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Visit our blog: [acnargs.blogspot.com](http://acnargs.blogspot.com)

September 2017

## SEPTEMBER 16: KEN HULL ON NATIVE ORCHIDS



Cypridium acaule in the Adirondacks

Ken is an amateur botanist with a special interest in native orchids of NYS. He has searched for and photographed all but one of the 65 species and varieties native to our state over the last 25 years.

He has a B.S. in Microbiology from Cornell University and a M.S. in Adult Education from Elmira College. He is retired from a 40+ year career in the Laboratory and Human Resources from United Health Services.

Ken is a member of NY Flora Association., Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Leatherstocking, Botanical Society and Native Orchid Conference. Field trips have led him to many locations throughout the Northeast states and Canada in pursuit of these orchids, many of which no longer can be found in New York State. He gives presentations to Orchid Societies, Garden Clubs, and other organizations with this common interest.

**Our meeting will be held** in the Whetzel Room, Room 404, on Tower Road, Cornell University. Map at the end of this newsletter. Bring your own bag lunch at noon for socializing. Refreshments to share are appreciated.

## FROM THE CHAIR

*John Gilrein, ACNARGS Chair*

With a lot of teamwork the Adirondack Chapter pulled off a successful picnic and plant sale Sunday August 27. We had great weather, great plants, great company, and great food. I hope everyone who attended is pleased with their plant purchases. So thanks for all the hard work done by the plant donors, sale organizers, food providers, barbecuers, and cleanup crew. There was a really nice selection of plants, and plenty of good food.

One minor glitch with the plant sale was that a few plants were mislabeled. This could be due to an issue with NARGS seed, as sometimes the seed donated is not correctly identified. If in the future you determine your *Penstemon* is really a *Dianthus*, I can't promise we would be able to identify it, but if you email me a photo I'll share it and make the attempt; likely we could identify at least the genus, if not the species.

One my firm beliefs about gardening is that one should experiment and try new things. Even those of us who have been gardening for 50 years (if you're kind, you'll think I started very young) can try some new things. Of course there is some risk of failure, but there is also risk of a stunning success. So with the help of my friend's greenhouse, I



started some Caladiums indoors and transplanted them outside in the summer. Caladiums are easy to grow, being sold as tubers, though they're "tropical flowers", in the sense that they like warm to hot weather, moisture, and humidity. They were terribly slow to leaf out in the greenhouse, but in the garden they bloomed (typical aroid blossoms) and their colorful leaves should remain showy until frost. They won't get nearly as large as they would in a Florida garden, but this experiment was a success as I'm enjoying those colorful leaves. The next experiment will be to see if they make it through the winter in the basement.

If you're up for an experiment, bulb planting season is coming up, so why not try something new? Starting plants from NARGS seed is always a bit of an experiment; some seeds germinate and grow well, others don't germinate at all, but there is joy in the successes.

Coming up in the fall, we have interesting programs coming up, as well as Plant-of-the-Month selections for September and October. Hope you will be there to enjoy them. The speaker we will be getting through NARGS for October, Yasemin Konuralp, is coming from Turkey, and is an expert of the flora of this area. So for October we are planning to have 2 talks by the speaker, with the first talk being in the late morning. Mark your calendars!

Late summer/early fall is a great time to plant when the sun is lower in the sky; it's not as hot and dry as May and June, and one is less tethered to the watering can. Coming up in November is a NARGS conference/annual meeting in Raleigh, NC, including trips to Montrose, Nancy Goodwin's garden replete with Cyclamen and Galanthus (snowdrops, including fall blooming) and Plant Delights Nursery/Juniper Level Botanic Garden.

**PLANTS-OF-THE-MONTH : PROVEN PERFORMERS**

Marlene Kobre, POM Coordinator

The September POM features a selection of alpine plants from Wrightman Alpine Nursery in New Brunswick, Canada. I chose Wrightman not only because of their reputation for offering an exceptionally wide range of choice alpines suitable for rock gardens and/or troughs, but also to support Esther Wrightman as she follows in her late father's footsteps. The following five selections are plants that I have grown for the past two years, in troughs and the rock garden. So far, all have proven to be reliably hardy performers in zone 5 and their cultural requirements are reasonably easy to satisfy. Photos are included and you can also see them on the [Wrightman website](#). I hope you will enjoy them as much as I have.

