

Alpine Line

NEWSLETTER of the ALLEGHENY CHAPTER of the NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Jan.-Mar. 2021

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Greetings Rock Gardeners –

Happy New Year to All! The Allegheny Chapter's program year will begin on **Sunday, January 17th at 2 p.m. with a presentation via Zoom by Dianne Machesney, amateur naturalist and photographer. Dianne will present "Dreaming of Wildflowers in January".**



While we are waiting for our seed catalogs to dispel the gloom of winter, let's take a virtual tour of the wildflowers we can see while hiking the trails of W. PA. Some are rare, some are common, but all are beautiful.

*Photo attached: Marsh Marigold
Caltha palustris*

Native spring wildflower of wet places. Buttercup Family

Dianne works as a self-employed tax accountant but has also been a long-time amateur naturalist and photographer. She graduated from the Penn State Master Gardener program in 2011 and is active in the Longvue Acres Garden Club, Wissahickon Nature Club and Botanical Society of W. PA. She was an adult leader in the Boy Scouts of America for 26 years and is in charge of the gardens at her church, St. Teresa of Avila in Ross Township.

*You missed a good one if you didn't join in on Zoom!
Hope you will join us next time!!*

The Zoom link will be sent by email the week before the meeting. Save the following dates for future presentations.

Join us again on Zoom —February 21st at 2 p.m. for the presentation of “Small Gardens with a Big Mission: Rethinking the Purpose of Botanical Collections” by John Berryhill.



The Botanic Garden of Smith College is home to the oldest public rock garden in North America. The gardens were founded 125 years ago to provide robust and diverse teaching collections as well as a beautiful and inspiring living space for our students.

Today, as the global botanic garden community responds to the call to fight biodiversity loss, we are rethinking our work and what collections must look like in the coming century.

John Berryhill is the Landscape Curator for the Botanic Garden of Smith College where he has worked for just over 23 years. In that time he has served several roles, including wildflower gardener and arborist. He served as the Chief Arborist there for 15 years and has transformed the care of Smith’s arboretum from an external, contracted operation to an internal one with a team of three certified arborists.

John is tasked with ensuring that the building and management of the outdoor collections at Smith is rooted in and reflective of the Botanic Garden’s Collections Policy, Strategic Plan and Mission Statement. As curator, his current work is oriented towards building a strong conservation component to the collections and operations at Smith and building partnerships that will amplify the value of that work. John also manages the outdoor horticulture staff and is a primary partner for student interns, workers, and learners in Smith’s garden spaces.

March 21st, at 2 p.m. a program (to be announced)

April 18, at 2 p.m. we will be at the National Aviary (tentative)

2021 DUES

Traditionally, many of us have paid dues in person at the January and February meetings. This year members are asked to submit dues and any changes to email, mailing address or phone number by regular mail to: Lyn Lang, 4042 Valleyvue Drive, Gibsonia, PA 15044. Make checks payable to NARGS Allegheny Chapter. Annual dues remain \$10 for individual and \$15 family.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR ==

It's still winter as evidenced by the four inches of snow blanketing my garden and yard, protecting it from the cold and wind. The expression, blanket of snow, is so appropriate as it provides the warmth to help plants survive throughout the winter, and I am grateful for it. It also helps to make the landscape not so bleak. However, with the arrival of seed catalogs my thoughts jump to spring with anticipation. We are many weeks away though, and we still need ways to make it through to the warm breezes.

Nancy Knauss set up two very good Zoom presentations for our November and January meetings. Todd Boland talked about the beautiful alpine plants along the Beartooth Highway and Dianne Machesney talked about wildflowers of Pennsylvania. Both provided us with such visual beauty through their slides and interesting information. The number of members tuning in has been very disappointing. I realize Zoom meetings are not ideal for some people, but they remain as the only means for us to stay together as a club until in-person meetings can start up again. It's very difficult to discuss club business when there are so few members present. I urge all of you to please give the Zoom meetings a chance.

February's program presenter will be John Berryhill, the landscape curator for the Botanical Garden of Smith College. His presentation will center around the oldest public rock garden in North America. Please consider joining the meeting for what promises to be a very informative and visual treat.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our February meeting. Until then stay safe, hug your family, and page through all the wonderful seed catalogs.

