



# Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society  
✧ Volume XLI ✧ Late Fall 2017 ✧ Number 7 ✧

## Upcoming Programs

**Saturday, November 18, 2017, 10 a.m.**

**Frelinghuysen Arboretum**

**For Members Only!**

**Annual Meeting And Luncheon**

**Speaker Ernie Cavallo presents**

**'Galanthophilia,**

**A Good Kind of Love'**

**Members are asked to bring a ready-to-serve appetizer or dessert and any necessary serving pieces. Members are also encouraged to bring an interesting plant or two for show.**

**Saturday, February 17, 2018, 10 a.m.**

**Frelinghuysen Arboretum**

**Speaker Lisa Roper, Chanticleer**

**Horticulturist, presents**

**'Gravel Gardening'**

## Our November Speaker

Ernest Cavallo has gardened on the East End of Long Island for 40 years. In 2008 when he retired from a career in public service, he decided to take a trip to the UK to explore new options for his Winter garden. At Colesbourne Park in the Cotswolds, millions of snowdrops

seduced him on the spot. He has spent the last eight years studying snowdrops, experimenting with species and cultivars in our climate, identifying best practices to encourage bloom and multiplication, propagating rare snowdrops and recently selling to others who share his love of this essential bulb for the late Winter/early Spring garden. Since 2010, he worked with the staff at NYBG as a volunteer to help expand the Garden's collection. Now he is ready to share what he has learned with you.

Please join us, and bring a friend!



Photo courtesy Ernest Cavallo

## NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER



Ray Waksmundzki, left, brought some plants from his collection, admired here by Noel Schulz, Program Chair. Photo by Hilary Clayton.

**HELP WANTED! We are still a NARGS Chapter without a Chair!** Please consider if you would be willing and able to:

- Conduct the general meetings of the chapter.
- Conduct board meeting- 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.

Your Chapter needs you! Please consider stepping up to lead.

**MORE HELP WANTED!** We need a party planner, or planners, to coordinate our Chapter's 2018 Soiree, Picnic, and Luncheon- or choose one that you'd like to organize. No dates or locations have been determined yet. If you have a garden you'd like to share, or just enjoy hosting garden parties- not necessarily at your own home- this position is for you! Contact Program Chair Noel Schulz at [noelschulz@verizon.net](mailto:noelschulz@verizon.net) or 201-445-6445 to volunteer.

**Dues reminder!** Membership Chair Sid Jones will be on hand at the November meeting 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 the meeting, you can mail your dues to Sid Jones, 123 Mountainside Drive, Randolph, NJ 07869.

**We would like to thank Caroline Ford** for her service as the Watnong chapter Treasurer. Caroline served from January 2013 to September 2017. Caroline encouraged the

chapter to establish yearly donations; as a result, we are now contributing annually to the Blackburn Scholarship, and to the renovation of the rock gardens at the Laurelwood Arboretum. We are happy to welcome Don Grossmann as our new Treasurer.

**Watnong NARGS will once again be packing seed for the annual seed exchange** at the Jordan House at The Leonard J. Buck Garden in Far Hills, the weeks of December 4 & 11. Days and hours will be determined based on what works best for the most people. If you'd like to participate, contact Hilary at [hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com), or 908-781-2521.

Anyone interested in working on the next phases of the **Laurelwood Rock Garden Project**- developing a plant list and ordering material- should contact Mike Wilson at [miwilson@ramapo.edu](mailto:miwilson@ramapo.edu) or call 862-397-9339. We will also need a volunteer(s) to receive the plant deliveries and care for them until they can be planted next spring.

