

Berkshire Botanical Garden's Harvest Festival
Saturday and Sunday, October 1st & 2nd 10:00-5:00, Stockbridge MA at the junction of Routes 102 & 183

Sunday, October 16, **NARGS Tri-state meeting** in Pelham, New York. (Daronco Town House) **Ellen Hornig**, of Seneca Hill Perennials, will speak on new plants of interest as well as arisaema and aroid cultivars. Tailgate sale. 10 am - 3 pm

Elisabeth Zander
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Complimentary

Published by the Berkshire Chapter NARGS

Chair: Elisabeth Zander
Vice-Chair: Pam Johnson
Treasurer: Barbara Glastris
Secretary: Norma Abel
Independent Director: Tom Clark

Dues Payable January 1st: \$10 single, \$12.50 family
Membership open to all members of NARGS
Payable to the Treasurer, 72 Nassahegan Drive Burlington CT 06013

Please write for permission before reprinting articles

Monthly Coffee/Tea Setup Co-ordinator:
October: John Spain and Becky Lynn

Please ensure your BNARGS luncheon menu selection form is returned with a check to Pam by October 22nd.



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter

October 2005

Chairman's Message 9/25/2005

By Elisabeth Zander

We have a new editor: Peter George, beginning with our next issue. Many of you know him from our plant sales. We are always most indebted to him for organizing them. Please write articles for him and email them to

petergeorge@verizon.net. It will be delightful to read about the different plants fancied among our group. He will, no doubt, be in touch as to what kinds of material he would like.

Thanks to everyone who made our September plant sale such a success! Many fine plants were found by all, including me. Most interesting is a little crucifer seen on the show benches of the Brits in the past few years: *Clausia aprica*. I fancied the leaves – hairy to almost a shag, with some brown articulation on the dark green leaf. The flower, it turns out, is that of a wallflower, to which it is kin. At only 6 inches in height, it is pictured as a neat little plant with lots of great bloom. Seed sources mention it as being from the steppes and stepfield meadows from Western Siberia to Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Probably it will be hardy enough for our winters.

Our wreath workshop this month should be great fun. A special note of thanks goes to chapter friend Casper Ultee. He is donating bags of sedums & semp plant material for us to use. John Spain is also bringing along a bit, as am I. You may also. Also purchased for this event are some interesting succulents from Contagious Cactus, which is closing down. If any of you are in the Burrville area of Torrington before frost, there are some fine older specimens of succulents (the big caudex type) to be had at very reasonable prices. We are allotting materials at the workshop for 25, which may mean one per family, depending on interest.

Next Meeting

October 8, 2005, Saturday 10:30 am

Berkshire Botanical Garden Exhibit Hall
BBG is located 2 miles west of Stockbridge MA
at the junction of Routes 102 & 183

Chapter Business: Show & Tell & Ask

AM – Winter Hardy Cactus Gardening

John Spain

A past BNARGS chairman, John has been growing winter hardy cactus in northern states since 1965. The author of *Growing Winter Hardy Cacti in Cold/Wet Climate Conditions*, he is the authority on soil preparation as well as plant material selection. Join him as he takes a look at the world of hardy cactus

Lunch (BYO) We welcome dessert contributions.

Plant Sale – The last of the season!

Ok, time to get ready for old man winter. How about looking through all those pots of seedlings and deciding which ones you really need to keep. The extras may all be placed on the chapter sales table. Remember donors get first choice.

PM – Succulent Wreath Workshop

Phillip Allen

We are very lucky to get this highly respected member of the Cactus and Succulent Society to volunteer this workshop for us. It is his specialty. If you have succulent plant material, (optionally) bring it. Then we may all mix and match.

Upcoming

BNARGS November 5th

Annual Luncheon*

Rick Lupp *Growing In Sand Beds*

*Note – registration required by Oct 22nd

The garden view just now is owned by *Chrysanthemum weyrichii*. It captures your eyes in a glance. This majestic member of the Asteraceae grows in all zones –it is one tough little plant. Its blooms are large white daisies which fade pink with age. They seem hardly touched by frost.

Elsewhere in the garden: the crispness from this weekend's change of air still hints the strong scent of *Daphne* 'Schlyten'. What a neat little bun full of tidy needle like leaves. It sits sheltered by a rock, in the middle of the raised lime bed. Over in the bog garden, *Spiranthes cernua odorata* has thrust up its flower spike. Interestingly, the flower buds are parallel still. It will be fun to track as they

open and start to twist. Supposedly uneven cell growth causes the twisting of the flower stems. This orchid blooms in October here in the northeast.

Remember we are scheduled to package seed this December for the NARGS Seed Exchange. It's fun to invite horticultural friends to work packaging seed at your home for a day. Or you may prefer to work in the evenings by yourself. Even if you do not grow from seed, this exchange supplies your favorite growers with the new to cultivation gem you lust after. So mark your calendar for the second week in December. Plan on packaging seed in order to keep those great plants coming.

