



# Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society  
Berkshire Chapter April 2010

## **Next Meeting**

**Saturday, May 1 at 10:30 AM**

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

**Chapter Business:** Show & Tell, Chapter  
business and general announcements

## **Special Program!**



**Cliff Booker**

AM – *Cream of the Alpines*  
PM – *Alpine Fever*

(I've prepared a brief description of Cliff Booker and  
his 2 programs on P. 8)

**Lunch ---BYO** We welcome dessert  
contributions. Lunch will be followed by our  
plant sale, so please bring at least one seedling  
or plant!

## **Alpine Habits: The Vertical Accent**



**W**hen putting an alpine trough together  
there are so many things to consider.  
For once, I am not going to belabor  
the many vital points of cultivation;  
rather, I'd like to focus purely on aesthetic or  
decorative concerns. In other words: the fun  
part!

A relatively upright or vertical plant in a trough  
of any size or shape usually forms the focal  
point. We often call this the anchor plant of the  
trough. Frequently, this plant turns out to be a  
shrub. Sometimes I have an idea in mind and go  
looking to find a shrub that fits the idea. At other  
times, I fall under the enchantment of the  
character of the shrub first and it inspires me  
with the rest of the design.

This brings up an interesting point: once you  
have a shrub, an empty trough, and perhaps a  
few weathered and magical rocks in front of  
you, the personality that this trough will express  
will begin to make itself known to you. It's time  
to play. Mound up some extra soil to be the lay  
of the land: a berm, a cliff, the sides of a canyon.

Shift stones about and place the potted shrub in different spots until the grouping pleases you. Be aware that an upright plant smack in the middle of a trough rarely, if ever, works. Shrubs of all kinds simply cry out to be hard up against a beautiful craggy stone. Try it off center or even in a corner; a felt balance is what we are aiming for.



The exclamation point conifer so much in demand is *Juniperus communis* 'Compressa.' Narrow and vertical with soft looking needles (they are in fact quite prickly to the touch) this plant is easy to design with. It will, I have found, need a bit of protection to get through the winter unscathed. For a more conical shape, and a much sturdier winter constitution, use a *Picea* such as 'Jean's Dilly.' 'Pixie' is another good candidate.



There are many wonderful cultivars of *Chamaecyparis* that are striking in a trough. However, most are of mounded habit and can't really be called upright. The only exception might be *C. obtuse* 'Spiralis.' Also remember that in a larger trough, a taller vertical shrub planted near a rounded one forms a beautiful composition. The 1939 N.Y. Worlds Fair chose a cone and ball as its symbol called the Trylon and Perisphere; they were popular icons for good reason!

The smaller the trough, the more miniature the vertical accent must be. We often use a specimen of one of the more shrubby Penstemons instead. *P.* 'Waxworks' is an excellent choice and an aptly named plant. The good-sized flowers though officially called white, are in reality the yellowish color of old tallow, with a waxy texture as well. A diminutive Iris or grass also pulls the eye upwards; either of these always looks charming in the lee of a handsome stone.

Finally, think about a dwarf *Daphne* to anchor your design. *Daphnes* are a pretty inspirational genus. *D. x. mantensiana* is a beauty, blooming its heart out with purple gorgeously scented flowers. If this is your shrub of choice, though, understand that it will need some solid winter protection to make it to spring unharmed. *Daphne retusa* seems to be a good deal hardier. It has lovely white blooms opening from dark purple buds and dark glossy green leaves. *Daphne* 'Lawrence Crocker' is another one to covet. It was found in the garden of its namesake: one of the founders of Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery in Oregon; he was an incredible plantsman years ahead of his time. Petite, with shiny oval leaves and displaying pink flowers over a long period; this plant will without doubt be the star of the trough.

The more you trough garden, the more you will find that once the shrub and stones are in place, the bones of the design are too. The rest, as they say, is icing on the cake.