### **Save the dates!**

Thanks to Program Chair Noel Schulz, here is the 2018 Watnong Chapter Speaker list:

2/17/18, Lisa Roper, Chanticleer Horticulturist, 'Gravel Gardening'  
3/18/18, Marta McDowell, Garden Writer, 'All the Presidents' Gardens'  
9/15/18, Jessica Walliser, Radio Host,

'Attracting Beneficial Bugs to Your Garden'

10/21/18, John Lonsdale, Edgewood Gardens, 'Fall Bulbs- Untapped Treasures'

11/17/18, Hubert Ling, Native Plant Society, 'Shade Gardening: Native Wildflowers & Ferns'

### **A New Tufa Bed for Laurelwood** Text & Photos by Michael Wilson

During the summer of 2017, the chapter restored and built another bed in the South Rock Garden at The Laurelwood Arboretum in Wayne, New Jersey. This bed is adjacent to and compliments one that we restored a few years ago. The new bed has more height and will present alpines with a better, more natural view, with the bonus of an evergreen hedge behind it to frame the scene. Overall, the two beds work well together and with elevation changes at the site.



The process began in the same way as for the first bed, with a trip to Ilion

Gorge, New York in late May for a truck load of Tufa rock. I met Joe Ferdula at his quarry at sunrise on a Saturday morning, because he had family obligations later that day. As the sun was rising, we selected several nice pieces from the fresh pile of material that he dug the night before. This load had one big piece that is showy and is as nice as the Tufa that I acquired for the Frelinghuysen Arboretum. I felt lucky to find a few smaller pieces that compliment this large rock well, with similar crevices and coral-like features. By 9 a.m., I was on my way back home with another truckload.

In June, a small group of Watnong members met at the Laurelwood Arboretum and began excavating the new bed. We dug to about two feet below grade and discarded the rich soil. The new bed also includes a small rock wall on one side, and we began to dismantle part of it, with the intention of rebuilding it with Tufa. It soon became apparent that Dorothy Knippenberg, who, with her husband John, was the former owner and designer of the gardens and nursery that are now Laurelwood Arboretum, had intended that wall to be permanent. It was heavily cemented together. We could not completely dismantle it and had to defer the task to a future visit, when we would bring a sledgehammer.

We met again in July and began the process of making a scree planting medium for the rock garden. Scree mix

consists of one part coarse sand, one part quarter-inch pea gravel, one part peat moss, and one part top soil or fill. On that July day we mixed up a yard each with the help of the front-end loader from the arboretum. After repairing the wall and filling in the excavated area with scree, we decided that the bed needed a little more height. We decided to delay setting the Tufa until we were able to make more scree.



We gathered again in August and added about a half yard of each material, as we slowly placed pieces of Tufa into the bed. The bed is nicely mounded, and gives the one big piece of Tufa a prominent spot with the evergreen hedge behind it. The smaller pieces, similar in form to the big one, were placed with it, and give the feeling of a natural rock outcrop. The rock wall was rebuilt using the Tufa, and when planted will allow the public to get close to the plants for viewing. Hopefully they will be interested enough to become Watnong members!

On September 10 the bed was planted with about a dozen rock garden perennials and a couple of conifers. Some of the mountain plants include *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Antennaria dioica*, and *Gypsophila repens*. The conifers are *Picea abies* 'Nidiformis' and *Picea pungens* 'Globosa'. The new bed has some interesting areas for planting. One portion receives some shade in the afternoon, and that will present an opportunity to try some more difficult alpiners like *Saxifraga* and *Dryas*. Other areas are in full sunlight and will be a good place to grow more drought tolerant plants.



This past summer was a very productive season for the chapter's Laurelwood Project, but the job is not completed yet. Next spring the garden will have to be planted, which means that this winter we will have to peruse alpine plant catalogs and develop a plant list. Then orders must be placed, plants must be received and then cared for until planting.

Anyone interested in working on the next phases of the Laurelwood Rock Garden Project should contact me at [miwilson@ramapo.edu](mailto:miwilson@ramapo.edu) or call 862-397-9339. It isn't too early to start thinking about the plant list.

