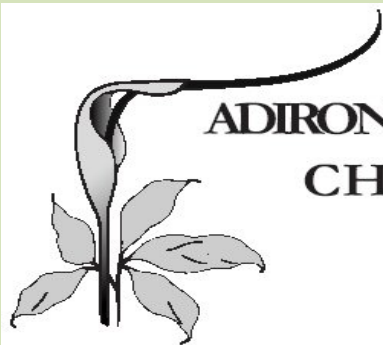




ADIRONDACK CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

October 2026

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OCTOBER 9 : TIM ALDERTON

Terry Humphries, Program Chair

October 9, 2026 Tim Alderton, Horticulturalist, JC Raulston Arboretum and new speaker from the NARGS traveling speaker program. Two programs: come for one or both. Join us at this

11 AM: **Botanizing in the Croatan** (*coastal North Carolina*)

12-ish: Break for brown bag lunch

1:00 PM: **Outstanding North Carolina Mountain Wildflowers**

We will meet at Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Av., Ithaca, New York. Tim is a late replacement because Judith and Felix Jones from Fancy Fronds in Washington state unfortunately had to cancel their trip to due to a medical emergency. Thanks to the efforts of Elisabeth Zander and Bobby Ward, Tim was suggested AND more importantly he was available. John Gilrein, who currently serves as the organizer for the northeast region, has been scrambling to confirm arrangements with the other host chapters.

Tim is being brought to Ithaca as part of the NARGS traveling speaker program. This program organizes and pays the travel costs for outstanding plants people to speak at chapter meetings. It provides speakers to the chapters that they might not otherwise be able to afford.

Note from Carol: Terry and I had a chance to meet Tim at the AGM in Calgary this summer. He took us on an unofficial side trip to a nearby city park where he was identifying all the plants in sight (and there were a lot!), including some wonderful orchids. I know next to nothing about the flora of North Carolina (rhododendrons, azaleas, trilliums?) so I am very excited to welcome him and very excited about the talks that he will be presenting. You should be too!



Tim is a native of Brookville, PA. He has had a love of plants since he was a child growing up helping in his family's small greenhouse and exploring the woods near where he lived. He graduated from PSU in 2002 with a BS in horticulture and moved to Raleigh in March of 2005 to accept a position at Plant Delights Nursery. In January 2006 he started at the JC Raulston Arboretum as their horticulture technician. He has taken care of the gardens for over 20 years growing countless different plants throughout the gardens. The rooftop gardens, scree and xeric gardens have all been some of his focuses. He was a speaker for "The Wandering Rock Gardener Stories from High and Wild Places" November of 2025 and was a traveling speaker for the Midwest chapters in April of 2026.

AND OUR NOVEMBER 9TH PROGRAM

Note: Our November meeting will be held November 9th, the second Saturday of November. Carol Eichler will present photos from her botanical trip to South Africa in 2025. The program will be again held at the Tompkins County Cooperative Extension offices starting with bag lunch at noon, program at 1:00pm.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair

Late breaking news from last week (September 23): the planned speaker for the Northeast region NARGS, Judith and Felix Jones, had to cancel due to a medical emergency. Felix is now out of the hospital but his mobility is impaired for now. We have a replacement speaker, Tim Alderton, from JC Raulston Arboretum, a botanical garden in Raleigh, NC. Tim graciously agreed to fill in for the Jones duo. The subject of the talks will be flora of North Carolina. The previously set up schedule & venue remain the same, with 2 talks at Cooperative Extension on Friday October 9. The first talk will be Botanizing in the Croatan (coastal North Carolina) at 11 AM, with the second talk Outstanding North Carolina Mountain Wildflowers at 1 PM. Hope you can join us on October 9!

MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

Don't miss out on the plant of the month and all of our other benefits! If you still need to renew for 2026 the renewal form is at <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>

PLANT OF THE MONTH :

Marlene Kobre, POM Coordinator

Check your email soon for POM info!

MORE CHAPTER HISTORY

Carol Eichler

Looking Back...Again

As part of our 50th Anniversary Celebration as a Chapter, I started a series called “Looking Back,” to recognize past members who were instrumental to shaping our Chapter. Well, it took “looking back” at past issues to remind me that I need to resume this nostalgic journey.

