

# ALPINE LINE



Allegheny Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society

July, August, September  
2016

## A Message from the Chair, Karen Schmidt

A lot has happened since the last newsletter.

The show and sale was a great success, thanks to those of you who were involved. The numerous entries showed some choice rock garden plants. There was a wide variety of plants for sale, and I hope you all purchased a new plant or 2 or 3, for your garden.

The meeting at the National Aviary was wonderful with Brent Heath giving a talk on small bulbs; then we got to visit the rock garden. The gardens were in bloom and are a great display of many rock garden plants, thanks to all those that beautifully maintain the gardens.

Then in late June we had our annual breakfast at DJ's Greenhouse--good food as always thanks Dennis and Gretchen (cook). We did the Kokedamas workshop, and everyone had fun making the string gardens and plant shopping.

We still have a lot more activities this year. The annual picnic is Sunday, August 21. More information is provided later in the newsletter. You don't want to miss this chance to visit with other members and enjoy some good food. Bring plants for the exchange; you will have the opportunity to get some new plants from other members. There will also be an auction and a trough show.

At the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting we will have Joseph Tychonievich, formerly from Arrowhead Alpines, who will speak on "The World of Rock Gardening". Then our final meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> will be with Dr. Mark Tebbitt talking about "Plant Hunting in the Andes".

We decided to try something different for the banquet on Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. (DATE CHANGE from October 15). We are going to have it catered at the church across from the library. *If anyone would like to help, please let me know.* I need help with table decorations and giveaways. There will not be a speaker, and it will be more of a social activity. There will be more information later in the year. We are going to do a garden item gift exchange game, so keep an eye out for a unique item to purchase.

I would like to thank Trish Abrams for agreeing to finish the Vice-chair term with me until the end of 2017. Bob Dietz has decided to step down.

I hope you all are having a wonderful summer and your gardens are growing well.

Hope to see you at the next meeting!

## August 21 - Picnic



The chapter's annual picnic and members-only plant sale will again be held at the Pine Township Community Park, on Sunday, August 21, 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 seed is a special activity of the overall garden experience. Members are urged to bring plants they have started from seed or ones they have divided 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 contribute 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 is easy to split and transplant. Volunteer seedlings are always choice material for our sale.

**RSVP by Sunday, August 14, if you plan to attend.**

**Contact Patty McGuire at [cmpmam@comcast.net](mailto: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.

## Allegheny Chapter, Rock Garden Meeting Minutes

The April 17, 2016 meeting of the Allegheny Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society was called to order at Northland Public Library at 2:15 p.m. by Chair Karen Schmidt. There were 30 members and 2 guests in attendance.

Karen introduced the guest speaker, Carol Anne Knock, Master Gardener. Carol is a retired Animal Science educator. She owns her own business known as Animal Insights specializing in animal behavior. However, gardening has always been a passion. According to her records, there are over 1,000 plants/shrubs, trees, etc. on her two (2) acre property. She also has a very large rock garden. Her favorite plants are sedums, hostas, ornamental grasses and day lilies.

Carol's program was entitled "Fascinating World of Succulents". She showed examples of the amazing textures, shapes and colors of sedum. Her presentation included such topics as how to prune, fertilize, mulch and select pots for sedums. She also discussed edible and medicinal succulents. In addition to their beauty, growing succulents has a purpose. They interact with beneficial pollinators and aid in eco-scaping.

Following a refreshment break, the Business Meeting began with the reading of the March 13, 2016 minutes by Dianne Passoth. Lorraine Duffola moved and Bonnie Plato seconded that the minutes be approved as read. The motion passed unanimously.

Patty McGuire gave the Treasurer's Report. There were 3 checks written and 2 deposits made. Janice Klingelhofer moved and Susan Benn seconded that the Treasurer's Report be accepted as received. The motion unanimously passed.

Patty then read a letter from the Horticultural Society thanking us for our donation. To date the Club has contributed \$1,100 to that organization.

Lyn Lang brought everyone up to date on plans for the May 1 Show and Sale. She reminded us to read the section in the *Alpine Line* on preparing plants for the Show. Len Lehman aided in properly identifying the plants

Karen Schmidt advised that the May 15, 2016 meeting would be held at the Aviary. The speaker was Brent Heath, owner of Brent & Becky's Bulbs. Guests were welcome.

Sandy Ciccone moved and Carolyn Collier seconded that the Business Meeting be adjourned. There were no objections. A raffle ended the afternoon.

