



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Connecticut Chapter July/August 2017

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The 3 day trip to Maine with Maryanne and Joyce was delightful, as was the beauty and bounty of lupines which bloom across that state in June! Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens is always a pleasure to visit. My great find was a magazine, **Wild Seed**, published by the Wild Seed Project. It is Vol. III and I am sending for the first two volumes. The mission of the project is to increase the use of native plants in all landscape settings in order to conserve biodiversity, encourage plant adaptation in the face of climate change, safeguard wildlife habitat and create pollination and wildlife corridors for insects, birds and other wildlife. Articles were written by Bill Cullina, Doug Tallamy and Tom Christopher among others. Check them out at wildseedproject.net.

I enjoyed seeing Carol Yee and her incredible nursery. She shared names of some friends whom we visited, one being the home of two gentlemen gardeners on the Penobscot River in Belfast. Our last stop was at Fernwood Nursery. Denise Miner Sawyer, who owns the nursery with her husband, is from Stonington, CT and a descendant of Thomas Miner, one of the founding fathers of Stonington. I purchased an alpine aster from Carol and *Linnaea borealis*, a native groundcover, from Denise.

With declining membership, we need to contemplate the future of our CT Chapter and will discuss this topic at our next meeting. Reflecting on the legacy of past "giants" of the Chapter, I realize I have gained both plants and knowledge over the years, and have enjoyed meetings and members.

My view of climate change is that it is more pronounced. I now have a bluebird family in my backyard for the first time. Their home is the house that my husband built years ago. He would be so pleased.

~Ginny

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JULY MEETING

Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Picnic Saturday 29 July noon

Garden of Maryanne Gryboski and John Kochiss
88 Eager Rd., Franklin, CT 06254

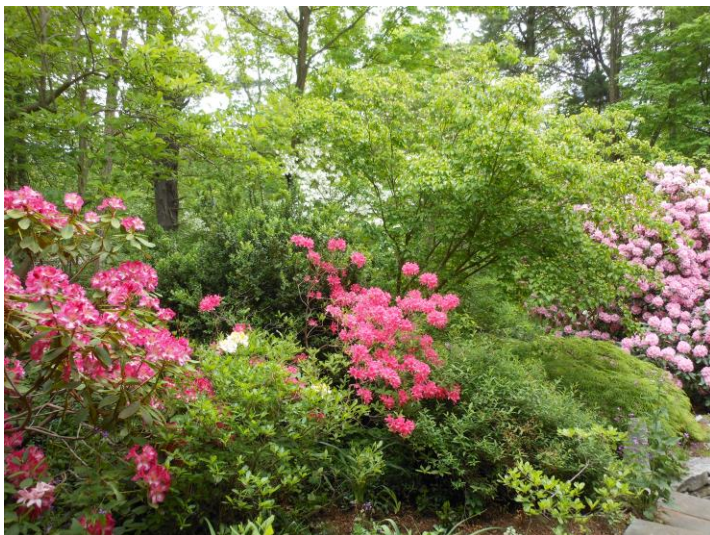
The Annual Picnic Meeting will be held in the garden of Maryanne Gryboski and John Kochiss on Saturday, July 29th. Plan to arrive around noon for a potluck picnic luncheon and a stroll through the garden. The future of the chapter will be discussed at the business meeting which will follow and that, in turn, will be followed by a plant sale.

Please bring a dish to share and a chair to sit in (some chairs will be on site); cold beverages will be provided. Also, if you can, please bring one plant, preferably something special or uncommon, for the sale.

Directions from Rte. 2: take exit for Rte. 32, Franklin-Willimantic. Turn right at end of ramp and go north on Rte. 32. At 3rd light after the Franklin town line bear right onto Baltic Rd. (yellow Victorian at this light). Go 2 miles, turn right on Eager Rd. Follow Eager to end, go directly across cul-de-sac onto drive, and immediately take 1st driveway on right, #88.