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Lori Chips © Winter 2004 (originally appeared in the Oliver Nursery Newsletter)

## Know and Grow

Anne Spiegel

**Z***innia grandiflora* is a western native found in Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico and south-central Colorado. The common names are Rocky Mountain zinnia and Desert zinnia. The Indians steeped the plants and made a tea which had many uses, including as a palliative for heartburn and stomachaches. They also used the flowers to make a yellow dye.



*Zinnia grandiflora* - Photo by Peter George

It grows in rugged terrain: open, dry, hot, sunny areas with limestone soil. This is a xeric plant which can be found in desert sites receiving less than 10" of rain a year. It doesn't sound like a prescription for a plant that will do well in northeastern gardens, but it is marvelous here if you pay some attention to its needs.

It's a late starter with no blooms before June. It forms a 6-10" mound of bright green, twisted, needle-like foliage and the sweetly scented flowers are deep yellow with 3 to 6 rays and raised columnar yellow-orange disks. The rays are broadly ovate to almost round, the flowers are flat and when they are finished the petals turn tan and papery and are very decorative. It will have sporadic bloom until hard frost. Deer and rabbits don't seem to care for it and it attracts butterflies.

In my garden it's planted at the base of a sloping, very fast-draining lime bed. It gets no water, but its position at the bottom of the slope probably gives it a little extra water. It took several years to establish but then started spreading beautifully. It seems to be tough and permanent. The accepted wisdom is that the seeds are difficult to germinate without the aid of GIB acid, but my plants came from seeds from Alplains and I never used the GIB acid. The seeds were sown and left outside for the winter. The trays of seed pots are covered with old kitchen screens but this is only to prevent heavy rains from replanting the seeds into adjoining pots. This method resulted in a dozen seedlings and 6 of them survived in the garden.

These have multiplied many times over on their own.

A hot color combination for the brave is *Zinnia grandiflora* and *Penstemon pinifolius*, the yellow and orange-red are quite sensational together. For the primary lovers, try it with *Penstemon virens* or *Penstemon 'blue lips'*. The latter is a cross between *P. crandallii* and *P. linarioides v coloradoensis*. Both of these *Penstemons* have soft blue flowers. All the above *Penstemons* are xeric and will accept the same conditions as the *Zinnia*. Just give the planting your sunniest, hottest and driest spot in the garden.

I cut back the dried stalks only halfway in the late fall. When the new leaves start to come out in the spring, and there's no danger of frost, I cut all the stalks back just above the new leaves. Once established, it will continue to spread.



*Zinnia grandiflora* – photo by Esther Wrightman

High Country Gardens has some new varieties of *Zinnia grandiflora* in this year's catalog: *Z. grandiflora*. 'Golden Eye', described as having a fluffy golden-orange center, and *Z. grandiflora*. 'Yellow Cushion', described as a lower growing cultivar with penny-sized blooms covering the tidy mound in late summer and holding its color well into the fall.

Seed is available from Alan Bradshaw of Alplains Seed Catalog ([www.alplains.com](http://www.alplains.com)). Plants are available at High Country Gardens (including all the *Penstemons* mentioned)

[www.highcountrygardens.com](http://www.highcountrygardens.com), Sunscapes Nursery ([www.sunscapes.net](http://www.sunscapes.net)), and Wrightman Alpines ([www.wrightmanalpines.com](http://www.wrightmanalpines.com)).

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## Meeting Notes

Text by Elaine Chittenden – photos by John Lonsdale

BNARGS April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010 Speaker: John T. Lonsdale ([www.edgewoodgardens.net](http://www.edgewoodgardens.net)). The Lonsdale family's garden is located in Exton, Pennsylvania (40 miles west of Philadelphia on 1 ¾ acres, in zone 6B, with slightly acid 6.0 to 6.5 pH). "Edgewood" is a private garden which has been evolving since the family's move from the UK to the US in 1995. It is home to several thousand hardy woodland, prairie and bulbous plants, trees and shrubs, grown in a variety of raised beds and natural settings. If you missed this presentation please consider looking at their web site where 8,000 photos are available for viewing and purchase, as well as plants.