Dianne Passoth, Secretary



## Date, Event, and Location for Chapter Activities in 2016

- \* **Jan 17 - St John's Lutheran Church**, 311 Cumberland Road, 412-364-1606, **2:30 PM**. Note change in time.  
Speaker: Len Lehman - **Rock Gardening 101**  
We will meet at the church since the library is not available. Members to bring snacks: A-H.
- \* **Feb 21 - Northland Library, 2:00 PM**, 300 Cumberland Road, 412-366-8100.  
Speaker: Len Lehman - **Seed Starting Workshop**  
Members to bring snacks: I-P
- \* **Mar 13 - Northland Library, 2:00 PM**  
Speaker: Keith McNeish Topic: **Soil the gardener's most precious asset**  
Members to bring snacks: Q-Z
- \* **Apr 17 - Northland Library, 2:00 PM**  
Speaker: Carol A. Knock Topic: **Sedum**  
Members to bring snacks: A-H
- \* **May 1 – Soergel Orchards, Allegheny Chapter's Annual Rock Garden Plant Show and Sale, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM**  
Chairs: Debra Meyer, Carol Przyborski and Lyn Lang
- \* **May 15 - National Aviary, 2:00 PM**  
Speaker: Brent Heath, owner Brent and Becky's Bulbs Topic: **Lovely Little Bulbs Minor Bulbs with Major Impact**  
Members to bring snacks: I-P
- \* **June 26 - Breakfast at DJs Greenhouse, Transfer, PA, 9:30 AM**  
Speaker: **Kokedamas Workshop**
- July - No meeting
- \* **August 21 - Member's Only Picnic, Pine Township Community Park, 2:00 PM**
- \* **September 11 - Northland Library, 2:00 PM**  
Speaker: Joseph Tychonievich Topic: **The World of Rock Gardening**  
Members to bring snacks: Q-Z
- \* **October 16 – Annual Awards Banquet, St John's Lutheran Church, Time TBD (NOTE DATE CHANGE)**
- \* **November 20 - Northland Library, 2:00 PM**  
Speaker: Mark C. Tebbitt, Ph.D. Topic: **Plant Hunting in the Andes**  
Members to bring snacks: I - P
- ⇒ **December 8 – Seed Packaging, Northland Library, 9:00 AM**

During the growing season, Allegheny Chapter members visit our rock garden at the National Aviary on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month to do maintenance. Members meet at the garden from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. You may contact Al Deurbrouck at [adeurbrouck@verizon.net](mailto:adeurbrouck@verizon.net) or Lyn Lang at [lyn9@consolidated.net](mailto:lyn9@consolidated.net) for further details.

# Growing the Cold Hardy Ice Plant:

## New Varieties and Returning Favorites

*This entry was posted on 05/10/16 by High Country Gardens. [David Salman](#), founder and chief horticulturist*

I've been in the greenhouse business long enough to remember when Purple Ice Plant (*Delosperma cooperi*) was first introduced to the gardening community in the early 1990's by Panayoti Kelaidis of Denver Botanic Garden.

It was a groundbreaking new plant introduction, the first of its genus to be discovered as cold hardy. This beautiful plant was a huge hit with Front Range Colorado gardeners. We now have many outstanding cold hardy ice plant selections to enjoy, and their use as succulent groundcovers has extended well beyond Colorado.

Ice Plants are native to Africa, with the best cold-hardy species originating from South Africa's lofty Drakensberg Mountains, mountains of the Western Cape and the cold plateaus of the Great Karoo desert. And thanks to the continuing efforts of Mr. Kelaidis and Colorado's Plant Select plant introduction program, the cultivars now available provide a wide range of colors from which to choose, including yellow, orange, purple, scarlet, pink, magenta, bi-color and many colors in between. For those interested in providing garden habitat for pollinators, Delosperma are an exceptional nectar source for honeybees.

## Where Ice Plants Grow Best

Ice Plants are most reliably perennial in the drier, less humid climates of the western US.

*Delosperma* tend to be annuals in cold, wet zone 4 and 5 climates like Madison, Chicago and Cincinnati, but will be longer lived in the zone 6-8 areas of the Appalachian mountains and Eastern Seaboard. (Remember that many drought tolerant plants are one or two zones less cold hardy in wetter climates.) It should be mentioned that in regions where Ice Plants are annuals in the ground, they should be used as container plants as they are fast growing and colorful when cascading over the edges of their pots.