I’m basing some of our history on the NARGS 1997 publication, *“A History of the American Rock Garden Society 1934-1995*. Besides including a history of NARGS (changed from its original name of American Rock Garden 1994), it contains a section on the various Chapters’ histories. Lee Nelson tells me the text recorded there is all wrong for our chapter. Until I stand corrected, this is what I have to go on.

From 1995 to 2003 there’s a big gap. I got involved with our chapter shortly after the 2000 Winter Study Weekend that we hosted in Syracuse. So from 2000 until 2003 when our newsletters are archived on the website, I’m relying on my memory and you know what they say about memory – it’s unreliable. So, you can choose to believe what you will.

So here goes a little pre-2000 history.

ACNARGS hosted a winter study weekend (WSW) in 1983, just a few years after our chapter was founded. Lee Nelson was a co-chair, back in the day when it was easy to gather 200, 300, or even 400 attendees. Traditionally, NARGS national held 2 WSW week-ends every year in addition to the annual general meeting. The expectation was that the eastern chapters would host first, in the winter, followed by a western study week-end. Holding a big event like this during full-on winter got a little challenging), back in the day when winters were winters.

Some years later, in 2000, our chapter hosted another winter study week-end. **Bill Plummer** chaired this gathering, again very well attended. We made what was a lot of money for us and there was much debate about how to invest it.

Tom Myers, if memory serves, became our chapter chair, following the 2000 winter study week-end. He had the tough job of rebuilding the board – those “persons of responsibility” - since there was almost complete turnover. I seem to remember he was the one responsible for asking me to serve, first as treasurer, then as secretary-treasurer. (Note, I said yes, not because I’m crazy but because I was flattered to be asked.)

The year 2000 was a big year. We built the Wurster Memorial Rock Garden. It must have been in the works for some time. Monika Roth from Cooperative Extension had approached the chapter about building a rock garden on the Extension property. There was a fund created in memory of Al Wurster. I wasn't involved in the decision, which I'm sure wasn't taken lightly. The chapter contributed some funds assisted by a Singer grant from NARGS National.

The planning process involved a number of meetings at the **Wilkinson's** house that never seemed to accomplish much. In the end **Robin Bell**, a long-time member and one of our most knowledgeable, saved the day, as the story goes, by sketching a plan on a bar napkin. Voila! A design was in place!



When it came time to build, truckloads of materials were gathered, with many of the stones hand-picked from a local quarry. A stonemason was hired and a surprisingly large group of people gathered to help. The construction began in the spring of 2000, but was not completed and planted until the spring of 2001. I still



marvel that our chapter pulled off such a huge project and that we have maintained the garden ever since.

I believe it was **Michelle Jones Ham**, our chair somewhere in this timeframe that began our tradition of offering plant-of-the-month for members to purchase at a discount. She was always a ball of energy and ideas and this was one of them. It helped us all learn about and start growing rock garden plants.

Michelle moved to Rochester and, not surprisingly with her energy, started a new chapter there. Some of our members like **Arthur Trimble** and **Roslyn Bliss**, who were driving to our meetings from Rochester, joined the new chapter but not before we had taken a day trip organized by Art to visit his and Roslyn's gardens, among others. That was in 2003 because the tour information is in our June 2003 Green Dragon.

Thank goodness we have those Green Dragon archives. **Craig Cramer**, as our webmaster, built our website. Our newsletter is the most prominent feature and serves as the "go to" for what's we're up to. One of the best decisions he made was to create this repository for past issues. Since our newsletter informs us of the chapter activities, it serves a great purpose of recording our history.

In 2005, the Green Dragon records that I had become the Chair. How did that happen? Uh-oh, was it because I was asked? (Question to myself, did I have a reputation as a push-over?)

Do you remember receiving the newsletter in the mail? We sent out printed copies until 2005 when print became an option and most of us went digital.

One of our summer activities included garden tours – local day tours and overnights. The one trip long-time members still talk about was in 2007 when we ventured all the way to Quatre Vents outside La Malbaie, Quebec. We received a personal tour from Frank Cabot, who was

heavily involved in NARGS and was one of the founders of the Garden Conservancy. We also visited Maria Galetti's garden and nursery, Alpines Mount Echo. She was quite a grower!

