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CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

www.acnargs.org

April 2007

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April 21 program: Seedling exchange & Liz Knowles on “Echoes of Wild Places”

Liz Knowles, a gardener and tour organizer from Toronto, will speak on “Echoes of Wild Places: A Hockley Valley, Ontario gardener pushes the limits” at our April 21 meeting. Immediately following Liz’s presentation we will have our seedling exchange.

The meeting will be held at **Tompkins County Cooperative Extension**, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. (where Dey St., Willow Ave. and Rte. 13 meet). If you need directions, visit: counties.cce.cornell.edu/Tompkins or call the CCE office (during regular business hours): (607) 272-2292.

The study group will meet at 10 a.m. (see below). Setup begins at 11 a.m. Bring a brown bag lunch and enjoy the company of your fellow gardeners from noon and 1 p.m.

This year’s seedling **exchange** is different than our usual April seedling **sale**. After Liz speaks, we’ll dig into our seedlings, divide them up, and hope to see them again in your garden and at one of our plant sales. You may bring your seedlings in individual pots or one large pot. We’ll have soil, pots, and labels on hand to help with the transfer to a good home. You do not have to bring seedlings to get seedlings. And it’s all free! Folks are also welcome to bring divisions of plants, labeled, and potted or not, to be reserved for the May plant sale at Ithaca High School

Road trip to Stonecrop Gardens April 28

Plans are coming together for our April 28 trip to Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Springs N.Y. (www.stonecrop.org). That's also the day of Stonecrop's spring sale, featuring the best plants, planted tufa specimens and planted troughs from Wrightman Nurseries and Alpine Mt. Echo. Find more information about the sale here: www.wrightmanalpines.com/stonecrop

I suggest we leave Ithaca at 6 a.m. in order to get to Stonecrop by 10 a.m. when the garden opens. They will close at 5 p.m. I need to know how many people want to take the guided tour of the garden. They want advance notice. The cost is \$10 dollars per person.

We do not have enough people signed up to make a bus with a driver feasible. However, National Rent-a-Car has a 7-passenger van for \$79.00 a day with unlimited mileage if any of you want to take advantage of that.

If anyone wants to sign up for the trip, please email or call me: Billie Jean Isbell bjj1@cornell.edu or 607-539-6484. **Let me know if you are willing to drive and how many spaces you have for passengers.**

We are also planning a two- or three-day trip around June 14 to Quebec, Canada to visit Maria Galetti's Alpine Mt Echo Gardens in Sutton, Quebec, near the Vermont border (www.alpinemtecho.com). Then we will travel north 2 hours beyond Quebec City to visit Frank Cabot's garden. Les Quatre Vents. (More info about Cabot's garden: pss.uvm.edu/ppp/gardens/gm0802.htm) Contact me if you have questions: bjj1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484.

Billie Jean Isbell, Garden trips/tours coordinator

Mark your calendar: 2007 program line-up

April 21 – Study Group Meeting, 10 a.m., Wurster Garden, Tompkins County Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, NY

April 21 – Liz Knowles, a gardener and tour organizer from Toronto on “Echoes of Wild Places: A Hockley Valley, Ontario gardener pushes the limits.” Tompkins County Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, NY Brown bag lunch at noon. Program begins at 1 p.m. **Seedling exchange** follows program.

April 28 – Garden tour: Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Springs N.Y. Featuring plant sale by Wrightman Nurseries and Alpine Mt. Echo. (Details above.)

April 28 – Wurster Rock Garden Guided Tour. Led by Robin Bell and sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Interested in rock gardening, but don't know how to get started? Come from 10 to 11:30 for a guided tour of the demonstration Wurster Rock Garden, just off Dey St. near Extension. Robin will explain the several designs incorporated into the garden and discuss the plants represented

and other easy rock garden plants. Rain or shine! Limit 15. \$5 fee. Pre-registration preferred. Contact Pat Curran, pc21@cornell.edu or (607) 272-2292.

May 19 – Plant Sale, Ithaca High School

June 14 (or thereabouts) – Quebec gardens tour. A two- or three-day trip to visit Maria Galetti's Alpine Mt Echo Gardens in Sutton, Quebec, and Frank Cabot's garden. Les Quatre Vents.

