

# Alpine Line

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

April - June 2021

## OFFICERS

### CHAIR

Sandra Ciccone

### VICE CHAIR

Nancy Knauss

### SECRETARY

Joanne Burzese

### TREASURER

Patty McGuire

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### AWARDS

Patty McGuire

### BANQUET

Cathy Kaut & Carol Przyborski

### FACEBOOK

Lyn Lang & Bobbie Diller

### LIBRARY

Patty McGuire

### MEMBERSHIP & PROOFREADER

Lyn Lang

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Sandy Ellenberger

### PLANT SHOW

David Amrhein

### PLANT SALE

Lyn Lang & Debra Meyer

### SEED EXCHANGE

Pinky Fredericks

### WEBMASTER

Nancy Knauss

## Message from the Chair.....

Spring has arrived and with it the joy that sunny warm days bring. It's time to go outside and visit with our gardens and go about all the spring chores needed to revive our gardens so we can appreciate the beauty they provide. It is also the time when we renew our friendships that have lain dormant for the most part during the cold winter. Humans are very social by nature and crave the company of others. I believe this is partly what drives us to join clubs. We look for people with shared interests and want to spend time with them. Clubs have a strong social aspect. When we attend a meeting we talk, share a few snacks and learn about our shared love of gardening. Take away that in-person social aspect and everything changes. That is what happened this year. A Zoom meeting which provides information and an opportunity to view some lovely slides is just no substitute for in-person experience that happens before and after the presentation. 90% of the NARGS chapters are experiencing low attendance numbers at their Zoom meetings, our club included. It's just not the same. I hope that when we start up in-person meetings all of our members will come back with a renewed joy and effort to keep our club vibrant and active once again.

So for those of you who have not renewed your membership, remember that Breakfast at DJ's is scheduled for Sunday, June 13th. Be there or be square!

*Sandy*



## UPCOMING MEETINGS

APRIL 18 ~~ Wildflower Walk at Raccoon Creek Wildflower Reserve

MAY 16 ~~ Nursery visit to *Plants We Like* in Scottsdale

JUNE 13 ~~ Breakfast at DJ's

AUGUST 15 ~~ Picnic at Pine Township Park

SEPTEMBER 19 ~~ Trough making at Pinky Fredericks' home

OCTOBER 17 ~~ Banquet

## 2020 NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN (NARGS)

For

## ALPINE PLANT CONSERVATION

A conservation proposal was developed to involve botanical gardens to propagate and protect alpine plants. Alpine plants, plants that grow above the tree line, are particularly vulnerable to recent changes in climate. Global warming is believed to shift climate zones to higher altitudes, thus endangering many alpine plants. It is believed that a third of all plants globally will face extinction in the future through climate change and other reasons. Policies involving conservation for alpine plants are being initiated via the North American Rock Garden Society. The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) was formed to develop policies for plant conservation internationally during these challenging times.

NARGS objectives include: 1) identifying plants/locations/pertinent knowledge about these plants, 2) protection of a certain percentage of the plants in its natural locations as well as propagation/protection in other sites, 3) the education of the public, and 4) involvement of professional societies, networks, regions, government etc. to spread these objectives.

Further information is available at the Betty Ford Alpine Garden web site (<https://bettyfordalpinegardens.org>). Contributors to this proposal were N. Ripley, J.R. Neale, N. Kuich, M. Kintgen, R.A. Hufft, and A. Schneider.

**Rebecca Stevenson**

In the Spring at the end of the day,  
You should smell like dirt.

# WELCOME



## New Members

The NARGS Allegheny Chapter welcomes 3 new members to our club of rock gardeners. They are **Ellen Fast, Craig Jansen and Karel Ulizio**. We look forward to meeting you at the rock garden and future in-person meetings.

Our club members are passionate about little plants with big flowers, from sunny alpines to shady woodland plants. We strive to learn about genera and species that are new to us and then share our knowledge with others. Some of us have rock gardens while others grow strictly in troughs and containers. We all share appreciation for our public rock garden at the Aviary. We hope you'll enjoy learning about rock gardening as much as we do.

If you have gardening friends who may be interested in joining the Allegheny Chapter, encourage them to check out our website and Facebook page for more information.