As for local garden trips, we covered lots of territory over the years – Binghamton, Oneonta, Greene, Rochester, Syracuse, Cazenovia, Ithaca of course, and probably other communities I have failed to mention. Our members have been very generous to share their gardens with us.

Then came Covid-19 and the world shut down. It changed the way we functioned as a chapter. The NARGS Annual General Meeting was to take place in Ithaca, but we were forced to cancel. That was a first! No May plant sale for us either.

We continued to hold meetings via Zoom, which allowed us to book overseas speakers that we otherwise could not have afforded to bring here in person. Attendance at these meetings was poor so we were happy to finally get together in person to hold our members' only sale in August; being cautiously held outdoors.

Covid has had lasting effects. Slowly and reluctantly people returned to our in-person meetings. We have chosen a different model for our spring plant sale. For the last few years, we have opted for a May members only as well, and have come to enjoy the more relaxed atmosphere and the camaraderie. So far, we haven't tapped out on buying plants from each other.

After telling ourselves "never again" would we host an AGM (all that work for nothing), painful memories faded and we were back at it in 2022. And, we pulled off a very successful meeting! You all rallied to help out. Despite attendance coming in at just over 100 (some people were still reluctant to socialize in large groups), we made money too!

So that's a brief highlights of our history that brings us to 2026 and our 50th anniversary as a chapter, 25 years for the Wurster Rock Garden, and the launch of a new woodland rock garden!

If you really want to take a walk down memory lane, go back and visit our archived newsletters. Meanwhile, I want to honor some additional members who are no longer active members or who have passed on.

Whatever happened to ...?

(And in no particular order)

Bill Dress, professor emeritus of botany at the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium at Cornell, author of 10 plant books and for whom two plants have been named, served as an important link to our chapter's relationship with Cornell (and the Whetzel Room located down the hall from where he worked). He was likely a charter member. He passed away in 2011.

Al Wurster will be remembered as a knowledgeable and general gardener. You could never "just" visit him; you had to be prepared to walk his gardens and rural property over several hours and return home with a carful of plants. He was killed in a farming accident in 1997. A memorial fund established in his name became the seed money for our public rock garden. The garden was named in his honor.

I'll remember **Billie Jean Isbell** for her wonderful rock gardens, when my own were still years away from becoming a reality. I especially remember one rock garden built on a stone tabletop. She was a great cook and I remember dish-to-pass dinners at her house, often hosting speakers or events at her house.

What I remember most about **George Erdman** from the Binghamton area is his easy-peasy method for building rock gardens. He made 4' x 8' raised beds, using treated lumber (or black locust is a possibility) to the exact dimensions that boards come, filled the planting, and built height with very manageable cobble stone. These beds were easy to construct and easy to maintain. All parts of the rock garden were within arm's reach. Very slick and efficient!

I wish I knew more about **Graham Edgerton**. He was associated with NARGS, first with the Delaware Valley Chapter because he lived in that area. When he moved to Cazenovia, he joined our Chapter. We visited his garden - I remember - just days after he had had his backyard excavated for a new septic system – not how he would have chosen to showcase his extensive plantings of wonderful trees. He welcomed us nevertheless.

Eric Neff and his wife used to drive up from the Binghamton area for our meetings. Anyone willing to drive an hour or more to attend, is surely a serious gardener. He was noted for his Hosta collection.

For as long as I can remember, **Marcia Meigs** was always a part of our board and holding positions of responsibility. She had a wonderful woodland garden and generously shared plants for our plant sale, especially hellebores.

Bill Plummer is another member who drove all the way from Painted Post well into his 80's to attend our meetings. He chaired the 2000 study week-end. He was quite involved with National as well, tending the long-gone slide collection that was available for loan. He also attended many AGM's and so was well-known throughout the greater rock garden community. I remember he held a wonderful celebration at his home to mark the 50th anniversary of his garden.

Robin Bell had a great garden – large for downtown Ithaca - with lots of tufa. He attended a number of national annual meetings and botanical trips, sharing his experience through chapter programs. I especially remember his attending an AGM hosted by the Alaska chapter. When he decided to move to Oregon, he held a friendly competitive auction for his tufa. Bill Stark bought most of it.

