  - d. Any manmade rock garden
  - e. Rock garden plants in containers
2. All entries must be taken by exhibitor. An exhibitor may enter up to 5 photos in each category up to 10 photos total.
3. Photos should have single mat or be mounted on natural light-weight stiff card stock or foam board. Photo size may be 5 x 7 inches up to 14 x 17 inches. DO NOT USE GLASS OR FRAMEWORK!
4. Photographer should label the following information on back of photo:
  - a. Name of plant and/or area where growing
  - b. Photographer's name and address
5. An entry tag must be attached to the photo in such a way as to not obscure photo. Tags will be available at show. Exhibits must be entered by (?).
6. Winners will receive appropriate ribbons based on judge's decision.

**Address any comments to Len Lehman.**

## There Are Two Exciting Meetings in May - Both within Driving Distance!

### FIRST:

The Delaware Valley Chapter is pleased to host the 2019 Spring Study Weekend, May 3-5. The conference features an excellent line-up of speakers, tours, open gardens, sales, and more. There is also a separate [pre-conference tour](#), May 2-3. Our meeting location is Frazer, Pennsylvania, about 25 miles west of Philadelphia.

#### Program Synopsis

Our official events begin on Friday with plant show, plant sale, book sale, dinner, and lectures. On Saturday there is breakfast and a bus trip to gardens. Later in the day we have the plant show, plant sale, happy hour, dinner, and lectures. Then on Sunday we have breakfast buffet, then the final lectures. There will also be gardens open on Friday and on Sunday afternoon.

#### Study Weekend Chairs

Chuck Ulmann: [email](#) or (610) 329-7884. If no answer, leave a message including your name and phone number.

Jerry Rifkin: [email](#)

#### Registration

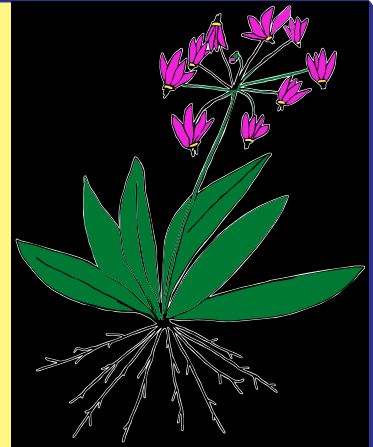
Liane Schleifer: [email](#) or 770-939-9468

#### Pre-conference Tour

Janet Novak: [email](#) or 215-248-2642

The conference registration fee is \$425 and includes all programs and meals from Friday night, May 3, to Sunday morning, May 5. The included activities are talks, plant show, and our bus tour of gardens. The included meals are Friday night appetizers and buffet, Saturday morning breakfast buffet, box lunch, Saturday night appetizers and banquet, and Sunday morning breakfast buffet. Cash bars are available both nights.

**Registration website:** <http://www.dvcnargs.org/studyweekend.html>



**Rooted in Diversity**

### SECOND:

The Great Lakes Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is announcing a regional spring gala! Save the date of May 18, 2019. It's our turn to show how Michigan gardens are preferred by four out of five dentists. We have a wonderful evening planned on Saturday with dinner and Vojtech Holubek speaking about rock garden plants we can grow in our Utopian mid-west paradise. On Saturday we will have our gardens open (at least 7) for your perusal and our chapter spring plant sale will be available for all. More details to follow. Also Esther Benedict will bring from Indiana "rock plants to sell" and Andy Duvall will have his nursery-garden open. Be prepared to have your life changed; well, maybe just be prepared to have a change of underwear so you can spend the evening with your rock garden comrades at the famous Weber's Inn in Ann Arbor, MI. We have some rooms set aside at \$99 a night at Weber's, so come over to the Great Lakes State and enjoy some time with like minded plant nerds. See ya' then (there is no registration fee)!!!

Don LaFond  
734-426-5452  
Weber's Inn 734-769-2500





## **October 20, 2018 Minutes** Joanne Burzese, Secretary

The Allegheny Chapter of NARGS annual awards banquet was held at Bravo's in Cranberry on Oct. 20. Dave Amrhein welcomed speaker Janet Novak and presented her with a watercolor done by Alan Peacock. Dave thanked Sandy Ciccone for her work planning the banquet. Sandy Ciccone thanked her committee and all those who brought cookies and donations for door prizes. She also thanked Debra Meyer for making the cement leaves used as table decorations and for door prizes. She also acknowledged Randy Soergel's donation of \$100 in gift certificates for door prizes and thanked Dennis James for his donation of gift certificates also for door prizes.

Following the delicious buffet, Janet Novak gave a presentation on the botany of Newfoundland. She also gave some information on the National NARGS study weekend to be held May 3-5 in Frazer, PA. She advised those interested in pre-workshop field trips and hotel reservations to book early at [dvcnargs.org](http://dvcnargs.org).

Al Deurbrouck presented plaques to the 2018 award winners: Best Plant in Show/Clare Williamson Award - Cathy Kaut for *Primula Vulgaris*; Best Trough in Show/Audrey Rauch Award - Debra Meyer; Chair's Choice Award for fern - Joanne Burzese; Daffodil and Hosta Society of WPA for Iris 'Little Showoff' - Jim Adams; Best Dwarf Tree, Shrub or Conifer/Connie McKeever Award for *Ilex crenata* 'Jersey Jewel' - Sandy Ciccone; Carl Gehenio Plantsman Award to Dennis James and the Life Membership Award to Len Lehman.

