



ALPINE LINE

Allegheny Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society

August—September 2015

Message from the Chair, Len Lehman



I have always dreaded the 4th of July when I was teaching because it always seemed as if summer sped by after that and it was soon time to go to face the terrible teens in the classroom. And for that reason, I always tried to cram as much fun into the remaining days as possible mostly by daily grooming the garden. Day-lilies would be at their peak bloom season, and nothing looked so horrible to me as an un-groomed daylily garden.

Now coming into prime blooms are several of my favorite lilies, including the following:

Viettes Black Knight - big, blackish purple



Blackberry lily (*Belamcanda paradoxa*) - vibrant orange yellow with white petal stripe

Greywoods Lips A Quiver - cream with dark red eye and red edge



My true bulbous lilies are making a show. *Silk Road* is over six feet with its massive white and red fragrant flowers! (Note to self - get more!)

The dog days of late July and August generally bring more heat, so I try to garden in the early morn and then of course enjoy a much-needed nap in afternoon. Also, it's time to look over catalogs for new daffodils and bulbs!

Annuals are beginning to come into their own giving brightness to the border gardens. I am trying a new marigold this year called Mango Crush - a large orange one, and it is performing nicely. I have to check the alpines, as so many sulk in the summer months. I need to get them into cooler shaded places for awhile!

A surprising trivia fact is that dogs days do not refer to the general idea of dogs taking it easy but to the fact that the Dog Star, Sirius, rises in the sky to become a summer-fall noteworthy light in the night!

Remember to save Sunday, August 16, for our annual picnic, plant swap, seedling sale, and auction at Pine Township Community Park. This is always a fun event and makes for good times, good eats, good friends and a great way to get new plants. Consider digging up, potting, and sharing some extra perennials or hosta plugs distributed at last years picnic.

Karen has some top-notch speakers lined up for the fall, including Jon Lonsdale for our banquet. Jon last spoke to our club two years ago and had some choice cyclamen for sale. He will be bringing plants to this banquet as well.

Please note that this is our year to elect officers. We have a nominating committee (Sandy Ciccone, Bonnie Plato and Jim Adams) working on selecting potential candidates. If you are asked to serve, please give it serious consideration. Unfortunately, the Rochester chapter folded because no one would step up and help run the club. We have a vibrant growing and exciting chapter - let's keep it growing!

Now, time for nap! Hope to see you all at the picnic.

Save the Date for our Annual Picnic. . .

Sunday, August 16, 2:00

Pine Township Community Center

CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

Officers

Chair: Len Lehman, 412- 233-5902

lclehman1@verizon.net

Vice Chair: Karen Schmidt, 724-679-3818

KarenSMG@aol.com

Secretary: Dianne Passoth, 724-444-4862

DiannePassoth@mtsaonline.org

Treasurer: Patty McGuire, 412-366-8364

cmpmam@comcast.net

Committee Chairs

Awards: Al Deurbrouck, 412-653-0281

adeurbrouck@verizon.net

Banquet: Deb Meyer, 412-734-2039

DebrASM@aol.com

Hosts: Bonnie and Steve Plato, 412-726-7865

stephenplato@gmail.com

Library: Patty McGuire, 412-366-8364

cmpmam@comcast.net

Membership & Proofreader: Lyn Lang, 724-443-7092

Lyn9@consolidated.net

Newsletter Editor: Linda Kalcevic, 412-847-0825

kalcevicl@verizon.net

Plant Show & Sale: Deb Meyer, Lyn Lang, and

Carol Przyborski

Seed Exchange: Patty McGuire, 412-366-8364

cmpmam@comcast.net

Website: Sylvia Lynch, 412-795-0736

home.comcast.net/~sylvialynch/

Contributors

Al Deurbrouck

Lyn Lang

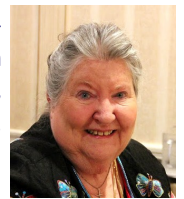


Share an interesting and informative article, an idea, or helpful suggestion about gardening by publishing it in the *Alpine Line*. Send it to kalcevicl@verizon.net

If you would like your garden featured in the newsletter, email Linda at kalcevicl@verizon.net - or mail pictures to Linda Kalcevic, 772 Village Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15237. The deadline for submissions is the **20th of the month**.

In Memoriam Connie McKeever

Esteemed member and honorary chair of the Allegheny Chapter, Connie McKeever, passed away on July 4, 2015. On behalf of the Allegheny Chapter, we extend our deepest sympathy to her family. Connie's obituary is below.



Age 77, of Wilkins Twp. Beloved wife of 55 years to Raymond J. McKeever; loving mother of Maureen McKeever of Wilkins, Michael (Kathy) McKeever of Lancaster, PA and Matthew (Donna) McKeever of South Hadley, MA; grandmother of Seth, Hope, Nathan, Joshua and Ethan McKeever; daughter of the late Herman and Frances Yeschka.