*Dianthus* x 'Blue Hill:' Thick blue cushion with large, vibrant magenta flowers. Light: sun/part-sun; Month: May-June; Height: under 10cm; Shape: tight cushion; Soil: scree



*Erodium* x 'Natascha:' A wonderful hybrid with dissected, frosted green foliage and pink flowers with dark markings all summer—a time when continuing color is welcome. Light: Sun; Month: July-Sept.; Height: 10-30 cm; Shape: Tuft; Soil: Scree or trough

*Erodium chrysanthemum*: Finely divided, silvery foliage forms a tight clump. Pale yellow flowers all summer. Light: Sun/part sun; Month: July-Sept.; Height: 10-30 cm; Shape: tuft/clump; Soil: scree



*Erodium* x 'Natascha'



*Phlox* 'Crackerjack': Many crimson red flowers on compact plants. Another dazzler. Light: sun/part sun; Month: June-July; Height: under 10cm; Shape: tight mat; Soil: scree or trough

*Erodium*



*Phlox douglassii* 'Crackerjack'

*Saponaria* hybrid: Tight green mats with stemless clusters of dazzling deep pink flowers. Light: Sun; Month: May; Height: under 10cm; Shape: mat/cushion; Soil: scree or trough

Note: 2.5 cm = 1 inch

*Saponaria* Hybrid

## OPEN GARDEN INVITATION SEPT. 30



An enticing sample  
from Kathy's garden

Come see one of the country's largest collections of colchicums. Kathy Purdy invites gardeners to view the colchicum collection in her garden on Saturday, September 30, 2017 from 11 am to 4 pm., rain or shine. Kathy has over 50 different kinds of these fall-blooming bulbs, many of which will be in bloom at the end of September. Each variety is labeled and attractively situated in the garden with companion plants. Visitors are welcome to bring their own lunch and enjoy it on the screened deck. Set your GPS to 565 Moran Rd., Oxford, NY 13830. For more information, call or text **607-843-7455** or email [kopurdy@gmail.com](mailto:kopurdy@gmail.com).

## TAXONOMY : IT'S NOT A SCARY WORD

*Rick Rodich, member of the Minnesota Chapter NARGS  
Reprinted by permission from the author*

What is taxonomy, anyway? In short, it is the study of classification. Of plant classification? Well yes, but not necessarily. One could have a taxonomy for vehicles, and in fact, we do! Vehicles are classified by truck or car, make (brand), model, type, options. Why do we do this? To make sense of it all through organization. Think of how chaotic it would be if we had no words for car, truck, SUV, etc. What if the only word we had to describe them all was just "vehicle"? Yikes.

Carried over to the plant world, what if the only word for an alpine was "plant," and the only word for a perennial was "plant." The word for tree was "plant," the word for seaweed was "plant," and on and on. What a sticky wicket. We need taxonomy to keep our heads from exploding.

So in a nutshell, taxonomists categorize plants to make sense of them and understand them better. They do this by determining how they relate to each other. Did you know Shooting Stars are closely related to Primroses? Who says? Taxonomists (and DNA). Forming this logical hierarchical order of the natural world is their job. Despite the disdain that arises from "constant" taxonomic name changes, I embrace these forward thinking ideas. Taxonomy: it's not a scary word!

*Editor's Note: I love that when I travel to other countries I may not be able to speak the language of those countries but together we can all certainly speak the language of plants (and animals too for that matter).*

## CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

*Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator*

Please note that the 2017 ACNARGS Membership Directory is attached to the newsletter announcement email or to your paper copy of the newsletter. If you have corrections please contact Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu).

## NOVEMBER PROGRAM CHANGE

*Bill Stark*

*Editor's note: Since our scheduled November program speakers had to cancel unexpectedly, we are offering a different program for November. Take note: Bill Stark and Mary Stauble will present "29 British Gardens in 15 days - Lessons Learned."*

We drove 1,534 miles in southern England and Wales and visited 29 Gardens and 10 archeological sites because we needed to resolve design issues for the Lansing garden that we're building. We focused on gardens that contained rock, ravine, water, ruin, and grotto features - but we also visited famous gardens like Sissinghurst and Hidcote.