THE CIRILLI GARDEN: May 21, 2017

By Maryanne Gryboski



Sunshine softened by high clouds greeted us for the garden tour at Jean and Bob Cirilli's where many mature rhododendrons, placed for a pleasing blend of flower color, were in glorious bloom. Our hosts guided us through the extensive gardens surrounding their home, identifying woodies and listing their provenance. Some of the rhodies had been hard pruned in the last couple of years for shape and size and were making a vigorous comeback. Japanese maples, a selection of flowering



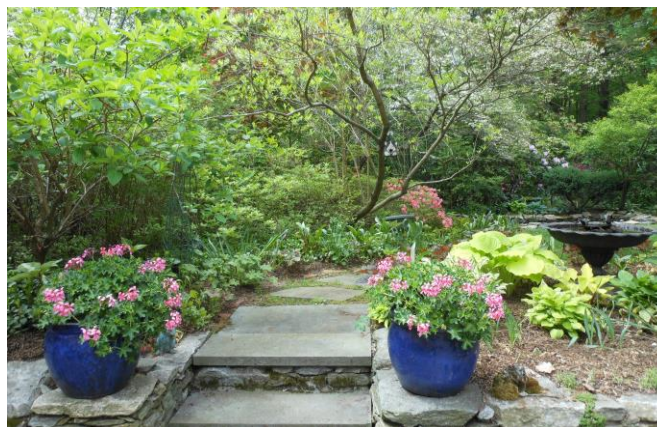
dogwoods and magnolias, stewartias and other understory woodies contributed mid-level interest to the garden.



At ground level, many spring ephemerals and shade lovers could be seen: *Primula sieboldii*, with huge blooms in a variety of color forms; *Arisaema sikokianum*, with large silver centers to the leaves; a *Primula elatior* 'Jessica', with raspberry flowers nestled against its bronzed foliage; *Dodecatheon*; and the heart-leaf golden Alexander, *Zizia aptera*. Bold leaves of choice hosta selections offered textural contrast while tree peonies claimed sunny spots.

The hardscaping in the garden - stone steps leading up to the front beds and down from the side gardens to the slate patio at the back, a second smaller patio toward the front originally created for Jean's mother to enjoy her special plants, and a retaining wall which offered shelter to troughs of alpines including *Ramonda myconi* - added stylish maneuverability.

This is an exceptional spring garden; unfortunately, only five members were able to attend.



NARGS CT CHAPTER OFFICERS

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MAINE TRIP: June 13-15

Day One: Coastal Maine Botanical Garden
By *Maryanne Gryboski*

We arrived at CMBG around 1pm, not a cloud in the sky and a sweltering 94 degrees in the parking lot. Just planted annuals along the entry walk flagged in the heat and the short walk from car to visitor center made me wonder how long we would last in an open garden!

We hopped the tram and rode to the Rhododendron Garden first, where high shade and the sound of falling water made for a somewhat cooling atmosphere. Although late for rhodies, there was still ample color; better yet were selections with more unusual foliage: the almost blue leaves of *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum* (below) or the wooly indumentum and cinnamon tomentosum of *R. pseudochrysanthum*.



Before leaving that area, I dipped my kerchief in the pool and draped it on my neck for cooling relief as we walked back on the Woods Trail. Among the lush evergreen seedlings on the forest floor, white dots of *Cornus canadensis* shone with an occasional lady's-slipper (above); leaves of the blue-bead lily, *Clintonia borealis*, were also seen but only one flowering stalk had escaped a voracious woodland herbivore.

Much of the remainder of the afternoon was spent exploring the paths adjacent to and behind the rose arbor; located on the cove side of the gardens, this afforded a refreshing breeze and nearby shade. A mass of *Gillenia trifoliata*, the bowman's root, was planted on the up-side of a steep path to very good advantage and I delighted to think my one small plant might someday make as good a show; but a smaller grouping of the selection 'Pink Profusion', with burgundy flower stems and pinkish flowers, really caught my eye. Other eye-catchers were *Rodgersia sambucifolia* with its dense, salmony flower stalks and the lovely *Magnolia sieboldii* 'Michiko Renge' its pure white cupped flowers accented by deep crimson stamens.

