



Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis', photo by S. Strickler

PVC web page: <https://nargs.org/chapter/potomac-valley-chapter>

2021 Calendar of Events

All meetings are Saturdays at 10:00 am via Zoom except where noted. These are PVC hosted events; you will receive a link from Barbara Rose a day or so before the event in order to join the meeting. (It helps if you have downloaded Zoom.)

January 23, Brandon Huber and Jason Lattier, **“The Aroid Collection of Alan Galloway.”** A tribute to Alan from Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery <http://blog.plantdelights.com/tag/alan-galloway/>

February 13, Dick Tyler **“Hellebores: Homeland to the Present”**
Dick Tyler is the owner of Pine Knot Farms nursery in southern, Virginia.
<http://www.pineknotfarms.com/>

March 13, Marianne Willburn, **“Tropical Plants and How to Love Them”**
Growing, designing with and overwintering tropical plants. Based on her forthcoming book:
<https://www.amazon.com/Tropical-Plants-How-Love-Them/dp/0760368945>

President’s Message from Barbara Rose

Greetings PVC members,

Not only are we in the middle of holiday season but it is also the NARGS seed exchange season. Thanks to Kevin McIntosh for organizing PVC’s seed sorting effort and to all who contributed their time and organizing skills. Because of the pandemic, we completed the sorting by ourselves. Even though it just wasn’t the usual party, I think we all still enjoyed sorting.

The NARGS seed exchange officially opened on December 15th <https://www.nargs.org/2020-online-ordering-information> and many of us placed midnight orders to get our first choices. With over 3,000 seed varieties to choose from, it's interesting how each of us decides which seeds we want from the exchange. As a relative newcomer to growing rock garden plants from seed, I rely on two criteria: First, I select species I know and like. Second, I resort to lists I've found in sources prepared by experienced rock gardeners. Some of the plant lists I've used can be found in the pamphlet "Rock Gardening in the Greater Washington, D.C., Area", authored twenty years ago by PVC members. I've also used suggestions from the book "Creating and Planting Garden Troughs" by Joyce Fingerhut and Rex Murfitt. And another source has been Elizabeth Lawrence's "A Rock Garden in the South."

2020 is the third year I've ordered NARGS seeds and, even though I'm still a novice, I have had some success. To the right is a picture of the *Aquilegia flabellata* v *pumila* that I grew from seed ordered in 2018



Keeping in touch with everyone and offering talks has been a huge challenge this year and thank you to all of you who came forward and shared zoom talks - Jim Dronenburg, Jim Hughes, Judy Zatsick, and John Willis. Congratulations to all of you who demonstrated adaptability and resilience by simply being there on Zoom. It looks like we will be depending on zooming for another year, so I hope more of you will join us for future online talks.

Our calendar for the coming year is filling up and I only hope more of you will share topics of your choice with PVC's zooming members. Let's plan on safely touring some gardens together in the coming year too. Wishing everyone better times ahead and a safe and healthy 2021!
Barbara

A Woodland Beauty

by John Fitzpatrick

One of the joys of my garden in 2020 was the blooming of *Iris gracilipes*. Known as slender iris, it bloomed for several weeks in May and then again in November. Since I have had the plant for only two years, I don't know if rebloom is common. This autumn, we saw quite a few garden plants reblooming which do not do so normally. The flower is one and half to two inches in diameter and of



typical iris form: three each of falls, standards, and style-covers. Petal color varies from pinkish lilac to white, in forma *alba* and some cultivars. The typically pale pinkish lilac falls are recurved and obovate in form with a broad notch at the apex. At the center of each fall is a prominent white oval spot that is marked with purplish and brown lines. (The accompanying photo shows the variation in coloring of the falls of my plant.) Crests at the center of the falls are touched with yellow to orange. The standards are commonly the same as the base color of the falls. Their apex is likewise notched. The style covers are the same color as the standards or a darker shade, as in my plant's flowers. The apex of the style covers is irregularly toothed. There is much going on in the form and coloring of this tiny flower!



