

ADIRONDACK
CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

Visit our blog: acnargs.blogspot.com

April 2021

IN THIS ISSUE:

- April 17 meeting via Zoom
- From the Chair
- May 22 Plant Sale
- Plant-of-the-Month
- Membership
- Growing From Seed
- Gardening Resources
- NARGS Annual Meeting
- 2021 ACNARGS Programs
- Calendar of Garden Events
- Contacts
- Photos

APRIL 17, 1P.M. VIA ZOOM: ANNA LEGGATT ON CLEMATIS THE QUEEN OF FLOWERS

Terry Humphries, Program Chair

LOOK FOR THE LINK IN YOUR EMAIL WEDNESDAY EVENING 4/14/21

BE SURE TO DOWNLOAD THE SLIDE & PLANT LIST

There are about 300 species of Clematis throughout the world, mainly in the Northern Hemisphere. Size ranges from tiny rock garden gems and herbaceous border stalwarts to large, aggressive vines. Flowering can be any season, depending on species. More and more hybrids are arriving on the market, from large to small flowered, in a dazzling array of colors. Anna Leggatt's illustrated talk will show species in the wild and in the garden. She will explain care, pruning and cultivation and give a glimpse of some of the new cultivars.



Clematis 'Alionushka'

Anna has, among many other items in her curriculum vitae, a BSc. in Botany from London University, a Diploma in Nature Interpretation from Humber College and a Diploma in Horticulture from Guelph. She is a former high school teacher in Botany and Chemistry, past chair and editor of the

Ontario Rock Garden Society Journal, and a past Director of the North American Rock Garden Society.

Anna teaches occasionally at the Toronto Botanical Garden covering topics such as general gardening and more specialized courses such as water and rock gardening. Anna offers lectures to Horticultural Societies and writes for several magazines including the NARGS *Quarterly* on topics that include her travels abroad, and subjects that reflect her vast interest and passion for gardening.

Editor's Note: We're still Zooming. Don't be shy; give it a try. We're here to help. And we actually spend some time chatting following our program. It's the next best thing to being altogether.

FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair

After a tough year, this past March with its abundance of sunny days and some warmth has been most welcome. It also helped push the flowers into bloom after the snow stayed around a little longer than usual (at least here in the snow belt).

We had a most enjoyable March meeting with good participation, including some from the Hudson Valley Chapter (Westchester County, NY) of NARGS. During our meeting we had a healthy discussion about our spring plant sale, considering the results of the online Survey Monkey poll of our members. Poll results showed that most members were interested in a plant sale, though there was a small minority of members who planned not to attend. Since we haven't met in person in a year (other than the August plant sale), having our own plant sale, congregating, and talking with other members was more desirable to our group than participating in the Cooperative Extension Garden Fair and Plant Sale at Ithaca Farmer's Market plant sale this year. We still plan to have a table at the Ithaca Farmer's Market 2 PM – 7 PM May 14 and 21, so if you can volunteer for that, it would be most appreciated.

Our semi-annual plant sales are our main fundraisers. Earning money from our plant sales allows us to keep our dues low, pay for quality speakers and our Chapter-subsidized Plant-of-the-Month program, and stay financially healthy. We hope you can contribute plants to the sale (see Carol's article in this Green Dragon for more information on that). Our plant sales are always fun and a great opportunity to get some new and interesting plants at good prices. And chances are if our people are bringing it to a sale, it's a plant we can grow in our area, not to mention that there are always interesting and unusual plants.

What kind of plants can you contribute to the plant sale? Everything, EXCLUDING invasive plants, aggressively spreading plants, non-hardy trees (it's hard to grow a mango indoors), and very common perennials. Rock garden plants, houseplants, unusual annuals, not so common perennials, and hardy trees are all good. If you have a question about plants, email me, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu

At our March meeting, one of the Hudson Valley participants suggested buying and selling wholesale plant sale plants from a nursery. This is not something the Adirondack Chapter has done in the past. It's certainly possible for the future. I'm still awaiting a reply from the recommended nursery to find out what they offer.