Continuing the topic of the rock garden plants in the Primulaceae, John spoke about Cyclamen in the morning presentation and Dionysia, Androsace and Primula in the afternoon.

**A.M. Cyclamen.** The Lonsdale's had 7 days to purchase a home when they moved from the U.K. They were delighted by the "wild" deer and consequently provided food and salt licks, until they began eating their trillium. One observation made due to a power line clearing in a portion of their property is that shade plants, if provided ample water can tolerate much higher light levels. Plant losses are suffered every year, however this year of heavy snow (76" total) allowed the least losses ever!

Mabberley's Plant-Book (2008) lists 22 species of cyclamen and John talked about 17 species, plus subspecies, forms and cultivars there of. They are able to grow 10 species outdoors with most of them happily seeding themselves; high shade and perfect drainage seemed to be the key, plus they have several cats, part of their



*Cyclamen purpurascens*

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as well as Home Land Security. He began by describing how the species may be distinguished (or not) by "tuber" characteristics. For example some tubers (*C. africanum*, *C. coum* & *C. graecum*) form a floral trunk. *C. graecum* tubers have multiple growth points and contractile roots, while *C. coum* tubers are smooth with roots arising from a central point. *C. africanum* tubers have fibrous roots arising from the top as well as all around the tuber and the concavity on the top side makes it susceptible to rot. The variation in leaf shape, color and patterned mottling John showed was amazing. Floral characteristics including detailed morphology, color and fragrance were also noted as were name changes, as some subspecies have been elevated to species.



*Cyclamen coum*

Beginning from seed John sows seed (no later than the end of August) on top of the soil filled to ½ from top of 2" pots, and covers all with ½" of turkey-grit (granite), being sure to use clean pots and a fan to circulate air, both of which reduce damping off. By August or September seedlings are potted up. Growing them cool and not too wet during the summer is essential; most flower within 3 years. He does no soil prep when planting outdoors, however he uses BioComp BC5 (composted peanut shells and bark) mixed 50:50 with perlite for propagation.

He noted that *C. coum* and *C. hederifolium* should never be grown together as *C. coum* is more robust and *C. hederifolium* likes dryer conditions. Cyclamen seed is ant dispersed; using *C. hederifolium* as an example John has observed the seed pod takes 8 months to ripen, becoming very hard and just before opening it becomes very squishy. Presumably one would want to collect the seed at this point as freshly ripened seed (when capsule opens) are sticky due to a sugary coating, hence ants being a dispersal agent.

Of the species shown the following are fragrant: *C. confusum* from Crete (formerly *C. hederifolium* ssp. *confusum*), now considered a tetraploid; *C. mirabile* (Turkey); *C. libanoticum* (Africa) with the largest flowers other than the florists' cyclamen (*C. persicum*); *C. repandum*, *C. pseudoibericum* and *C. purpurascens*.

**P.M. Dionysia, Androsace & Primula.** John demonstrated how he formerly grew Dionysia, Androsace and some Primula in his numerous English alpine houses with images of these special structures, propagation boxes, and the tools used to grow some otherwise challenging plants. As Dionysia are diminutive plants (totally hidden by their relatively large flowers when in bloom), their propagation by cuttings was painstaking. John used fine pumice or sand to root them, with rooting taking 6 to 8 weeks; although fall cuttings take longer to root, they work as well as those taken in the spring. Their fine roots require excellent drainage therefore a medium of 75% grit was used. And because they grow where there is next to no humidity (Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan) ventilation was key to successful cultivation.

He has grown European Primula in their own alpine house, mostly *P. allionii* cultivars and *P. a.* crosses containing *P. marginata* or *P. auricula*. Those considered easily propagated by division included Primula Tinney's Jewel and Primula Tinney's Moonlight, both with serrated petal tips. The reference to heterostyly (a difference in the length and placement of sexual parts leading to out crossing) was reviewed. "Pin" plants as they are so called have the

anthers deeper in the corolla tube and a longer style evidenced by the visible stigma at the opening of the corolla, while "thrum" plants have anthers positioned at opening of the corolla tube and the stigma is not visible. Pin plants are prohibited as show plants in the U.K and



*Primula juliae*

I was assured that this was not due to gender bias! In any case he reported that crossing thrum (pollen) on to pin (stigma) plants produces more thrum plants. The variation resulting from "rogue" seedlings included reflexed petals (not appealing as they are in cyclamen), widely separated and streaked petals. All of these plants get composted. A few Asian species were covered as well, including easily grown, plant sale favorites: *Primula kisoana* and *P. sieboldii*.

