

March 2025

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MARCH 15, 2025

Terry Humphries, Program Chair

Colgate Biology Professor James (Eddie) Watkins receives rave reviews from his students so we can expect to learn a lot about ferns at our March meeting. He has received numerous teaching awards, including Colgate Professor of the Year, the Bessey Teaching Award from the Botanical Society of America, and the Balmuth Award for Teaching and Student Engagement.



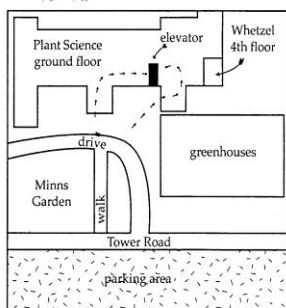
Eddie's specialties are biological sciences; botany; plant ecology; plant physiology with a particular focus on ferns. We at AC NARGS have long expressed interest in a program on ferns, and Eddie knows all about them. He is particularly interested in how the natural world shapes the distribution of species in both modern landscapes and over evolutionary time frames. Much of his field work helps students develop a better understanding of the mechanisms behind stress tolerance and recovery in a changing world.

Eddie has served as President of the American Fern Society and is long-term Associate Editor of the American Fern Journal. He has published numerous papers on the evolution of fern growth forms, particularly how they became epiphytic and how xeric ferns developed special capacities for their survival. He has a special interest in some of our favorite species, particularly the American Hart's Tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) and well as those in the *Dryopteris* genus. He promises to discuss xeric ferns, fern identification, reproduction, propagation and more.



BS, Auburn University, 1997
 MS, Iowa State University, 2000
 PhD, University of Florida, 2006
 Post Doc, Harvard University, 2008

******NOTE: Our meetings are back at Whetzel Room,
 Room 404 Plant Sciences Building
 236 Tower Road, Cornell University! ******



The west wing of the Plant Sciences Building has been shut down for renovations. And other than having those hallways walled off, everything should look pretty much as it did last time you were here. Remember the elevator to the 4th floor and then exit right down the long hallway. You will be facing the Whetzel Room.

Just a reminder, we ask all attendees to be fully vaccinated. Additionally, we will be following CDC, NYS, and Cornell covid protocol, which at this time does not require masks though you may choose to do so. Please do not attend if you are not feeling well.

FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair

I'm starting to write this on Friday February 22, two months after the winter solstice. Syracuse has had around 100 inches of snow this season; Terry in Barneveld has had much more and Ithaca has had much less. Some of our perennial plants may be very happy under their thick blanket of snow. My crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) has approximately 3 feet of snow covering it (more than what's on the ground as it gets snow shoveled off the porch). Even though I like some things about winter, I was happy to feel that winter is turning a corner, with the sun out today and the temperature creeping above freezing.

We're working on a garden tour weekend the last weekend of April, April 25-27. Plans are still under development; note that it's much more complicated to make plans for visits to private gardens. One of the highlights of the weekend is the annual Alpine Plant Sale at Stonecrop in Cold Spring, NY. Stonecrop was one of the homes/gardens of the former Frank Cabot, and now a public garden. Please let me know if you're interested in participating and check the draft itinerary.

As in the past few years, we're planning on having a booth at the Cooperative Extension Plant Sale at the Ithaca Farmer's Market on Friday May 16, and having our own chapter plant sale at Myer's Point in Lansing on Saturday May 17. Some of us are disappointed in the CCE plant sale being the downsized version, and CCE reports that having a plant sale at the Ithaca High School (like the Garden Fair of yore) has become more complicated.

There is a common expression among gardeners, perhaps even more so with those who have a rock garden, about trying a plant 3 times before resigning oneself to failure at growing the plant.

Some of us, at least this pertains to me, had a bit of learning curve for growing rock garden plants, and a lot of this could be summed up “it’s the drainage, dummy”. There is a lot of advice in books about rock gardens, but in our wet part of the US, the drainage is even more important than other areas. Multiple attempts at growing doesn’t only apply to rock garden plants. I would encourage people to try a plant multiple times if the first time failed. Of course, it’s a big help to consult with one’s fellow gardeners, and if possible, see where the plant is growing in gardens or nature. Information about the provenance is helpful too, when that information is available. Some of the plants I have tried to grow multiple times and eventually found success with include: *Berberis stenophylla* ‘Corallina Compacta’, a dwarf barberry shrublet that’s rock garden size; saxifrages, including the silvers and the kabschias. These rock garden saxes like bright light, but it’s too warm here for them to be in full sun. Rock garden Daphnes (dwarf shrubs) are another one; for me the key was to provide great drainage and limit competition (they don’t want to be shaded). If there’s a plant you really love and killed it the first time growing it, I’d recommend trying again, of course with different cultivation practices. Some plants are just really miffy, they either need a different climate or perhaps an alpine house, and it’s good to be practical and recognize there are limits to what one can grow without extreme cultivation efforts. Some of the almost impossible plants for us include *Dionysias* (primula relatives that like vertical fairly dry cliffs), *Eritrichiums* (alpine mats with forget me not flowers), and certain high mountain *Androsaces*.

