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October 2013

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OCTOBER 19 : KATHY PURDY ON COLCHICUMS

Nari Mistry, Program Committee



Our speaker for October 19, 2013 is our own Kathy Purdy. Her lecture is titled *Colchicums: Autumn's Best Kept Secret*. She is a real colchicum *afficionado* and has been growing colchicums for over twenty years. Charmed by these unusual corms, she has become a colchicum evangelist, converting unsuspecting gardeners into confirmed colchicophiles. You may have read her article on colchicums in the September/October 2007 issue of *The American Gardener*, or you may have been the recipient of some of her surplus colchicums at last year's

members-only plant sale. She currently has over two dozen varieties growing in her garden, and you'll get to see most of them in her presentation. Come and hear the nuances and secrets from an expert and you too will be converted!

Join us at 1:00 p.m. on October 19th in the Whetzel Room (404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University-map at newsletter's end). Optional bring-your-own bag lunch and social time starts at Noon. Drinks provided. Goodies always welcome for sharing.

What is life, and what is gardening, if one is not always ready to make new friends and make new experiments? Vita Sackville-West

FROM THE CHAIR

Carol Eichler

Our September meeting was jam-packed. Several members brought plants to share, with special thanks to John Gilrein and Michael Loos for their exceptionally generous contributions. It's as though we're clinging to the waning days of the gardening season. With the sunny, warm weather we've been having it's mentally hard to accept that winter is coming.

Our speaker Matt Matthus offered a very floriferous view of winter. His greenhouse is filled with winter flowering bulbs, their blooms peaking in the very depths of January, in contrast to stark snowy landscape outdoors. His success with so many species and cultivars was very impressive. Anyone up for a trip to Worcester, MA in January?

Of course, winter is a great time to peruse garden catalogs, make plans for spring, and to turn our thoughts to the NARGS seed exchange. Our own BZ Marranta has taken on the position of Seed Exchange Manager, which means (I think) that she recruits and coordinates all phases of packaging and distributing the donated seeds once they have been cataloged.

Our Chapter has been involved in the Exchange process for several years. This year we are committed to help with PACKAGING, that is, dividing seeds into individual packets. This phase needs to occur within a fairly short window in December, usually 2-3 weeks. How much we can commit to do will depend on how many of you are willing to help and how much time you can offer. This is a great way to get become more involved in the Chapter and requires a limited time commitment – coming at a time of year when garden activities are at a lull (and combating gardening withdrawal perhaps?). We will be recruiting volunteers at our October and November meetings.

The Seed Exchange is made possible through the generosity and hard work of many NARGS members. Part of the fun in participating is knowing that we're part of a huge effort that encompasses individuals, as well as seeds, from all over the globe.

Until the October meeting,
Carol

BILLIE JEAN ISBELL RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICE

Carol Eichler



What inspires someone to become a rock gardener? For Billie Jean Isbell it was the Andes Mountains of Peru, which she visited regularly as part of her professional career as a cultural anthropologist. She has transformed her property into a series of named gardens (the most recent of which is pictured below) and meandering pathways, entering a world that combines plants, with stone, water, and structures.

Through her unique rock gardens--which she continues to expand--Billie Jean has been a leader by example to the rest of us in the Adirondack Chapter. She has welcomed visitors to her garden for both NARGS and non-NARGS events, hosted our workshops and picnics, and continues to share her plants generously. Leadership positions she has held in our Chapter include coordinating Plant of the Month, Programs, and Trips as well as serving as Chapter Chair. Chapter members still rate the trip to Quatre Vents and other Quebec gardens that she planned as one of our most memorable.

At our September meeting, the Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society recognized Billie Jean Isbell for her contributions to our Chapter by presenting to her a 2013 Chapter Service Award.



