



ADIRONDACK
CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

www.acnargs.org

October 2006

In this issue:

- October 21 program: Susan O'Leary, "Gardens I Have Known & Loved"
- Mark your calendar: Annual Meeting and dish-to-pass November 11
- Letter from the chair
- Eastern Winter Study Weekend in Rochester: The Evolution of a Rock Gardener
- Member Grants Available For Study Weekend
- Green Dragon or Prolific Imposter?
- Simple Stratification for Tree Seeds and Woodland Plants
- Other events: Cornell Plantations free fall lecture line-up
- People

October 21 program: Susan O'Leary, "Gardens I Have Known & Loved"

Susan O'Leary, executive director of One Seventy One Cedar Arts center in Corning, will speak on "Gardens I Have Known & Loved" at our meeting Saturday, October 21.

Susan has worked in public horticulture for more than 20 years. Her presentation will feature gardens in Delaware Valley, where she used to be education leader at Longwood Gardens, as well as some gardens in the Rochester area, where she managed restoration of the George Eastman House. Susan has also worked as a horticulture and preservation consultant and for the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta.

The meeting will be held in the Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, on the Cornell University campus. Bring a bag lunch and socialize starting at noon. The program will begin at 1 p.m.

Mark your calendar: 2006 Programs at a glance

- Nov. 11 - Annual Meeting and dish-to-pass. 404 Plant Science.

Look for information about 2007 events in the February issue of *The Green Dragon* and on our website: www.acnargs.org

Letter from the Chair

Want to go to Greece? After Nick Nickou's talk last month, I do! He showed areas of Greece off the beaten path and all of it gorgeous. And from the looks of things it certainly looked like all gardeners in Greece – whether by the sea or in the mountains – are rock gardeners. They simply have no choice. I really liked the fact that most of the plants we saw liked alkaline soils which suits my soil pH just fine. I'll pack my bags anytime.

Our upcoming October 21 program, "Gardens of the Delaware Valley" with Susan O'Leary, promises to bring us closer to home. Having spent a few days last year touring gardens in the Delaware Valley, I'm looking forward to Susan's perspective and maybe even re-visiting some familiar places. Chanticleer, one of the public gardens where she worked, is one of my favorites.

The Chapter has two important opportunities coming up for our members. The first is our annual member recognition awards that are presented at our annual meeting November 11. Now is the time to submit nominations for this year's recipients. These awards serve as a way to publicly recognize and thank members of the Chapter for exemplary service. Ours is an all-volunteer organization so behind everything we do – from finding a reserving meeting space, booking and accommodating speakers and other program, organizing plants sales, tracking our finances, and publishing and sending out our newsletters and more – there are devoted individuals making it all come together. Please contact me with your nominations by October 31. (cme24@cornell.edu; 1562 Taughannock Blvd. Ithaca, NY 14850-9512; (607) 387-5823.)

The second opportunity is really two-fold and is so important that we have devoted two separate articles to it. Eastern Study Week-end (ESW) is coming January 19-21, hosted by our sister spin-off (if I might be allowed to call it) the Genesee Valley Chapter. Never is ESW likely to be this close to us again and so our hope is that our Chapter will be well represented. The program schedule is highlighted elsewhere in the newsletter and I hope you agree that the line-up of speakers and vendors is impressive. Some of our former members have been part of the organizing team. A number of years ago our own Chapter hosted ESW so we can appreciate how much work is involved.

One of the results of our own successful ESW is that we have set up a fund to which our members may apply for one-time grants up to \$300 to be used to further not just the recipient's knowledge of rock gardening but also to share with and expand the knowledge with the Chapter membership. The application and review process is outlined in this newsletter. Our funds allow us to award several grants so I encourage each of you to consider applying.

Alas, the gardening season is winding down. Enjoy the last of the fall flowers! See you October 21.