August date TBD – Picnic and members-only plant sale. Bill Plummer, Gangs Mills (near Painted Post), N.Y., will host.

September 15 – Ellen Hornig, proprietor of Seneca Hill Perennials and well known to many chapter members, will talk on woodland plants and other treasures from her garden/nursery. Location to be announced.

October 21 – Janis Ruksans, owner of Ruksans Bulbs Nursery in Latvia, a world renowned bulb grower and collector and author of five books on bulbs will speak. **Note this meeting will be on a Sunday** due to Ruksans' tight speaking schedule. 404 Plant Science. Brown bag lunch at noon. Program begins at 1 p.m.

November 10 – Annual meeting and dish-to-pass. 404 Plant Science. Brown bag lunch at noon. Location to be announced.

Letter from the Chair

Spring snowstorms are not the most welcome sights. We were unfortunate to have one arrive on March 16th. But fortunate perhaps in that our speaker Harvey Wrightman and his wife Irene arrived at their destination, host family Carolyn and Jerry Yaeger's home, before the brunt of the storm arrived.

For those Chapter members who ventured out the next day, with the storm largely diminished by then, Saturday began with a meeting of the Study Group in the morning. No chance of working in the Wurster Garden where some stones appeared above the snow piles – likely hiding a few flowers already in bloom. The Study Group was able to continue to do planning and gather ideas for the season ahead. In this issue you will find an update from this meeting.

Twenty-five people signed in for our afternoon program where we were treated to many slides of dry-tolerant rock garden plants and also to the real thing – plants, plants, and more plants! Between our own plant-of-the-month offerings and an additional collection of plants that Harvey sold directly, it certainly felt like the gardening season had begun. Hopefully within this next month we'll be able to introduce our new acquisitions to our gardens. If that wasn't enough, Harvey also led a tufa planting workshop subsidized by the Chapter. (See story below.)

Information was also introduced about two exciting garden trips that Billie Jean has arranged for April to Stonecrop and June to choice locations in Quebec. Look for more information in this issue about these exciting opportunities!

Lastly, for those who truly wanted to make a day of it, there was a dish-to-pass dinner at the Yaeger's. We found out that the storm hadn't entirely passed as we struggled out to our cars and back home under a new, not insignificant, snow covering.

Let's hope April brings us better weather.

Happy Gardening!

Carol Eichler, chair

Study group update and plans

The March snow didn't discourage us from meeting and making plans. We now have a clipboard posted inside the shed at Cooperative Extension where we can record on log sheets any individual or group activity at the garden. The clipboard has a cover to keep our documentation dry. It also contains a map identifying the various habitats within the rock garden and a plant list.

We continued discussion about a weather-proof brochure rack. And that we might combine this rack with a small planting – a trough would be perfect since there are no troughs used in the garden and it would further illustrate a way to get involved with rock gardening.

We talked about what kinds of information could be displayed (perhaps alternating different publications) such as the Wurster Garden and Chapter brochures, and others we'd like to produce such as understanding habitats, how to build a trough, soil mixes, easy plants to grow, growing from seed, beginners reference list and websites. If anyone in the Chapter is interested in writing a leaflet on any of these topics, please contact Carol Eichler.

The Chapter also purchased about 50 plants from Wrightman Nursery. Carol has catalogued them and is holding them under lights at her house. The Study Group will plan to meet at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 21 at Cooperative Extension just prior to the program meeting and seedling exchange.

It will be time to get these new acquisitions planted and the garden spruced up for the public class that Robin Bell is teaching there on April 28. We'll need many hands to get the garden into shape so please join us. Bring tools and wear work clothes. It's a great opportunity to expand your rock gardening knowledge.

If you wish to be placed on the email alert (or phone if you do not have e-mail), or have other questions please contact Carol Eichler (cme24@cornell.edu or 607-387-5823).

