

April '25

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APRIL 19, 2025

Terry Humphries, Program Chair

Barbara Cooper & Bella Seiden of Toronto, Ontario:

Mountain Passes: Four Passes in the Andes

1:00 PM Whetzel Room 404, Plant Science Building Cornell University

Brown bag lunch starting at noon

Once again, we welcome our Canadian friends, Barbara & Bella to share their botanical adventures to remote alpine environments!

Barbara Cooper and Bella Seiden have been gardening together in Toronto for more than 25 years. They have a plant collector's garden in an urban setting, where they have constructed a tufa garden, crevice and rock gardens as well as perennial beds. Over the years, they have developed an interest in seeing plants in their natural habitat and have traveled several times to South America, South Africa, and Turkey. Barbara and Bella are members of the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society where they are responsible for the Speakers Program of their NARGS Chapter.



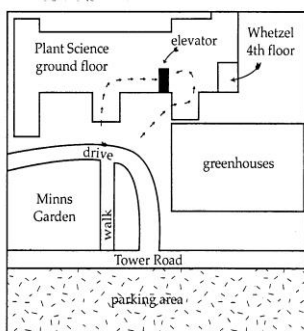
Mountain Passes: Four Passes in the Andes

Mountain passes provide a unique opportunity to visit alpine areas to botanize, because unusual plants can be found not far from the road. On an earlier trip, there had been discussion about the

roads that cross the Andes, so in 2020 Bella and Barbara returned to Argentina to botanize the area with Marcela Ferreyra. Marcela is a passionate biologist, former professor and mountain guide. She was one of the authors of the authoritative guide *High Mountain Flowers of the Patagonian Andes*. The goal of the trip was to follow the “spine” of South America, in search of unusual plants distributed across various altitudes, latitudes and exposures. Together they drove up and into the eastern Andes in Argentina, then crossed over into Chile to explore the western Andean slopes. This presentation will focus on their experience of four very different mountain passes and what they learned about the flora they found there. This program provides a unique opportunity to vicariously explore some of the remotest places on earth with knowledgeable people who never tire of discovering small floristic treasures hidden high in the mountains.



*****NOTE: Our meetings are (usually) 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.

NOTE: As of now, we are meeting in-person at Cornell in the Whetzel Room and not recording the sessions

FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair



Perhaps it has been a pleasant shock this year to go from 2 months of wintery weather to spring bursting out all over. I know it was a bit of a shock to the system for me to go out walking when it was 30 degrees and windy after some days of sun and temperatures in the 60s. Ironically as I was writing this on March 22, we had a 10-minute snow flurry.

We had an interesting talk on ferns in March. The talk was unusually technical for us, and good to hear about some other aspects of ferns. The delicate appearance of our ferns belies the ease of cultivation when grown in good conditions, which is partial shade or shade for most of them. There are some ferns which are fussier of course. Ferns have varied sizes, colors, and textures, and will generally look good for the whole growing season. You can take one home after our April meeting as the Plant of the Month. Flowers can be fleeting, but pretty foliage that lasts all season – that’s a winner. I have killed a lot of rock garden plants, but hardly any ferns!



There are 2 garden visits coming up in April:
 The Stonecrop Alpine Plant Sale is on Saturday April 26 9 AM – 3 PM (\$5 admission). Stonecrop’s website: <https://www.stonecrop.org/>. Peruse plants from the dozen or so vendors, or stroll the various gardens and glasshouses, where you can see a diverse array of hardy and tender plants, many of which will be in bloom.
 The next garden is the garden of Bunny Williams in Falls Village, CT, tour starting at 1:30 PM April 26. We’ll get a tour there with the head gardener, thanks to the generosity of the owner, who’s a bit of a gardening celebrity. There’s a limit of 20 visitors for this garden, so if you’re interested contact me for details (jgilrein@twcny.rr.com).

Registration is still open for the NARGS Annual General Meeting in Cheyenne Wyoming June 12-16, 2025, at the Cheyenne Botanical Garden. The meeting will include trips to natural areas and Lauren Springer’s garden (Ms. Springer is a well-known garden designer/author) in Colorado. For details, see nargs.org.

