



Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society
✧ Volume XLII ✧ Spring 2018 ✧ Number 3 ✧

Upcoming Programs

**Annual Plant Sale at
The Leonard J. Buck Garden
11 Layton Road, Far Hills, N.J. 07931.**

Saturday, April 21, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Sunday, April 22, Noon – 5 p.m.

Saturday Lecture 1 p.m.
Author/Gardener Jana Milbocker will present "The Garden Tourist", must see gardens and nurseries in the northeast, including The Leonard J. Buck Garden! Copies of her book will be available for sale after the lecture.

Sunday Lecture 1 p.m. Hunterdon County Master Gardener Ruth Claus will present 'Welcome Butterflies', with a focus on native plants that attract butterflies.

Guided tours of The Leonard J. Buck Garden are offered each afternoon at 2 p.m.

Our annual soiree (for members only!) will be held in June; date, time and location to be announced in our next newsletter.



Marta McDowell signs copies of her book '*All the Presidents' Gardens*' for Annette Tyler and Ann Wiss at the March meeting.

Plant Sale Volunteers Urgently Needed!

We don't yet have enough volunteers to run the plant sale, so your help is needed. Most shifts still have openings. You could be a cashier, help customers select plants ("plant advisor"), or supervise the plant holding area. The shifts are **Saturday, April 21:** 9:45 a.m. to 12 noon, 12 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., or 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.; **Sunday, April 22:** 11:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

We also need

1) Someone to watch over the plants on the afternoon of Friday, April 20, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., or whatever portion of that time that you can manage, telling visitors to The Leonard

J. Buck Garden that the sale does not open until 10 a.m. on Saturday.

2) Someone to pick up donuts and bagels on Saturday morning for the volunteers. You will be reimbursed.

Please note that we do not need any more help to set up the sale on Thursday.

To volunteer, please contact Martha Podilchuk at marthapod@comcast.net or [908-507-6487](tel:908-507-6487).

Plants donated by members greatly add to our profits. As you start your spring gardening, **please consider potting and labeling your extra seedlings or divisions.** Donated plants may be dropped off at The Leonard J. Buck Garden from Saturday, April 7 until Thursday, April 19, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Please consider printing a copy of the plant sale flyer on page 10 and posting it at your favorite local business, or on the window of your parked car.

Lastly, here's the easiest way to help us swell our profits: set aside a few boxes and bring your own to carry home your purchases!

To volunteer for the plant sale, please contact Martha Podilchuk at marthapod@comcast.net or [908-507-6487](tel:908-507-6487).

Plants That I'm Excited About

By Melissa Grossmann

I have had to exercise extreme self-control to make such a short list. Here's what's new or different this year.

Take the *Delphinium* plunge with *Delphinium* 'Cobalt Dreams', which was intentionally bred for increased heat and humidity tolerance.

Eryngium planum 'Blue Hobbit' is weird-looking in a good way. It must have dry, well-drained soil, but is worth the trouble.

Gentiana cruciata 'Blue Cross' is not fussy, as long as the soil is well-drained. *Helleborus* 'Penny's Pink' has everything that a hellebore should have: outward-facing flowers and marbled foliage that is attractive all year, unless a tree falls on it.

Monarda bradburiana is a central US native deserving of wider acclaim, and is rarely available for purchase.

You will find few tiny, evergreen, flowering ground covers. I can attest that *Potentilla neumanniana* is all of these.

Rhodea japonica is an evergreen perennial for shade, and a good companion for early bulbs, which might otherwise be lonely.

Silene 'Rollie's Favorite' may be an intergeneric hybrid with *Lychnis*. It is durable, long-blooming, and sterile.

Thalictrum (formerly *Anemonella*) *thalictroides* 'Pink Pearl' Oh my fur and whiskers, a double, pink rue-anemone.

The **various small *Veronicas*** are reason enough to create a well-drained bed with a top-dressing of gravel.

Particularly tempting woody plants:

Acer rufinerve ‘**Winter Gold**’: a snakebark maple with bright gold twigs.

Symphoricarpos ‘**Proud Berry**’: a shrub grown for its bountiful fall display of bright pink berries.

Magnolia virginiana ‘**Moonbeam**’: hardy to zone 4, and only half as wide as tall.

NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER

On Sunday, April 15, at 12 noon Hilary Clayton will be potting up succulents for the plant sale at The Leonard J. Buck Garden. Contact her at hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com if you’d like to help.