Hope to see you this spring!

MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

Our heartfelt thanks to all who renewed your membership for 2024! It’s time to renew for 2025! The ACNARGS membership year runs the calendar year. So, unless you’ve already renewed or you’re a lifetime member, your 2025 membership is due now (Individual @\$15, Household @\$20). If you have not renewed, you will see a reminder message in the email announcing this newsletter.

Print and complete the 2025 Membership form now: <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf> or you can save a stamp and renew in person at our February meeting. Questions? Contact Mary at mes2@cornell.edu

While it’s true that our meetings are free and open to everyone, there are advantages to becoming a member: mainly our members-only plant-of-the-month at discounted prices and our May and August member-only plant sales. Any of these can easily recoup the cost of your dues. And ... you can never have too many plants!

We hope to see all of you in 2025!

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Marlene Kobre, POM Coordinator

Reliable sources for rock garden and alpine plants have become scarcer than proverbial hens’ teeth. So for our first POM in 2025 I decided it was time to explore what is for me a new source: Illahe Rare Plant Nursery in Salem, Oregon, owned by Mark Akimoff. Mark describes Illahe as “a craft nursery specializing in rare bulbs, alpine, rock garden and xeric plants for an evolving climate.”

In addition to offering a rich range of well-grown plants, many of which are indeed rare, Mark maintains an interesting blog. As testimony to his serious dedication to environmentally sustainable gardening, one blog entry describes the energy-efficient heating system he designed and constructed for a new geothermal eco-friendly greenhouse. His website and blog are definitely worth a visit.

For March we are offering the following two selections that I hope will serve as harbingers of spring that will help lift your spirits out of our dismal winter weather.

DIANTHUS ‘INSHRIACH DAZZLER’

Genus name derived from two Greek words, “dios” & “anthos,” translated as “divine flower.” This cultivar is a dazzler indeed, endemic to a Scottish National Nature Reserve of the same name.

Bloom Time: May-June-July **HZ:** 5 **Height:** Under 10 cm/4”

Foliage, Flower, and Shape: Thin leaves create a neat green tuft/cushion up to 10cm wide. Fragrant, bright pink 5-petaled flowers with fringed edges smother the foliage during bloom time. Deadhead flowers after blooming and lightly clip foliage to encourage rebloom and compact growth.

Light, Soil, and Moisture: Sun/part sun but dislikes shade; well-drained gritty soil with some organic content. Avoid overwatering and standing water and use inorganic mulch like pea gravel but not too close to the stem.

Benefits: Well-suited to troughs, scree conditions, and border edges. Deer resistant but rabbits are said to eat them. We’ve grown them for many years, and we have rabbits, but I’ve never seen evidence of the flowers or foliage being nibbled.

Propagation: Dianthus are said to be relatively easy to grow from seed or from cuttings. Cuttings of non-flowering stems are best taken in the spring before the new growth has hardened.

PHLOX subulata/douglasii ‘MCDANIEL’S CUSHION’ (The genus name comes from the Greek word for “flame” to signify the often bright colors of the flowers. I couldn’t track down Mr. or Ms. McDaniel).

Bloom Time: May-June **HZ:** 5 **Height:** 10 cm/4”

Foliage, Flower, and Shape: Dark green needle-shaped leaves form a compact mat that can reach 18” wide. The foliage is engulfed by vibrant pink flowers during bloom time. Like the Dianthus, this phlox will benefit from a trim after flowering.

Light, Soil, and Moisture: Full to part sun, but full is best. Neutral to alkaline, gritty, well-drained soil but with some organic content.

Benefits: Well suited to various garden sites: spilling over walls, in troughs and rock/crevice gardens, and as border edging. Deer and rabbit resistant.

Propagation: Soft wood cuttings of non-flowering stems in spring.

A Cautionary Reminder: These plants have been grown in an Oregon zone much milder than ours, so they will need some TLC for a few weeks as they adapt to our colder climate. Give them protection from the inevitable March and early April frosts by either bringing them in at night or covering them. Frost blankets work well if you have them.

PLANT SALES

Carol Eichler, Plant Sale coordinator

The Plant Sales are Coming!