Connie graduated from Stowe High School in 1954 and went to Penn State University where she was a member of Theta Phi Alpha Sorority graduating in 1958. She was employed by Koppers Co. as a secretary until marrying Raymond. Connie was a girl scout leader and active with the Wilkins Century Club, Wilkins Zoning Hearing Board, Wilkins Arts Festival and Wilkins Recreation Board. She was also involved with the County Rock Garden Society. She then graduated from the University of Pittsburgh Law School in 1990 and practiced Family Law. She was active in her church on parish council as an usher and with marriage prep.

Friends were received at Wolfe Memorial, Inc., Forest Hills Chapel, 3604 Greensburg Pike, 412-731-5001, Wednesday only 2-4 and 6-8 p.m. Mass of Christian Burial St. John Fisher Church Thursday 10 a.m. Memorials may be made to your local food bank.

Connie was a member of our Chapter for over 30 years. During that time, she headed a committee that wrote our first set of by-laws; was chair of the Awards committee for a number of years; and as a lawyer was able to get our Chapter a tax exemption that has saved us many dollars over the years. She was an excellent gardener and won many awards at our annual May Show and Sale, and her entry of a dwarf conifer once won Best in Show. She was a special member who found real joy in gardening and being a member of our Chapter. She will be missed.

~Al Deurbrouck



Mystery Plant Contest

This month's mystery plant belongs to one of the largest genera in the Bean Family - Fabaceae. Found throughout the world, these plants have beautiful flowers and unusual seed pods which are also very attractive. They are notorious among cattlemen and horsemen for causing "blind staggers" in livestock, a potentially deadly condition!

This specific species is an alpine plant with lovely white flowers and intense red pods. Flowers are typically pea or bean like. Despite its notoriety, it is a potent nitrogen fixer and helps improve typically nutrient poor soil and, in the old world, related species are often used to revitalize old fields. Definitely a group that should have wider use in rock gardens or troughs in our area.

Send as many entries as you like—with botanical and common names—to Len at lclehman1@verizon.net. The first person with correct answer wins a prize plant.

Many entries have been incomplete. *Both scientific and species* must be named.



Congratulations to Jim Bucklad for identifying . . .
Primula sieboldii - Seibold's Primrose



Congratulations to Karen Schmidt for identifying . . .
Calceolaria darwinii - Darwin's Pocketbook Flower



Many thanks to Al Deurbrouck for tackling the arduous task of compiling the Chapter's history. See pages 6-8.

Allegheny Chapter's Rock Garden at the National Aviary

The Aviary Rock Garden has been a delight this summer! The variety of plant material, the abundance of rain, and of course the efforts of our maintenance crew keep the garden pristine.

Blooming since Spring have been varieties of campanula, daphne, sedum, choice alliums, dianthus, and lovely seed heads of pulsatilla. Plants currently in bloom include Hieracium maculatum (lovely foliage, rather tall and if not deadheaded the seeds germinate everywhere), Campanula Bevilin, Campanula rotundifolia, Goldenrod, Daphne, Phlox North Hills, Dianthus, Allium thunbergii (dwarf variety), Allium senescens, Stachys monieri, Argentine (an annual), Toad Lily, Delosperma (red), Oxalis regnellii, Geranium, Gentiana paradoxa, and Oenothera.



The National Aviary is located at 700 Arch Street, 15212. The garden is on the grounds outside the Aviary, next to the driveway leading into the visitors' parking lot. Volunteers meet at 10:00 at the rock garden rain or shine on the 2nd and 4th Thursday, March through November. Bring your favorite garden tools, gloves, and a container for debris.

If you feel like getting up a bit earlier, join us at 9:00 at Ye Olde Allegheny Sandwich Shoppe, 822 Western Avenue 15212, for a great breakfast, and usually free parking across the street. Enter the gravel lot from Brighton Road and park at the Western Avenue end.

Contact Al Deurbrouck at adeurbrouck@verizon.net or Lyn Lang at lyn9@consolidated.net with any questions.

~Al Deurbrouck

August 16 Picnic

The chapter's annual picnic and members-only plant sale will again be held at the Pine Township Community Park, on Sunday, August 16, at 2:00. The Chapter will provide ribs, chicken, drinks, and place settings. Members are asked to bring a covered dish to feed approximately eight.

This meeting provides a nice opportunity for all of us to get to know better some of our newer members and make them feel at home. We will again hold the Trough Show that will be judged by all the attendees. A trough is defined as at our May Show -- Class #9: A trough of three or more distinct species of rock garden suitable plants arranged for effect.

Three nice prizes will be given to the three troughs voted most popular (one prize per member). While it is a bit of a contest, look at it as an opportunity to see what members are growing. Also, single plants in a container can be brought in for members to enjoy (sorry, no prizes).

Growing your own plants from seeds is a special activity of the overall garden experience. Packets of extra seeds from NARGS Seed Exchange will be available.