Carol Eichler, chair

Tufa workshop with Harvey Wrightman

Editor's note: This is adapted from a post on my garden blog. For more and larger pictures, visit: www.remarc.com/craig/?p=75

After our March 17 meeting, Harvey Wrightman (right), owner of Wrightman Alpines in Kerwood, Ontario led a tufa planting workshop with about 15 chapter members. Harvey sells many alpines that are well-suited for tufa gardens, rock gardens, crevice gardens, and troughs. (Check out his website: www.wrightmanalpines.com)

Tufa is a relatively soft, high-lime rock that forms when calcium carbonate precipitates from water. It's not to be confused with hypertufa, which is made from concrete and usually some peat. I've made a bunch of hypertufa troughs, but this was my first experience with the real thing.

Harvey brought along hunks of tufa to his presentation that had already been planted. They mimicked slides he showed in a presentation earlier in the day of alpine plants growing out of rock faces.

Later at the workshop, he demonstrated the process. It's pretty simple. Drill half-inch holes in the tufa, no more than 2 inches deep. Nestle in rooted cuttings (foreground of top picture) along with a mix of crushed tufa and some of the fines leftover from drilling the hole.

Once the weather settles, the planted tufa can live outside year-round, with occasional watering when it's dry. Over time, the plants actually sink their roots right into the rock, and form cute little buns or mats that flower in their particular season.

Here's a short list Harvey sent me of some good species for tufa:

- *Armeria* x 'Little Penny'
- *Asperula boissieri* (and other species too)
- *Arenaria tetraquetra*
- *Primula allionii* 'Neon'
- *Heterotheca jonesii*
- *Androsace hirtella*
- *Campanula bornmuelleri*
- *Saxifraga* x 'jana' and other kabschia saxifraga are particularly good in tufa
- *Draba acaulis*
- *Ramonda myconi*

Craig Cramer, newsletter editor



Native Plants Resources

Interest in native plants has grown recently, along with awareness of some of the exotic alien plants that have aggressively colonized our landscape from Europe and Asia, like Autumn olive and Tatarian honeysuckle. If only deer ate *those!* Many of our native plants are beneficial for attracting wildlife, including birds, butterflies & moths (and their caterpillars), and mammals. Ironically some of our native plants, like goldenrod, have now returned after selective breeding in Europe. Plants that are native to the Northeastern U.S. are generally adapted to our climatic extremes with fluctuating temperatures and short dry periods in the summer without pampering. The sources listed below all sell native and non-native plants.

We all might have an idea about what “native” means. A lot of the plants labeled “native” might be native to much of the Eastern U.S., East of the Mississippi River or “native” to the Northeastern U.S. north of Washington D.C. A purist might not consider a plant “native” in Tompkins County, N.Y., unless the plant was known to grow in that county. The Plantsmen’s helpful native plant list actually specifies whether the plant is a local native, native to North America, or a non-native.

When purchasing native plants, it is very important to know the siting requirements for your plants, including amount of sun/shade, moisture available, and soil, including the pH. Many native plants are adaptable to different soils, but the native ericaceous plants (blueberries, mountain laurel, and trailing arbutus) and tupelo need acid soil. Usually the vendor can provide information about a plant’s site preferences or you could refer to one of the reference books below.

A few recommended native plants:

- White oak (*Quercus alba*) – good fall color, strong branching.
- Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) – yellow fall color, red berries, tolerates damp sites and somewhat deer resistant.
- Trumpet honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera sempervirens*) – attractive flowers, attracts hummingbirds.
- Lobelias, Cardinal Flower and Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia cardinalis* and *L. syphilitica*) – late flowering, attract hummingbirds, tolerate ordinary to wet soil, deer resistant.
- Little bluestem (*Schizacrium scoparium*) – clumping grass that stays attractive most of the year.
- Wood ferns (*Dryopteris* sp.) – attractive carefree ferns for part shade to shade.

Local Nurseries:

The Plantsmen Nursery

482 Peruville Road (NY Route 34B)
Groton, NY
(607)-533-7193
www.plantsmen.com

Extensive list of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous wildflowers. Open daily beginning April 21, 2007.

Maple Hill Nursery

4116 Pompey Center Road
Manlius, NY 13104
(315)-447-3196

Extensive list of trees, shrubs, grasses and vines. Call ahead to find out open hours.