What I remember most about **George Erdman** from the Binghamton area is his easy-peasy method for building rock gardens. He made 4' x 8' raised beds, using treated lumber (or black locust is a possibility) to the exact dimensions that boards come, filled the bed, and built height with very manageable cobble stone. These beds were easy to construct and easy to maintain. All parts of the rock garden were within arm's reach. Very slick and efficient!

Debby Shanahan is a lifetime chapter member living in Syracuse. She was editor of the Green Dragon for a number of years. Her interest in plants intersects with John Gilrein's occasionally at plant gatherings.

Anne Klingensmith held the challenging position of program chair in the 2000's. She grew many plants from seed, and still does, though she became less involved as her interests began to gravitate towards native plants. She has recently re-engaged with NARGS and has been involved in rebuilding the bog at the Wurster Rock Garden.

Nari Mistry was another program chair for the chapter and he served in that position for a number of years. It's a big job finding topics and speakers, then making all the arrangements. He also had some wonderful rock gardens that we were able to visit. In his retirement he took up landscape painting and what a wonderful artist he was. We miss you, Nari.

Carolyn and Jerry Yaeger served on the ACNARGS Board though perhaps not simultaneously. Carolyn offered her special skills in bookkeeping to become our treasurer. They operated a small nursery called Chickadee Farm and grew, among other things, trilliums from seed. I remember a dish-to-pass supper at their house in the hills of Caroline. There was a snowstorm raging outside but nobody seemed very concerned. However, the drive back to our homes was what made that supper particularly memorable.

These are past members that come to mind for me. They have helped to shape our chapter and hold it together over the past 50 years. There are no doubt others from the past and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Have I forgotten someone? Please let me know.

Our 50th year isn't over yet. So, stay tuned for the November issue for my next and possibly last installment.

NEWS FROM NARGS NATIONAL

Carol Eichler, Recording Secretary, NARGS

I always find the NARGS Seed Exchange list to be a bit overwhelming, something like a metaphorical hike in the wilderness. So, I try to think of it as a big adventure. Some people build “wish lists” throughout the year and look for them on the seed list. I’m not that organized but I do consult my orders from previous years and check out seeds not received or designated as 2nd choices. (Note: You can find your previous year’s order by going to your account on the NARGS website).

To tackle the seed list, here’s one suggestion: talk with more experienced members of your chapter and see what plants they suggest that are reliable germinators. The Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society’s Germination Guide (click [here](#)) is a great resource to browse and note plants that indicate no special treatment for germination. Maybe you may choose to order from one genus to more fully explore it – I think that would be a fun experiment.

Seeds that have multiple donors suggest they may be easy to germinate; they are likely easy to grow as well if you don’t already have them in your garden. The fact that each species listing is linked to a webpage is also a great feature that I use a lot to learn more about that plant.

Will a plant be hardy in your zone? That can be a bit of a guessing game. So, I reference the donor number from the donor list to see where the donor lives to guesstimate the likelihood of hardiness.

I also look at the size of the plant. Since I am focusing on rock garden plants, I want them to be small in stature. Thirty centimeters is stretching my maximum height for the scale of my garden. That certainly helps to eliminate lots of seed selections (the Seed Exchange includes a range of plants, not just those for the rock garden).

While you probably won’t know the size of the seeds, I have less confidence with tiny (small like dust) seeds. Sowing is tricky, watering is tricky, and transplanting is tricky. I’m still trying to figure out good strategies. Suggestions anyone?

My last suggestion is don’t feel pressured to order the maximum of 25.

I have been ordering and growing seeds for years. The low cost to participate in the Seed Exchange has spoiled me. I have gotten better at figuring out what to order, although I admit it can be a time-consuming experience.

Growing from seed is a long-term commitment. It requires vigilance at every step – from sowing the seeds ideally in winter, (although they can be stratified in the refrigerator), monitoring and watering them throughout the growing season, and transplanting as needed before they are ready to face reality in my garden. For me, it's always a big experiment – trying different growing medium, lighting systems (or not), determining transplanting timing and methods, and how to ensure overwintering success.

As I've repeatedly stated, there are many opportunities to fail. But the rewards are great when you finally do grow a plant from seed to full-scale flower... when you can say, I grew that plant from seed. How cool is that?! And it's very possible that you are growing something unique that cannot be found "in the trade." That's pretty cool too.

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

2026 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, **terryehumphries@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. Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, **cderamer@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 \$45 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 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 November 2026.