Members are urged to bring plants for the sale as well as something special for our auction that will again be conducted by Len Lehman, our walking encyclopedia on plants and planting. The auction has been great fun over the years and with your help it can be even better this year. As always, members who contrib-

ute plants will be given a few minutes to buy some of the choice plants available before the sale officially starts.

Now would be a good time to split some overgrown clumps of plants that are starting to intrude on their neighbors. Almost all primulas actually thrive on being split every two or three years. Most sedum are easy to split and transplant. Volunteer seedlings are always choice material for our sale.

RSVP by Sunday, August 9, if you plan to attend. Contact Patty McGuire at cmpmam@comcast.net or 412-366-8364.

Directions to the picnic:

Traveling north on US 19, Perry Highway in Wexford, bear left onto Church Road at the Custom Framing Shop and then turn right (east) onto PA 910. Pine Community Park is located on the left, across for the Pine Township Municipal Building. Turn left onto Pine Park Road. Turn at the next left and then immediately turn right and park at the end pavilion.

Traveling south on US 19, Perry Highway in Wexford, bear right onto Church Road at the Goodyear Tire store and then turn left onto PA 910. Continue on PA 910 for 1.7 miles then turn left onto Pearce Mill Road for 2.5 miles. Pine Community Park is located on the left, across for the Pine Township Municipal Building. Turn left onto Pine Park Road. Turn at the next left and then immediately turn right and park at the end pavilion.

~Al Deurbrouck

Worthwhile on the www



www.louistheplantgeek.com/ - "Louis Raymond experiments in his own gardens like a mad scientist, searching out plants that most people have never seen before & figuring out how to make them perform." - The Boston Globe

[www.Monrovia.com](http://www.monrovia.com)—Plant Savvy e-newsletter for new plants, design ideas, and garden trends



eartheasy
Solutions for Sustainable Living

<http://eartheasy.com/> - A family business committed to . . . practical products and information for sustainable living.

Recommended by Len Lehman

Use A Palette Knife to Replant Seedlings



Allthingsplant.com recommends a palette knife as a tool for seed starting because it is flat and narrow. Instead of poking through the bottom holes of cell trays or squeezing the plants out when you are ready to pot up seedlings, just use a painting palette knife to run around the edge of the plug and gently lift out the seedling. If you sow in vermiculite, the palette knife can gently lift up your seedlings. You can also use the palette knife to push aside the potting mix and place the seedling in. That way you have a deep slit for the roots and can push the potting mix tight to the roots after placement.

Allegheny Chapter 2015 Meetings/Events

Next meeting—2:00 Sunday, August 16, Pine Twp. Community Park

	Time	Speaker	Topic	Location
January 18	2:00	Debra Meyer and Carol Przyborski	NARGS Annual Meeting in Santa Fe	Northland Library
February 15	2:00	Len Lehman	Seed planting workshop	Northland Library
March 15	1:30	Jill M. Nicolaus	Pocket Gardens	National Aviary
April 19	4:00	Dieter Zschummel	One Year in Our Garden in the Middle of Germany	St. John Lutheran Church Cumberland Road
May 17	2:00	Garden tour	Lynch's garden and her neighbor's Japanese garden	184 Spring Grove Road, Penn Hills 15235
June 28	9:30 am	DJ	Breakfast at DJs and hands-on Terrarium workshop	DJ's Greenhouse
August 16	2:00	Picnic	Fun	Pine Township Community Park
September 20	2:00	Chuck Gleaves	Gardening for the Fun of It	Northland Library
October 17	5:00	John Lonsdale	Spring Bulbs	Banquet— TBD
November 15	2:00	Jared Hughes	Groovy Plant Favorites	Northland Library
December	9 am		Seed packing workshop	Northland Library

Daffodil & Hosta Society of Western PA (DHSWP)

Saturday, August 8	STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
August 15, 9-1:00	Garden in the Parks Field Day, gardens at North & South parks
September---TBA	Fall Hosta Forum, Edinboro PA
Saturday, October 10	Pot Luck meeting: Put your Hosta to Sleep/Plant your Daffodils for Spring, Northland Library
Saturday, November 7	End of Season Luncheon, TBA
Saturday November 21	STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

DJ's Greenhouse 2015 Calendar of Events

Aug 8, 9:00	Breakfast with DJ. Reservations
Aug 11, 6:30	Tapas at Sunset. \$23. Small plate with beer & wine. Tasting Chef David Armstrong. Reservations
Aug 18, 6:30	Create Your own fairy Garden. \$35. Materials Included
Aug 22	Customer Appreciation Day: Refreshments and Specials
Aug 25, 6:30	Vegetable Garden Series
Sept 5, 9:00	Breakfast with DJ. Reservations
Sept 8, 6:30	Make your own Terrarium. \$35. Materials included
Sept 22, 6:30	Vegetable Garden series
Sept 26, 10:00	Fall Clean-up Class and Garden Walk. A Guided tour of the Fall Garden. Q & A
1004 East Lake Road, Transfer PA 16154, www.djsgreenhouse.com or 724-92-1230	

History of Allegheny Chapter of North American Rock Garden Society

Past Chair Al Deurbrouck recently compiled highlights of the history of the Allegheny Chapter. Here is a chronological story of the chapter's growth and the people important to its present state. It all began in 1964, when Madeline Modic called a meeting of local members of the American Rock Garden Society (now North American Rock Garden Society). Six people attended.