By viewing many gardens in a short time, we were able to contrast how different designers handled similar challenges. We could see why Longstock Park Water Gardens were so magical while another water garden using similar plant material was not. We also focused on garden construction. Some of our photographs of the beautiful crevice garden at Wisley included a tape measure so that we'd have a record of the thickness and spacing of the stones. We recorded how the Wisley designers closed off the ends of their crevices, the hole size in their tufa rocks and how nearly every garden room at Hidcote uses a different flooring material. We photographed crumbling garden features so that we could look inside and see how they were built.

We'll show plenty of pretty photos such as the long border at Great Dixter, but rather than present a travelogue, we'll use our photos to discuss garden design and construction.

## NEWS FROM NARGS: THINK ABOUT COLLECTING SEED

*Excerpted from Collecting and Cleaning Seeds by Jane McGary, NARGS Quarterly, Vol. 49 No. 3, Summer 2001*

### Collecting Seed

Whether you want to experiment with collecting seeds to sow for your own use or feel you are ready to donate seed to the NARGS Seed Exchange, here are helpful tips from Jane McGary former Intake Manager of the NARGS Seed Exchange. To learn more about contributing to the NARGS Seed Exchange follow this link: [NARGS seed donation instructions](#).

In most cases, you will want fairly large envelopes or even small paper bags in which you can place entire capsules. People who collect a lot in the wild sometimes

use small cloth drawstring bags, either home-made or purchased from scientific or geological suppliers. The cloth bags will not fall apart if exposed to moisture, and they allow the plant material to "breathe" and dry naturally. Do not place seeds in plastic bags; they are likely to mold and rot.

Label your envelopes carefully as you collect them. The commercial bags may have a label attached; otherwise, insert a slip of paper with the data written in pencil—ink may run as it absorbs moisture. Include the name of the plant, place and date of collection, and any other information you think pertinent. Serious collectors often carry altimeters and record the elevation.

If you cannot identify the plant in the field, take a sample of the foliage and any other part that might be diagnostic so you can go over it once you return to your reference books. The botanical description may even clear up the problem of whether you have seed in the first place. Don't laugh; various other parts of the dried inflorescence show up in "seed" donations. I had to read up on *Eriogonum* the first time I collected its seed in order to puzzle out how to extricate it from the capsules.

Material sent to the exchange as composite seed is often devoid of true seeds. The seeds are the plump, sometimes rather hard bits attached to the disk; the bits above them are chaff. If you're not sure, look at the material with a good magnifying lens: the actual seeds are regularly shaped.

Never take more than a small portion of the seed you find at a given wild site. Some collectors also plant seeds near the parents to help protect the population from nonhuman seed predators. In most wild populations, very few of the seeds produced are able to germinate and produce mature plants.

Even when you collect seed from the garden, don't rely on your memory to hold the identity. When I don't have time to clean and package seeds right away, I place the capsules in a small dish to dry and immediately label an envelope, placing it in the same container. Once the seeds are off the plant, they must have a written name attached somehow!

I learned from David Hale, author of the "Botanical Traveler" columns in this journal, that it is possible to collect seeds that don't appear to be mature, and they will still ripen further and germinate well. This is particularly true of composite (Asteraceae) seeds, which can be rather green and still viable as long as they are plump. Some seeds never really look "ripe"; for example, the short-lived seeds of fall-blooming *Kirengeshoma* should be planted while soft, white, and wet.

Whether you collect the seeds in far Bolivia or in your back yard, clean them as soon as possible. Many insects spend all or part of their lives inside seed capsules, busily devouring the seeds, and they will keep doing this until you destroy their happy homes.

### **Cleaning Seed**

Because nature has given rise to so many different kinds of seeds and seed capsules (or "pods"), there are many different approaches to proceeding from the mass of vegetable matter you have collected to the seeds pristinely tidy enough

to store, plant, or exchange. Some are simple: when you split the capsule with a little pressure, they simply fall out with no extra bits attached. Empty this type into a clean dish—a white porcelain bowl with sides about 2 inches (5 cm) tall is useful—and take it outdoors on a day that is not too windy. Blow very gently onto the seeds to remove the light chaff (waste material). This is a good way to separate viable from nonviable lily seed, since the bits without embryos are lighter and fly away.