## Cultural Advice for Healthy Ice Plants

### The keys to successful cultivation of Delosperma are as follows:

- Plant them in a sunny spot with fast draining soil. Sandy, sandy loam or gravelly soils are best. In drier climates, garden loam is fine, but avoid clay in all regions.
- Plant by mid-summer in colder climates to establish themselves for winter.
- Fall planting is recommended in hot summer climates of the Southwest US.
- Water them regularly (weekly) during the heat of the summer, as Delosperma come from areas of South Africa that get summer rains.
- But keep them dry over the winter months. In regions where snow stays on the ground over winter, I recommend covering the plants with a piece of row crop cover (frost blanket) to keep their foliage and crowns dry.
- Ice Plants love gravel mulch and do best when the stems grow over the top of the gravel which keeps their roots moist and their leaves and stems dry (by not sitting in contact with wet soil over the winter). Other fast drying mulch materials like pine needles or medium textured bark chips are also suitable.
- Let them dry out in the fall by stopping or greatly curtailing their irrigation. They need to shrink down and harden off for the cold winter to come. Lush, actively growing plants in late fall often are killed by the first hard frost.
- Prune out any winter-damaged stems in mid-spring.
- Only fertilize once in the fall using organic or natural fertilizers. Ice plants are very prone to winter kill when fertilized frequently during the growing season as they keep growing into the fall and stay plump with water in their leaves.

To cover larger areas with Ice Plants, space new transplants 15-18" apart (closer for smaller rock garden varieties) with a minimum of soil preparation. A handful of Yum Yum Mix and a little compost in each planting hole is enough.

## Recommended Varieties:



**Delosperma 'Alan's Apricot'**- 2016 Plant Select winner.

A new hybrid introduced by Alan Tower of Denver, CO is long blooming and very cold hardy. Possibly the most cold hardy next to *D. congestum*, *D. nubiginum*, and *D. sp. 'Lesotho Pink'*. The plant blooms all summer with large pink-fading-to-apricot flowers. Some afternoon shade shows off the pastel colored flower best.



**Delosperma dyeri Red Mountain® Flame** - 2015 Plant Select® winner. This is my introduction that I discovered in a batch of seed grown *Delosperma dyeri* plants that had accidentally hybridized with an unknown variety. The large scarlet-orange flowers cover the plant beginning in mid-spring for about 4 weeks. This selection is reliably cold hardy to zone 6. I'm not kidding when I recommend sunglasses for viewing the brilliant flowers in the mid-day sun. Flame has excellent heat tolerance and is recommended for hotter, drier planting sites.



**Delosperma ashtonii 'Blut'** - The very best long blooming selection that covers its dark green, slightly flattened leaves with a blanket of dark magenta flowers. The handsome foliage is reliably evergreen, and it turns a nice plum color over the winter months for additional ornamental interest. Good cold hardiness and xeric, this is an exceptionally long lived ice plant. Discovered by nurseryman Kelly Grummons of Arvada, CO.



**Delosperma 'Lavender Ice'**

2009 Plant Select® - A wonderful, long blooming selection that covers itself with huge pastel lavender-pink flowers for much of the growing season. I recommend mixing 'Lavender Ice' with 'Blut' and other magenta or pink-flowered ice plants to show off its superb flowers. The reliably evergreen foliage turns purplish in color over the winter. Introduced by Perennial Favorites Nursery in Rye, CO.

**Delosperma sp. 'Lesotho Pink'** - I selected this superb variety from seed collected at an elevation of 11,000 feet in the high peaks of Lesotho (the mountainous, landlocked country in the middle of South Africa). The bright green foliage forms a tight-growing mat that covers itself in early to mid-spring with a carpet of bright pink flowers. Very cold hardy, this is often the first of the cold hardy Ice Plants to bloom in spring. Does best at higher elevations and areas with cooler summers; not a good choice for hot climates. Needs water in the summer heat.

**Delosperma Fire Spinner®** - 2012 Plant Select® winner. The flowers of Fire Spinner® are an incendiary combination of orange and purple that cover the plant in late spring. A big planting of it will be the highlight of your late spring garden. Note: Fire Spinner® should not be planted in regions with warm winter weather, as it will not chill the plant sufficiently to flower. Best flowering occurs in zones 5-8.



# The Golden Rules of Successful Alpine

## Rock Gardening in Western PA

by Al Deurbrouck

Rock gardening in Western Pennsylvania is not easy; we are trying to grow alpine plants that are at home above the tree line and grow at 1,300 feet above sea level. We fight high humidity that practically eliminates our chances of growing some of the really choice alpiners of our western states. However, there are a LOT of really choice alpine plants that we can grow successfully when paying attention to details.