Members can be proud that the Allegheny chapter members have won five honorary awards. Four members have received national awards, the NARGS Award of Merit, which comes from the national organization and honors members who have made outstanding service contributions to NARGS at both the local and national levels. Details are included below.

- 1965
 - September - The first local newsletter was sent.
 - AJ Brownmiller was elected Chairman.
 - Our organization was then called the Tri-State Region.
 - Meetings were held twice a year and newsletters sent monthly.
 - Annual dues were 60 cents.
 - May - 28 attended the meeting.
 - December - The organization grew to 30 members.
- 1966
 - May and September – The first plant sales.
- 1968
 - Annual dues were raised to \$1.00.
 - The name of the organization was changed to Allegheny Region.
- 1969
 - April – The newsletter included the first article on trough gardens.
 - May - The first flower show was held at the residence of AJ Brownmiller.
 - A rock garden project was started at Phipps Conservatory.
- 1970
 - Member Dr. Norman Deno, Penn State professor, presented the first of his lectures to our chapter. Dr. Deno authored a most detailed publication for rock gardeners on growing plants from seeds, *Seed Germination Theory and Practice*, based on his personal experiments on 145 families, 805 genera, and about 4,000 species. The second edition was published in 1993.
- 1971
 - Bimonthly meetings began.
 - The first seedling sale was held.
 - The first combined Show and Plant Sale was held at North Park skating rink.
- 1972
 - A two-day annual show and sale was held for the members on Saturday and opened to the public on Sunday.
 - A jewel box rock garden was built and displayed.
 - Tours of members' gardens were started.
 - The name was changed from Allegheny Region to Allegheny Chapter.
- 1973
 - Monthly meetings started.
 - Approximately 2,500 visitors attended the Annual Show and Sale at the North Park skating rink.
- 1975
 - We hosted the Annual Meeting of the North American Rock Garden Society at Conley Motel, Rt. 22, Monroeville, PA. Carl Gehenio was the Annual Meeting Chairman.
 - There were 35 plant classes in the show. Today this number has been reduced to 10 classes.
- 1976
 - Members built a rock garden at the Pittsburgh Civic Garden Center. Some remnants still remain in 2015.
- 1978
 - Madeline Modic received the Award of Merit from NARGS.
- 1979
 - A wildflower exhibit was held at the Annual Show.
 - The Chapter grew to 69 members.

Allegheny Chapter History 1980-1998

- 1980
 - Dues were raised to \$3.00.
 - An educational creation was displayed at the Butler *Scent of Spring Show*
- 1981
 - Hosted the Annual Meeting of NARGS at the Holiday Inn, Monroeville. Carl Gehenio, Annual Meeting Chairman.
- 1982-83
 - The Annual Show was held at Century III Mall, West Mifflin.
- 1983
 - Members planted the first rock garden at the Pittsburgh Aviary.
- 1984
 - The Annual Show was held at the Pittsburgh Civic Garden Center.
- 1985-86
 - The Annual Show returned to North Park Skating Rink.
 - Ruth Young Memorial Library was created.
- 1986
 - Monthly meetings were held at the Northland Library.
 - Dues were raised to \$5.00.
 - Chapter membership grew to 72.
- 1987
 - *Alpine Line* was adopted as the name of the chapter newsletter.
 - Madeline Modic was named Chairwoman Emeritus, and the Madeline Modic Service Award was established to honor members for long-term meritorious service to the chapter and to rock gardening.
 - The A.J. Brownmiller Award was established to honor members for excellence in writing, lecturing, or photography that enhances or expands the knowledge or pleasure of rock gardening.
- 1989
 - Hosted Eastern Winter Study Weekend, *Winter Maneuvers*, at the Hilton Hotel, downtown Pittsburgh. The closing banquet held on the Ohio River on the Gateway Clipper in early February in hindsight was not the best decision, but the weather turned unseasonably warm and we were able to walk on the ship's deck in shirt-sleeves. Al Deurbrouck was study weekend chairman.
 - Carl Gehenio received the Award of Merit from NARGS.
- 1990
 - The Annual Show was held at North Park skating rink on the Sunday before Mothers' Day.
- 1992
 - The Carl Gehenio Plantsman Award was established to honor chapter members who have shown unique skills in the propagation and growing of rare and unusual rock garden plants.
- 1993
 - Alpine Line began publishing six times per year.
- 1994
 - The Annual Show and Sale was held at the North Park skating rink for 10th consecutive year.
 - The rock garden at Pittsburgh National Aviary was completely rebuilt.
- 1995
 - Membership grew to 125.
- 1996
 - Dues were raised to \$8.
- 1997
 - The Annual Show was held at North Park skating rink for the 13th consecutive year.
- 1998
 - During the breakdown of the 1997 show, a member fell from the second floor down the long dark boathouse stairway and fractured her ankle. Due to this accident future shows were held at Soergel's where we continue to meet.
 - The first trough-making workshop was held at Audrey and Clarence Rauch's home.