Happy gardening,

Carol Eichler, chair

Eastern Winter Study Weekend: The Evolution of a Rock Gardener

January 19-21, 2007

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Rochester, N.Y.

Sponsored by: Genesee Valley Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society.

This dynamic, fun-filled, educational weekend will feature fabulous speakers, interactive breakout sessions, premier vendors, alpine exhibits, raffle & silent auction, memorable gifts, book sales & signings, tasty food, fun social hours, & more! Speakers include:

Gwen Kelaidis, NARGS members since 1976 and editor of the Bulletin for 11 years. Currently working on books about hardy succulents and rock gardening for beginners.

Tim Gruner, Curator, Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Ill., manages a team of gardeners in the maintenance and ongoing construction of the #1 rated Japanese Garden in North America. Frequent contributor to Roth Journal of Japanese Gardening.

Nicola Ripley, Director of Horticulture & Research at the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in Colorado, graduated with a Masters in Ecology from University College of North Wales and has 18 years of experience in the field of alpine ecology.

Rex Murfitt, author, photographer, and lecturer, was born in England, and trained as a nurseryman. He now grows alpiners at home in Victoria, B.C. Coauthor of "Creating and Planting Garden Troughs" and author of new "Creating and Planting Alpine Gardens."

Carl Heilman II, renowned photographer, has lived in the Adirondacks for almost 30 years and melds his passion for wilderness into his photography.

Henrik Zetterlund, horticultural botanist of Gothenburg Botanic Garden and co-author of "Corydalis, a gardeners guide & monograph of the tuberous species." A grower extraordinaire who introduced new species of *Corydalis* and *Dionysia*.

Bill Mathes Ph. D., owner of The Wild Orchid Company, focusing on hardy terrestrial orchids. Bill enjoys the excitement of the typical outdoor gardener when they realize that they can grow orchids in their own backyard.

Mike Shadrack, British horticultural speaker and photographer, co-author of "The Encyclopedia of Hostas," will share the charm of dwarf and mini hostas, their special needs, container growing and selection.

The program also features breakout sessions (Plant Selections for Oriental Gardening, Trough Planting, Soil Mixtures) and early-bird tours.

Registration fee: \$255 per person, Includes two continental breakfasts, Saturday lunch buffet and Saturday night banquet. Optional Friday Dinner: \$35. Full program details and registration information are available at: www.gvcnargs.org, or phone: 585-924-1739.

Member Grants Available For Study Weekend

You are invited to apply for a grant to attend Eastern Study Weekend January 19-21, 2007 in Rochester, N.Y., hosted by the Genesee Valley Chapter. This grant program was established to help grow the knowledge of our members, encourage greater participation at both the local and national levels, and, by requiring some form of sharing with the greater membership, furthering our collective knowledge about rock gardening.

Here's how to apply:

1. Submit a request in writing to Chapter Chair, Carol Eichler. This can be submitted by email (cme24@cornell.edu) or snail mail (1562 Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca, NY 14850).
2. Your request should include your name and contact information and a short paragraph explaining why you want to be considered. You might also suggest what you would like to offer back to the Chapter such as a short talk to the Chapter (as Art did at our annual meeting last year), a newsletter article, etc.
3. Applications will be forwarded to a review committee who may request additional information, if needed, from you.
4. Deadline for applying is October 31, 2006.
5. Awardees will be announced at the November annual meeting.
6. Awardees will be expected to share information from ESW in some form with the Chapter membership.

Our aim is to encourage a number of Adirondack Chapter members to attend this nearby Eastern Study Weekend. We have budgeted \$1,500 or at least five awards to be granted.

Our parent organization, NARGS National, also offers grants up to \$300 to first-time attendees to a National conference such as ESW. If you wish to apply for this additional grant, please submit your application following the criteria above. You must be a member of NARGS National to receive this grant and the Chapter Chair on behalf of the applicant must submit this application to the review committee.