Please think about potting up some plants for our plant sale on Saturday May 17 at Myer’s Park, Lansing. There’s always something interesting to add to your garden to be found.

MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

If you have not renewed for 2025, you should do it now so you’ll be eligible for our many membership benefits. You can renew at the April meeting or by mail. Your new or renewed membership will allow you to purchase the April Plant-of-the-Month, which we sell at a discounted price. The renewal form is at <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>. Your membership status is reported to you in the email with the newsletter link. Contact Mary Stauble at mes2@cornell.edu if you have any questions.

PLANT OF THE MONTH :

Marlene Kobre, POM Coordinator

APRIL POM 2025: FERNS GALORE

Inspired by our March speaker, fern specialist James Watkins, I turned to the incredibly rich range of hardy temperate ferns for our April POM. Our source is Fancy Fronds Nursery, located in Gold Bar, Washington. Judith Jones, the sole owner and proprietor of this family-run nursery since 1981, discovered the world of ferns through her love of Victorian literature. Since then she has named and introduced new cultivars of ferns and has been a leader in fern identification. In spite of being past retirement age, the website says “she has never quite recovered from that affliction” and “continues her botanical rampage with unabashed abandon.” The plant descriptions on the website reflect the depth of her knowledge and experience. They also sent me to the dictionary for a lesson in fern terminology.

Many of the cultivars I was tempted by were already “Sold Out,” or low in numbers so we have three selections. Descriptions and cultivation requirements follow, including how many plants of each cultivar are available.

***ASPLENIUM trichomanes subsp. trichomanes* (Maidenhair Spleenwort) (10)**

Origin: Pacific Northwest but now also considered native in the Northeastern U.S.

Height: 6-12”

FronD Structure: Linear fronds with 15-30 pairs of green rounded oblong “pinnae” (aka leaves?) with toothed edges arranged on dark brownish-black “stipes” (aka stems?).

Light, Moisture, and Soil: Part-full shade (no direct sunlight), evenly moist but well-drained, slightly acidic soil. They especially appreciate rocky crevices. To avoid mud splattering on the fronds, mulch with rocks or moss.

***ASPLENIUM scolopendrium ‘Marginatum’* (Narrow Hart’s Tongue Fern) (9)**

Origin: English cultivar

Height and Fronds: 6-12”; tongue-shaped fronds are unusual for being undivided.

Light, Moisture, Soil: part-full shade, evenly moist, slightly alkaline soil. They will tolerate alkaline soil if egg shells, wood ashes, or other sources of calcium are added.

***DRYOPTERIS affinis ‘Pinderi’* (Pinder’s Golden Scaled Male Fern) (2)**

Origin: English Lake District 1855

Height: 2-4’ upright fronds

Light and Moisture: Part sun to full shade; moist to dryish conditions. Fancy Fronds says it’s “forgivingly tolerant” as to light and moisture.

Plant SALE :

Carol Eichler, Plant Sale Coordinator

If you can think this far ahead (and please do), May 16th is one of two back-to-back days coming up. That’s the date of the annual and long-standing Cooperative Extension Plant Sale. This year it will be held at the Ithaca Farmers Market from 1 to 7 p.m. You can expect lots of vendors to be on

hand showcasing tempting plants - offering everything from annuals to herbaceous perennials to trees and shrubs. It's amazing to see so many nurseries all in one place! As we approach the date, you can get information on the vendors attending on the CCE Tompkins County Home Gardening website.

The event has become a major fundraiser for the Master Gardener program with their offering of proven performers from their gardens and lots of native plants. They also offer helpful information displays, free soil testing, and a GrowLine (ask a gardener) booth. Come support them and their good work in the community.

ACNARGS will also be there offering information about our Chapter and trying to lure new members with some trough displays. Carol (carolithaca@gmail.com) still needs a few volunteers, especially the 2 and 4p.m. shifts.

So come to shop. Stay to volunteer.

As for our member only sale, prepare for the next big day, May 17. As plants start to pop out of the ground, you should be thinking about potting up your surplus to pot up and donate. As you dig and divide, remember to remove as much soil as you can and repot into soilless mix. However, we do not need to be as scrupulous in past years in regard to bare-rooting to avoid the spread of jumping worms. Most of us already have the worms in our gardens; we are passing the responsibility to those few among us who do not. Buyer beware. Please label your pots in advance by Latin name if possible.