Allegheny Chapter History 2000—present

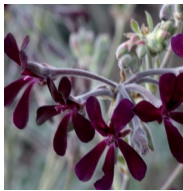
- 2000 • A second rock garden was created at Pittsburgh National Aviary because of their expansion.
- 2001 • The chapter hosted the NARGS Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Station Square. Al Deurbrouck was the Annual Meeting Chairman.
- 2005 • Dues were raised to \$10 for individuals and \$15 for family memberships.
- 2011 • The Pittsburgh National Aviary expanded again, so the rock garden was moved to a new location that turned out to be a superior location and size. Construction of the new National Aviary Garden began with a grant from NARGS national.
 - December - Started an annual event of packaging seeds for the NARGS Annual Seed Exchange.
- 2012 • The Chapter hosted Eastern Study Weekend at the Four Points Sheraton in Wexford, Pittsburgh. Len Lehman was the Study Weekend Chairman.
 - Al Deurbrouck received the Award of Merit from NARGS.
- 2014 • For the 17th consecutive year, the Annual Show and Sale was held at Soergel's and included not only a plant show and sale but five educational presentations.
- 2015 • Annual Show and Sale was held at Soergel's for 18th consecutive year. It was arguably the most successful and included a large number of entries in the show.
 - Len Lehman received the Award of Merit from NARGS.
 - Membership is 76 and growing.

Allegheny Chapter History—Chairs

1965-66	A.J. Brownmiller
1967-68	Madeline Modic
1969-73	Carl Gehenio
1974-75	John J. Kovalchik
1976-77	Clare Williamson
1977-79	Dr. Robert McDermott
1980-82	Margaret Wisner
1983-84	Marie Plaisted
1985-87	Anne Toumey
1988-91	Walt Betzold
1992-95	Al Deurbrouck
1996-99	Larry Hankowitz
2000-03	Patty McGuire
2004-07	Jerry Pottmeyer
2008-09	Patty McGuire
2010-11	Alan Peacock
2012-13	Al Deurbrouck
2014-present	Len Lehman

Annuals for the Rock Garden by Mike Kintgen, Denver Botanic Garden (Part 3)

Pelargonium sidoides (Burgundy). Perhaps the darkest flowered Pelargonium, its kidney shaped silver leaves and dark burgundy, magenta or almost black flowers keep coming all summer. If the bloom stems, which are quite a bit longer than the foliar mound, get too long I cut them off and within 10 days or so it is back in flower.



Petunia integrifolia and *exserta*. Some may be surprised to see petunias on this list; however two species are refined enough for use in the rock garden. *Petunia integrifolia* is native to Brazil and probably Argentina. It forms a sprawling mound of bright green foliage and magenta flowers 12-18 inches across or more if happy and seems to bloom all summer with almost no care. Keep it away from small treasures, but if you need impact in the garden this could be the one for you. Seed is often available online or in seed exchanges

Petunia exserta has medium red flowers all summer with kind of a starry shape similar to a *nicotiana*, but the petals are reflexed differently. It is native of Brazil where it is possibly extinct and also the specie that gives all the modern red hybrids their color. Annie's Annuals often sells plants sent right to your door.



Ursinia. I thought this might be a flash in the pan; however, in the summer of 2014 it was still blooming in October and possibly into November for me. Sown from seed in early April, they were blooming by late June. I let them go to seed as I was collecting it in hopes of doing a larger showing in 2015. Despite setting a ton of seed, they keep blooming all season. 2014 was a cooler but very humid summer by Colorado standard. Even my intern from South Carolina would occasionally remark it was humid. (I wilt when values exceed 48 percent.) They performed very admirably under these conditions

The plant is probably best directly seeded into its location in early spring about 2-4 weeks before the last frost. Annie's Annuals sells starts of a variety called 'Solar Flame.' I really enjoy its wildflower look in the garden. Seed can take a bit of detective work to find. I purchased mine from Chiltern's Seed in England.

Cool Season, short lived

These are annuals that are best sown in the late fall, winter or early spring to germinate with the first warm days. They do not like heat in general and tend to finish by the 4th of July or a bit earlier, depending on conditions and the plant.