Our website:

<http://nargspittsburgh.wixsite.com/rock-garden>

Our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/NARGS.AlleghenyChapter>

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org) :

- **Select *About Us***, then ***Local Chapters***
- **Select *Allegheny Chapter***, then ***Visit the website of Allegheny Chapter***

Lyn Lang, Membership Chair



# YouTube and Public Gardens

I recently discovered that I can observe public gardens via YouTube on television. It is a wonderful opportunity to view some of those gardens that you have never gotten to visit on the big screen in your own home. Sometimes there are opportunities to look at the changes in the gardens at various seasons. Some examples: I visited Portland a number of years ago and visited the Chinese Garden and the Rhododendron Garden, but I missed the chance to see the Rose Garden or the Japanese Garden. Yesterday, I discovered that the Japanese Garden is a delight and is considered the best Japanese Garden outside of Japan... I also viewed Chanticleer, an eastern PA garden I have never seen with YouTube videos of different seasons and I viewed a clip of the Chelsey Garden Show.

If someone is interested, it might be fun to film the NARGS rock garden at the Aviary at various seasonal intervals or film the rock garden show with its amazing troughs and place them on YouTube to share it with a wider audience.

Anyway, if anyone has observed some amazing gardens via YouTube, do share that with the rest of the club. I could watch these clips of public gardens almost everyday.

If you don't have YouTube on your television, you might consult your media provider or local tech store. Without a Smart TV, we recently had to upgrade with a Fire Stick in order to get Netflix and that provided the free YouTube (Verizon).

Rebecca Stevenson

+++++

**TO PLANT A**

*Garden*

**IS TO**



*Believe*

**IN TOMORROW**

## Rock Garden at the Aviary – March 2021

~ Lyn Lang

When we arrived at the garden for our first maintenance visit on Thursday, March 25, the garden looked lovely as usual from a distance. As we got close, we were greeted by two gray squirrels approaching from the largest bed, and I thought I heard them say, “Do you have peanuts for us?” The garden was littered with peanut shells! Apparently, some of the park visitors are having fun feeding whole peanuts to the squirrels.



New member Craig Jansen saved us tons of work with his vacuum shredder. He picked up most of the peanut shells as well as last year’s leaves and neatly deposited them into the barrel provided by the Aviary.

We were also surprised to find severe damage on the choice Japanese maple planted in memory of Larry Hankowicz. In addition, the little azalea contributed to the shade garden by Len Lehman had been browsed. Sara Showers reported significant browsing damage on new plantings at the Aviary as well.

Last year we noticed that a Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) had self-sown in 2019 when we had record rainfall. Although the parent plant had already bloomed, it was exciting to see these cheerful harbingers of spring establishing a colony. Blue *Scilla siberica* is also beginning to scatter offspring down from the top of the large bed. A few bright yellow and red tulips were blooming, and the collection of Hellebores were at their peak.

The tiny *Draba aizoides* was blooming in the crevice area as expected. The *Euphorbia myrsinites* was striking with its succulent blue-gray foliage set off by bright yellow flower clusters. Many white *Scilla* have established themselves among the rocks edging the shade garden. Most stunning were the 2 varieties of *Corydalis solidia*, ‘Purple Bird’ and ‘Beth Evans’.

In a few short weeks, the garden will be in full bloom. Stop by whenever you can to enjoy the show. Garden maintenance will be from 10:00 to noon on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month. See you there!





## LOOKING AHEAD

SINCE THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER WILL BE IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDENING SEASON, IT WOULD BE NICE TO FEATURE SOME ASPECTS OF OUR OWN MEMBERS' GARDENS.

AS YOU TEND TO YOUR GARDENS THIS SUMMER, THINK ABOUT WHAT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO OTHER CLUB MEMBERS, AND PLAN TO SHARE THEM IN THE JULY-SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER.

THIS COULD INCLUDE A SHORT WRITE-UP AND/OR PHOTOS OF AREAS OF YOUR GARDEN OR CLOSE-UPS OF A PLANT OR FLOWER YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE AND WANT TO SHARE.

# Monarch Butterflies Are Nearing Extinction: 5 Ways to Help

Kier Holmes February 18, 2021

Monarch butterflies have been in the news lately, and unfortunately it's not because thousands of them have made their epic long-distance southern migration to their California coast and Mexico wintering spots. They're making headlines because their numbers are critically low—so low that they are tragically inching to extinction.

Western monarchs generally head south from the Pacific Northwest and land in forested groves on the California coast by the beginning of November before dispersing across the country in March when the weather warms up. Eastern monarchs fly thousands of miles from southern Canada and northeastern United States to spend their warm winter break in Central Mexico. This year, sadly, the count of monarchs is grim. In fact, The [Xerces Society](#), a non-profit environmental organization focusing on invertebrate conservation, recently recorded fewer than 2,000 monarchs for the entire state of California—a frightening decline from the tens of thousands counted in past years. And at the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary in Pacific Grove, CA, where typically thousands of western monarchs overwinter, [volunteers spotted zero](#).