The plant consists of slender, branching rhizomes at ground level and stems of two types: flowering and non-flowering. The non-flowering stems are very short and bear three to five leaves that are six to 12 inches long. Each leaf is $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wide with six prominent, raised nerves. The flowering stems, six to 12 inches long, bear two or three short leaves and two or three flowers. Because the leaves arch over, the plant is only about six inches high.

Iris gracilipes was named and described by Asa Gray of

Harvard University in 1858. It is native to Japan and China on wooded and rocky mountain slopes and forest edges. In the garden, slender iris thrives in partly shaded, moist sites. I don't claim to be expert in cultivation of the species but I can tell you the conditions I have provided. My clump is in dappled sun in the morning with some direct sun in the afternoon. It is surrounded by a mat of *Isotoma fluviatilis* (blue star creeper), which does not appear to hamper it. Overhead is a large specimen of crape myrtle. I purchased my plant from Joe Pye Weed through the mail. I've been very pleased with the variety of plants (mostly irises) they offer and the good quality of what I receive. Next, I want to purchase a white-flowered variety.

References: American Iris Society: wiki.irises.org/Spec/SpecGracilipes

Species Iris Group of North America: signa.org

Gray, Asa. 1858. *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, ser. 2, 6 (2): 412.

Curtis Botanical Magazine, t. 7926 (1902).

Joe Pye Weed's Garden: jpwflowers.com

A NOVEMBER MORNING GARDEN MEDITATION

by Elvira Griffith

It's dark this early morning, just in time for sunrise. We've had frost, but now it's warm again in the 60s, almost 70 degrees. I go out to get the paper, enjoying the slow change from dark to slivers of color on the horizon. There has been a full moon that disappeared in a hazy morning mist.



Coffee in hand, I make the sleepy walk along the driveway. I stop even in the dark to look at the bits of flowers still blooming and stones and boxwood in the rock garden that now lines the driveway. Again, I feel the compulsion to improve what's already there. In the low light, the diminutive white flowers of Baby's Breath (*Gypsophila*) peek out from the gravel I use as mulch. Two of the *Dianthus* are still blooming in different shades of magenta against needle-like silver-grey foliage. I like the effect combined with miniature Japanese boxwoods. These particular boxwoods have tiny pointed rather than rounded leaves, which work well with the scale of the *Dianthus*. There are also the grey-white leaves of pussytoes (*Antennaria*), greyish-green Elfin thyme and needle-like branchlets of yellow *Penstemon* nearby, like pine branches but softer and paler. I hope this survives. It has struggled through the summer where I planted it, so I've moved it and hope to see it bloom. It is a new plant for me and I'm anxious to see how it fits in.



I think this is the month to enjoy grey foliage. It stands out in cloudy weather so much better than in sunshine. So much more subtle than the golden-red foliage of mid-autumn. The lamb's ears catch my attention as I step off the porch. It must be a dusting of dew that makes them seem almost to shine grey. The ribs stand out darker, much more differentiated than in summer. The prize for grey, though, goes to *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' with its layer upon layer of lacey branches. It's four feet across and about three feet tall. It must be in the perfect spot with

full sun and good rich soil. I have only had it in lean soil before and yanked it out. At the time, the area along the sidewalk had too much grey, I thought. The discovery this year is that it goes beautifully next to the yellow of thread-leaf *Chamaecyperis*.

This little rock garden area that I see first thing every morning gives me such joy. I've read that some people look up in nature and some look down. I'm the down-looker most of the time. I love the little surprises that don't jump out at you on first look around.

I don't stop there. Now being caffeinated, I throw the paper toward the porch and continue my walk along the sidewalk, sizing up the garden forms and imagining the summer to come. I keep going even as the sun rises and I get a different perspective on what I just looked at. Full of plans, I continue on around the front, back into the house and out the back door to look at more. Now that I can see clearly, a plant must be moved or watered, or a stone rearranged or there's a potted plant that I bought ages ago that I really ought to put in the ground.