Adonis arvensis. Despite its deep red flowers, this species is overshadowed by its famous yellow early flowered perennial and long-lived Eurasian relatives. All it asks for is sun and well-drained soil, and it will often self-sow in a modest way.

Asperula orientalis. A small pale blue annual for sunny dry well drained sections of the garden, it self-sows politely. It's very deli-

cate and petite and would work with all but the tiniest rock garden plants. The plants reach only 3-6 inches and bloom for a few weeks in late spring and early summer after the main flush of color in the rock garden is over.

Dimotheca. These South African natives related to *Osteospermum* traditionally are used just in the spring. However, from a late May sowing in Denver they will bloom July through November or whenever we have a hard frost. An early sowing and some drought stress will have the plants peak in late June and then quietly finish flowering. I am not sure how durable they will be under heat and humidity. I recommend giving them a try. Their soft colored daisy-like flowers remind me of meadow wildflowers found around the world.

Linaria maroccana. In Colorado a fall or very early spring sowing of these can bloom all season, while the ones bought in a greenhouse in full bloom in the spring tend to die out when it gets hot. They are small enough for small containers or troughs. Delicate enough to blend in with all but the daintiest rock garden plants, these quick and easy annuals belong in more gardens. I have not had a problem with self-sowing like some perennial *Linaria* that have become invasive weeds in the US.



Orlaya grandiflora. In Colorado we are always looking for things that do well without supplemental water. I realize you can have the opposite problem in the East, but *Orlaya grandiflora* would be one to try. Picture a more delicate, shorter, purer white and graceful Queen Annie's lace, and you have *Orlaya grandiflora*. It does die after it flowers and you have a mass of brown stems, so bear that in mind. Around early to mid-July I do a purging in the garden, cutting back tired spring and early summer perennials and removing the *Orlaya grandiflora* skeletons. Once established in a sunny well drained area, I have not had to replant as it self-sows reliably each year. Young seedlings are easily removed if they end up where you do not want them.



Late summer annuals

While many of us equate annuals with season-long blooms, a few bloom only in August or September perhaps when the garden is most in need of something different.

Eriogonum pharnaceoides. A small self-sowing annual that is great for a late burst of texture and color in the rock garden, its airy branching style makes it more of a textural plant than a show stopper. In large enough patches it can be show stopping especially as the snow white flowers blush to pink, and eventually shades of russet. Seed can be difficult to find but it's worth the search. Try the seed exchanges or possibly Seed Hunt. It's a plant I would not be without in the rock garden. →

Annuals for the Rock Garden by Mike Kintgen, Denver Botanic Garden (Part 3)

Unsung heroes

This category includes biennials that more than pay the rent with their long bloom times and unusualness.



Campanula incurva. Sometimes there are truly spectacular plants that deserves to be more widely used. This is one of those plants that should for its long season of insanely large blossoms in early summer to autumn in Denver. The first year the rosette of spoon shaped leaves seems rather unpromising, but come the second or third year the rosette sends out branches at ground level to create a wagon wheel of color 12-24 inches across.

Campaula incurva is perhaps best established as plants set out into the garden in spring or fall from seed started in pots. Pick a sunny well drained site, and it will most likely self-sow for you. It actually loves narrow cracks and crevices as it is a chasmophyte in nature. It can smother tiny mats and cushions when it is in flower but worth the room for how spectacular it is.

Sesili gummferum Moon Carrot. Related to carrots and Queen Annie's lace, however, it's much more exotic looking with blue green leaves and pink umbels fading to cream. It's a bit tall for the average sized rock garden at two to almost three feet. The flowers which arrive in July and August are a magnet for pollinators. In a well-drained sunny site it can self-sow sparingly to prolifically.

Moon carrot can be established several ways, either by planting young plants in spring or fall, or scattering seed where you want it to grow. All it asks for is full sun, well-drained soil and some vacant real estate. It doesn't like to self-sow in cramped conditions. It generally self-sows generously once a few plants get going and start to flower.



Michauxia tchihatchewii. Imagine a campanula on steroids with white octopus-like flowers in mid-summer, reaching 2 to 3.5 feet. This rare plant was originally collected by Jim Archibald and deserves to be in more gardens.

True annuals are rare in alpine habitats; annuals, however, fill the spaces between rocks and perennial plants in every other terrestrial environmental on earth. Often times they can create spectacular displays which people flock to see. Think of the Blue-bonnets in central Texas or California poppies of the American southwest during a wet year. Annuals can be an essential part to creating a well-rounded and beautiful garden that is interesting and beautiful year around.

Sources

Some of the plants above are difficult to find while others can be found in most local garden centers. For some of the more difficult ones, try the sources below. As always, the NARGS Seed exchange can be a great source for seed as well.