Time to think spring even though “the weather outside is frightful.” I’ve been busy making arrangements for our two plant sales and a booth for the Cooperative Extension plant sale. That’s been a great distraction from the snow, ice, and frigid temperatures. (That, and my recent trip to Colombia!)

First up on the calendar is the **Cooperative Extension plant sale on May 16**. This is a Friday, and it is being held from 1 – 7 p.m. at the Ithaca Farmers Market. We have not attended

in several years, but I felt it was time we at least participated with an information booth. The annual sale is well attended and serves as a great opportunity to promote our Chapter. Maybe we can recruit some new members. I am looking for volunteers to work 2-hour shifts. Contact me (carolithaca@gmail.com)

The following day, **Saturday May 17**, we re-scheduled our **members-only plant sale**. We'll be back at Myers Park in Lansing. Expect our usual routine with the set-up and sale in the morning followed by a dish-to-pass lunch. We apparently still have lots of great plants to share. And yes, I need volunteers to help with set-up and take down, as usual.

Our 2nd big **members-only sale will be held Saturday, August 23**, a bit later than usual. I'm really going to need help for this one, since I will be traveling on the NARGS Tour to South Africa. I am looking for someone to take on the one-time role as Coordinator. Since I know I'll be away this far ahead of time, the wonderful person who steps up can receive "training" by helping with the May sale and be assured with the knowledge that you won't be carrying the responsibility alone. I am happy to discuss the job in greater detail with anyone who is interested.

NARGS & ACNARGS UPCOMING 2025 PROGRAMS

Carol Eichler, NARGS Board Member-at-Large

NARGS Annual Meeting: *Peaks and Prairies*

Thu, Jun 12th, 2025, 9:00 AM - Mon, Jun 16th, 2025, 5:00 PM MDT

Cheyenne Botanic Gardens, Cheyenne, WY

The post-conference trip to Cody, Wyoming, led by Panayoti and Mike Bone, has 11 or 12 people registered with space for 16. Todd expects it will fill.

NARGS Tours

There is still room for registrants to upcoming trips to **Tajikistan/ Uzbekistan** (17 so far)

South Africa: 15 people are registered, which means Julia Corden will go along as a second guide in addition to the Green Tours guide. Both have done tours in South Africa for many years.

And Future trips to look forward to:

January 2026 – Chile with Chris Gardner of ViraNatura. The trip will have some overlap with the Argentine Patagonia trip but will also include new species and genera. A trip description and cost is available on VN website:

<https://www.viranatura.com/tour/100043/chile-alpines-of-the-andes-a-tour-for-nargs>. (I don't think registration is open yet. Chris spoke to our Chapter last fall and also once by zoom)

March 2026: Crete to see spring bulbs

Fall 2026 Turkey to see fall bulbs

March 2027 Morocco

June 2027 (3rd week of June) Julia Corden, wants to repeat the tour to **Switzerland** tour

CALENDAR OF SELECT AREA GARDEN EVENTS

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

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Online class information:

ccetompkins.org

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society monthly meetings – a hybrid of in-person and zoom:

<https://flnps.org/> Recordings of past programs are available to view online.

Cornell Botanic Gardens: <https://cornellbotanicgardens.org/explore/events/>

Habitat Gardening in CNY, local Wild Ones Chapter: <https://www.hgcnny.org/>

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

To have your garden event listed send all pertinent information to Susanne Lipari
selj3@cornell.edu

2025 ACNARGS BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

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

Chair (aka head honcho): John Gilrein, basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu

Program Coordinator: Terry Humphries, terryhumphries@gmail.com

Program Committee Members: Would you like to help? Share your speaker suggestions!

Secretary: Currently rotating amongst "Responsible People"

Treasurer (aka CFO): Marlene Kobre

Plant Sales Chair: Carol Eichler carolithaca@gmail.com

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

Membership: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu

New Member Hospitality: We are looking for volunteers!

Newsletter Editor: Susanne Lipari selj3@cornell.edu

Wurster Garden Coordinator: Carol Eichler

Wurster Volunteers: Elaine Caso, Ellen Lane, Sheila Stone; Others always welcome! Contact Carol Eichler if you wish to be added to the email list.

Book Order Manager: New NARGS program to offer NARGS' members select books at deeply discounted prices. New Chapter position. Looking for a volunteer!

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

ABOUT US – ADIRONDACK CHAPTER NARGS

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, occasional 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. 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), invitations to our garden day trips, 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 a wealth of information including current and archived of Quarterly's, recordings of past study days and more. NARGS National also 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

Published eight times a year (Jan./Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec. Submit articles no later than the fourth Friday of the month preceding the monthly publication to Susanne Lipari, sel3@cornell.edu. Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be April 2025.