A few weeks ago, no one could predict how well the people of New York would be doing with getting vaccinated for COVID. Now that vaccination just opened to people 30 years old and over (as of March 29), it looks like most, if not all, of our members who want to be vaccinated should be fully vaccinated by our plant sale on Saturday May 22. Vaccination is moving much more quickly now and I hope this will soon expand to people 20 and older. This should make our gathering for the plant sale a bit less stressful for some.

This may be a bit off topic for a garden club, but it's a critical concern for most of us. If you would like to get vaccinated, I want to share some of my experience. In January, I qualified to get my shot, and the best opportunity I could get from the NY State website was an appointment in Utica (1 hour away) in April – an impressively long wait. At the beginning of March, I popped into a nearby small town pharmacy, not hoping for much. I ended up with a vaccination appointment 3 days later at this pharmacy. So if you aren't getting a timely appointment via the state website, consider going to a local pharmacy (or phoning) a few of them. Perhaps now that much more vaccine is available, appointments are easier to obtain.

With things looking up pandemic-wise, I think we would be able to have a summer garden tour this year. Not much work has been done on this yet; it is still under exploration. I hope to have more information for the May Green Dragon. I hope to see you on Zoom in April, and in May in person!

John Gilrein, Chair

OUR 2021 MAY 22 PLANT SALE!

Carol Eichler

Yes! we will have a May plant sale!

Mark your calendars for May 22nd when we will hold a members-only plant sale at Myers Park in Lansing. After some discussion following the March speaker presentation, we arrived at this decision. Our poll responses showed strong support to hold a sale.

The May 22nd sale will be only our second chance in over a year to meet in person. We see this as a great opportunity not just to share our plants but also to reconnect with each other. It will be modeled much like the August sale. Those who attended this successful sale can vouch for how much fun it was. It was conducted in a very orderly way so that we could maintain safe social distancing and it felt refreshingly relaxing.

We will provide details about the sale in our May newsletter. Suffice it to say set-up will begin as early as 9a.m., with the sale starting around 11a.m. You are welcome to attend whether you donate plants or not. We need buyers too! We have rented a large roofed pavilion (the same as last August) with plenty of room to spread our plants and people

for safe distancing. By that date I expect many of us will have been vaccinated but we will still require masks, assuming that will still be protocol for outdoor group gatherings.

It is not too early to start potting up plants. Since this member-only sale gives us a lot smaller customer base, you will want to give some thought as to what plants to bring that would be greatest interest to our members as well to consider the quantity of any one plant. Remember to wash the roots and repot into soilless mix to avoid the spread of the invasive jumping worms. As with last August, we hope to send out an advance plant list to minimize hovering and browsing.

Following the sale, Bill Stark and Mary Stauble have offered to open their garden for us to visit. Each year the gardens continue to be expanded and transformed. So you will not want to miss this opportunity! Timing should be good to catch their *Primula japonica* in bloom and many other gems putting on their spring show.

We also plan to have an information only booth at the Cooperative Extension Spring Plant Sale and Garden Fair. The event will be held over two Fridays this year, May 14 and 21 from 2 – 7pm. If we can find sufficient volunteers, we hope to staff our booth both days, since this has been a great way to gain visibility in the community and to recruit new members. To volunteer for an hour or two or more, contact Carol Eichler carolithaca@gmail.com, so she doesn't have to contact you!

BREAKING NEWS !

Marlene Kobre

Back by popular demand after a long dormancy, we are resuming the POM tradition by offering *Cyclamen purpurascens* at our May 22 Plant Sale. Its virtues are many: it is the hardiest of its kind, it blooms throughout the summer and holds its leaves, and it is fragrant. More details to follow in the May Newsletter.



Cyclamen purpurascens.
Photo: Edelweiss Perennials

JUST A REMINDER: TIME TO RENEW FOR 2021!

