



# Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society  
✧ Volume XLII ✧ Fall 2018 ✧ Number 6 ✧

## Upcoming Programs

**Saturday, October 13, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**Annual Tri-State Meeting**

**New York Botanical Garden**

**Speaker Vojtech Holubec**

**RSVP & other details on page 3-4**

**Sunday, October 21, 10 a.m.**

**Frelinghuysen Arboretum**

**Speaker John Lonsdale,**

**'Fall Bulbs- Untapped Treasures'**

**Saturday, November 17, 10 a.m.**

**Annual Meeting and Luncheon**

**For Members Only!**

**Speaker Hubert Ling presents**

**'Shade Gardening: Native**

**Wildflowers and Ferns'**

**Please bring a friend, your favorite warm beverage, and a finger snack to share!**

## OUR OCTOBER SPEAKER

John Lonsdale is the owner of Edgewood Gardens, a rare plant nursery and garden in Exton, Pennsylvania. Born in England, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1985.

John, a recipient of the Alpine Garden Society Gold Merit Medal, has

grown a wide variety of alpine and woodland plants and bulbs for more than 30 years. He has traveled extensively to study plants in habitat, especially Trillium in the southeastern United States. He regularly contributes to the publications of many horticultural societies, lectures widely, and maintains a website featuring over 10,000 images of plants growing in his garden, [www.edgewoodgardens.net](http://www.edgewoodgardens.net). He contributed a chapter on Cyclamen in North America to the book, 'Genus Cyclamen in Science, Cultivation, Art and Culture', published by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Please join us, and bring a friend!



Speaker Jessica Walliser discusses bugs with Liam Coleman and Brian Coleman following our September lecture. More conversations in the background, with Susan Deeks, Sid Jones, Ray Waksmundzki and Peter Birnbaum.

A bit of poetry to help set the mood for our upcoming speaker, shared here with the permission of the author. A parody of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'My Favorite Things', your editor sometimes hums a bit of this while setting bulbs.

## A Few of My Favorite Bulbs

By Bobby J. Ward

Snowdrops 'mid oak leaves and  
Cyclamen dancing,  
Hyacinths sunning and Lycoris  
prancing,  
Blue Scillas shivering late in the  
spring—  
These are a few of my favorite things.

Bulbs in brown tunics with roots  
pushing downward,  
'Ice Wings' that hover and leave me  
spellbound-ward,  
Crocuses smiling and having a fling---  
These are a few of my favorite things.

When the sleet gels,  
And the snow mounts,  
And I hide away.  
I simply remember my 'fleurs favorites'  
And then I become---Monet.

Lumpy fat tubers and lilies 'Formosa'  
Mauve Colchicums, and corms  
amorosa.  
Ixia's 'Mabel' all purple without---  
These are a few of the 'stars' that I tout.

Stormy rain lilies that bloom like  
confetti  
Move me to write operatic libretti.  
Sternbergias shout on autumnal days---  
All of these would make for handsome  
nosegays.

When the clouds gray,  
When the frost nips,  
And I'm in bad moods,  
Then I count up all of my favorite bulbs  
And wish I could play---etudes.

Crinums and Cannas and Callas  
consorting  
'Rembrandt' and 'Darwin' and 'Parrot'  
cohorting.  
Daffodils named after Alfred the King--  
Guess it seems that I like 'most  
ev'rything.

Dog's-tooth bright pendant, Pheasant's-  
eye' & hoopskirt  
Join in the geophytes' seductive group-  
flirt.  
Joyfully brings me to chant praise en  
masse:  
*O santi bulbas beatissimas!*

When the ice falls,  
When the sky's dark,  
And I'm staring—crazed,  
I always remember my favorite bulbs.  
Then I become---upraised.

@1995 by Bobby J. Ward

## NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER

### **We are still a NARGS Chapter without a Chair, but you can change that!**

Roxanne Hiltz has come forward as willing to share the chair position- Roxanne's travel schedule leaves her unable to attend all of our events, particularly those in the summer months, which she feels is an important part of the Chair's duties. If you would consider sharing the responsibilities with her, please contact her soon at [roxanne.hiltz@gmail.com](mailto:roxanne.hiltz@gmail.com). Please consider if you would be willing and able to help her:

- Conduct the general meetings of the chapter.
- Conduct board meetings at least once a year, at the Chair's discretion (currently we meet five times a year, an hour before our regular meetings).
- Oversee the committees of the Chapter: Program, Membership, Newsletter, & Plant Sale.
- Act as liaison to the Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, to schedule our meetings.
- Attend the annual Plant Sale and other Chapter events, if possible.
- Represent the Chapter for all business conducted by the North American Rock Garden Society.