An "Irishman's cutting" is really a weak division (not much root) and a stronger plant (of any members of the *P. auricula* section) results if true cuttings (forcing the plant to make ALL new roots) is used. He demonstrated primula division using *P. hirsuta* for which he uses concrete sand as a rooting medium.

John's gardening methods (from U.K. to U.S.) have changed as Dionysia required much fussing with tweezers and/or an exacto blade to remove old leaves, a must due to *Botrytis*. Older leaves dry on the plant but do not drop off! Additionally he used a hand held puffer (to removed excess farina), a powdery substance with its own fragrance, sometimes overproduced upon the leaves of Primula (and causing allergies in those susceptible). Here in the states, however, these tools have been replaced by chain saw and a leaf blower.



## Nursery Open House

*Garden Vision Epimediums* mail-order nursery offers over 180 species and varieties of shade-loving Epimediums and a selection of other choice, hard to find shade perennials. Plant explorer Darrell Probst has collected and introduced dozens into the trade. Prized for their easy care and tolerance of difficult sites, their graceful, spidery flowers and brilliant spring foliage add excitement to the shade garden.



Epimedium x 'Kuki' – photo by Darryl Probst

Come to our open nursery days *Fri.-Sun. May 7-9 & 14-16, 10am-4pm*. The nursery is located at 63 Williamsville Rd, Hubbardston, MA. This event will be held rain or shine, and is the only time that the nursery is open to the public during the year.



Epimedium grandiflorum 'Swallowtail' – photo by Darryl Probst

We will answer your questions and have a selection of plants for sale, but not a comprehensive offering. If you have your heart set on specific varieties; send your order ahead of your visit so we can pull it in advance. To protect our research collection, *please leave children and pets at home*. Some uphill walking on uneven dirt surfaces is necessary. Sorry, *no restroom facilities are available on site*. Refreshments provided. For more information or to have a catalog sent, contact Karen Perkins at [epimediums@earthlink.net](mailto:epimediums@earthlink.net) or call 978-249-3863.

## Romancing the Rockies Guide Training

*Tales from an Alpine Novice*

Text and Photographs by Megan Bowes

**T**hirteen Januarys ago, when I left my childhood home in northern Virginia—with my eclectic collection of house plants, my dog, a stereo and a pair of ski pants and boots that I wore when I was eleven—you could have witnessed me driving along I-70 at a whopping 50 miles per hour. Never had I seen mountains like those in Colorado, nor had I experienced such a wealth of snow...and I began to wonder where it was I was heading. Many years later, I am still a novice of the alpine tundra. Instead, I've spent my time exploring Colorado's western grasslands, reveling in the heat and drought—and rattlesnakes. And so this winter's Romancing the Rockies guide training was a way for me to finally explore our alpine ecosystem, albeit through the pages of books and the web.

I offered to help lead the trainings last fall when the winter seemed endless (and my workload light), and I chose to arrange my slides around plant families. This

organization offered a number of benefits (from my trained botanist perspective), including the ability to quickly recognize related taxa and then flip to the appropriate families in the simple, yet truly elegant Alpine Flower Finder. And “even though the names changed again” (a comment provided by a number of our guides), on some occasions, it also allowed us to explore the affinity of closely related taxa to specific ecological habitats. For example, our ranuncs, Latin for “little frogs”, tend to dominate moist habitats like snowbeds or meadows at base of snowbanks. Alternatively, saxifrage members are more likely to be found in rocky environments, hence the translation from Latin to “rock breaker”.