Please welcome 2 new members - Frank Kirk of Binghamton who is an expert on heathers and Summer Rayne Oakes of Spencer, NY who is living on the old Plantasia Nursery site. Also 2 long lapsed members have renewed - Ruth Hopkins of Lansing who has a wonderful garden we visited many years ago and Mary Royer of Ellis Hollow area of Ithaca. Our thanks to all 73 of you who have joined or renewed for 2021!

If you have not yet renewed for 2021 dues are \$15 for individuals, \$20 for a household - perhaps you will be able to take advantage of our member benefits in 2021! Check my email announcement of the newsletter link for your membership status. The renewal

form is at <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>. Contact Mary Stauble at mes2@cornell.edu if you have any questions.

GROWING FROM SEED: A FORUM DISCUSSION

Various Contributors

This time of year – for some of us at least – it's much ado about seeds. With our NARGS seed exchange seeds arriving in winter, it's time to sow. And it's all one great big experiment – past experience combined with limited resources and a little logic and thinking. Inexpensive seed sources are available – as a benefit of your NARGS membership and through our Chapter's free distribution of surplus seed from the NARGS seed exchange. There is little to lose and a lot to gain by growing your own plants from seed and we are encouraging one and all to "give it a try." Basically one is trading time for money to add plants to your rock garden or trough – often plants not readily available in the trade. We promise you a sense of pride and bragging rights when something you've grown from seed comes into bloom.

The ACNARGS member forum has been chatting up seeds lately. So we share some of that exchange here.

Linda: Aquilegia 'William Guinness' and Saxifraga 'Minutifolia' seeds have germinated! I promise not to post every time that I find seedlings but I'm very excited after having so little success in the past.

On Watering

Carol: Lately I've been questioning the best technique to maintain a proper moisture level for successful germination of my rock garden seeds. Many rock garden seeds are tiny or require light to germinate, which means to my way of thinking that moisture should be maintained at the top to give them the moisture they need to break dormancy. Yet, in seeming contradiction, they want a well-drained growing medium. Hmmm, constant moisture without overwatering. I've been top-dressing with chicken grit, which strikes me as neither moisture-retentive or able to wick moisture from below. Hence my quandary.

From Colette: ...That [grit] is non-tufa-like stone, and not likely to attract water from the soil mix. In fact besides holding seeds and soil in place, if not applied too heavily, it will help keep the soil from crusting over which is to be avoided, especially for the ability of any dust-like or tiny seeds to emerge. Claire Cockcroft touched on this subject in our March zoom meeting Misting and keeping soil moist but not wet, never drying out, all the usual caveats. Bottom watering works well for me only under some circumstances. I don't like the inability to visually gauge how dark the soil is getting as an indicator of water saturation when grit has been applied, as we most often do. There are so many variables to this question, I hope I've not muddled it further.

From John G.: I might be slightly incautious, but I normally water from the top, carefully. For the initial watering after sowing I did water a tray with the pots in it to let the water soak up from the bottom. This year, unlike the many years previously when I sowed seeds, I put the pots out in an enclosed and unheated porch. This porch doesn't

have insulated outer walls, so it was pretty chilly, like refrigeration temperature or so, most of the time. The pots in the porch stayed pretty moist without watering.

When I left pots outdoors to stratify, in the past, I would water them, again from the top. In the first month I either didn't need to water, due to snow cover, or covered the pots with a little snow. With weather like we're having now, pots outdoors would need watering frequently. I'm hoping the seeds on the porch had enough cold stratification that they'll germinate. I don't record what I plant and what germinates, but I'd say I normally get around 50% of the taxa germinating. It seems that some seeds germinate well, and others do not. One of the great mysteries of seed starting!

Last year, the first year I had shelves with grow lights, I brought some of the pots inside under the grow lights trying to encourage faster germination/growth. I'm still thinking about when I want to put out the seed pots – for now I think I want to keep them on the porch, where at least during the warm sunny days it's cooler than outside in the sun.

A really fine rose on a watering can could be a great tool for watering seed pots – my watering cans have a rose but not a very fine one.