Some capsules are more retentive. The nutlike capsules of many penstemons are designed to hold onto the seeds until the following spring and then release them when conditions are right for germination. I break these open with needlenose pliers, since many of them have sharp processes which are hard on fingertips. Pliers or long forceps are a necessity for collecting and cleaning the seeds of *Morina* species, which are guarded by ferocious spines. A well-aimed boot can remove the fruit of a cactus, and then all you have to do is extricate the hard seeds from the pulp, which in some species is really disgusting.

Some growers clean seed in sieves, but I don't think it is a good idea to rub the material on the grating of a metal sieve because it may damage the seed coats. However, a fine-mesh sieve can be helpful in separating very fine seed, such as that of campanulas, from the larger chaff. Note that some seeds are fairly fragile; *Corydalis* specialists, for example, may pack their exchange seeds in little padded boxes so they won't be broken in transit.

The showy seedheads of *pulsatillas* and *clematis* tempt many seed donors, as any seed exchange worker knows who has dealt with the great sacks of this stuff that arrive. Part of cleaning these seeds is cutting off the "tails." If it seems like too much work, you've collected too much seed!

In rare instances, it may be best to leave the seed in its capsules. Several years ago I did this after collecting the minute capsules of the remarkable *Saxifraga eschscholzii* on Alaska's Seward Peninsula. I felt that any grower who got them would be more than willing to extract the seeds on arrival.

Seeds that are enclosed in fleshy fruits present a special problem. The fleshy material should be removed before the seeds are stored or sent off; sometimes it contains a germination inhibitor and must be removed even before they are planted at home. If the pulp is watery (e.g., *Vaccinium*), I crush the fruits lightly and leave them out to dry on paper towels for a day or two. Fleshy seeds like those of *arisaemas* can be soaked in water at room temperature for a few days, then rolled in a cloth, rubbed gently, and washed in a sieve.

It is advisable to wear rubber gloves when handling the broken pulp of *arisaemas* and other aroids, many of which contain strong irritants. Hellebore seeds also cause skin inflammation in many people.

## UPCOMING 2017 ACNARGS PROGRAMS

*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 renovated Whetzel Room, 404 Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.*

Sept. 16: Ken Hull, Native Orchids

Oct. 21 Yasemin Kon, author of *Wildflowers of Turkey*. Talks at 11am and 1pm with bring-your-own bag lunch/break in between.

Nov. 11: Mary Stauble and Bill Stark (note change in program) "29 British Gardens in 15 days - Lessons Learned"

Nov. 17-19: NARGS Annual Meeting, Raleigh-Durham, N.C. Info [here](#).

And planning ahead for 2018:

Spring: Study Week-end sponsored by Delaware Valley Chapter. Details to follow.

June/July dates TBD: NARGS-sponsored botanical tour in China. Details coming soon.

July 6-8, NARGS Annual Meeting in St. John's Newfoundland

As we learn more details of these meetings they will be included in future newsletters, our blog, [acnargs.blogspot.com](http://acnargs.blogspot.com), and our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/acnargs>.

## CALENDAR OF SELECT GARDEN EVENTS

*To have a garden event in your area listed send all pertinent information to Carol Eichler at [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)*

Cooperative Extension Programs, located at 615 Willow Av., Ithaca. 607-272-2292. Unless otherwise stated, classes require pre-registration and have a self-determining sliding fee scale. More info at [www.ccetompkins.org](http://www.ccetompkins.org)

Sept. 6, 6-8pm: Cover Crops for Home Gardens.

Sept. 17: 11am – 2pm: Heirloom Tomato Festival! Drop in to sample many varieties of heirloom tomatoes, then take home some saved seeds. No registration. Donation suggested.

Sept. 28 6-7:30pm: Dividing Perennials. Hands-on.

Oct. 4, 5:30-6:30pm: Native Plants for Pollinators at Tompkins County Public Library. Free (donations accepted). No registration required.

Oct. 12, 6:30-8:30pm: Introduction to Permaculture Design with Sean Dembrosky of Edible Acres ([edibleacres.org](http://edibleacres.org)).