Carol Eichler, chair

Green Dragon or Prolific Imposter?

Editor's note: *As a member of both ACNARGS and the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Rosemarie Parker brings a unique perspective on these plants. If you would like to share your experiences with particular plants – favorites or otherwise – write newsletter editor Craig Cramer cdcramer@twcny.rr.com.*

Misidentified plants are sort of like a computer virus – if you get one you are most likely to spread it to your friends.

A chance meeting with fellow ACNARGS member Tom Myers in Wegman's started me on an identification search that may have implications for several other chapter members and/or the members of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society. Tom

mentioned he'd acquired a "green dragon" (*Ariseama dracontium*) that turned out to be a weedy look-alike – and one that is hard to eradicate. I've acquired *A. dracontium* seedlings from several sources over the past eight years, but mostly from NARGS chapter sales or give-aways. I've had very mixed luck with them. Some sort of sit there, while others grow enthusiastically.

Green dragons have a reputation for being hard to grow and slow to spread. Yet some folks in this area literally give them away because "they grow like weeds." I've seen such clumps myself. Well, after Tom's comment, I started looking closer. There is an Asian genus, *Pinellia*, which looks just like *Ariseama*. Several species are in cultivation, and an internet search will generate a lot of information. I suggest starting with the Pinellia Page (www.aroid.org/genera/arisaema/herold/Pages/pinellia.html), which is informal and has nice photos if you follow the links.

To make a long story shorter, yes, I have some *Pinellia* mixed in with what I hope is some true *A. dracontium*. I think I have *P. cordata*, but haven't keyed it conclusively. I'm sure I got it from someone local. Tom got his from Fair Gouldin, who lives in what used to be Dr. Hamilton's house. Both Fair and I donated green dragons to the Mundy Wildflower Garden at Plantations, and, yes, at least three were *Pinellia*. (Thankfully garden derived plants are only put in the entry beds, so it will not be that hard to locate and pull them. But they already have seedlings nearby!) Given the contacts Dr. Hamilton had, *Pinellia* may well be all over the region's gardens. Which may be fine, so long as it is properly identified. But it's not good if we are spreading it in the name of the native *Ariseama*.

How can you tell? Well, it isn't easy unless you have the inflorescence. The leaves of *Pinellia* look like *A. dracontium*. Bob Wesley even says so. But the flower timing is off. And in the plants in both my garden and Mundy, the *Pinellia* spadix (the "Jack" part in the pulpit) is fused to the spathe (the "pulpit") along much of its length. According to Bob, in true green dragons the spadix is standing free, totally *unfused*. So, you may have a *Pinellia* imposter if you notice that your "green dragons" are:

- Blooming in August. (Yes, large *A. dracontium* do bloom later than small ones, but not that much later.)
- Still green in September. (*A. dracontium* should have senesced by then.)
- Prolific self seeders. (According to Bob, *A. dracontium* spreads more by offset bulbs, usually within 2 inches or so of the original stem rather than by seedlings found further away.)

If you suspect that you have *Pinellia*, please keep a close eye on them until you can verify the identification with a bloom. Don't give them away until you know for certain. If you have planted them in or near a natural area where *A. dracontium* grows naturally, please remove them. If you choose to keep *Pinellia* in your garden – and they can be attractive, if aggressive – be sure to clearly label any that you give away with correct ID and warnings. I'd dig them up before selling the house, too.

Rosemarie Parker, ACNARGS member

Simple Stratification for Tree Seeds and Woodland Plants

Many of our native trees and woodland plants produce seed that will not sprout without stratification. According to Norman Deno, in *Seed Germination Theory and Practice*, all plants have a mechanism for delaying germination. The book also states that germination patterns are more related to the ecological environment than to taxonomy. In other words, woodland plants would be expected to have similar germination requirements.