*Besseyia alpina*

I should also mention that I believe strongly in Roger L. Williams’ statement, from the preface to the 4th Edition of Ruth Ashton Nelson’s Handbook of Rocky Mountain Plants, that “while drawings are, no doubt, helpful, the keys in any flora are

fundamental, and the beginner is encouraged to become familiar with how they work. Besides, as Ruth Nelson pointed out, the use of keys is a valuable exercise in observation [emphasis mine].” Thankfully, we can all observe a cushion plant’s ability to shape its environment by directing wind up and over it, thereby slowing the drying effects in the center of the bun while also allowing wind-blown soil and moisture to collect within the stubby branches. Likewise, we could recognize how the open “bowl” flowers of ranuncs (Ranunculaceae, locally including Helleboraceae and Thalictraceae), roses (Rosaceae) and other taxa (Caryophyllaceae/Alsineae, etc.)—most with numerous stamens, and pistils and petals—are open to a variety of pollinating insects since the pollen and nectar are plentiful and easily accessible to any accidental visitor. These type of flowers are commonly visited by beetles, flies, wasps, and some bees—all common pollinators of the alpine Rockies.



*Primula parryi* & *Psychrophila leptosepala* (Elk Range)

Fortunately for our group of rock gardeners, Rocky Mountain Rare Plants proprietress Rebecca Day-Skowron shared cultivation tips for 21 of our most easily grown species. Rebecca told us about a number of alpine species that she’s found to be easily grown in cultivation, such as *Draba oligosperma* (especially var. *juniperina* which can found at the lower elevations of Dinosaur National Monument), *Townsendia rothrockii*, and

*Macheranthera coloradoensis*. Perhaps the most useful tip she imparted was that she doesn't think that most of these plants are limestone obligates—despite what many of us were told about the “marriage of plant and stone”—since nutrient additions usually suffice to cultivate biodiversity in the garden. And one of the many, many perks of guiding was the free seed that Rebecca provided at our last training.

Extra special thanks should go out to Loraine Yeatts, who donated a number of photos for the training—not to mention her expertise during the two herbarium sessions. I attended classroom trainings with Loraine back in 2002 when I was still working in DBG's herbarium, but left for other field work in North Dakota that summer and was sorry I couldn't participate in that year's NARGS annual meeting. Nevertheless, I learned much from Loraine then, and continue to learn much from her and the many other Rocky Mountain Chapter members. Experiencing and learning about plants—in the garden and in the wild—is a lifelong experience. I hope we can all follow my good friend Lee Curtis' lead. Lee will be organizing the plant sale this meeting, yet joined our training “just for the fun of it!”

Join us for **Romancing the Rockies!**



This article was provided by Sally Boyson, the talented editor of Saximontana, the newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Chapter. She wrote: *I am enclosing an article and some pictures that I'm hoping you'll want to run to advertise our national meeting. Our guides have worked very hard in their training for this meeting.*

PFG

## **BNARGS Programs**

### May 1

AM & PM **Cliff Booker**, (NARGS Tour Speaker from the UK)

### June 5

Garden visit to gardens of **Robin Magowan & Juliet Yli-Mattila**, with a talk on the new construction aided by Josef Halda and Zdenek Zvolanek

### July 3

**Trough Workshop at either John Spain's or Elisabeth Zander's garden (This is a change!)**

### August 14

AM - **Bill Brown**, *Spring Bulbs of Turkey*  
PM – **Peter George**, *Evolution of My Garden*

### September 4

AM: **Barrie Porteous**, *Unusual and Underused Perennials*

PM – **The Big Plant Sale**

### October 9

AM: **Andy Brand** of Broken Arrow Nursery, *Shrubs for the Rock Garden*

### November 6

#### **Annual Lunch**

**Sydney Eddison**, author of Gardening for a Lifetime: *How to Garden Wiser As You Grow Older*

## **Cliff Booker**

Over the 15 years that I've been involved in our chapter, I've had the opportunity to see, meet and listen to some extraordinary gardeners/plantpersons. Their biographies rarely tell the full story of their enormous accomplishments in our somewhat arcane avocation, and Cliff Booker fits right into this last category. I suggest that you visit the following website to gain a somewhat more three dimensional look at this rather remarkable man, and certainly make every effort to be in W.