Your local nursery

Many nurseries have common native plants, e.g. sugar maples, New England asters, and honeysuckle vines, though they might not have a varied selection of natives like those listed.

White Oak Nursery

4350 Kipp Road
Canandaigua, NY
(315)-789-3509 (Owner’s home is in Geneva)
www.whiteoaknursery.biz
Call for appointment.

Native trees and shrubs; great website for information about the plants. Usually at the Plant Fair at Ithaca High School May 19, 2007.

Moore’s Christmas Trees

NY Route 34
Lansing
607-533-7394

Live evergreen trees, including white spruce and balsam fir. Call to arrange to request for trees to be dug and pickup time.

Mail Order Nurseries:

Amanda's Garden

8410 Harper's Ferry Road
Springwater, NY 14560
(585)-669-2275
www.amandasgarden.com

Woodland wildflowers. Open spring weekends.

Munchkin Nursery

323 Woodside Drive, NW
DePauw, IN 47115-9039
(812)-633-4858
www.munchkinnursery.com

Woodland wildflowers and ferns.

Eastern Plant Specialties

P O Box 5692
Clark, NY 07066
(732)-382-2508

Trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. Wildflowers are sold in quantities of 5 to 50.

Musser Forests

Dept S007M, 1880 Route 119 Hwy N
Indiana, PA 15701-7341
(724)-465-5685
www.musserforests.com

Trees and shrubs.

Forest Farm

990 Tethrow Road
Williams, OR 97544-9599
www.forestfarm.com

Huge catalog, may be the source for what you can't find anywhere else.

Reference Books

- The American Woodland Garden, Rick Darke, Timber Press. A good reference for Eastern North American deciduous forest conditions.
- Native Plants for the Northeast, Donald Leopold, Timber Press. A good reference for Northeastern North America; it includes lists of plants for specific site conditions, including wet and dry sites and shade.
- The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds, Stephen W. Kress, Cornell University Press. Has recommendations, specific for different regions of the US, for plants that attract birds.

John Gilrein, *Plant of the Month* coordinator

NARGS annual meeting in West Virginia, June 14-17

"Appalachian Mountain Refuge" is the theme of the NARGS Annual Meeting, June 14 to 17, at the Canaan Valley Resort, Davis, West Virginia.

The meeting will feature field trips to Dolly Sods Wilderness Area and Blackwater Falls State Park. Dolly Sods, at 4,200 feet, is an alpine boreal ecosystem with amazing displays of Kalmia and Rhododendron as well as acid bog flora. Blackwater Falls is at a lower altitude with an Appalachian woodland flora. Both sites are refugia, places where plants remained after the Wisconsin Glacier retreated.

Speakers will include Bill Cullina of The Garden in The Wood, Bill Grafton of West Virginia University, and Bonnie Isaac of The Carnegie Museum. They will discuss the plants we see on the field trips and why they are there.

For more information, visit www.acnargs.org or contact Paulette and John Zabkar, johnzabkar@aol.com or (412) 364-5820.

Lost and found

Found in the Whetzel Room after our March program meeting: winter hat and gloves and a travel mug. If these sound like yours, contact Carol Eichler (607-387-5823 or cme24@cornell.edu). Hopefully we won't need the hat and gloves much longer but I'm sure you'd like them returned. Winter will be back.

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. (This is the slate to be voted on at our Feb. meeting):

- **Chair/Membership:** Carol Eichler, cme24@cornell.edu, 607-387-5823
 - **Vice Chair/Program:** Robin Bell, rgb2@cornell.edu, 607-272-2074
 - **Treasurer/Secretary:** Carolyn Yaeger, cao2@cornell.edu, 607-844-9462
 - **Garden trips/tours:** Billie Jean Isbell, bj1@cornell.edu, 607-539-6484
 - **Plant sales:** David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu, 607-342-3660
 - **Plant of the Month:** John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, 315-492-0844
 - **Newsletter editor/Webmaster:** Craig Cramer, cdcramer@twcny.rr.com, 607-539-7233
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