Annie's Annuals. Plants shipped to your door, a bit pricey but the quality is very high. <http://www.anniesannuals.com/>

Seed Hunt. Seeds of many California natives and other unusual plants. <http://www.seedhunt.com/>

Select Seeds. Seeds and some plants, prices are reasonable and quality is good. <http://www.selectseeds.com/>

Chiltern Seeds UK. A very wide offering of both common and unusual seeds. Quality is high. <http://www.chilternseeds.co.uk/>

The Fragrant Path, PO Box 328, Fort Calhoun, NE 68023
www.fragrantpathseeds.com

Something to Think About

Global warming is actually a misnomer.

It should be global extremes and global swings, because you add - as you add more energy into the atmosphere, it sloshes around.

Energy doesn't simply uniformly warm up the planet. And that means droughts in one area, enormous snowstorms in another area, 100-year floods here, 100-year forest fires there.

~Michio Kaku, American physicist

How 'Neonics' Impact Bees and Your Garden by T.J. Blackman

Reprinted from *eartheasy*. Posted 4/30/15.

Albert Einstein once made a statement that was simple but carried a punch, "If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live."

Whether or not you agree with him, one thing is for certain, we need bees. The populations of domesticated honeybees and wild bumblebees are in decline. This is alarming when you consider that more than one half of the world's crops are dependent on bee pollination. Crops such as apples, blueberries, onions, and almonds are just some of our food that will be in serious jeopardy if our bee population continues to drop off.



credit: Simone Pellicone
Almond trees are completely dependent on bees for pollination.

The mysterious phenomenon of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) surfaced in late 2006 as report after report came in of disappearances of do-

mesticated honeybee colonies in North America. Soon after, the same occurrence began to baffle those in Europe as well. At present, an average of 30% of all beehives in the US are lost each winter.

This epidemic means that many colonies are found with a live queen, honey in the hive, and immature bees still present. All the worker bees in these hives are simply gone. They leave the hive to go to work and don't seem to make it back.

While science scrambles to come up with the answers to the bewildering disappearances, a hot debate over the use of neonicotinoids, commonly referred to as "neonics", has erupted.

What are neonics?

Neonics are the largest selling class of insecticide sold worldwide. Neonics are different from other insecticides because they are 'systemic', meaning they infiltrate the entire system of the plant's tissues, affecting the roots, stems, pollen and nectar. This means the bees consume the pesticide right from the bloom. Many environmental researchers and bee activists claim this neurotoxin then kills the bee, or in cases of lower dosages, compromises its ability to navigate it's way back home.

Researchers from Penn State University have been looking at the pesticide residue in loads of pollen that bees carry home as food. Every batch of pollen that honeybees collected was found to contain at least six detectable pesti-

cides. This included various fungicides, herbicides, neonicotinoids, pyrethroids, and insect growth regulators, according to the Center for Pollinator Research.

There is enough concern about the use of neonics to cause the European Union to vote in a two year moratorium on the systemic insecticides.

A group of scientists associated with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)- undertook a meta-analysis of 800 peer reviewed reports of systemic pesticides such as neonicotinoids and fipronil. The report concludes, "...that field-realistic concentrations of neonics adversely affect individual navigation, learning, food collection, longevity, resistance to disease, and fecundity of bees. For bumblebees, irrefutable colony-level effects have been found with exposed colonies growing more slowly and producing significantly fewer queens."

Dr. Jean-Marc Bonmatin- one of the leading authors of the report claims we are witnessing a threat equivalent to that of DDT. Dr. Bonmatin further states, "Far from protecting food productions, the use of neonics is threatening the very infrastructure which enables it."

Neonics in your garden

Neonics can be introduced to your garden when you buy transplants from nurseries and garden centers which have been pre-treated with pesticides. And because these pesticides are 'systemic', they persist in the soil after the crop has been harvested. These lingering pesticides can then affect the following crop, with residues absorbed into the harvest and eventually to the food on your plate. A 2013 study by the environmental group Friends of the Earth found neonics in plants from Lowe's and Home Depot stores in Minneapolis, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Gardeners can reduce their exposure to neonics by buying only 'certified organic' transplants and starters. Organic gardening methods negate the need for pesticides and herbicides in the garden, and lawns today can be tended without relying on chemical assists.

There is another voice

Representatives of the insecticide industry argue that the amount of neonics used in studies reflect lethal doses, concentrations much higher than bees would be exposed to in typical agricultural conditions, and therefore are not realistic reflections of the effects of neonics on bees. →

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In a recent study at the University of Maryland, research shows that the higher the dose of Imidacloprid (a widely used neonicotinoid) administered to the bees, the lower the rate of survivorship is for the honeybee colonies. However, the dose considered by the authors to be considered 'field-realistic' does not show a significantly higher death rate, or decreased foraging abilities. To view the study, visit journals.plos.org.