Stockbridge for at least one of his 2 talks on Saturday.

[http://www.nargs.org/images/stories/4articles/booker\\_profile.pdf](http://www.nargs.org/images/stories/4articles/booker_profile.pdf)

His morning program is titled 'Cream of the Alpines,' and he comments "it features thirty plant (or species) portraits captured in the wild showing habitat shots, allied species and some plants exhibited on the show benches. It is, like all my presentations, a self-running digital presentation with commentary so I won't be able to answer questions as we go along but will willingly attempt to assist anyone after the talk."

The afternoon program is titled 'Alpine Fever', and according to Cliff is "a whimsical look at alpine gardening on the other side of the pond."

PFG

### Editor's Notes:

As everyone that reads this newsletter knows, it's prime garden season, and each of us is trying to spend as much time as possible outdoors, playing in our gardens. Each year we try to carve out some time to go to meetings, attend plant sales, and do all the non-gardening activities that make us better and more interesting gardeners, but it still is difficult to drive an hour or more, and then spend an otherwise glorious spring day indoors watching slides as a (usually visiting) expert share his or her gardening exploits with us for a couple of hours. But we do it because we enjoy each other's company, and because we know that a few hours lost from the garden in pursuit of knowledge will turn out most often to be of great help to us in selecting and growing our precious plants. So I hope to see a lot of you on Saturday, because this program will be worth the loss of a gardening day!

About 10 years ago Anne Spiegel explained to me (a complete naïf at that time) that I ought to let my volunteer seedlings stay awhile before I

'weeded' the garden. She showed me numerous examples of choice seedlings that arrived entirely on their own, and I proceeded to follow her advice. Over the years I've waited for a month or two before I started the weeding process and it has paid off every year. This year I have self sown seedlings of *Adonis vernalis*, *Degenia velebitica*, *Dodecatheon puchellum*, and some beautiful orange and red *Primula veris*. There are certainly others, but it will be a while before I'm certain what they are, and I suggest that you too consider not being TOO neat in the garden during this early spring period.

One other suggestion I can offer is to wait until May or even June before pulling out 'dead' plants. For 4 week I watched over a clearly dead *Lupinus breweri* which I bought in Portland from Rick Lupp of Mt. Tahoma Nursery last spring. I've tried for years to overwinter one of these small Lupines, always without success. Sometimes they would flower the first year, but they always went into permanent dormancy over the winter. So, with the Stonecrop Sale coming up, I was looking for some prime garden real estate for new acquisitions, and I pulled up the 'dead' carcass of this Lupine. Appalled, I discovered some nice new growth coming out of the crown, which was buried under the dried up stems. I replanted it immediately, but Lupines don't like root disturbance, so I won't know if will survive my stupidity for another few weeks.



*Lupinus breweri*

**See you on Saturday!**

PFG

## Four Stalwarts

Text by Harvey Wrightman – Photos by Esther Wrightman

This year, I am seeing a spectacular display of bloom in our gardens – partly the result of maturity (both the garden and me), and partly the season we are having, earlier in arrival by ~ 7-10 days and much drier than last year. Dry is not so bad when flowers are considered, as adequate soil moisture and increased light = more energy for the plant. So, ignoring all those wonderful new treats, let's have a look at some less hallowed yeomen.

*Dodecatheon pulchellum* 'sooke' - This is a local endemic from the area around Sooke, BC, outside of Victoria to the west a short distance. Largely developed now into housing, the habitat is reduced. My stock plants came from the



*Dodecatheon pulchellum* 'sooke'

Vancouver nursery, Alpenflora Gardens, who had made a collection of the variety sometime in

the early 1970's. The plant has sessile, fleshy leaves with a glaucous hue. Short flowering stems no more than 15cm tall bear an explosion of large brightly colored shooting stars. The magenta coloring is particularly dark and clear in this form. It is a very unfussy plant that grows equally well in sun or shade, wet or dryish conditions. Good rich garden soil is preferred as, like many other Primulaceae, it is a "feeder". It can literally be grown anywhere and expected to give many years of early spirit-lifting bloom.