PLANT OF THE MONTH: DOG TOOTH VIOLET

John Gilrein



Sisto Nikon - CLICKALPS
PHOTOGRAPHER

Our October POM is *Erythronium dens-canis*, (air-ith-ROE-nee-um) which is found in Eurasia, and the only species found in Europe. Our native *Erythronium*, *E. americanum* has a multitude of common names, including trout lily, dog tooth violet, fawn lily, and adder's tongue. The name trout lily refers to the speckled leaves, which look somewhat similar to the markings of the side a brook or brown trout. Dog tooth violet refers to the shape of the bulb; violet is a misnomer, since *Erythronium* is in the lily family, Liliaceae. *Erythronium* is a genus of 20 to 30 species native to temperate regions of the northern hemisphere (N. America, Europe, and Asia) of bulbous, spring-flowering plants. *Erythronium* flowers come in cream, yellow, rose, and mauve/violet. The bulbs and the leaves are reputedly edible, though with any exotic food item it would be best sampled in a small dose the first time. Unlike many other species of plants, the hotbed of species diversity of *Erythronium* is North America, rather than East

Asia, with most of our *Erythronium* species found in Western North America.

Hardiness: zone 3-8
Height: 6 to 12 inches

Planting: 5 inches deep, rich woodland soil, sun to part shade, use mulch.

Forces well in a cool greenhouse

Blooming: pendant rose to purple flowers in mid to late Spring, dormant in summer. OK if dry during dormancy; mottled leaves.

Wikipedia Erythronium page with photos

Source of our bulbs: **Brent & Becky's Bulbs Gloucester, VA.**

Other sources: McClure & Zimmerman, Telos Rare Bulbs, Odyssey Bulbs.



Photo courtesy Becky Heath

Plant of the Month is a member benefit, partially subsidized by your dues, to provide additional encouragement to attend meetings and expand the horizons of our members. The goal is to coordinate the plant of the month to the meeting topic, though sometimes that is not possible. Please send suggestions for Plant of the Month to John Gilrein.

WHAT YOU MISSED: MATT MATTUS

Kathy Purdy

Matt Mattus has a 33'x30' greenhouse from the **Texas Greenhouse Company**. I don't have a greenhouse, so while listening to Matt's talk on **Non-Hardy Bulbs** for our September meeting, my ear was attuned to potential houseplants and other tips I could pick up. So here are my hastily scribbled notes, supplemented by further elucidation by Matt: *Cyclamen africanum* can grow well in a cool north or east bay window. *Oxalis versicolor* is easy and likes it wet. *Gladiolus tristis* smells better than jasmine at night. *Pleione* orchids are growable on a bright windowsill if you first provide a cold period above freezing (such as an unheated garage until February) for a dormant period, but are not readily available. *Scilla aristides* is tender, but, boy, what a looker!

According to Matt, "Seed for *N. triandrus* and other narcissus, especially *N. romieuxii* is available from the NARGS seed exchange, and the AGS or SRGS site. Ian Young will talk about these at length – I learned everything from him and his **bulb log**. I recommend getting the book *Miniature Daffodils* by Alec Gray (out of print), as it helped me. Look for it at any of the antique book dealer sites." *Lachenalia* species are easy and underused. "**Silverhill** offers seed of many lachenalia, and I sow deep (as Ian Young will demonstrate with narcissus seed, but few have tried it with lachenalia, yet that is how deep I sow it). *Lachenalia* bulbs can found at:



Telos Rare Bulbs
Paul Christian Rare Bulbs
Nick DeRothschild

And the named African Beauty series of lachenalia can be found at **McClure & Zimmerman, Brent and Becky's** and some other commercial sites."

Raising bulbous plants from seed is far less expensive than buying bulbs. In general, Matt advised to sow seed for bulbs fresh and keep it dry. "I harvest my cyclamen seed just as the seed pods become soft, as the foliage is fading, in June (greenhouse method). Once the pods split, the seed is often stolen by ants, and you can lose it. So I pick the pods when soft, as I know they will split open soon, and I place them in little bowls. Once they peel away and open, I sow the seed in pots (4 inch pots) with fresh ProMix (peat based soil mix with some grit added). I sow near the top, but cover the seed lightly. But sometimes ants place seed into other pots, and they come up everywhere. Not a bad problem to have, so I am not certain that proper depth is essential. Tulips, crocus, narcissus and lachenalia, I sow deep – almost 3/4 of the way down in a 4 inch pot. I don't water them in until autumn; there seems to be enough moisture in the soil to keep the seed stable until the combination of temperature swings and seasonal moisture triggers growth."