I agree with Colette, that I don't think grit generally wicks up water. Maybe I'm prejudiced as the grit I have is granite, which is fairly impermeable. In the past I have used Turface in lieu of grit, and Turface is somewhat permeable, so I would consider that an exception.

I don't know if it helps to spray or mist the surface of the pots. But I suspect it would help, especially for pots inside the house with its dryer environment.

From Rosemarie: I also water from the bottom as I sow, but I use moist mix and always spray water on the top to be sure the bottom water gets all the way in. Then set them on a rack to drain well before putting them in the cold. Most of what I do is the same as John, although I do plastic bag (and shade) the flats once they have frozen on the porch. I will check if my super shaded porch still has frozen flats. If not, I remove the bags. Then I water overhead with a fine rosette facing upwards so the drop is softer. I only found a nice rose on a small can, so I keep filling the small can from my larger one until the outside water is turned on. Then a fine rosette designed for seedlings goes on the hose.

I have been doing much better at overwintering flats & pots & germinating since I got the current set up. I put the sheets up when I enclose everything in plastic, and remove them along with the bags. (soon, but they are still really cool)

BTW- depending on the size of the grit, thus the openings between the grains, I would think you would get a bit of wicking, especially if mixed with sand. A light cover of starter chicken grit over the soil probably does not wick much.

And more from Colette: I had tried Turface instead of grit in a pinch, but found it caused too much of a moist then dry condition for tiny seeds, but I do like to use it as part of some soil mixes. I haven't ever tried sand as part of the "mineral" topping, because I worry about the same quick wet/dry condition. Have you used or observed a mixed sand/grit soil cover? What grain size/type do you think works for this?

I have found that starting with an evenly moist mix is really important, and prefer to leave a moistened mix for a day to "rest." If the mix is a very fine seed starting mix, which works best for me when starting seed indoors, I won't usually bottom water because of the risk for compaction and losing the air in the mix, but this seems to work just fine for others, like Rosemarie says. Coarser soil mixes for outdoor sowing, I have bottom watered. I have used coarse sand to make an outdoor sandbed for both seeds and for striking some cuttings, and it worked well enough. As others mentioned, gentle top watering/misting with a fine rose on a watering can or Fogg-It type hose nozzle helps me to keep from dislodging those fine seeds. Many years ago I used a handheld rubber bulb (think turkey baster) with a fine rose, which worked well... but only for the occasional seed pot. Both Rosemarie's and John's methods are detailed and most helpful

On Stratification

(cold period that some seeds require in order to break dormancy)

Terry: Instead of stratifying outdoors, this year I have put my seeds on these cool racks (see photo) for their "cold period." Because the soil is moist and the pots are under plastic domes, I worry about mold, so I mist them with a bit of Captan from time to time. I put colored stickers on top because some I will be put out April 1, some April 15. I'd like to wait until after this week when it is to get down in the teens, in case any of them are thinking about germinating soon.



Terry's basement set-up

I like sowing in take-out containers that I stack and then run a drill through to make four good-size drainage holes. There is a lot of surface for sowing, the clear covers retain surface moisture, and they don't crack like plastic pots. However, I question whether more air would be favorable?

Terry discovered some great resources on the Prairie Moon Nursery website: <https://www.prairiemoon.com> under Resources/Guides.

(Editor's Note: Both Rosemarie and John wrote about using a similar technique by also stratifying in cold, unheated indoor areas, in their cases, unheated porches.)

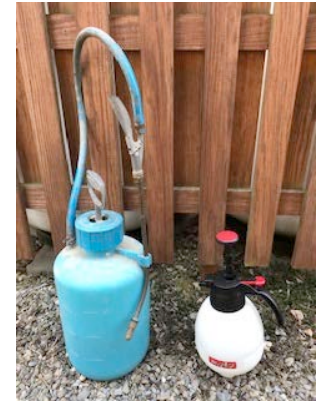


Carol: My conclusion is that there seems to be no one way nor definitive answer to the seed starting questions. I guess that means we each have to keep trying techniques that work for us.