More details about the sale at Myers Park in Lansing will be forthcoming in our May newsletter. If you have attended in the past, you already know what to expect including the dish-to-pass lunch following the sale.

IN PRAISE OF SPRING

J. Bruce

Spring is not a non-stop cheer;
 It previews the entire year.
 The summer sun, the vernal rain
 Give way to winter white again;
 The autumn leaves and snow plough grit
 See coltsfoot blooming where they sit.
 When short sleeves vie with tuques and coats
 To slide on sleds or paddle boats,
 And when we, for what seems no reason
 Hum tunes of a different season,
 Certain whether we will choose
 To visit Banff or tour Toulouse
 Then we can thank the gifts of Spring
 Which showers us with everything.

STARTING A FERN NURSERY

John Gilrein

I got an idea in Granby, Connecticut (central Connecticut on the Massachusetts border), USDA hardiness zone 6, a similar climate to ours, with less snow. The soil is a sandy/gravelly loam with low pH and low fertility. On the north side of a house is a lawn, which is somewhat sparse and unfertilized. There are no nearby trees or shrubs, so the site gets a lot of light but little direct sun. This shady side of the house is a natural fern nursery, with a few species of ferns. My tentative identification of the ferns is *Dryopteris intermedia* (evergreen wood fern) and *Polystichum acrostichoides* (Christmas fern) – these ferns are small sporelings whose growth is controlled by mowing. Due to the small size of the ferns, my identification skills are a bit challenged. To the north and south of the property are several acres of mature forest, which includes native ferns (and a source of fern spores). The soil here fine for growing trees, ericaceous plants, and ferns, just not good for growing grass. This site included dozens of small fern plants. On this property there are no cultivated ferns or garden borders, the fern spores all had to come from the woods.

Seeing this natural fern nursery gave me an idea: I can replicate these conditions at home and create a low care fern nursery. This natural fern nursery is thriving on neglect. I haven't tested this out yet, but copying the conditions above should encourage success. This is what I'm thinking: create a substrate (which could include topsoil or not), i.e. a made-up soil, with sand and organic matter without added fertilizer. Maybe with the proportions of 50% soil, 20% sand, and 30% organics, or 50/20/30. My goal would be an organic rich well drained medium of low to modest fertility with some structure; the pH could be acid, neutral, or slightly alkaline. For organic matter I would prefer leaf mold or Leaf Grow (commercially composted leaves). Compost from my bin would probably need to be sterilized (my home compost does not get hot enough to kill weed seeds). Starting with a medium free of weed seeds would be ideal, to limit weed growth and allow space for ferns to grow. This fern nursery could be created in a large trough. Minimal mulching would be good; too much mulching would make it hard for fern spores to germinate.

For ferns to grow, most of our common woodland ferns and common cultivated ferns are either somewhat indifferent regarding the soil pH, or will tolerate moderately acid or alkaline conditions: Christmas fern, evergreen wood fern, marginal wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), hart's tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*), etc. In general, these ferns prefer good light/partial shade or limited direct sun, good drainage, some organic matter in the soil, not much competition from greedy tree roots, and not too much competition from neighboring plants. Ferns requiring more specific conditions like a rock garden (*Cheilanthes sp.*), wet conditions (cinnamon fern, *Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*), or are very large (ostrich fern, *Matteuccia struthiopteris*) would not be good candidates for this.

Once the fern nursery trough is filled with the planting medium, it would be ready for fern spores to be introduced. Woodland ferns bear spores on the undersides of the leaves. Harvesting some leaves with some of the spores reaching maturity would provide a good source for the spores. This trough being situated in a shady spot would help keep the planting medium moist. Small ferns are very modest consumers of moisture, so it would require watering only during droughts, heat waves, or the height of summer (which may all occur at the same time). Weeding would be necessary, mostly to remove weed seeds blown in by the wind. Assuming I'll get some success,

the young fern plants will get transplanted into the woods behind the house as their permanent home.