Meeting Minutes September 2005

By Norma Abel

Anne Spiegel called the meeting of 35 people including 4 guests together promptly at 10:30.

- John Spain appealed to the group for volunteers to fill the positions of treasurer and newsletter editor for next year.
- Anne read a letter sent to Elisabeth from BBG requesting plant donations for the BBG Harvest Festival scheduled for Oct 1-2. Plants would need to be delivered to BBG the week preceding the Festival. BNARGS donated a couple of *Sauromatum venosum*.

Show and tell:

- Erica Schumacher brought in a planted trough with plants in bloom that had bloomed all summer.
- Barbara Glastris reminded us that the book *Creating and Planting an Alpine Garden* by Rex Murfitt would be available during the plant sale.

- Geoffrey Charlesworth brought in the seeds he had promised last month and also a 'Himalayan May Apple'. These were later auctioned off by Peter George for the benefit of the chapter.

Anne auctioned off the *Cypripedium* that the chapter had bought. She was very good at convincing people they 'needed' to have one of these healthy plants.

Six chapter members then presented slides of plants, their gardens, interesting ideas etc. They were:

- David Gehrs
- Brain McGowan
- Juliet Mattila
- Alex Kenner
- John Spain
- Anne Spiegel

It was very interesting and educational to here the members talk about their gardens and see their generally beautiful photos.

Dry Erase Boards

By Dean Evans

If you think of something while gardening, or need notes to remind you, Home Depot sells some things that will help you. Over in the

lumber section they have pieces of plywood, masonite, and other panel type materials pre-cut to useful sizes. One such bin holds 1/8"

2'x4' rectangles of what is referred to as "marker bd". I assume the "bd" means board. Then it says "Handy Panel". The stock number is 32931. It sells for \$5.95. Essentially what it is is 1/8" masonite with a white acrylic paint finish on one side. This is the same material they use in dry erase panels that you can buy in Staples and other office supply houses, in an assortment of sizes but are paying a premium price. Elsewhere in Home Depot you can find the same material in 4'x8' sheets. It's called 1/8" Thrifty White tileboard, stock number 300, at \$9.95. They also have stock number 311 for \$12.95 for a 4'x8' sheet. None of the staff could tell me what the difference was but I assume the least expensive one is a lost leader item. 8' times 12" = 96", divided by 3 is 32". Take this panel to where there is a panel-cutting saw and one of the workers will cut it for free. Make sure that he pushes the panel back securely so there is no bow in the material. If there is, there is a chance that the end result cut will have an arch in it, instead of being cut straight. Have him set the saw at 31 13/16". This will remove the 3/16" width of the saw cut from all the panels and they should all end up equally sized. Otherwise the two cuts of 3/16"

will be off of one of the panels. They sell in 8' lengths strips of plastic, referred to as "inside corner". It's \$2.29/length, stock number 121619. This plastic extrusion will allow the 1/8" masonite to slide into a three-sided slot. This would allow you to dress up the edge with a type of molding, if you are that fastidious.

An ideal application would be to hang pieces of this material in garden sheds and work areas, so when needed, you could write at will, with dry-erase markers. A nice set of multiple colors would help you "color your world". When hanging, you should use at least 6 nails, roofing nails would be adequate but I would lace the nail through a 3/16" fender washer. Fender washers are larger diameter washers than standard washers. In hardware stores they can be found in the "pick-a-nut" drawers, those small white boxes where nuts and assorted fasteners are kept. The advantage to fender washers is that, when nailed securely to the wall, the larger washer spreads the forces and it is less likely that the panel would break away. It's just another "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" thing. Unless you are driving through sheet rock, 1" nails will probably do.

Favorite Plant

By Robin Magowan

Favorite plants? May I name two: *Leucojum autumnale* and the combination of *Androscae lactifolia* and *lactea*. The androsace is easily dismissed as a biennial and weed. But a plant that will grow where only sempervivum and sedum does, on almost soil less stone, is invaluable in extending the planted surface of the garden. And one that comes in to bloom in late April and is still in bloom in mid-June as I write-clouds of lovely clear creamy white on tall wavering stems-can have its uses in imparting to a flat garden the notion of an alpine meadow. And the clouds, because of their height, form a visual prism for smaller buns. Most gardens, however stratified by rock, will eventually turn into meadow. I can't imagine a more useful meadow plant.

Leucojum autumnale is a bulb that comes into bloom in mid-August. Slender, delicate, maybe eight inches high, it has a drooping, fritillaria-like cupped flower of a lovely translucent white, fringed with pink at the bottom. I came upon it in half-shade and have always grown it in similar conditions, but what counts apparently isn't shade, but well-drained soil. Still, its demure beauty glows better on a bit of an incline, in afternoon shade. If happy it will establish colonies. To have a plant of such beauty when very little else is in flower, and one with a long bloom as well, makes for something well worth acquiring (especially when the bulbs offered by the nurseries are always multiple ones.)