Here's what I've decided to do: I work with pre-moistened medium which is about 2/3 pre-moistened, soilless peat-based mix and 1/3 grit. I pack my pots to about 1/2 inch from the top and water well from the top. Then I plant either on top

of the soil or covered depending on what the species might require. Then I cover with a mulch. In the photo I topped off with grit. Really tiny seeds and those requiring light for germination are sown on top of the grit.

I got a really great hand-held mister (the smaller one on the right in the photo) and I am planning to water from above. However, I have also placed humidity covers over the flats and are placing them in my garage so they shouldn't dry out so quickly as outdoors. As pots germinate however, they will go outdoors into natural light. Watering from below is not my choice since the water can take hours to be absorbed, especially if the soilless mix has dried out. Hint: the mix will readily absorb warm water.



I used to top off the pots with a fine vermiculite but didn't like its stickiness when I got to the transplanting stage. For my second batch of seed yet to be sown, I have decided to give vermiculite another chance for topping off. It will retain water more readily and does have wicking properties.

Let's hope we get some follow-up information on results from our seed growers in the future.

Got a question? Have a comment to offer? Join the discussion; join the ACNARGS Member Forum. Not a member yet? The Forum is limited to ACNARGS Members. Send a request to Carol Eichler, carolithaca@gmail.com. Then simply respond when you receive your email invitation to join this Google Forum

ARMCHAIR GARDENING

Covid has opened a whole world of online options to broaden our knowledge of plants and gardening of all sorts. I want to share a few of those that have recently come my way. Save these up for evenings or rainy days or when you need to give your body a break from gardening.

* Garden MasterClass YouTube channel, hosted by Annie Guilfoye and Noel Kingsbury, offers free videos every Thursday. They are also archived and available to view at your leisure. There are hours and hours to explore here from the familiar (Wave Hill and Innisfree) to gardens around the globe. You might want to start with this one: "How I became an Alpine Gardener and Plant Explorer" by Harry Jans. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnx_6txCtJO&t=645s. This is

* David Culp's free "A Journey Through Your Garden" month-by-month. Next live session is April 22. Register here: <https://www.gardendesign.com/davidculp/>. It is recorded but you must register to access the recording.

* Closer to home Habitat Gardening of Central New York offers videos by them and by many other organizations on topics relating to native plants and the greater ecosystem. Links can be found at : <https://www.hgcny.org/learn/videos/>

* Learn more about the Hart's Tongue Fern – its history, life cycle, and state breeding program - from a recent zoom



program meeting of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society. Here's the YouTube link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHIToSHDhEo&list=FLgVs2if9Liq5DdkhgQScxAA>

We are privileged to live within reasonably close access to the rare Hart's Tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium* var. *americanum*) at Clark Reservation and Chittenango Falls State Park.

And a great article about this fern:

<https://medium.com/usfishandwildlifeservicenortheast/this-hart-is-in-the-right-place-one-plants-recovery-story-a6f6009d5298>

* Listen to new member Summer Rayne Oakes' YouTube recording (from her YouTube channel Plant One on Me) on her visit to the Alpine House at Gothenberg Botanical Gardens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo-8T12DhIQ&t=1s>. This is just one of a number of botanical tours available on her YouTube channel.



Have you heard rumors that Bakers' Acres has been sold? This is not true. The property that Bakers' Acres sits on is "Under Contract" and may possibly sell. But regardless, Bakers' Acres will remain open through 2021. We had hoped that the new buyers would be interested in continuing Bakers' Acres, but at this point, it looks as though that may not happen. It was a wonderful 40 years and we look forward to our 41st and more if things change.

NEWS FROM NARGS : AUGUST DURANGO AGM

The NARGS Annual General Meeting (aka conference) will be held this year in Durango, Colorado, from August 5 - 8, 2021. The date has been shifted from an earlier announced June date because of concerns about COVID. At the Durango meeting, CDC and local health guidelines will be adhered to. Registration for the Durango meeting is now open.