And that's why a neighbor, who walks by with his dog every morning, went home and told his wife, "There's a lady in our neighborhood who gardens in her bathrobe!"

Smithiana 'Sunny Day'

by Sharon Washburn



Last November, Kevin McIntosh gave me a Smithiana 'Sunny Day' houseplant, in full bloom. It is a glorious Gesneriad with large fuzzy leaves and begonia-type patterns, greener on top and red from below. It has an upright habit and prefers bright indirect light.

I enjoyed its wonderful spike of long trumpet-like blooms, which kept on blooming for several weeks. Staking the bloom can help keep it from toppling over. A common name, Temple Bells, makes sense when you see the row of long bell-shaped blooms. When the plant died back, the stalk and leaves started drooping, I thought I had killed it.

This summer the stalk revived and started new leaves. Lo and behold several new starts appeared off a root. I divided the new starts and the original plant into three pots and shared them. They are all happily blooming once again. I have since learned that the die back is normal—the plant is going dormant.

I now have two strong stalks with gorgeous yellow-apricot flowers. If you see an offering of this houseplant at a plant exchange, don't hesitate to grab it. It is easy care, doesn't need too much light and is happy to sit outside during the warm weather. Bring it inside around September and you will be rewarded with a nice bloom at this time of year when we can all use sunny blossoms.



ADDENDUM to our November Members' Meeting

John Willis and Judy Zatsick both gave presentations during our Zoom members' meeting. Judy showed gorgeous images of Heronswood, the former garden and nursery of plantsman Dan Hinkley, in Kingston, Washington. <https://heronswoodgarden.org/> And John showed us beautiful scenes of botanizing in Portugal and southwestern Spain. (Their requested plant lists are BELOW)

Judy's talk sparked some questions about the status of Heronswood and Dan Hinkley's current involvement, so I did a little research. I was curious myself.

Heronswood: A Bit of History

by Sarah Strickler



Dan Hinkley and his partner established Heronswood, a home, garden and nursery in Kingston, Washington, on the Kitsap peninsula in 1987. Some of you may still have copies of old Heronswood plant catalogs. They sold the business to W. Atlee Burpee, the national seed company in 2000. Word was Heronswood could and would continue as a nursery, introducing rare plants from Dan Hinkley's far flung plant explorations. Meanwhile, Dan and his partner established a new home and garden nearby in Indianola they call Windcliff

[https://danieljhinkley.com/windcliff-](https://danieljhinkley.com/windcliff-plants/)

[plants/](https://danieljhinkley.com/windcliff-plants/).

According to Heronswood's site, Burpee declared chapter 11 within six months of the purchase, but it wasn't until 2006 that Burpee closed the Heronswood nursery, claiming there was not a sufficient market for the rare plants they were selling. Six years later in 2012, the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe bought the neglected garden and nursery at auction with an understanding of the site's importance as a local and international horticultural resource. Dan Hinkley returned to his former garden first as garden director and now as director emeritus since Patrick McMillan, a former professor at Clemson University, has recently been named director.

<https://heronswoodgarden.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Patrick-McMillan-announcement-release.pdf>.

Judging by the numerous video garden-tours and classes Hinkley conducts (they all appear on Heronswood's site) he is excited to be helping shape his former garden. You can hear it from Dan himself here: <https://vimeo.com/102309488>

But as many of you probably do, I remember the public outcry when Burpee closed Heronswood. It seemed like another example of corporate homogenization; another small, specialty nursery (and public garden) eaten up by a bigger, more powerful company while scores of 'marketable' plants proliferate at Lowes and Home Depot. Well, amazingly, things have come full circle and Dan Hinkley is reunited with his old garden and nursery! Of course, he is the one who decided to sell to Burpee in the first place. Did it make him a rich man? Finance his new house and garden? I don't know, but it is a happy ending to what easily could have been a tale of horticultural loss. Heronswood is now under solid stewardship, again open for public enjoyment (when Covid allows) and is providing wonderful horticultural outreach.

