



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter May/June 2014

JUNE MEETING

Annual Pot-Luck Luncheon

Saturday 21 June 11am

Variegated Foliage Nursery
245 Westfield Rd., Eastford, CT 06243

Meet at the nursery to tour the display gardens, browse and shop! Please bring a dish to share for the noon luncheon; beverages will be provided and picnic tables are available. Sally and Bill Katkaveck will open their nearby garden following our meeting so plan to attend. Other area interests include: Woodland Trails Nursery, just up the street at 32 Ashford Rd., Eastford; and Palmer Arboretum on Rte. 169 in Woodstock.

Directions to VFN: from I-84 (Hartford) take exit 69; turn right onto Rte. 74 E; turn left onto Rte. 44 E; turn left onto North Rd.; take 2nd right onto Floeting Rd. which turns into Ashford Rd.; take left onto Westford Rd.; VFN is .2 miles on left.

Upcoming Meetings and Dates of Interest:

Saturday July 19: Paint your Styrofoam trough.
Home of Maryanne Gryboski, Franklin, CT.

Sunday September 14: Todd Boland, chair of the Newfoundland Chapter NARGS, will speak at Comstock Ferre, Wethersfield, CT.

October date TBA: Plant your Styrofoam trough with layers of bulbs for a spring display.

The New England Primula Society holds its annual show on May 3rd & 4th at Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, MA. www.americanprimrosesociety.org

The Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary in Monson, MA is offering many wildflower/wildlife events in May/June. www.norcrossws.org/norcross.htm.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winter snow, ice and cold have taken its toll on some alpiners and woodland plants while others are performing very well in my gardens. *Primula* 'Wanda', *Jeffersonia dubia*, *Amenonella thalictroides* 'Cameo' and 'Shoaf's Double Pink', Dutchmen's breeches, hellebores, and both single and double bloodroot have made it through unscathed.

Connecticut Chapter NARGS has been invited to participate in Woodland Gardens' "Thursday Evenings in the Garden", a series of workshops and special events at the Manchester business. The garden talks and displays are held Thursday evenings, May 1 through June 12, 4:30 - 7 p.m. I plan to be present – on a date yet to be determined - to answer questions and have information on NARGS, a display of plants, and a planted Styrofoam trough. Maryanne and Sally will assist me with preparation. I appreciate the opportunity to share information about rock gardening and woodland plants and a local garden center is a perfect setting. Perhaps a nursery in your area would consider a similar display.

~ Ginny



Plum-purple *Iris histrioides* 'George' in Leslie Shields' early April garden. Photo by M. Gryboski.

Meeting Report: April 5, 2014

By Barbara van Achterberg

A good group including some long-time members of the Connecticut Chapter whom we had not seen for a while and some new members and guests came to hear Russell Stafford of Odyssey Bulbs, a small mail order nursery for rare bulbs in Massachusetts. His talk was on bulbs for different habitats, a very helpful way for the gardener to plan bulb purchases. Below are some he showed us from each group.

Steppe/Mediterranean Bulbs - Sunny and Summer Dry

- *Colchicum luteum*: bright yellow, tender for much of Connecticut, but Carol Hanby can grow it in Branford.
- *Colchicum hungaricum* 'Valentine' and two named forms of *Colchicum svovitsii*: early, bloom with snowdrops and have heavier substance than crocus so they stand up in weather.
- *Fritillaria pinardii*: tiny and cute.
- *Fritillaria stenanthera*: gorgeous, pink, 15 inches tall, blooms most years in mid-April; try in a well-drained place.
- *Iris bucharica* 'Princess': a Juno iris, slightly fragrant.
- *Tulipa bifloriformis* 'Starlight' and *Tulipa dasystemonoides*: both have 'fried egg' colors.

Somewhat More Moisture-Tolerant Steppe and Mediterranean Bulbs

- *Chionodoxa sardensis*: a gorgeous Turkish native, bright blue and white.
- *Colchicum bivonae* 'Apollo': really pink, no colder than zone 6.
- *Crocus cancellatus ssp. cancellatus*: a beautiful subspecies that is fall blooming with purple and white petals.
- *Crocus fleischeri*: one of his favorites, an elfin species from central Greece.
- *Muscari leucostomum*: dark, doesn't seed around.