Other factors to consider

Marta Spivak, an entomologist and Distinguished McKnight University Professor at the University of Minnesota, puts forward the observation that managed honeybee hives have been in decline since World War II, when agricultural methods changed. According to Spivak, after the war, farmers started planting large mono-crops like corn or soybeans and began to use herbicides to kill off the weeds. Many of the weeds had flowers that bees count on for their survival. Farmers also stopped planting cover crops like clover and alfalfa, which are highly nutritional food sources for bees.

Spivak also makes a case for the devastation of bee death when neonics are applied in high concentrations, and she acknowledges the problem of the Varroa destructor mite, which spread widely in the 1990's. If a bee's immune system is already compromised by even a low dose of neonics (for example, the concentration found if only the seed of a plant is treated) it can make it all the more difficult for the bee to recover when it encounters the dreaded mite.

We are not helpless

While large agribusinesses may account for much of the herbicide and pesticide usage, individuals also make a difference when choosing products and methods for lawn care, gardening and pest control. What can we do to lessen the problem?

Plant bee friendly flowers like foxglove, angelica, or wildflower seed mixes and don't contaminate them with pesticides. Go online and find what flowers are native to your area and plant those to help out the bees.

Choose nontoxic alternatives for insect pest control in your garden. You can have a productive garden using natural pest control methods that are effective and easy to learn and apply. Read our Guide: [Natural Garden Pest Control](#)

Keep your lawn pesticide-free. Wean your lawn from commercial herbicides, there are nontoxic methods for growing a healthy lawn. Or you can make your lawn into a clover patch full of thriving buzzy bees that are free from the drunken effects of neonics.

Learn more by reading our Guides: [Natural Lawn Care](#) and [Lawn Alternatives](#)

Use safe alternatives to 'weed n feed'. You can control emerging weeds in your lawn while providing a fertilizer by using corn gluten, a nontoxic product which is safe for people and wildlife. For spot weed control, use BurnOut to kill weeds without using chemical herbicides.

Buy 'certified organic' transplants and shrubs. Check the label when buying starters at the garden center. Choose only those items that are marked as certified organic; ask at the counter if you're not sure. Garden centers are becoming aware of the problems associated with neonics and some chains are now selling only organic transplants.

Diversify garden plantings. Plant a variety of food and flowers for the bees to feast on and if you are planting food crops, plant flowering crops at the borders of your gardens or fields.

Let your voice be heard. Campaign to your local representatives to get untreated flowers planted in public spaces like parks or roadsides. Write letters to them to look into regulations for neonicotinoid usage or encourage an all out ban, if there is not one already in your area, until more is known.

The mystery remains

What exactly is killing our bees? The use of neonics does not appear to be the sole nemesis of bee survival but it seems like a very good place to begin when considering what to look at and change, when it comes to helping our bee colonies continue to thrive and do the work they want and need to do. Lets protect the sweet relationship we have with the bee by taking the effect of our pesticide practices seriously.

News update: [Lowe's to eliminate pesticides that hurt crop pollinating honeybees](#)

T.J. Blackman resides on a tiny island where she lives happily among the trees. She has various works in progress, including a novel that she works on while she is not writing articles for sites that pique her interest.

Related:

[6 Reasons to Avoid Using Weed n Feed on Your Lawn](#)
[Lawn Care Chemicals: How Toxic Are they?](#)

[Would You Expose Your Family to Neurotoxins for a Greener Lawn?](#)

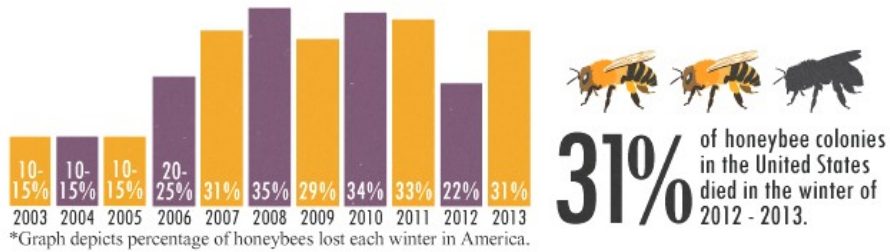
Want to help rebuild our bee population? Check out this useful infographic: 

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COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER IN AMERICA



WHICH FLOWERS DO BEES REALLY LIKE?

SPRING	EARLY SUMMER	HIGH SUMMER	LATE SUMMER
 THRIFT <i>Armeria maritima</i>	 LUPIN <i>Lupinus polyphyllus</i>	 LAVENDER <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	 SUNFLOWER <i>Helianthus annuus</i>
 CRANESBILL <i>Geranium macrorrhizum</i>	 ROSE <i>Rosa</i>	 GOLDENROD <i>Solidago Canadensis</i>	 VERBENA <i>Verbena bonariensis</i>
 CHIVES <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	 CALIFORNIA LILAC <i>Ceanothus "Victoria"</i>	 FENNEL <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	 BLACK EYED SUSAN <i>Rudbeckia</i>

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