The winter issue of the NARGS Quarterly included inviting articles about the Durango area. NARGS members received this issue in the mail and it is also available online to NARGS members. Further information and registration form can be found on the NARGS website ([nargs.org](https://www.nargs.org)) or the direct link to the AGM:

<https://www.nargs.org/news/2021-03-29/edge-rockies-durango-agm-2021>

ACNARGS UPCOMING 2021 PROGRAMS

NOTE: Due to covid our meetings will take on a different format for the foreseeable future. We will hold live meetings via Zoom for now, with hopes of resuming in-person meetings in the fall. For those of you unfamiliar with Zoom, contact Terry Humphries terryhumphres@gmail.com for assistance.

April 17: Anna Leggatt via Zoom, "Clematis the Queen of Flowers"

May 14 and 21: 11 – 7p.m. ACNARGS booth at CCE plant sale, Ithaca Farmers Market

May 22: Plant Sale covid style for ACNARGS members only, Myers Park; set-up begins at 9, sale following thereafter at approximately 11a.m.

Date TBD: Day tour of gardens in the Ithaca area

August 5-8, 2021 NARGS Annual General Meeting in Durango, CO. Info and registration at NARGS.org

August TBD: annual member only plant sale

What's in store for our programs this summer and fall? After our usual summer program meeting hiatus, woefully we will be able to meet in person. This newsletter is your best source for learning about our 2021 programming.

CALENDAR OF SELECT GARDEN EVENTS

For the latest information, visit these websites of these gardening organizations.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Online class information:
<http://ccetompkins.org/gardening>

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society monthly meetings via zoom. <https://flnps.org/>

Cornell Botanic Gardens: Verdant Views virtual programs; no on-site events at this time; visit Cornell Gardens at home: <https://cornellbotanicgardens.org/explore/events/>

Liberty Hyde Bailey Garden Club: <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/LHBGC/>

To have a garden event in your area listed send all pertinent information to David Mitchell at david_mitchell_14850@yahoo.com

2021 ACNARGS BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

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

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

Program: Terry Humphries, terryehumphries@gmail.com

Program Committee Members: Could this be you?

Secretary: Currently rotating amongst "Responsible People"

Treasurer: BZ Marranta, mmm10@cornell.edu

Plant Sales Chair: Carol Eichler carolithaca@gmail.com

Plant Sales Committee Members: Michael Loos, BZ Marranta, David Mitchell

Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, mkobre@ithaca.edu

Membership: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu

New Member Hospitality: Graham Egerton

Newsletter Editor: David Mitchell, dwm23@cornell.edu and sometimes Carol Eichler.

Looking for a new editor!

Calendar: Pat Curran, pc21@cornell.edu

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

ABOUT US – ADIRONDACK CHAPTER NARGS

Early bloomers Photos by C. Eichele., J. Gilrein, P. Curran
Many more flowers every day!



Draba hispanica. First to bloom. Funny how this tiny plant can make a penny look big.



Daphne mezereum is a stunner and it seems happy in this shady raised bed.



Nice shade of purple Iris reticulata at Wurster R.G. The flowers seem to pop up overnight followed by much taller foliage. Looks best in a large clump like this



Black pussy willow just opening up



Forced tulip 'Little Beauty'

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, two plant sales a year, and frequent plant giveaways. 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 [our Zoom subscription limits participants to 100]. Chapter membership starts at \$15 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, annual membership directory, and plant sale discounts and member only sales, including Plant-of-the-Month sales.

ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at www.nargs.org) for only \$40 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication focused on rock gardening, and an online website 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.

GREEN DRAGON TALES



Cyclamen hederifolium w/Paeonia mlkosewitschii



Helleborus 'Anna's Red'



Helleborus 'Golden Sunrise'



Hepatica nobile



Adonis vernalis



Self-sown Chinodoxa

Normally published eight times a year (Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec., during covid we've been publishing monthly. Submit articles by the fourth Friday of the month preceding publication to David Mitchell, david_mitchell_14850@yahoo.com
Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be May 2021.