I would like to extend many thanks to all who helped with this project, who worked long and hard in hot weather to accomplish our goal of building a second bed for the South Rock Garden.

## **NEWS FROM NARGS**

### **2017 NARGS Annual General Meeting 'Rock Gardening in the Southeastern U.S. – Past, Present, and Future' November 17-19, 2017**

The 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of NARGS will be held in Durham, North Carolina, and is being hosted by the Piedmont Chapter. The AGM will explore the past, present, and future of rock gardening in the south eastern and mid-Atlantic regions of the U.S.

Details about the meeting, as well as an on-line registration form, are available at [www.piedmontnargs.org](http://www.piedmontnargs.org).

### **2018 Seed Exchange**

On December 15, the 2017-2018 Seed List will be on the NARGS website, (<https://www.nargs.org/seed-exchange>) so mark your calendar!

The redesigned online ordering program on the NARGS website will require you to login to the NARGS website using your personal username

or email address AND password to access the seed ordering program. Please make sure you have created an account and know your password NOW so that you are ready when the Seed List goes live. You can login at: <https://www.nargs.org/user> .

If you need a paper copy of the seed list mailed to you, contact Joyce Fingerut, 537 Taugwonk Road, Stonington, CT 06378-1805, or [alpinegarden@comcast.net](mailto:alpinegarden@comcast.net) by December 1.

### **Tour of Yunnan China**

June 13 - June 29, 2018

From tour leader Panayoti Kelaidis:

"The Snow Mountains of Yunnan are the southernmost extension of alpine flora in China: this region possesses some of the greatest biodiversity on the planet. Here we'll follow Forrest's, Kingdon-Ward's, Rock's (and Harry Jans') footsteps through several mountain ranges northward towards Tibet. Expect to see a vast range of Primula, Androsace, Rhododendron and no end of Roscoea, Anemone, alpine Gesneriads, Aroids and woodland treasures galore--a living encyclopedia of alpines!"

We expect this to sell out fast!

Minimum number of participants: 15; Maximum: 22; Shared twin price: \$4,500 USD; single room supplement: \$5,500 USD. **NARGS membership required.**

Airfare (roughly \$1500 USD) from and to the US is not included. Also airfare to Lijang and from Shangrila is not included in the price. Participants will

need to book their own flights. For questions please contact Jody Payne: [jodycpayne1@gmail.com](mailto:jodycpayne1@gmail.com) (link sends e-mail)

You can find the itinerary on line at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org).

### **The October Meeting: Speaker Kim Eierman, 'Ecobeneficial Gardening 101: Boosting the Ecosystem in Your Own Yard' Summarized by Hilary Clayton**

Our October speaker, Kim Eierman, is the founder of EcoBeneficial. She is an Environmental Horticulturist specializing in ecological landscapes and native plants. Based in New York, Kim teaches at the New York Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, The Native Plant Center in New York, Rutgers Home Gardeners School and several other institutions.



**Speaker Kim Eierman, at right, distributes EcoBeneficial Tips at the October meeting. Photo by Hilary Clayton.**

Kim's lively talk demonstrated how small changes by home gardeners can

make big ecological differences in a region. Here are her top 20 ways to create an EcoBeneficial landscape, taken from the laminated information sheet she distributed to those attending.

1. Reduce or eliminate the 'Green Desert' (lawn/turf). It is an ecological wasteland.
2. Increase the health of your soil. Everything starts with the soil: healthy soil makes for healthy plants.
3. Avoid synthetic pesticides. Rachel Carson warned about them 50 years ago in 'Silent Spring'
4. Limit the use of organic pesticides. Use only when absolutely necessary, and then sparingly and carefully.
5. Support beneficial insects, nature's pest control, by planting a diversity of native plants to support them.
6. Tolerate some messiness in your landscape to support wildlife. Dead logs, tree snags and brush piles are homes for many creatures.
7. Tolerate some plant damage in your landscape. Valuable insects have to eat too, and they don't eat very much.
8. Leave perennials standing through winter. They can provide food and cover for birds and insects.
9. Plant more native plants to support your local ecosystem. Native plants have co-evolved with each other and with the wildlife around them.
10. Think 'plant communities' when selecting plants. Native plants don't grow in isolation. Learn which plants grow together naturally, and plant that way.