**Drainage** — If one aspect of my approach to rock gardening has changed over the years, it has been my march toward a coarser, more open, and somewhat richer planting media. A wag once said the three keys to successful rock gardening are “**drainage - drainage – drainage.**”

**Aspect** — A facing in a given direction (from Webster). Give me a good eastern exposure on a hillside and a lot of difficult plants all of a sudden thrive. Dr. Norm Deno, a former member of our Chapter and the author of “Seed Germination Theory and Practice”, gave a talk to our Chapter on what he called the “Magic Angle” in the planting and growing of alpiners. The Magic Angle provides maximum afternoon sunlight to the growing surface of plants but little direct sunshine to the soil surface. The result is a cooler root system, reduced watering, and a happy plant. This is generally an exposure sloping to the east and to a lesser degree to the north.

**Maintenance** — Because our soil mixes are relatively coarse, the watering of alpiners needs to be done more often than is generally realized. However, deep soaking of the alpine garden is not required as the water drains quickly through the coarse soil. Finally, most true alpiners do not require much feeding. An ambitious fertilizing regimen can lead to soft, large, non-characteristic plant growth that will result in plants likely not to be as hardy as would be expected.

When you buy a plant, the first thing you should do is look at it and determine how to propagate it. Carl Gehenio dropped this tip in a talk he gave to our Chapter a few years ago. I do this to the point where I'm often able to split a plant as soon as I get it from the nursery. Very commonly I do this on plants I get from Dennis James' nursery because of the generous size of the plants he sells.

Always put your plant labels in the same place in relationship to your plants. I always put them to the right and somewhat above the plant. This sure helps when you forget the name of a plant that has been in your garden a number of years and has grown substantially in spread completely covering your label. This little trick I learned on a visit to the awesome gardens of Geoffrey Charlesworth and Norman Singer. To expand on this - when Alan Peacock and I attended the 100-year anniversary of the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show in 2013, we also visited a number of other choice English gardens including Kew where we discovered that plant labels were both above ground and below ground for most plants. Below ground labeling is a great way to assure that plants are properly identified, if above ground labels are moved or simply lost over time.

Before purchasing plants, check hardiness zone knowing what your zone is. Also consider micro-climates which often offer less hardy plants winter protection.

So finally, start with easier plants that you will have success with: alliums, campanulas, pulsatillas, aquilegias, globularias, dianthus, and phlox. And please do not overlook the sempervivums and sedums just because they are so easy. They provide dependable color and exciting form all year.

# MYSTERY PLANT CONTEST

Our mystery plant for this newsletter is a rhubarb relative (in fact, its close relative called Indian Rhubarb is frequently used in Chinese medicine and cooking). Hardly a rock garden plant, it is regardless a spectacular plant because of its impressive size and unusual coloration. The pale upper parts are chlorophyll-lacking bracts (similar to the white bracts of dogwoods). Because these plants grow at high altitudes, the bracts protect the hidden flowers from both cold and high UV light which could sterilize the flowers. The bracts contain special chemicals to filter UV radiation. Also, since pollinators are rare at high altitudes, the plants have formed a symbiotic relationship with female fungus gnats. A special chemical secreted by the flowers attracts the gnats which then parasitize the flowers with their eggs. However, the gnats pollinate far more flowers than they parasitize and so both benefit. In the US, the plant is more of a novelty and is generally grown in cool greenhouses rather than in the open garden.

Be the first to correctly identify this plant with both the common name and the scientific name to receive a special prize. Mail answers to Len Lehman at [lclem1@verizon.net](mailto:lclem1@verizon.net).



# Allegheny Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society

## The Ruth Young Library 2015 Book List

Patty McGuire, Librarian

***MEMBERS ONLY SERVICE***



The list of books available for loan to Allegheny Chapter members has been updated and placed on the Chapter's website for your review. If you would like to borrow one or more books from our Ruth Young Library, visit the website at

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

From there you can make your selection and then click the on-screen envelope to send Patty McGuire your request via email.

**NOTE - To request a book, please email Patty McGuire.** Patty is our librarian and treasurer. She has all of the books contained in the Chapter's library. We periodically publish the list of available books that members can check out.

**She will bring your specific book request to the requested meeting you will be attending. Please make the job of librarian easier by returning borrowed books promptly.**

**Thank you!**