Early in his talk, Matt mentioned his online magazine, **Plant Society**. Digital issues are available for \$2.99 each.

CYCLAMEN COUM – WHICH END IS UP?

Carol Eichler

I went to plant by new *C. coum* tubers and ran into a dilemma trying to figure out which end was stem and which was root. Most articles about cyclamen seem to assume any gardener would know the difference. There were nubby "things" on both sides of my round, flattish tubers – not helpful.

After a little "rooting around" on the web, I found my answer. The above ground side may be slightly concave, while the root side will be convex or rounded. I've planted them under a tree where they will get the shade that they prefer and shouldn't get obscured by other herbaceous flowers. Fingers crossed. Good luck with yours, everyone!

WORLD'S MOST PERMANENT MARKER CAN NOW BE YOURS : JUST THINK, LIFE-LONG LABELS!!

Susanne Lipari

Four years ago, when I was getting ready for the Garden Conservancy tour of my garden, I decided to get rid of all my little, broken, misplaced plastic plant labels. But I also knew that visitors to my garden would ask about the plants and no, I don't know every plant in my garden by genus, species and cultivar. I had bought – long ago - the Lucite strips and clear label stock to print labels from my database. Those I still move faithfully from one spot on my garden shelf to another. What to do?

A day trip to Lake Ontario with all the lovely flat stones along the beach gave me an idea, and my years of experience in research labs gave me the method: When you have to label tiny plastic tubes to survive treatment in hot and cold water baths, ethanol, minus 80 Celsius temperatures – and that for years – you look for a really good marking system. An acquaintance, who owns a

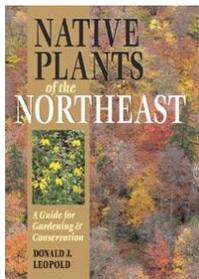
lab supply company, gave me a truly permanent marker. I placed flat pebbles labeled with the plant name around my rock garden.

And after the tour, life got busy, I lost the marker, new plants kept the little plastic thingamajigs until those were lost or broken and then- age appropriately – I forgot their names. A couple of week ago I found one of those stone labels whose plant had died. After all these years in sun, rain, ice and snow, the writing was still clearly visible. Hurrah!

An email exchange with my acquaintance assured me that, yes, I can still buy the markers from him. And since he is eager to open a gardener's market for his pens, he is willing to sell us a pack of 10 markers for \$ 44 (instead of the \$110 in his catalog). I will definitely order one pack, but if there is enough interest, I'll order more. At less than \$ 5 per pen, what can we lose? Send me an email at selj3@cornell.edu to let me know if and how many pens you want to get.

HEADS UP FOR OUR NOVEMBER MEETING

Carol Eichler



Our November meeting is our last for 2013, and then we take a short hiatus before resuming our meetings again in February. Besides scheduling Don Leopold as our speaker, we will hold a dish-to-pass lunch beginning at noon. As has been our custom for the last several years, we will meet on the 2nd Saturday of November, November 9, hopefully before we all get caught up with Thanksgiving preparations. The November *Green Dragon* will offer more details.

Just a reminder, we are offering Professor Leopold's book, *Native Plants of the Northeast*, for sale to members at a deeply discounted rate. The book will be available at both the October and November meetings, while supplies last.

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Mary Stauble

Two new members signed up at our September meeting. Dan Otis is from Ithaca and collects Japanese Maples and Suzanne Anderson is from Trumansburg. Welcome to both!

TRADE: ONE HOUR FOR PLANTS

Billie Jean needs your help



If anyone interested in helping plant bulbs and other rock garden plants, I'm looking to trade one hour of planting for free plants from my garden. You'll have to dig them. If you are interested, please email (bjj1@cornell.edu) or call me (607-539-6484).

I'd also like to thank Mary Stauble, Bill Stark, and Giorgi Upton for their work moving the stones into place.

2013 PROGRAM PLANS

Mark your calendars! Unless otherwise specified, all local events start with a brown bag lunch at noon with the program following at 1 pm, and take place at the Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (see map on the last page).