Oct. 18, 6:30-8pm: Impacts of Invasive Plants on People and Wildlife

Oct. 19, 5:30-6:30pm: Winterizing Your Garden

Nov. 18: 6th Annual Leaf Swap Pick-up Day and Compost (up to 5 gal.) Giveaway. Free

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society Meetings from 7-8:30pm at the Ithaca Unitarian Church annex (corner of Buffalo & Aurora, enter side door on Buffalo St. & up the stairs). More info at [www.FLNPS.org](http://www.FLNPS.org)

Sept 20 - Aaron Iverson, Cornell : Nectar and pollen resources at landscape scales

Oct 18 - Allen Nichols – American Chestnut Foundation –chestnut recovery status

Nov 15 – Mark Witmer – shrubs for birds

Plus FLNPS Walks meeting at different times and locations.

Cornell Botanic Gardens (formerly Cornell Plantations) fall lecture series. Unless otherwise noted held at Statler Auditorium on the Cornell campus at 7:30pm.

Sept. 3: The Songs of Trees: Tree Acoustics, Ecology, and Ethics by David G. Haskell, author and professor biology, University of the South

Sept. 27: The Art of Gardening at Chanticleer by William Thomas, Executive Director, Chanticleer: A Pleasure Garden

Oct. 12: Plants, Magic and Molecules: The Search for New Cures from Old Remedies by Cassandra Quave, Assistant Professor of Dermatology and Human Health, Emory University School of Medicine and Curator of the Emory University Herbarium. Note location G01 Gates Hall

Oct. 23: Park Rx America: Prescribing Parks to Prevent and Treat Chronic Disease by Robert Zarr, Staff Pediatrician, Unity Health Care and Founder, [ParkRxAmerica.org](http://ParkRxAmerica.org)

Nov. 8: Adapt and Thrive: Creatively Living in a Climate Changed World by Alizé Carrère, National Geographic Explorer & Cultural Ecologist

## ABOUT US – ACNARGS

We are an all-volunteer organization and one of thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Our annual Chapter activities include 6 program-speaker meetings, the Green Dragon newsletter, web and Facebook pages, garden visits, overnight garden trips, hands-on workshops, and 3 plant sales a year. Our meetings are informal, friendly gatherings that provide a wealth of information and offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners. The public is always welcome.

Chapter membership starts at \$10 a year based on the calendar year. Membership includes these benefits: newsletter sent to you electronically (or option by mail for an extra fee), opportunity to travel on our planned overnight garden trips, and plant sale discounts and member only sales, including Plant-of-the-Month sales. Download a membership form here: <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>.

## ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)) for only \$40 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS National also conducts winter study weekends and holds its Annual Meeting in interesting places where attendees have the opportunity to visit gardens, and take field trips, often to alpine areas, as well as hear talks by outstanding plants people from around the world. More recently, NARGS is offering botanical tours each year, both within the US and abroad.

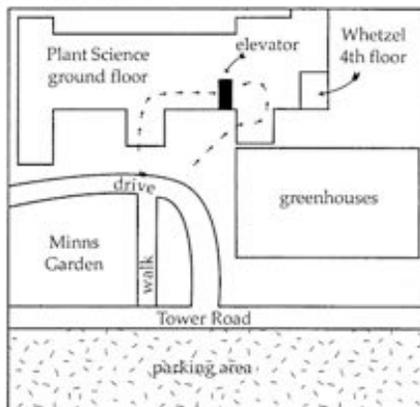
## RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE/2014 BOARD MEMBERS

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

Chair: John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)  
 Program: Terry Humphries, [terryehumphries@gmail.com](mailto:terryehumphries@gmail.com)  
 Program Committee Members: **Could this be you?**  
 Secretary: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)  
 Treasurer: BZ Marranca, [mmm10@cornell.edu](mailto:mmm10@cornell.edu)  
 Plant Sales Chair: David Mitchell, [dwm23@cornell.edu](mailto:dwm23@cornell.edu). **Seeking a Co-Chair for 2018 to work alongside David...Why not you?**  
 Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranca, Carol Eichler  
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## GREEN DRAGON TALES

Published eight times a year (Jan/Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec.). Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to Carol Eichler, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com). Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be our October 2017 issue. The newsletter is always posted and printable each month on our website: [www.acnargs.org](http://www.acnargs.org)



Map: Whetzel Room,  
Cornell campus

## PHOTOS OF THE MONTH: ENFIELD CREEK AND GORGE

For those of you who didn't hike (or haven't hiked this gorge) at the Robert H. Treman State Park, here are some photos. This is just one of the reasons they say Ithaca is Gorgeous!



Gorge at Enfield Creek  
Robert H. Treman State Park

