



Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society
✧ Volume XLIII ✧ Late Summer 2019 ✧ Number 5 ✧

Upcoming Programs

Saturday September 14, 2019 10 a.m.
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Elisabeth Zanders of the NARGS
Connecticut and Berkshire Chapters
'Hardy Northeast Rock Garden Plants'

Sunday, October 13, 2019 10 a.m.
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Watnong's own Joann Knapp
'The Frustrations of a Flower
Photographer'

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

Our September Speaker:

Elisabeth Zander

Elisabeth recently retired from programming backend databases and is currently serving as president of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) as well as the society's webmaster. Over the years, she has worked in many capacities for NARGS, starting at the chapter level (Newsletter Editor, Chair, Treasurer, Program Manager, etc.) As the 1994-96 NARGS

Seed Exchange Director, she managed the complete operation with the help of the Connecticut and Berkshire chapters. Before passing it on, she split it into a three-part operation for future exchanges.

For many years now, she has economically arranged several of the NARGS Speakers Tour for its chapters. An avid seed grower since joining NARGS, she was sowing well over 1,400 packets of seed yearly by the late '90s. She built raised berms, hill pocket, and shade gardens to house all the plants and kept over 2,500 species thriving. At the turn of the millennium, Elisabeth moved her gardening to a blank slate of property in the hills of northwest Connecticut. Since then, she and her husband Rod have built a greenhouse, stone walls, plunge beds, troughs, raised beds, sand beds, and extensive crevice gardens. In 2018 they received the Linc and Timmy Foster Millstream Garden Award from NARGS for creating a superior garden that reflects the standards of the Millstream Garden. Still sowing seed, she has tapered down to a couple of hundred packets of seed a year- but she is still constructing additional outlays to her crevice gardens.

NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER

Save the dates!

10/13/2019, Joann Knapp, Watnong NARGS, 'The Frustrations of a Flower Photographer'

11/16/2019, Michael Hagen, New York Botanical Garden, 'The T. H. Everett Memorial Rock Garden: Past, Present, and Future'

January 2020, dates to be announced, NARGS Seed Exchange distribution at The Jordan House, see page 4.

Hospitality is back!

We have a hospitality committee now and need more volunteers! One, or preferably two, people should sign up for each of our program meetings. Roxanne will bring the supplies.

Volunteers should arrive at 9 a.m. on the day of the meeting to set out table covers, paper and plastic ware, beverage fixings, and start the water for tea or cocoa, which takes about 40 minutes to heat. Hospitality volunteers will also help those who arrive with goodies to arrange them. After the meeting, allow at least five minutes for those who want a post meeting snack, then clean off the covers, pack up the remaining supplies, and help carry them out.

Volunteers for our October 13 meeting are Lillie Dorchak & Shirley

Rovinski; for November 16 Michele Guitierrez and CarolAnn Baldowski.

To sign up, or for more information, email Roxanne.hiltz@gmail.com

Watnong Chapter receives the Norman Singer Award By Michael Wilson

On behalf of the Watnong Chapter, Michael Wilson received the Norman Singer Endowment Award from the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) for the chapters' effort with the restoration of the South Rock Garden at Laurelwood Arboretum. The award provides \$2000 funding for Laurelwood to complete the restoration and continue maintenance on the garden and gives both the chapter and Laurelwood Arboretum some national attention from NARGS.

In 2013, as part of the chapter mission, the South Rock Garden at Laurelwood Arboretum was chosen as a local rock garden to restore and support. The chapter made a five-year commitment.

Work began in 2014 with the excavation of one of the garden beds. Several pieces of Tufa were found, and it was decided that this rock would be the best to use for the restoration.

Additional Tufa was purchased, and a new bed was created and planted. A second bed was created a few years ago and again Tufa was chosen as the rock to use. Over the past year the

second bed has been planted. Nearly all of this work has been carried out by members of the Watnong chapter, with some support from the arboretum.

2019 is the fifth and final year of this restoration project. As part of a transition to turn over the maintenance and continuation of the South Rock Garden, Michael Wilson has been working with members of the Laurelwood volunteer force to guide them on maintenance procedures.

Anyone interested in working with Michael and the volunteers at the South Rock Garden can contact him at miwilson@ramapo.edu or call at 862-397-9339.

A Splendid Picnic in the Barn ByRoxanne Hiltz

Hilary and Michael Clayton outdid themselves once again, hosting our July picnic at Hay Honey Farm. They had wisely chosen to set up all the tables inside the shade of the barn-- It was a bit hot but otherwise good weather for the end of July.



Lunch and the Plant Swap, photo by Kenneth Johnson

The Plant Swap was very popular. The Claytons contributed many unusual plants grown from seed, Frank Goodhart brought several of his choice hand grafted conifers, and there were many other wonderful contributions too. The “nice plants seeking good homes table” also seemed popular, with almost all the plants set there finding new homes. Another treat was the dessert table—our members are really good at desserts (home-made gooseberry pie, a fruit crumble, yummy chocolate pudding with dark cherries, lavender shortbread, even some gluten-free cookies, among many others.)