This is the only position currently open on the board and up for election at our November meeting. Your Chapter

needs you! Please consider stepping up to lead.

**Dues reminder!** Membership Chair Sid Jones will be on hand at the October and November meetings to collect dues for 2018. Watnong dues remain a bargain at \$10 individual or \$15 per household/ mailing address. Dues may be paid as cash or check, made payable to Watnong Chapter NARGS. If you can't make either meeting, you can mail your dues to Sid Jones, 123 Mountainside Drive, Randolph, NJ 07869.

### **Save the dates!**

With thanks to Program Chair Noel Schulz and Co-Chair Mike Wilson, here is the 2019 Watnong Chapter meeting schedule:

February 16

March 10

Plant Sale April 27 & 28

September 21

October 13

November 16

## NEWS FROM NARGS

**The annual Tri-State Meeting** for 2018, sponsored by the Manhattan and Hudson Valley Chapters, will be held Saturday, October 13, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Ross Hall at New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York.

The speaker is Vojtech Holubec. His first talk will be 'Tian Shan -- Celestial Mountains, land of burning sun and

cooling ice '. From Vojtech's new book, the talk will show the whole Tian Shan, from its western ridges in Uzbekistan over Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, on to its ending in far-off Xinjiang China. These mountains have vast glaciers, yet are surrounded by several large deserts. The beauty and diversity of Tian Shan will be displayed in photos of the principal ridges and their plants, and the talk will include general information on the region useful for growing these alpine beauties.

The second lecture will be 'Southwestern China -- Yunnan, Sechuan, Qinhai, heaven of alpine flowers'. Southwestern China is thought to have the highest diversity of alpine plants in the world, with Yunnan and Sechuan alone having more than two-thirds of Chinese flora. The talk will focus on late summer and autumn in some of the ridges richest in diversity, with particular emphasis on *Gentians* in full bloom. In Vojtech's words: "The diversity is so rich that you cannot walk, only move on your knees with a camera!"

**Judi Dumont, the coordinator for the Tri-State, needs to provide parking information to NYBG. If you will be arriving by car, please contact her at [judi.dumont@gmail.com](mailto:judi.dumont@gmail.com), preferably by October 6.**

### **NARGS Seed Ex Distribution**

Watnong members may recall that for the past few Decembers our chapter has worked with Phase 2 of the NARGS Seed Exchange, packing seeds. In spite

of the fact that we don't have a chapter chair, we are one of the largest and most active chapters of NARGS, and for 2019 and 2020 we've been asked to handle the main distribution of seeds to members instead.

The main distribution of seeds begins in late December with the receipt of packaged seeds from the various chapters. Seed orders arrive via e-mail and paper mail, and orders are fulfilled throughout the month of January and into February. This year, the Sierra Chapter filled 596 orders in 16 work sessions, with the help of 19 volunteers overall, far fewer orders than in years past, when orders reached 1500 or more.

The Leonard J. Buck Garden will allow us to use the Jordan House. We'll be able to use the Jordan House every day of the week, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. We'll decide which days of the week to meet based on which days have the most volunteers available, with a bit of flexibility to allow for uncertain weather. Currently the plan is to meet two days during the week and one or both days on the weekend. In order for the Watnong chapter to fulfill this critical role in the seed exchange, we will need a team: for example, someone to handle the computer work, printing out the electronic orders and entering the mailed-in orders, plus keeping stats on orders filled, which can be done at or after the work sessions. Another person can handle the logistics of the seeds: setting up the boxes of packets, keeping them tidy as the stocks are depleted,

making additional packets as needed. A third (or more!) person can oversee the mailing of the filled orders by addressing the shipping envelopes, filling out customs forms for Canadian/overseas members' orders (this can be done online), and toting filled orders to the post office, which also can be done outside the work sessions.

General volunteers, who come for a few hours at a time, can handle the filling of the individual orders. These volunteers don't necessarily have to be NARGS or chapter members; the staff at The Leonard J. Buck Garden has helped in the past, and has expressed a willingness to do so again. We anticipate sessions to set up the space in mid- late December, to start the distribution in early January, and a complete by mid-February.

**If you would be interested in helping to run the seed distribution, please contact Hilary Clayton at 908-781-2521 or [hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com).**

### **Our September Speaker:**

#### **Jessica Walliser, 'Attracting Beneficial Bugs to Your Garden' Summarized by Hilary Clayton**

Our September speaker was the enthusiastic Jessica Walliser, a self-described 'very keen amateur entomologist'.