Sandy



Maintaining a beautiful garden is a lot of hard work, but you can labor more efficiently — and put less strain on the pursestrings — with these brilliant gardening tips.



Reader's Digest — June 2, 2020

START YOUR GARDEN WITH GOOD SOIL

☀ Work in compost, manure or dried peat moss for nutrient-rich planting beds. Amended soil is lighter, drains well, makes for easy weeding and allows roots to establish themselves more quickly.

SHRINK THE SIZE OF YOUR LAWN

☀ One of the best gardening tips that landscapers can offer is to shrink the size of your lawn. You'll be amazed at how much time you'll save on lawn chores simply by reducing the grass-covered areas in your yard. Combine trees, shrubs, boulders and decorative mulches to fashion eye-catching, maintenance-free island beds in your front and back yards.

KEEP GARDEN TOOLS HANDY

☀ Stash a spare set of hand tools and garden twine in a waterproof container in your garden. That way, when you spot weeds, broken rose canes or a stem that needs tying up, you won't have to run to the garage or potting shed for supplies.

PLAY IN THE RAIN

☀ There's no better time to visit a garden center than during a cloudburst. Nurseries are less crowded, lines are shorter and staff members are more available to answer your questions. Once the rain eases, go out and pull weeds—even clumps of crabgrass and deep-rooted dandelions pull easily out of wet soil.

GROW A CONTAINER GARDEN

☀ When you can't get anything to grow beneath trees or along fences, set up a multitiered container garden in the shady location. Plant shade-loving perennials and compact shrubs in appropriately sized containers; set the container on stands in varying heights. Or use simple green pots that blend into the background, and won't compete with the flowering show.

SEE WHAT WORKS IN YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GARDEN

☀ When walking or driving, take note of interesting plants and plant combinations. Write them down and take the list with you to the nursery—having an itemized list will speed up your shopping trips and reduce the urge to impulse-buy.

FERTILIZE SMARTER—NOT HARDER

☀ Nourish gardens and containers with time-release fertilizers that continue feeding for long periods of time. That way, you won't have to fertilize as frequently.

PRUNE EVERGREENS LATER IN THE SEASON

☀️ Wait to prune evergreens such as yews and boxwood until they've produced most of their new growth. As a result, you won't have to prune them again until next year.

ADD FRESH MULCH TO YOUR GARDEN

☀️ Add fresh mulch to your gardens every year. A 2-to 3-inch layer of mulch keeps weeds from sprouting and helps the soil retain water, so you'll be weeding and watering less often.

CONSIDER COLORFUL GARDEN TOOLS

☀️ Don't waste a second searching for misplaced garden tools. Buy trowels, cultivators, forks and pruners with bright red or orange handles so you can quickly spot them amid the greenery.

MAINTAIN YOUR GARDENING TOOLS

☀️ Make sure your tools are clean and sharp—they'll last longer and work better in the garden. Use ergonomically designed tools, kneepads, or kneeling mats to lessen stress on your joints—pain-free bodies also work more efficiently in the garden.

TAKE INVENTORY OF YOUR GARDEN

☀️ Make a running list of newly-added plants and their locations—this will help you remember what you planted where, which will prevent the inadvertent weeding (and replacing) of a “good plant.” Save perennial plant tags and store them near your favorite how-to gardening book to keep all your gardening tips and planting information in one spot.

INVEST IN NATIVE PLANTS

☀️ Buy improved varieties of plants and grasses that are native to your region. They'll thrive with very little care and are likely to be the best-looking plants in your garden.

DIG ONCE, PLANT MANY

☀️ When you've got a bag of tulip or lily bulbs to plant, or when using annuals to edge a border, dig a large, single planting hole instead of many smaller holes. Make sure it's large enough for all the bulbs or plants to prevent overcrowding.

BE PREPARED

☀️ At the beginning of the season, stock up on gardening supplies like garden twine, twist ties, garden gloves, plant supports, plant markers and bags of compost to eliminate garden center runs and the long lines on busy gardening days.

LET PLANTS DO THEIR THING

☀️ Choose plant varieties that readily self-seed, such as corydalis, larkspur and purple coneflower, or that quickly naturalize, such as daffodils and day lilies to fill your borders inexpensively.



NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



How to build, plant, display, and celebrate gardening in crevices An On-line Zoom Meeting Saturday, February 6, 2021 11:00 EST

The North American Rock Garden Society will present a day devoted to the study of crevice gardens at 11:00 am EST, 8:00 am PST, on Saturday, February 6, 2021. This study day will consist of six 45-minute sessions with a two-hour intermission.

Tickets and a schedule are available at nargs.org.

Cost is \$25 for NARGS members and \$50 for non-members, which includes a NARGS membership for a year. This study day will be recorded so ticket holders can watch it whenever they like.

Generally (and very briefly) crevice gardens are made from slabs of rock arranged diagonally or vertically allowing plants just space enough to send roots down between the rocks.

Six eminently knowledgeable gardeners, designers, and authors, from Vancouver to Nova Scotia and North Carolina to Utah, will present aspects of crevice gardening ranging from a historical perspective to cultural practices, planting, and materials.

Paul Spriggs (British Columbia) leads off with a "Brief History of Crevice Gardening" in the broad context of international rock gardening;

Kenton Seth (Colorado) will speak on "Crevice Garden Construction," guidance aimed at the general public;

Jeremy Schmidt (North Carolina) will shift the focus to the Southeast and talk about boulder construction in "From Big Rocks to Little Rocks";

Susan Sims (Utah) introduces a new world of plants to the dry land gardener and a new array of challenges in the "Dryland Crevice Garden/My Crevice Garden";

Jay Akerley of British Columbia speaks about his experiences building budget-conscious crevice gardens in "Crevice Gardens for Small Spaces"; and

Roslyn Duffus (Nova Scotia) in "From the Mighty to the Modest" takes us from the Bicentennial Botanic Garden at Truro, Nova Scotia, to a small crevice built from recycled concrete.

For more information, check the nargs.org website

30 BEST GARDENING TIPS OF ALL TIME

- 1 - GIVE YOUR GARDEN ONE LONG WEEKLY SOAK (ABOUT AN INCH OF WATER) - Short, frequent waterings won't penetrate to the roots.
- 2 - AND AVOID WATERING DURING THE HOTTEST PART OF THE DAY - Unless you want to burn your plants. (Shoot for morning or dusk instead.)
- 3 - IF TRANSPLANTING PLANTS, DO SO AFTER A RAINFALL - Damp soil will keep the roots from cracking.
- 4 - "INSULATE" YOUR HOME WITH SHRUBS AND BUSHES - Planting strategically along your facade can create a natural wind barrier...and save you money on heating costs.
- 5 - BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVERMOW YOUR GRASS - Never cut shorter than two inches: It'll weaken the grass and make your lawn susceptible to weeds.
- 6 - ASSESS HOW MUCH SUNLIGHT YOUR BLOOMS WILL GET BEFORE YOU PLANT THEM - Most plants need six hours of sun to thrive.
- 7 - PRUNE SPRING TREES (LIKE LILAC AND MAGNOLIA) RIGHT AFTER THEY FINISH BLOOMING - If you wait too long, you'll dissuade next year's buds.
- 8 - KEEP HERBS SEPARATE FROM OTHER PLANTINGS - Mint, in particular, is highly invasive.
- 9 - STRIP LOWER LEAVES ON VEGETABLE PLANTS REGULARLY - This will prevent fungal diseases from encroaching.
- 10 - STAKE YOUR TALL PERENNIALS (LIKE PEONIES AND HOLLYHOCKS) EARLY - It's pretty hard to do so once they've taken off.
- 11 - AND A REMINDER ON PERENNIALS: THEY NEED THREE YEARS TO MATURE - Practice patience and you'll reap the rewards.
- 12 - DEADHEAD YOUR FLOWERING PLANTS VIGILANTLY - Remove wilted blooms to tell your plant to make more of them.
- 13 - IMPROVE YOUR SOIL BY WORKING IN A FEW INCHES OF COMPOST - Manure and peat moss work great, too.
- 14 - TACKLE SPRING PLANTINGS ON CLOUDY DAYS - New plants take best to cool soil.
- 15 - USE BROTH FROM COOKING VEGGIES TO WATER YOUR PLANTS - "Veggie soup" is the *best* plant food.
- 16 - BROKEN TERRA-COTTA POTS? PLACE THEIR SHARDS AROUND PLANTS - This will keep critters from tearing up your geraniums.
- 17 - AND EDGE YOUR FLOWERBEDS WITH ROCKS - To help discourage grasses and weeds from taking over.
- 18 - LINE CONTAINER GARDENS WITH A THIN LAYER OF GRAVEL - Proper drainage is key here.
- 19 - PLANT BLOOMING HERBS TO ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES - Like lavender and bee balm.
- 20 - BUT MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERGREENS LIKE BOXWOOD AND HEATH, TOO - You want your garden to look good in every season.
- 21 - HOLES FOR BULBS SHOULD BE TWO TO THREE TIMES AS DEEP AS THE BULB ITSELF - They need room to grow, after all.
- 22 - WEAR GARDENING GLOVES - Those rose bushes are no match for your protected paws.
- 23 - RUN YOUR FINGERNAILS ACROSS A BAR OF SOAP - Gardener hack: This will seal off dirt from accumulating under your nails.
- 24 - DON'T JUMP THE GUN AND PLANT TOO EARLY IN THE SEASON - Check you local last "frost dates".