Barb Pecca considers her options at the Plant Swap table, photo by Hilary Clayton

After the socializing and eating and drawings for the plant swap, Hilary gave a short history of Hay Honey farm and about an hour- long guided tour.

Among the highlights were the vegetable garden and butterfly meadow, a woodland area full of hundreds of pink *Astilbe chinensis* 'Pumila', *Kirengeshoma palmata*, and other shade-loving flowers, and of course the big curving perennial border, with Lilies, Cabbage Leaf Sunflowers, *Rudbeckia maxima*, and Joe Pye Weed, *Eutrochium maculatum* 'Gateway' among the eye-catching display.



Touring The Hay, Honey Farm, photo by Kenneth Johnson.

NEWS FROM NARGS

It's time to start thinking about the Seed Exchange again! While you go about your weeding and deadheading don't forget to bring along a paper bag for any seeds you might want to share. Donations to the seed exchange must be received by November 1. **For information on how to collect, package, and ship your seeds, visit nargs.org.**

The Watnong Chapter will again be running Phase III of the seed exchange, the distribution. We'll be working in the Jordan House at The Leonard J. Buck

Garden in Far Hills, from early January through the first week of February. You don't need to be a member of NARGS to help with the seed distribution, and many hands make light work! For more information, or to volunteer, contact Hilary Clayton at hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com or 908-781-2521.

IT GREW IN SPITE OF ME:

Cardiocrinum cordatum

Text & Photos by Hilary Clayton

On the property where I garden, The Hay, Honey Farm, we keep two compost piles. One is a proper triple bin compost, built to specifications from Organic Gardening magazine decades ago. The other is more of a weed pile- one big heap that gets stirred around a bit but doesn't necessarily get hot enough to kill things. This story involves the latter.

A few weeks ago, I brought a bucket of weeds back to the pile when a new, tall plant caught my eye in the woods beyond. On closer investigation it was a lily stem, and strangely familiar. I realized it was a *Cardiocrinum*; and then I started wondering if that could possibly be, since we hadn't grown any here in years, and never outdoors.

Thank goodness for plant records! A *Cardiocrinum cordatum* was purchased in 2000, on a Watnong NARGS trip to Barry Yinger's nursery, Asiatica. *Cardiocrinum*

are bulbous plants in the lily family, native to Japan, and prefer woodland habitats. When it came on site, research showed it hardy to zone 7-8; since we're zone 5b here, I kept potted in the greenhouse- for years and years.



The flower stalk, July 19, 2019

Finally, in 2010, it flowered, and to be honest, it didn't hold up to the anticipation. The flowers extend from the stem at a 90-degree angle, and the top petals droop, giving the blossom a somewhat flattened look. Even when fully open we couldn't see the center of the flower.

Cardiocrinum are monocarpic- once flowering before setting seed and small bulb offsets. The Hay, Honey team briefly discussed starting over- it really should only be three years to bloom- but

remembering the floral disappointment thought the greenhouse space could be better spent and sent it to the compost.



Full bloom, July 24, 2019

The intervening nine years are anyone's guess; the bulblets might have rolled off the pile, or been carried away by rodents, but somehow, they came to rest a few feet from the compost, under a sugar maple and on top of a remnant rock wall.

The foliage is not unlike skunk cabbage, and in the woodland garden setting easily escaped any notice. I expect the last two seasons of unusually high rainfall finally provided enough moisture there to support flowering.



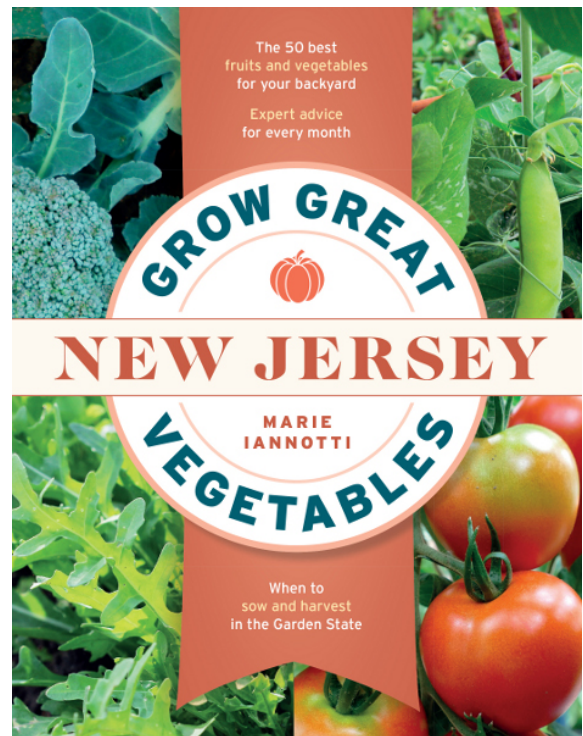
Nice heart-shaped foliage, but easy to miss in the woodland.