NARGS & ACNARGS UPCOMING 2025 PROGRAMS

Tonic for the Garden(er) Invitation to a Symposium

Panayotis Kelaidis

Gardening, by its very nature, is generally a solitary occupation. We indulge our inner introverts by delving deep into nature, uprooting weeds, pruning the four “d’s” off of shrubs and trees (the diseased, dead, deformed and demented!). I don’t know about you, but come spring—especially if it’s a warmish day with a bit of humidity in the air so everything smells sweet and strong—and I practically run out into the garden and begin to work. The day flies by “like an arrow” as they say in Chinese. Next thing you know the sun’s setting and you go inside reluctantly. It’s magical stuff—and let’s not even talk about delicate flowers or masses of gorgeous bloom. Don’t you feel sorry for those who don’t have gardens?

Most of us have in-house critics, who ask us unbelievable questions such as “do you really think you need more plants?” or “how much have we spent on soil and amendments the last few years?” We can hardly be blamed for seeking out fellow conspirators--a gardener a few blocks away, or nowadays someone we swap email messages with on the Internet—with whom we can share garden thoughts, plants and commiserate over the bulbs dug up by the damn squirrels!

Imagine, if you will for a moment, a whole auditorium full of such people—and you have a pretty good image of a NARGS Study Weekend or Annual Meeting. I must warn you, these are addictive! I’d hate to count how many of these I’ve attended over the decades (the first for me was in Seattle and Vancouver in 1976—49 years ago!) I cannot begin to relate what I have learned at such meetings or the friends I’ve made and the heros I’ve come to know. Jim Archibald was one, who was selling plants at Alpines ’81: little did I suspect at the time that he would use our home as a base of operations as he and Jenny collected across the Rockies and Great Basin in the summer of 1987, or that he and I would collect seed together in Africa a few years later or that we would go to Wales several times to visit. Multiply that by people manifold—the memories are golden!

This June the NARGS Annual meeting (“Peaks and Prairies”) will be held in Cheyenne, Wyoming—a relatively small, charming city, with a fantastic botanic garden few large cities can match. Cheyenne is surrounded by vast natural areas—many of which will be featured during and after the conference: shortgrass prairie full of paintbrush, penstemon and buckwheats. Several mountain ranges are nearby: the Laramie Range, the Medicine Bow (or Snowy Range) and the northern Front Range. And throughout Laramie and Albany counties, there are concentrations of rare cushion plants--many endemic--which will be in full bloom,

The roster of speakers includes some of the greatest talents of the New Wave of rock gardening: Kenton Seth’s recent book (co-authored by Paul Spriggs) has become a veritable bible for rock gardeners—believe me, Kenton has new things to convey. Mike Kintgen has been Curator at Denver Botanic Gardens for several decades: he has researched rock plants and gardens around the world, and always has fresh ideas and wonderful images to share. Connor Smith—who gardens at Utrecht Botanic Gardens—is also a world traveler in the forefront of European rock gardening. And several local specialists will provide programs on the rich geology and botany of the area.

There are numerous options for flying directly to Cheyenne, or if you plan to take a few days extra, perhaps fly to Denver and rent a car (it's only 100 miles away). One thing you can be sure of—you will have wonderful programs, beautiful venues, great gardens and natural destinations at the peak of bloom. And droves of the best gardeners from across North America (and beyond) to chat with dawn to dusk! And beyond!

Click here for more info (and sign up!):

<https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/cheyenne-botanic-gardens/nargs-conference>

Hope to see you there!

ACNARGS Garden Tour

Save the date of June 14th for a garden tour in the Ithaca area with a focus on native plants, but by no means exclusively. We will join the tour arranged by the Master Gardener Volunteers, which begins at Cooperative Extension.

The pollinator and native plant demonstration gardens will be highlighted but of course, you will want to view the Wurster Rock Garden too. Additionally, two ACNARGS members - Mary Squyres and Gin Mistry - will open their gardens, along with two other garden stops to round out the day. At Gin's home you will have a chance to visit the rock garden she has maintained in Nari's memory.

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.hgcny.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
sel3@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: vacant

Newsletter Editor: Susanne Lipari sel3@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 Quarterlies, 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 May 2025.