Sun-Loving Bulbs for "Average" Soil

- *Colchicum autumnale* 'Album': blooms late September/early October and has a daintiness that large colchicums don't.
- *Colchicum* 'Rosy Dawn': beautiful.
- *Crocus longiflorus*: fragrant, fall blooming.
- *Crocus pulchellus* 'Inspiration': lovely species with goblet form, fall blooming.
- *Crocus kosaninii*: very good increaser, desirable for those of us who constantly lose crocuses to rodents.
- *Crocus tommasinianus* 'Albus': great plant, this is the white form which comes true from seed. In his picture it was really white, not the bluish white color that so many other bulbs have. (In my garden only *Pseudomuscari azureum* 'Album', which goes by at least two other names, is that same shade of white).
- *Crocus tommasinianus x vernus* Lavender Striped: very good increaser.
- *Crocus* 'Alionka,' 'Early Gold,' and 'Ego': all very vigorous golden hybrids.
- *Fritillaria elwesii*: comes from southern Turkey but is moisture tolerant, easy, increases readily.
- *Iris histrioides* 'Major': a dark blue member of the reticulata group. Russell Stafford says that most of what we call *Iris reticulata* is really *Iris histrioides*. In my well-drained rock garden a single bulb increased by offsets to a veritable colony in a rich vein of soil (see photo next page).
- *Narcissus minor* 'Midget': adorable, one of the earliest and smallest.
- *Tulipa* 'Elegans Rubra': elegant! Red, a really old cultivar with a lily-like form.

Bulbs for Damper Sunny Areas

- *Camassia leichtlinii* 'Alba' and *Gladiolus imbricatus* were the only ones on this list. Both are hardy to zone 5 at least.

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NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

CHAIR: Ginny Gingras / 21 Timber Ln. / Vernon, CT 06066 / 860.875.9865 / ginnygingras2013@gmail.com

VICE-CHAIR: Dave DeLucia / 26 Overlook Dr. / East Haddam, CT 06423 / mrdcac@aol.com

SECRETARY: Barbara van Achterberg / 359 Silver Hill Rd. / Easton, CT 06612 / 203.261.2156 / bvanachterberg@yahoo.com

TREASURER: Sally Katkaveck / 82 Ashford Rd. / Ashford, CT 06278 / 860.974.2563 / sallybillkat@charter.net

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Maryanne Gryboski / 88 Eager Rd. / Franklin, CT 06254 / 860.822.6589 / strollgarden@aol.com

PROGRAMS: Please talk to one of the officers if you are interested in the Programs Chair position.

Bulbs for Partial Shade with Summer Moisture

- *Allium paradoxum* var. *normale*: from the Caucasus, 10 inches tall, early May; unlike regular *Allium paradoxum*, this is not weedy.
- *Arisaema candissimum*: white. He recommends colchicum leaves as a good mulch for this.
- *Corydalis malkensis*: one of his favorites, white.
- *Corydalis solida*: in my experience, I found it does well near primula. In the summer I water the primroses once a week if it is dry, and the invisible *Corydalis* also gets watered. I have many seedlings.
- *Erythronium dens-canis* 'Purple King': has great leaves, too.
- *Puschkinia scilloides* 'Aragats' Gem': about twice as big as regular puschkinia.
- *Sanguinaria Canadensis* 'Multiplex'



Iris histrioides 'Major' in Barbara van Achterberg's garden.

Stafford uses rice hulls instead of perlite. He said "you can beg around at places that produce apple cider" for these. Some of these bulbs and many others are on the 2014 Odyssey Bulb Catalog: <http://odysseybulbs.com/> If there is enough interest, the Connecticut Chapter may do a group order from Odyssey Bulbs, with members picking up their bulbs at a fall meeting.

There was also a rather terrifying discussion of the crazy snake worm with Judy King presenting. They don't emerge until late summer but their eggs may lurk on the top of mulched soil. They have invaded parts of Connecticut and are capable of doing a lot of damage to gardens, lawns and woodlands. I hope that this dread invertebrate does not show its turgid body in any of our gardens.

Open Garden of Leslie Shields

By Maryanne Gryboski



Over a dozen people toured the garden of Leslie Shields on the morning of April 10th, a chilly but sunny day. Snow-drops ruled: a large drift of *Galanthus nivalis* carpeted the ground under two large white birches (photo above); a stream of the double *G. nivalis* 'Flore Pleno' bordered a shed; clumps of assorted species and cultivars were dotted throughout. Leslie's enthusiasm for this genus, and many others, was evident. Thanks for the tour!



Left, an unidentified double snowdrop with very green inner petals; right, almost pure white *Galanthus* 'Atkinsii' with its narrow inner cup.

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Bulb Order

If anyone is interested in participating in a group order from Odyssey Bulbs, please contact Maryanne Gryboski by May 15th with order information. Discounts are given on orders in excess of certain amounts so pooling small orders is financially beneficial.

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Please consider contributing an article/photo/news blurb for the newsletter. We're always looking for material.