October 19: Kathy Purdy on Colchicums: Autumn's Best-Kept Secret
November 9: Don Leopold on Native Plants for Difficult Garden and Landscape Settings

Details as we learn them will be included in future newsletters, our blog, acnargs.blogspot.com, and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

CALENDAR OF GARDEN EVENTS

OCTOBER

Winter Vegetable Gardening Thurs, Oct. 10, CCE
CCE 100th year celebration Mon. Oct. 14, events at 4H Acres, CCE, Neighborhood Pride Store
Ron Raguso, Cornell, (topic TBD) Wed. Oct. 16, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, second floor
Kathy Purdy on Colchicums Sat. Oct. 19, 1 pm, Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, Wetzel Rm., Plant Sci. Bldg, Cornell
Getting Your Landscape Ready for Winter Mon. Oct. 21, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, CCE

NOVEMBER

Pick a Durable Tree for Your Site Mon. Nov. 4, 6:30-8:30 pm, Pat Curran, CCE
Don Leopold, Native Plants for Difficult Garden and Landscape Settings Sat. Nov. 9, 1 pm, Adirondack Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, Wetzel Rm., Plant Sci. Bldg, Cornell (NB: this meeting is on the **SECOND** Saturday)
David Werier, Field Botanist, Rare Plants of Westport NY Wed. Nov. 20, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Unitarian Church Annex, second floor

DECEMBER

Evergreen Wreath-Making Workshop (for those who have participated before), Friday Dec. 6, 6:30-8:30 pm, \$10 special MG price, limited to 15, CCE, taught by MG volunteers, pre-registration AND PREPAYMENT required.
Evergreen Wreath-Making Workshop (how-to instructions by MG volunteers, for those who have not participated before), Sat. Dec. 7, 10 am-12 noon, \$10 special MG price, limited to 15, pre-registration AND PREPAYMENT required.
Solstice Celebration Wed. Dec. 18, 7 pm, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, check [website](#) for location

RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE/2013 BOARD MEMBERS

If you want to volunteer, we'd love to hear from you!

Chair: Carol Eichler, carolithaca@gmail.com

Program: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu

Program Committee Members: Nari Mistry, nbm2@cornell.edu

Secretary: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu

Treasurer: BZ Marranca, mmm10@cornell.edu

Plant Sales Chair: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu

Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca

Plant of the Month: John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu, Karen Hansen

Membership: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu

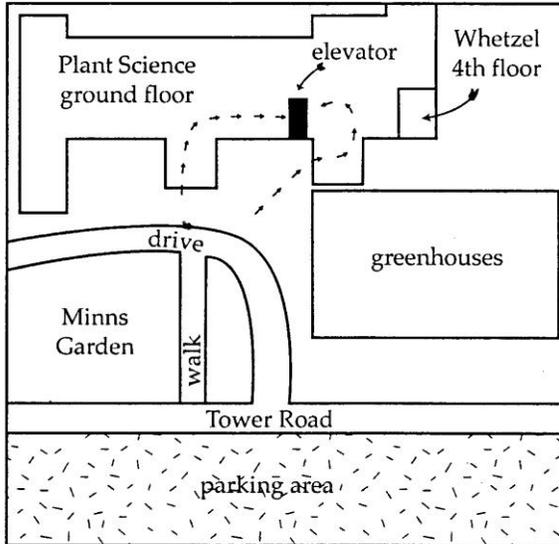
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Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, cdcramer@gmail.com

HOW TO GET THERE: MEETING ROOM MAP

This is on the Cornell University Campus.



It is the first day of October. Summer birds are gone. Frosts have signaled for winter. All tender vegetables are harvested from the garden. Marigolds and zinnias and a few other rugged things still retain the glow of warm weather, yet autumn chill is in the air, new colors are on the hills, dead leaves begin to cover the grass. It is plain we approach a great event in the progress of the year, when products and ambitions will be housed and we shall settle down to the hopeful routines of winter. Most persons will cease to regard the landscape and they will seldom go to the garden or follow the lines of the brook.

-Liberty Hyde Bailey, from *The Garden of Gourds*, 1937, p. 1

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 Kathy Purdy, kopurdy@gmail.com.

Note: The next issue of The Green Dragon will be in November 2013.