- 25 - ADD A TINY BIT OF FERTILIZER TO WATER FOR NEW PLANTS - It's like giving a toddler milk for strong bones.
- 26 - PLANT MARIGOLDS ALONG YOUR BORDERS TO KEEP UNWANTED BUGS AND DEER AWAY - Gnats, mosquitos, and deer hate them.
- 27 - LOAD UP ON PERENNIALS LIKE IRISES AND HYACINTHS - They're splurgier than annuals, but they'll save you work and money in the long run (since they regrow from the same root system every year).
- 28 - USE WEED PREVENTING PRODUCTS LIKE "PREEN" - When it comes to weeding, extra reinforcements are often necessary.
- 29 - OR USE MULCH TO SMOTHER WEEDS ENTIRELY - Works like a charm!
- 30 - AND THEN USE IT AS A PRETTY FILLER FOR BARREN SPOTS - Like underneath your sycamore, where you can't seem to grow anything. Three cheers for pretty, easy fixes.

GRACE BEULEY HUNT

Online Talks Hosted by Piedmont Chapter of NARGS

After reading in the NARGS Piedmont Chapter's "Trillium" newsletter about their monthly talks co-hosted with the JC Raulston Arboretum, I checked out the Arboretum's website and found a wealth of rock gardening and other horticultural lectures available online. I attended a live presentation by Joseph Tychonievich and viewed a recording about wildflowers along the Appalachian Trail, and now I want to share my enthusiasm for this educational resource.

At present, the NARGS presentations are scheduled one Saturday each month via Zoom. You can view the event calendar at <https://jcra.ncsu.edu/events/calendar/>. Previously recorded presentations are listed on the Arboretum's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/jcraulstonarb>.

Members of the NARGS Piedmont Chapter and Friends of the JC Raulston Arboretum members attend for free. Otherwise, you may need to subscribe to the YouTube channel or pay a small fee to attend a live presentation.

On February 13, 2021 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM, Brandon Huber, Graduate Student, NC State University, and Jason Lattier, Director, Caine Conservatory, High Point University, will present "The Aroid Collection of Alan Galloway". Perhaps you read their story in the Jan/Feb 2021 issue of the "Trillium" titled, "The Intersection of an *Amorphophallus* and a Titan's Legacy".

We can take advantage of these new online programs and lectures and increase our knowledge while we wait for our seeds and a new gardening season to arrive.

Lyn Lang



NARGS or nargilé? Which way North America?

by Panayoti Kelaidis

Those of us trying to publicize the North American Rock Garden Society experienced a bit of a shock a few months ago when we discovered that the tag #NARGS was already being used on Twitter and elsewhere for smoking on the hookah. I knew the word “nargilé”—since that word is used in Greek (*vapylé*) for the hookah (I had a notorious uncle, born in Ottoman Crete, who smoked a water pipe)—but I had no idea it had been contracted to “nargs” thereby obfuscating our marketing efforts. We persisted with “NARGSrocks” and hopefully will eventually smash the water-pipers...so to speak.