Interested in helping save monarchs? Please keep reading:

## Why are these beloved butterflies disappearing?



*A monarch on milkweed in Marie Viljoen's Brooklyn garden.*

Butterflies are, not surprisingly, very fragile and easily affected by environmental changes. Scientists believe many factors are contributing to their decline, but one major cause is the decimation of their critical milkweed habitats that grow along their migratory route.

(Monarchs, unfortunately, are not legally protected by the state and federal system). As development projects consume the land and genetically modified

crops take over, the native milkweed is destroyed.

Another contributing factor is the widespread overuse of toxic herbicides and pesticides. And then there's the effects of climate change, which alter the schedule of the springtime wildflowers necessary to their migration, coupled with the numerous destructive wildfires that raged through the West last year.

## How can you help?

Before monarchs dip into the threatened or endangered category, fellow gardeners can start taking action right now in these five ways:

*Photography by Marie Viljoen for Gardenista, unless otherwise noted.*

### 1. Plant native milkweed.



This crucial plant is what butterflies rely on exclusively for their first life stages: the females lay their eggs on it, and the caterpillars munch on it for nutrition *and* protection (the plant's noxious chemical compounds make the caterpillars taste repugnant to predators.) It's a symbiotic

relationship: the nectar nourishes and gives energy to the butterfly, and the butterfly pollinates the milkweed. This important plant not only serves monarchs, it also benefits other pollinators and beneficial insects such as honeybees. Be aware that tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) should never be planted because not only is it not native to California, it harms butterflies by being evergreen, which encourages our winged friends to hang out and breed in the area instead of moving on to other more hospitable winter locations. Instead, only plant narrowleaf milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) and showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*).

Pro Tip: Because milkweed is deciduous and is often covered in unsightly aphids, it's best to plant it in less visible spots in the garden. Give your milkweed good drainage and little summer water.

Note: If you live in coastal areas of Marin (Bollinas, Inverness, Tomales, Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, and Point Reyes Station), the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting and sustaining the water, land, and biodiversity of West Marin, suggests planting coastal nectar-rich native flowers and overwintering tree covers to give them the food they need as well as protection from cold winter weather.

## 2. Grow a diverse and flower-rich pollinator garden

Pick plants that will fuel their flight and plant a diverse amount of flowers rich in nectar. Monarchs love to (and need to) gorge on big flower clusters. Best plants for spring and summer are narrowleaf milkweed (only for inland gardens), pink-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), seaside daisy



glaucus), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), and blueblossom (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*). Fall favorites are sages (*Salvias* spp.), goldenrod (*Solidago velutina*), California aster (*Symphotrichum chilense*), California fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*), coyote mint (*Monardella villosa*), as well as annuals like cosmos, zinnias, and Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia*).

Also provide a fresh water source, a good place for them to bask in the sun and rest, and a shady puddle of muddy water to rehydrate and gain minerals.

Pro Tip: Place a shallow plate of water filled with a few flat rocks on the ground near flowers and refresh every day to discourage mosquitos.

## 3. Stop using pesticides.

Both insecticides and herbicides not only remain in the environment, but they do not discriminate in their kill-mission. By eliminating the use of these toxic chemicals in public and agricultural lands and personal gardens, we can prevent the poisoning of these and other beautiful pollinators. Also,

*Monarch larvae feed on milkweed plants only. This image was taken at Central Park's six-acre pesticide-free Conservatory Garden.*



avoid buying plants from garden centers that are treated with any chemical, especially neonicotinoids that negatively affect the nervous system of insects.

## 4. Share the news.

Maybe your neighbor doesn't know the status of these black and orange

lovelies. Maybe they were just about to remove an overwintering site. Consider joining forces with your neighbors to plant pollinator corridors and monarch waystations (a stopping-off point for them during their journey) so that these creatures can easily find food and lay eggs without having to expend too much energy looking for the right spot.

## 5. Get involved.

Become a citizen scientist and help collect data on butterfly populations. The [Western Monarch Thanksgiving and New Year's Counts](#) and the [Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper](#) are two community science programs to join. Also research other local organizations that help restore narrowleaf milkweed sites, and consider donating to local organizations taking action to rebuild the butterfly community. Farther inland, it is also important to protect those migratory habitats (examples: Sacramento Valley, Coast Range, and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada,) so consider supporting organizations focusing on habitat restoration and land management.



Balcony Garden Web