Shade Garden Gracefulness

By Maryanne Gryboski, with contributions from Sigrid Hewitt, Sally Katkaveck, John Marchacos and Leslie Shields.

I was first introduced to epimediums in the early '90's but it was 1996 when I acquired my first, the yellow *E. x versicolor* 'Sulphureum', purchased at a local farmers' market. It was planted under a mature Japanese maple and mixed with hostas, *Trillium luteum*, European ginger and woodland phlox for a pleasant surround of the small patio where we took our warm-weather meals. Rose-red *E. x rubrum*, another useful groundcover for dry shade, came the following year. Although I knew additional species and cultivars existed, it wasn't until 2002 with the discovery of Garden Vision, the nursery begun by Karen Perkins and epimedium guru Darrell Probst, that I became aware of the great diversity within the genus and fell in love.

Epimediums spread by rhizomes, but annual rhizome growth can range from minimal in some clump-forming species to as much as six inches in the spreading, ground cover types. Epimediums tend to be long-lived perennials that prefer well-drained but moisture retentive soil although, once established, many will tolerate dry shade. And they are deer resistant. These qualities, along with a variety of colorful dainty blooms, leaf shapes and foliage hues, recommend them to many members' gardens.

Sigrid Hewitt vows for the toughness of eps: "Typical New England garden? Poor soil? Dry shade? Invasive roots? No problem if you are growing epimediums. Once established, my epimediums return every spring, green leaves replacing brown, and airy blossoms of yellow, lavender and white waving above. They have similarities, but each has a unique charm.

"Flourishing under my old oak tree are these: *E. x versicolor* 'Neosulphureum', which has spread into a generous clump with yellow flowers; *E. grandiflorum* 'Silver Queen', with white flowers and mahogany-colored spring leaves; and *E. grandiflorum* 'Yellow Princess', a smaller, delicate plant with pale yellow flowers. Last year, *E. grandiflorum* 'Waterfall' was added to the garden. I have started to divide the larger clumps, giving the epimediums even more territory. They don't seem to mind the tough garden conditions – they just rise and shine every spring."

Leslie Shields' "...favorite epimedium is 'Be My



E. x youngianum 'Be My Valentine'. Photo by L.Shields

Valentine'. It is an introduction by Darrell Probst and is *x youngianum*. At about ten inches tall, she has beautiful flowers in purple and white. She is lovely enough to make that reason alone for a 1st place in the garden, but she is named for Betty Valentine. I was lucky enough to get to know Betty through Rock Garden Society. She was one of the greats when I was just beginning to get involved. I remember the visits to her lovely garden and the help and advice she so freely gave the 'new kid'."

John Marchacos claims partiality to two spontaneous hybrids from his garden which were also introduced by Darrell Probst: *E. x youngianum* 'Marchacos Sprite', rose-pink flowers with narrow white spurs that are held at seven inches above the purple-washed spring leaflets; and *E. x youngianum* 'Jenny Wren', five inches in bloom with light lavender flowers and small, dark green leaflets mottled in burgundy.

In my own garden *E. grandiflorum* var. *higoense* 'Bandit' makes a lovely, strong clump. In spring, its green leaflets are each edged with a purple band while a prolific display of creamy-white flowers shines above the foliage. *E. x* 'Kaguyahime' has mottled arrow-shaped leaflets with a moderately spiny edge. The flowers are rose-pink with darker purple spurs; last year, it threw the occasional flowering stem right up to frost! My favorite, however, is

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E. grandiflorum 'Waterfall'. The new foliage is washed with purple while flower buds appear as dark violet pearls. Large flowers open a rosy purple. But it is the way the leaves fall, and their movement in a breeze, that makes this so choice and, I think, is the reason behind its name.

Old foliage on epimediums should be cut back long before new growth starts since young stems are brittle and easily broken. Sally Katkaveck, who had been looking for a convenient way to clean up some large clumps, says hers were mowed last November. "The stems have been left mostly four to five inches tall and the debris rakes off easily. With all our falling leaves and needles, they will still have good winter cover. It looks really tidy."

Many epimediums are now common in the trade, but if you are looking for a particular, rare, or special one, check the website for Garden Vision Epimediums, www.epimediums.com, and be awed by the incredible selection. Karen Perkins has announced open nursery weekends at the Phillipston, MA location in early May. She will also be visiting O'Brien Nurserymen in Granby, CT on May 18th. Surely that empty spot in your shade garden would benefit from the graceful beauty of an epimedium.

E. grandiflorum 'Waterfall' in bud. Photo by M. Gryboski



NARGS Connecticut Chapter
Maryanne Gryboski, Editor
88 Eager Rd., Franklin, CT 06254