Deno also says that there are exceptions to the generalizations made in the book. Many woodland plants need a cold, moist period to condition the seeds, prior to warm temperatures that ultimately bring on germination. For more technical information on germination requirements, and requirements for specific plants, *Seed Germination Theory and Practice* is a great reference and is available from the NARGS book service. (Find more information on the book service here: www.nargs.org/libry/bookstore.html)

One way to accomplish stratification without tying up space in the refrigerator is to plant seeds in pots and let the cold weather stratify your seeds. I have had success using this stratification method with red and bur oaks (*Quercus rubra* and *Q. macrocarpa*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), bladder nut (*Staphylea trifolia*), false Solomon seal (*Smilacena racemosa*), and blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*).

A potting mix with good drainage is essential, with our wet, cold weather from October to spring. I use a commercial potting mix and sometimes mix in a little sand for the gallon pots. I start large seeds (acorns) in gallon size plastic pots and small seeds (false Solomon seal) in six packs. Labeling the pots is important, since many months elapse between planting and germination.

Foraging chipmunks and squirrels can wreak havoc with the lightly buried acorns. One strategy to fend off the seed thieves is to use a barrier. Covering the pots with hardware cloth (galvanized steel mesh) is effective. Last year I also tried covering the soil surface of some of the planted pots with red pepper flakes. The red pepper flakes did deter the critters over the past winter, but I don't have enough experience with this method to predict whether it will be successful every year. After the pepper treatment, I covered each pot with plastic mesh bags leftover from produce (oranges or onions).

When I've completed the potting, the pots go into a protected spot that I try to keep covered with snow during the middle of winter. When the seeds begin to sprout in the spring, the pots go into a spot with part to full sun. As the young plants grow up, the plastic mesh and hardware cloth need to be removed.

John Gilrein, membership coordinator

Other events: Cornell Plantations free fall lecture line-up

This fall's free lecture series from Cornell Plantations is moving to an every-other-week schedule. While you may be disappointed that there aren't more programs, you won't be disappointed by the spectacular line-up.

The lectures start at 7:30 p.m. in Statler Auditorium on the Cornell University campus. Ample free parking is available after 5 p.m. in the parking garage on Hoy Road, just a short walk away. For additional information about these and other educational programs sponsored by Cornell Plantations this fall, visit www.plantations.cornell.edu or call 607-255-2400.

- October 11 – “Gardening--Passion for a Lifetime,” **Ken Druse**, gardening and environmental journalist, author of *The Passion for Gardening* and *Making More Plants*.
- October 25 – “Heirloom Gardening,” **Amy Goldman**, gardener and author of two award-winning books: *Melons For The Passionate Grower*, and *The Compleat Squash*.
- November 8 – “The Livable Landscape,” **Rick Darke**, photographer, landscape designer and author of *The American Woodland Garden* and *Timber Press Pocket Guide to Ornamental Grasses*.

People

Questions? Want to find out how you can help the Chapter? Don't hesitate to contact one of the volunteers who help make everything happen:

- **Chair:** Carol Eichler, cme24@cornell.edu, 607-387-5823
- **Treasurer:** Carolyn Yaeger, cao2@cornell.edu, 607-844-9462
- **Speaker Coordinator:** Anne Klingensmith, aekling@lightlink.com, 607-256-9308
- **Garden Trip/Tours:** Peg Ross and Alice Davis, pogr@aol.com, 607-656-4237 (Peg), 607-656-9931 (Alice)
- **Plant of the Month:** Billie Jean Isbell, bjj1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484
- **Plant sales:** David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu, 607-342-3660
- **Membership:** John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, 315-492-0844
- **Newsletter editor/Webmaster:** Craig Cramer, cdcramer@twcny.rr.com, 607-539-7233
- **Rep. to National, and Ex-officio:** Robin Bell, rgb2@cornell.edu, 607-272-2074

Green Dragon Tales

Published eight times a year (Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Craig Cramer: cdcramer@twcny.rr.com. Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be in **November**.