Jessica's lecture covered the roles of insects in the plant world, an

introduction to beneficial insects and their role in a balanced garden, and how to control pests.



Speaker Jessica Walliser, pictured here with the 'slug love' photo that inspired her to see her garden as so much more than plants.

Of the approximately 900,000 species of insects currently recognized and named by science, less than one percent are pests of humans or agriculture. With that in view, we gardeners would do well to shift our focus from controlling the bad to encouraging the good.

Jessica grouped beneficial insects into three broad groups: pollinators, predators, which consume other insects,

and parasitoids, insects that use other insects as a host to develop their young.

Successful balance in the garden requires some patience- the predator species will always lag a bit behind the prey population. To attract beneficial insects to the garden, we gardeners can grow plants that provide nectar and pollen, and maintain a pesticide free habitat. To provide year 'round shelter and protect overwintering insects, wait until spring to clean up the garden, when temperatures are over 50F, to allow overwintering insects to emerge.

Plants in the carrot, aster, mustard, and mint families are particularly helpful in creating a balanced garden, as they provide ready sources of pollen and nectar over many months. In addition to attracting pollinator insects, these plants also attract many parasitoid insect species- although parasitoids use other insects to feed their young, the adults feed on nectar and pollen.

If you missed Jessica's engaging lecture, her book, 'Attracting Beneficial Bugs To Your Garden', was published by Timber Press in 2014 and can help make your garden more insect friendly.

## **IT GREW FOR ME!**

### ***Rhodophiala bifida***

**by Hilary Clayton, with a link to more information and photos by Judy Glattstein.**

I was introduced to *Rhodophiala bifida* as a gift from Judy Glattstein in 2013. She delivered it in a deep nursery pot,

ready to bloom in a deep, true red- no imagination needed for the common name 'Oxblood Lily'. In my experience, the onset of flowering is a little unpredictable, but generally follows the return of autumn rains, so at the end of August I decided to divide and settle the now five- year old bulbs into new pots before a scheduled storm. As it turned out, Judy was doing the same, and I share with you here the link to her website: [Repotting Rhodophiala](#).



*Rhodophiala bifida* on September 14, photo by Hilary Clayton

On arrival here at The Hay, Honey Farm, Judy's gift bulbs were in the same soil mix described at her Bellewood Gardens website. Historically, most plants growing in a mix containing

garden soil have met a sorry end by overwatering in our greenhouse, so I transplanted the bulbs to a mix of one part peat mix to two parts perlite to one part granite grit, with a teaspoon of terrasorb, as recommended on the Pacific Bulb Society's website, and kept the water needs more in line with the other plants in the cool end of the greenhouse. Equipped with contractile roots, the bulbs like to pull themselves deep into the soil, and so I try to provide them with the deepest pots possible, while keeping them spaced as for Amaryllis, with about an inch between bulbs or the bulb and the edge of the pot.

The strap-like leaves emerge after the flowers, and are long and narrow, reaching all the way down to the greenhouse bench, and then some. Native to Argentina and Uruguay, it is summer dormant, with leaves starting to yellow in May or June. When about half the leaves have yellowed, I set the pots under a greenhouse bench for a summer rest, reducing its watering to a weekly 'baptism', as Judy suggested when she delivered it years ago.

When I upended the pot this year, careful not to break the brittle roots, I saw that I was blessed with many offsets. I decided to live dangerously, and set them in a new growing mix, partly to make the deep pots a little lighter in weight. Similar to what I've used for some winter dormant bulbs, I set them to one part peat mix: one part perlite: one part coir chips. As they are hardy from zones 7 through 9, I'm also

going to try leaving a pot in the cold frame through the winter this year, next to the miniature Agapanthus. I hope to see those brilliant red blossoms next September, and be able to again say 'it grew for me!'

## WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

### HYPERTUFA TROUGHS



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**If you would like to place an ad here, send copy to the Newsletter Editor, [hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com).**

**Deadline for inclusion in our late Fall Newsletter is October 21, 2018.**

**2018 WATNONG CHAPTER OFFICERS**

Chair	<b>Please Consider</b>	<b>Your Name Here!</b>	
Vice Chair	Michael Wilson	862-397-9339	miwilson@ramapo.edu
Treasurer	Don Grossmann	908-604-8060	donmliss@msn.com
Secretary	Debi Graf	201-919-0749	DGRAFatHome@aol.com

**2018 WATNONG COMMITTEES**

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