*Asyneuma lycium* - A relative newcomer, this member of Campanulaceae was collected on the upper slopes of Tahtali Dag, in Turkey. Similar to *A. compactum*, *A. lyceum* forms low cushions of tiny, narrow leaves, gently recurved overlapping in a congested irregular way. Thin flower stems emerge that bear several amethystine-colored flowers. It is very delicate and airy looking waving in a gentle breeze. It is a far more tractable plant than *A. compactum* and will easily grow in gritty scree or as a choice specimen in a trough. – all the attributes of *A. compactum*, none of the hassle.



*Gypsophila aretioides* 'caucasica'

*Gypsophila aretioides* 'caucasica' - The huge patches of this that grow at Stonecrop are distinctly planted in my mind. Outdoors, near the entrance, a swath almost engulfs a whole raised bed. This collection is equally dense in composition as a previous form I grew. The color is somewhat darker – offering a clue to its tough nature. It has all the qualities I want in a mat/cover:

1) Hardiness for both the heat & drought of summer, and exceptional resilience to cold, snowless conditions in winter.

2) The diminutive size is perfect for companion planting whether it be bulbs or meadow species of gentian. Sort of like a “green roof “, it protects from excessive moisture around the crown and provides a drier, cooler spot for root or bulb growth.

*Asarina procumbens 'nana'*- This plant was recently requested by the Mannhattan Chapter of NARGS – a very unfussy plant that thrives even in NY and probably totally unknown to the rest of its residents. Pity them. This ‘nana’ form is



*Asarina procumbens 'nana'*

less rangy, growing to ~ 20cm high. The large, hairy leaves with crenulated edges form loose, floppy mats. Along the stems are rather large, pouch-shaped flowers, creamy yellow with some light purple veining. Seemingly, it starts flowering in April or May and continues until the frosts of November bring all to a halt. From the Pyrenees, it is perfectly hardy in our garden.

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## Philosopher Queen

### The Chemurgic Garden

Wracked by disuse, vandals  
 long gone when she was charged  
 among a very few others to  
 rip it up. No herb  
 that morning no emetic  
 no narcotic or dye to remain.  
 Stinging nettle she has for  
 an answer, as thanks wringing  
 cursing her at the root

of her left thumb.  
 Did she dare enter  
 the building to find water or  
 would that even help, so she  
 will just rub the spot  
 a little and by lunch it will be forgotten and  
 it is.

The underground Horses  
 of her Park, the dark dark  
 stables, animals  
 used to moving rock-  
 They stamp  
 in her memory still.  
 Aconitum. Nicotiana. Dictamnus  
 Delphinium. Ah. Poisons, though the last  
 will lend you beauty before you die.

In their day the Horses  
 had heroic names, the old gardeners  
 had rules  
 She remembers and a Mystery  
 of Calendars to fuel their Work.  
 Growers are always counting backwards else  
 would seed erupt, fruit tree blossom  
 scion strike or  
 cutting root?

Here  
 the Moon’s tussle instructs  
 the very instant  
 on the head of a pin now Magic works  
 on the Queen she  
 recalls being young, Her hands in the dirt  
 getting dirty. It is all  
 too clean now. The smell  
 of hot dry earth  
 newly rained on reaches her.  
 Where are the poisons, Her  
 working Horses  
 now? She stands in the same sun  
 as before, blue  
 blooded fists  
 full of onions  
 and Thyme.



Lorie Chips

## Positions of Responsibility

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Vice-Chairperson – Robin Magowan  
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Archivist – James Fichter  
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Newsletter Editor – Peter F. George  
Meeting Recorder – Elaine Chittenden  
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Program Chairperson – Elisabeth Zander  
Proofreader – Martin Aisenberg  
Refreshments Chairperson – Joyce Hemingson  
Speaker Housing – Anne Spiegel

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