I admit that in the days between the appearance of the lily stem and the opening of the flowers my anticipation built, and I started to wonder if perhaps my younger self had been too hard on the plant. I started planning where I'd set the offset bulbs, now that it's clear *Cardiacrinum* is indeed hardy here. And then, it blossomed, and the flowers were...interesting. I admit I've developed some affection for the plant at this point, so I'll hope to collect some seeds, and maybe move a few offsets to provide a July surprise in a few years. Or perhaps I'll just leave well enough alone and see where it takes itself.

BOOK REVIEW: 'Grow Great Vegetables in New Jersey' and 'Grow Great Vegetables in Pennsylvania'

By Judy Glattstein

Images from *Grow Great Vegetables in New Jersey*, courtesy Timber Press



Fresh is best. Think about those tomato shaped vegetable products we find in the grocery store in winter. Now think about those red ripe summer tomatoes out of the garden, sun warmed, satiny smooth skin wrapped around juicy flesh. There's just no comparison.

Some good advice when you are starting down the edible garden path is very helpful and can be very reassuring. A new series from Timber Press offers

regionally appropriate help with separate volumes for New York and Massachusetts, and also the Garden State of New Jersey, the Keystone State of Pennsylvania, all four authored by Marie Iannotti.

There is concise and easy to follow text explaining what you need to know, such as hardiness zones. These are important whether you are growing vegetables or flowers. Based on winter low temperature and each with a 10-degree Fahrenheit difference from the next one, they provide guidelines for the length of the growing season and planting dates - when to expect the first frost in autumn and the last frost in spring. That's critical for planning when to start cold hardy vegetables such as broccoli, and when to bring in the last winter squash in the fall.

Once beyond the basics, there is a month by month guide to the year, with the month indicated on each right-hand page. Sound, useful information and very helpful lists – such as seed germination rates (did you really expect 100%?), how long the seed remains viable, and how to test older seed for viability. Each month has a page of quick tips to do each month.

Marie also offers advice on laying out the garden, so all plants have the optimum conditions - perennials such as asparagus don't interfere with annual vegetables, and tall vegetables such as corn don't shade the shorter ones. There

is information on learning to identify pest problems and coping with all sorts of pests: slug and snail control, companion planting to deter certain pests, attracting beneficial insects, homemade pesticides such as garlic oil or a tomato / potato leaf spray to repel aphids.

TO DO THIS MONTH

PLAN

- Buy garlic and shallots for fall planting
- Note reminders of what grew well, what failed, and any problems with pests
- Pull out the row covers and set up your hoop house
- Test the soil pH and add amendments for next year
- Start collecting seeds

PREPARE AND MAINTAIN

- Add manure to rhubarb bed
- Harvest remaining tomatoes to ripen indoors
- Harvest and dry popcorn

from Growing Great Vegetables in New Jersey, image courtesy Timber Press

From 'What to do in September', courtesy of Timber Press

Then, once you get through what to do and when to do it for the year's circle of seasons there is the good part: edibles from A, artichokes, arugula, and asparagus, through kohlrabi, okra, tomatoes and tomatillos, to Z for zucchini. This section begins with simple bar charts for planting and harvesting, organized by zone.

The book is well organized with good information for the novice and offers practical tips for organizing the chores and choices necessary to cultivate a productive vegetable garden. There's useful information for those ready to move on from just growing a tomato plant in a flower pot.

HYPERTUFA TROUGHS

Grow Great Vegetables in New Jersey. ISBN 978--60469-885-5
by Marie Iannotti
Paperback, \$19.95
Published by Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, April 2019

Review copies of these books were provided by the publisher.



OUT AND ABOUT

Six local private gardens in Hunterdon & Somerset Counties will open as a fundraiser for the Garden Conservancy Saturday, September 14, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.: The Hay, Honey Farm, Stone House Garden, Ellistan, Bird Haven Farm, and Jardin de Buis. In Essex County the Mountsier Garden in Nutley will also be open. Admission is \$10 per person per garden. For directions, garden descriptions, and more information visit <https://www.gardenconservancy.org/open-days>

WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

Would you give a friend a ride?

Long time Watnong NARGS member Ann Wiss would like to continue to attend our meetings and activities but needs a ride to and from. If you live near Short Hills, New Jersey, please consider bringing her with you. For more information contact Hilary (see below).

Coopers Hollow Farm specializes in native plants with people-pleasing qualities; pollinator friendly and ecologically beneficial. We offer selections of flowering perennials and shrubs, understory trees, shade grasses for dry to wet areas, ferns, and ground covers. Smaller sizes are available for mass plantings. Coopers Hollow is a NJ registered nursery located in Bernardsville, using only organic practices (not certified).

We are open by appointment only. For requests and availability, contact CoopersHollowFarm@yahoo.com

If you would like to place an ad here, send copy to the Newsletter Editor, hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com.

Deadline for inclusion in our Late Summer Newsletter is September 15, 2019.

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**THE WATNONG CHAPTER
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