11. Eradicate or reduce the invasive plants in your landscape. Always try organic, mechanical means first.
12. When invasive plants are removed, replace them quickly and thickly with competitive, regionally native plants.
13. Limit exotic plants and know their limitations. They will not provide the same depth of ecological services as native plants.
14. Encourage biodiversity by planting diversely. Bio-diverse ecosystems are more resilient to pests, diseases and climate change.
15. Avoid double flowered plants. They often have less nectar, pollen, and seed than single-flowered plants.
16. Select natural forms of native plants for best ecosystem dynamics.
17. Provide a water source for wildlife and insects. This is crucial, but often forgotten in many landscapes.
18. Emulate healthy local natural areas in your garden. Use nature as your reference for structure and plant selection.
19. Always plant the right plant in the right place. Some plants are flexible about where they are planted, but many are not.
20. When choosing plants, find the beauty in ecological function. As Mom said: physical beauty is only skin deep.

More information can be found at her website, [www.EcoBeneficial.com](http://www.EcoBeneficial.com). We appreciated her suggestions for making our homes more welcoming to the birds and pollinators we all enjoy.

## It Grew For Me!

### *Crocus speciosus*

Photo & Text by Hilary Clayton



*Crocus speciosus* is one of several species of fall blooming crocuses. Native to Greece, northern Turkey and Iran, it is a simple flower, a goblet in shades of blue. The blooms appear suddenly in our garden mid-October, just as the Asters are finishing; the grassy leaves appear later in the season, and, unlike the broad leaves of the *Colchicums*, easily mingle with spring bulbs and perennials.

The flowers are relatively large, with contrasting branched orange stigmas, and appear as bits of sky scattered among the fallen leaves. I'm particularly fond of them set beneath trees and shrubs with orange fall color, such as *Acer* species or *Fothergilla*. Over the years, I've grown four varieties: 'Aitchisonii', which blooms lavender-violet blue, 'Conqueror', with deep sky blue blooms, 'Oxonian', which is an amazing deep violet blue, and the pure-white form, 'Albus', which I like to set beneath yellow autumn leaves. The

blue forms are beautiful in combination.

*Crocus speciosus* are hardy in USDA zones 4 through 9. In bloom, they stand about six inches tall, and flower mid-October thru mid-November, varying a bit with variety and location. They need well-drained soil, but perform equally well in sun or dappled shade. They are relatively inexpensive, and easy to naturalize, as they multiply by both seed and offsets. Order them when your catalogues first arrive, as they're generally shipped in late summer, and set them about four inches deep. Expect the flowers to be late the first year—more than once I've despaired their loss to chipmunks only to be happily surprised in December.



**In our Late Winter Issue, Volume 41 number 2, Sid Jones shared his experiences growing *Paris polyphylla*. Here is a current photo of the same plant in seed, photographed October 2017. Thanks for sharing, Sid!**



## WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

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send copy to the Newsletter Editor,  
[hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com).

Deadline for inclusion in our Winter  
Newsletter is January 7, 2018

### 2017 WATNONG CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Vice Chair	Michael Wilson	862-397-9339	<a href="mailto:miwilson@ramapo.edu">miwilson@ramapo.edu</a>
Treasurer	Don Grossmann	<a href="tel:908-604-8060">908-604-8060</a>	<a href="mailto:donmliss@msn.com">donmliss@msn.com</a>
Secretary	Debi Graf	201-919-0749	<a href="mailto:DGRAFatHome@aol.com">DGRAFatHome@aol.com</a>

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**THE WATNONG CHAPTER  
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