The event concluded with the awarding of door prizes. The next meeting will be Nov. 18 at 2pm at Northland Library. Bob Mulvihill will be speaking on 'Bird Gardening'.

## **November 18, 2018 Minutes** Joanne Burzese, Secretary

The November meeting of the Allegheny Chapter of NARGS was held at Northland Library on Nov. 18 at 2 pm. Bob Mulvihill from the National Aviary spoke about making backyards better places for birds. He discussed the best trees, plants, and shrubs to grow to support bird and butterfly populations.

After refreshments, Dave Amrhein conducted the business portion of the meeting. Patty McGuire gave the Treasurer's report. She also reported that the renewal for the state sales tax exemption was due at the end of December. Amanda Haney made a motion to apply for renewal of the state sales tax exemption. Bobbi Diller seconded the motion and it was approved. Joanne Burzese read the minutes from the October meeting. Amanda Haney spoke about the benefits of belonging to the national NARG Society and urged members to consider joining.

Len Lehman distributed proposed rules for the new photography division at the annual NARGS show. Sandy Ciccone reported that she is trying to get John Powell as the speaker for the February meeting to help prepare members for participating in the photography display for the show.

Lyn Lang suggested having members e-mail her their photos of their favorite rock garden plants. She would then prepare a slide show so members could discuss them at the January meeting. There was a discussion about whether to conduct a January meeting and if this would be the topic for it. Dave Amrhein said the executive committee would further discuss this and let members know the decision.

Trish Abrams reported the seed packing would be held Thursday Dec. 6th from 9:00 to 3:00 at the Northland Library. She asked members to sign-up and to bring a snack. Pizza will be provided for lunch. Lyn Lang will send an announcement to remind members of date and time.

After the raffle, the meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm. Thirty-one members and one guest were in attendance.



## 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 alpiners 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 [www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly](http://www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly).

## 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.**

## 2019 MEETING NOTICES / ALLEGHENY NARGS

Date/Time/Refreshment Group	Location	Speaker	Activity
JAN 20 / 2:00 PM / F-O	Northland Public Library	Lyn Lang	Presentation of Rock Garden Photos by Members
FEB 17 / 2:00 PM / P-Z	Northland Public Library	TBA	TBA
MAR 17 / 2:00 PM / A-E	Northland Public Library	Chris Law, Iseli Nursery	Dwarf Conifers
APR 14 / 2:00 PM / P-Z	National Aviary	Sandy Feather	How Judges Judge
APR 28 / 9:00 AM	Soergel's Garden Center	Show & Sale	Show & Sale
MAY 3-5	Frazer, PA	Delaware Valley Chapter	NARGS Study Weekend
JUNE 9 / 9:30 AM	DJ's Greenhouse	Don LaFond, Great Lakes Chapter	Beginning Rock Gardening
JULY	No Meeting	No Meeting	No Meeting
AUG 18 / 2:00 PM	Pine Twp Community Park	Picnic	Raffle, Trough Show, Plant Sale, Auction
SEP 15 / 2:00 PM / P-Z	Northland Public Library	Len Lehman	Minor & Species Irises
OCT 20 / 1:00 PM	TBA	TBA	Awards Banquet
NOV 17 / 2:00 PM / A-E	Northland Public Library	Pam Varga, Master Gardener	Butterfly Gardens
DEC	No Meeting	No Meeting	No Meeting
DEC 5 / 9:00 AM	Northland Public Library	Trish Abrams	Seed Packaging



Our newsletter, The Alpine Line, is a wonderful vehicle to keep our members aware of all the activities of our club as well as a way to provide great information through relevant articles. Len Lehman and Al Deurbrouck have been the editors for the last two years. They have done a commendable job, and we thank them for providing us with a quality, informative newsletter. Al and Len have decided to step down as editors and provide an opportunity for another member or two to step up and serve the club and its members as editor. The Alpine Line is a vital part of our club, and we need an editor. We are asking each member, new and old, to consider taking on this responsibility. The club only thrives on the energy of its members to keep it going strong.

Please don't expect or wait for someone else to step up. If you are interested, please contact either Dave Amrhein or Sandy Ciccone.

## **Allegheny NARGS Membership Renewals for 2019**

Happy New Year! If you haven't already paid dues for 2019, this is your reminder. Annual dues are \$10 for individuals and \$15 for family membership. The Chapter depends on dues to help fund the great line-up of workshops and speakers.

Please make our check payable to NARGS Allegheny Chapter and mail to the membership chair:

Lyn Lang  
4042 Valleyvue Drive  
Gibsonia, PA 15044-9501.

If there has been changes in your address, phone number, or e-mail, please complete the enclosed membership form and send it with your payment.

Dues may also be paid by check or cash at chapter meetings in January - March.

### **2019 NARGS Allegheny Chapter MEMBERSHIP**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_

Individual - \$10 / Family - \$15

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

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