The beauty of CMBG lies in its setting in the larger landscape of forest, granite and water as much as in the developed gardens. In the scorching sun and heat of a mid-summer afternoon it was difficult to fully appreciate.

Days Two and Three: Everything Else
By *Joyce Fingerut*

Wednesday turned out to be perfect, in terms of weather and gardens and people and plants.

The hour-and-a-half trip north to Swanville (near Belfast) took us through small towns and very big rocks. It was great to see Carol Yee's new site for Carol's Collectibles, the name given her nursery years ago by Bill Cullina: <http://carolscollectibles.com>.



Carol at work outside one of her hoop houses.

In the relatively short time that she has been living and working in Maine, she has amassed greenhouses and garden beds and friends. We all found new treasures that followed us home: plants as varied as rhodies, *Salix nakamura* var. *yezo-alpina*, *Baptisia* 'Cherries Jubilee', *Aster alpinus*, and a dwarf *Alstroemeria* (which may or may not prove hardy here).

Carol had graciously arranged visits to two local coastal gardens but, unfortunately, was not able to break away from her nursery to join us on the tour. But first we took a break for an unusual and delicious lunch in downtown Belfast at Chase's Daily: a bakery, produce market, floral design service, and restaurant situated in the historic Oddfellows Hall.

Amplly fueled (and carrying plants of unusual tomatoes and Maine strawberries), we headed for the first private garden.



The new hardscaping with plants tucked under the existing trees.

Bruce Russell and Andy Oakley have beautifully remodeled a run-down home on the coast and completely revamped the garden and its structures, only retaining three massive oak trees to provide shade and shape. They have both shade gardens under the protective branches as well as gardens in full sun on the hillside going down to the water. The hardscaping -

paths, retaining walls, and an elegant curving flight of stone stairs – were all designed and executed by the owners (with the help of a friendly backhoe).



The rockery with *Geranium sanguineum* and rhodies.

The second garden was at the coastal home of a couple who were still in Arizona, but allowed us to visit. The Kuykendalls revamped a 1950s fishing shack. Their



The curved Glulam bench and stunning view from the deck.



cottage garden was neat and trim and held contrasting modern artifacts such as a curved Glulam bench, and a wood structure that may have been a bench or a sculpture. The small front and rear gardens managed to contain all these plants and features without feeling cluttered - a fine achievement, indeed.

Contrasting colors and textures enliven a small garden.

From the Belfast gardens, we traveled west to Fernwood Nursery & Gardens, billed as Maine’s Shadiest Nursery: <http://www.fernwoodnursery.com/about.html> Yes, there were oodles of hostas, large and small, but we swooned over the beautifully grown rarities, and carried home some *Linnaea borealis*, *Pteridophyllum racemosum*, *Eomecon chionantha*, and *Iris gracilipes* ‘Alba’. In addition to raising unusual and healthy plants, Denise and Rick also raise their own food (including livestock), sheep (for her hand-spun and -dyed yarns), and annually host WWOOFers: <https://woofusa.org>. It also turned out that Denise Miner still maintains a close connection to her hometown in southeastern Connecticut, where her direct ancestor, Thomas Miner, was one of the founders of Stonington and New London. The newly-established Thomas Miner Preserve & Wildlife Sanctuary is just down the street from me, and she will be visiting this area soon.

Denise’s parting words to us were that we simply had to make a detour to visit David’s Ice Cream stand - so we did. The ice cream held us for the ride back to Boothbay Harbor in the golden afternoon sun. A fine dinner at Ports of Italy capped off a wonderful day.

Thursday saw us back on the road, returning home to Connecticut. We stopped at Estabrook’s, a full-service garden center but without anything interesting for plant junkies, and then had lunch at an Asian buffet which provided a tasty and ample lunch to hold us till dinner.

There is so much more to be experienced in Maine - gardens and gardeners, nurseries, scenery and restaurants - that this could easily become an annual event.