(For another point of view, here is an interview with George Ball, CEO of Burpee, which appeared on the Garden Rant blog in 2012, the year the PGS tribe bought Heronswood: <https://www.gardenrant.com/2012/07/the-story-ends-well-for-heronswood.html>)

Like many organizations that have restricted visitation due to the pandemic, Heronswood is reaching out to gardeners online. I found myself thoroughly distracted while writing this by the number of interesting and educational videos providing glimpses of the garden and portraits of specific plants. Here's one on Salal, which I learned is a Gaultheria and the most common understory shrub in the Pacific northwest <https://vimeo.com/477724357> Or, this forthcoming online class with Dan Hinkley on plants for the winter garden (\$20 for nonmembers): <https://heronswood.odoo.com/event/plants-for-winter-gardens-with-dan-hinkley-2021-01-06-1/register> You may want to poke around yourself! And thank you, Judy, for sharing Heronswood.

In case you missed them, there are a couple of new books associated with Heronswood: *Windcliff: A Story of People, Plants and Gardens* by Dan Hinkley <https://www.amazon.com/Windcliff-Story-People-Plants-Gardens/dp/1604699019>

and by Heronswood's assistant director Ross Bayton: *The Gardener's Botanical: An Encyclopedia of Latin Plant Names* <https://www.amazon.com/Gardeners-Botanical-Encyclopedia-Latin-Entries/dp/0691200173>

Judy's Plant List

A happy coincidence for Judy was that her son worked in Seattle for several years so her visits to see Ben included horticultural adventures like Heronswood. The plants she discussed at our members' meeting:

Roscoea purpurea hybrids
Aralia cordata, Cyrtopodium formosanum,
Woodwardia unigemmata
Spirea nipponica 'Peacock'
Gunnera sp
Hydrangea macrophylla 'Ayesha'
Hydrangea macrophylla 'Beaute Vendomois'



Hydrangea macrophylla 'Hamburg'
Dichroa aff. *yaoshanensis*, *Cardiandra mollendorffii*
Aster amellus 'Violet Queen'
Anchusa capensis 'Blue Angel'
Gentiana aesclepiadae
Zauschneria californica
Persicaria sp.
Sarracenia hybrids
Crinum sp., *Roscoeia purpurea* hybrids, *Fuchsia* cvs
Dahlia 'Honka', *Dahlia* 'Bed Head', *Dahlia* cvs.
Clarkia amoena 'Aurora'
Inula sp.
Dianthus 'Green Ball'
Eucomis sp.
Gunnera, *Podophyllum*, *Disporum*, *Impatiens omeiana*

John's Plant List

John Willis showed lovely images of a botanical trip to Portugal and southwestern Spain last spring with the British company Green Tours <http://www.greentours.co.uk/>.

John said the daffodils were nice, but it was the terrestrial orchids that really excited him. As it turns out, he and his wife were on one of the last flights out of Spain before COVID lock down!

For more on John's trip, go to his blog:

<http://macgardens.org/?p=6718>

Here is **John's** list:

Rock Rose, *Cistus albidus*
 Giant Fennel 'Ferula communis'
 Bee Orchid 'Ophrys fusca' (See photo right)
 Naked Man Orchid 'Orchis italica'
Erodium
Iris planifolia
Narcissus panizzianus
 Iberian Fritillary 'Fritillaria lusitanica'
Asphodelus fistulosus
Orchis olbiensis



In Memoriam

Peter Jones: Pete's wife of 57 years Caecilie died on December 16th after a long illness.

Before her death, Pete shared this video about growing pines from seed:

<https://youtu.be/sA48D6aqjdQ>

Paul Botting: A long time member and former PVC chair, Paul died this past fall.

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=paul-botting&pid=196947689&fhid=25414>

SEND NEW Year's DAY BLOOMS (or as close as you can come) to me: sa.strickler@verizon.net I will post and send you all a link. Please include botanical name and photo if you have one. thanks.

DUES: \$15 per year. Please send to treasurer Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22207

Editor's note: All photographs are by the article authors unless otherwise noted.

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