But this coincidence has nudged me into some philosophical speculation: are there REALLY that *many* hookah enthusiasts in America who are so enamored of their water pipes that they hashtag Twitter, Instagram, and their like with OUR Society initials? Would that many North Americans even really “get” what a “nargs” was? Most people must know “Hookah,” but “nargilé?” or its contraction “nargs”? This has presented a bit of a challenge for me.

I quit smoking cigarettes forty years ago—and I still recall a time when the smell of smoke actually sort of appealed to me, and I relished the seemingly pleasurable sensation of the smoke corroding my lungs. It took a long time to really get over the sweetness of the memory, but somewhere along the line I developed the response many of us have of surprise and slight repugnance at seeing a cigarette in someone’s hand—or worse—between their lips. I have to restrain myself when I watch people I like start to smoke: I really would like to grab the thing and stamp it out like Smokey the Bear...but I’m sufficiently wise to know that doesn’t work.

There are hobbies, there are pastimes, there are mildly irritating habits like smoking cigarettes (or hookahs) and....and then there is rock gardening.

I like to think that our “hobby” is different. Special. And here is a sort of summation of my philosophy: at it’s very best—at a great estate or a hoary botanic garden (or especially in the small gardens of talented home owners) --a rock garden is a breathtaking work of art equal in my eyes to any painting or statue. I should repeat that last sentence again. To create a naturalistic slope, berm or corner that resembles a magical picture of an alpine scene or woodland dell is really a magical thing! But even those of us whose gardens are not quite there yet—“works in progress,” rock gardens are not “just” attempts at fine art, they are veritable scientific laboratories where we grapple with the mysteries of plant physiology and struggle to understand the ecology of plant interaction. We grow and come to know dozens, hundreds perhaps even thousands of plants from around the world and often go on sorties to see and appreciate them in nature. That’s something that I believe is noble and worthy.

In the Anthropocene, where humans are still destroying thousands of acres of wild habitat daily, I believe our “hobby” represents a sort of waking up and almost a bold act of protest! I, for one, see my rock gardens as an attempt to redeem, understand and ultimately preserve that which we are inadvertently still so rapidly eroding. I don’t think of rock gardening as “just a pastime.” For me it’s an act of inquiry into the natural world and a profound effort to bring Civilization and Nature into harmony. What other endeavor encompasses the world of Art and that of Science so elegantly? With the threat of climate change, I fear our gardens may become little arks of genetic resources to boot—something I hope we can avert.

Speaking for myself, my rock garden has been a solace and source of strength in this trying time of COVID. I pity those who don’t have a garden.

That said, it’s fun, good exercise, gets one out into the fresh air and best of all if you are active in a chapter or join N.A.R.G.S., you become part of an amazing community of diverse, engaging and, yes, sometimes eccentric

gardeners! I have been an active participant in N.A.R.G.S. for fifty years (yes, even when I smoked!). I have come to know and become dear friends with hundreds of rock gardeners in practically every state and province of North America (and far beyond): I have stayed in many of your homes and many of you have visited mine. Indirectly, because of N.A.R.G.S. I even pursued rock gardening as a profession—and have worked in a public garden forty years (yes, I quit smoking when I started at Denver Botanic Gardens). I can't imagine life without #NARGS (and I don't mean a hookah!).

I dream of a day when “nargs” will come to mean N.A.R.G.S. and not hookah. So please use #NARGStocks in social media till then! Better yet, be sure to join (<https://www.nargs.org/faq/how-do-i-join-nargs>) Unlike Herbert Hoover, we won't promise a “chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage”: rock gardening isn't necessarily for everyone. But everyone really ought to at least have a trough or two, don't you think?

[*Panayoti Kelaidis is the vice-president of the North American Rock Garden Society and co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Chapter. He is Senior Curator and Director of Outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens.*]

This is the first of a series that Panayoti Kelaidis will be writing.



????????? QUESTION FROM THE EDITOR ????????

For the past three years my “Rose of Sharon” bushes have developed buds, but only a few become flowers.

Then, in the fall the buds remain on the bushes until I cut them off in the spring.

Does anyone have any suggestions???????