On Saturday, May 5, the Watnong Chapter will participate in a ‘meet and Greet’ of plant focused organizations at the Friends of Frelinghuysen Plant Sale. Volunteer shifts are 9 a.m. – 11 a.m., 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., and 1 p.m.- 3 p.m. If you’d like to help increase our membership, contact Melissa Grossmann at 908-604-8060, or donmliss@msn.com

Our annual soiree has been tentatively scheduled for the week of June 18. Melissa Grossmann has

been in contact with the Somerset County Park Commission to allow us to meet at the Rudolf W. Van Der Goot Rose Garden at The Colonial Park Gardens, 156 Mettlers Road, Somerset, NJ 08873. We can have a tour of the rose garden, led by the Somerset County Park Commission Rosarian, if we choose to. Melissa Grossmann will work to coordinate with the Park Commission, but we still need someone to run the evening. **The date, time, and caterer will be the party planner’s choice. Please contact Melissa at 908-604-8060, or donmliss@msn.com if you’d like to take charge of the details.**

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 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.

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

We will be planting the newly prepared bed at the Laurelwood Rock Garden Project in early June. Please contact Mike Wilson at miwilson@ramapo.edu or call him at 862-397-9339 for the date and start time. We will also need a volunteer(s) to receive the plant deliveries and care for them until they can be planted later in the spring.

Save the dates!

Lectures at the Annual Plant Sale

Saturday, 4/21/18, 1 p.m., Author/Gardener Jana Milbocker, 'The Garden Tourist'

Sunday, 4/22/18, 1 p.m., Hunterdon County Master Gardener Ruth Claus, 'Welcome Butterflies'

With thanks to Program Chair Noel Schulz, here is the fall 2018 Watnong Chapter Speaker list:

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'



Ray Waksmundzki discusses *Cyclamen* culture with Michele Gutierrez at the March meeting.



A view of the plants and flowers Ray Waksmundzki brought to the March meeting.

NEWS FROM NARGS

Watnong members may recall that for the past few Decembers our chapter has worked with Phase 2 of the NARGS Seed Exchange, packing seeds. For 2019 and 2020 we've been asked to handle the main distribution of seeds to members instead. We served as the seed distribution chapter several years ago, under the direction of Peggy Krementz, and all who participated found it a fun way to spend a winter afternoon.

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.

We would again be able to use the Jordan House at The Leonard J. Buck Garden. 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.

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.

OUR MARCH SPEAKER:

Marta McDowell,

All The Presidents' Gardens

By Hilary Clayton

Watnong member Marta McDowell presented a cheery, non-partisan review of the evolution of the gardens at the White House and their influence on American gardening overall, starting in the days before it was 'that white house'. John Adams and his wife Abigail were the first to live there, in 1800. At the time, Abigail complained about the lack of gardens, but didn't

live there long enough to remedy that, leaving in 1801. The next occupant, Thomas Jefferson, added Lombardy Poplars as street trees- it seemed a good idea at the time- and grew Pelargoniums, an exciting new South African import, in his office. Jefferson also did some garden planning, establishing the front as formal and the back more park- like.

Roughly a decade later, James Madison grew lilacs, roses and vegetables. His vegetable seeds were supplied by the Shakers' new venture: standardized paper seed packets of quality seed.

In 1814 the British burned all the federal buildings and the grounds were destroyed. When the President's residence was rebuilt, the stonework was kept, and painted white to cover the fire damage. From here it became known as 'The White House'.

Marta's selections of photos also gave some interesting insight. The very popular Andrew Jackson's wife died suddenly just before his inauguration. He brought a Southern Magnolia to plant beside the south portico in her memory. His portrait graces the front of a \$20 bill; her tree is the plant on the left on the back of the bill.

There's even been scandal in the gardens: The Manure Scandal occurred during the Lincoln Administration, in the early 1860's, when the gardener, Watts, arranged to pad the horticulture expenses to cover Mrs. Lincoln's debts. He was dismissed.

President Rutherford Hayes started

commemorative tree plantings in the late 1870's, and the Easter Egg Roll. Both traditions continue to this day. A fan of the temperance movement, he and his wife served a tour of the glasshouses instead of after dinner drinks.

By the late 1800's, during Grover Cleveland's terms, there were Rose, Violet, and Orchid greenhouses to produce all the cut flowers used on site. These were removed by Teddy Roosevelt, who needed more office space.

The Taft presidency brought automobiles and cherry blossoms. Over the years well-known landscape designers of the day were hired for various projects. President Wilson's first wife, Ellen, hired Beatrix Jones Farrand to install an Italianate garden; unfortunately Ellen became ill and died before it was installed, but the second Mrs. Wilson saw the project through to completion.

Sheep, which maintained the turf in the early years, returned to the grounds during World War I, to help reduce expenses. Victory Gardens were a sign of patriotism during World War II, and the White House had one too.

The Trumans needed to focus their attention to renovations of the house, which had fallen into disrepair. When the reconstruction finished in 1952, they installed an 'instant garden', setting two mature, very large boxwood and rolling out turf. President Dwight Eisenhower improved the turf with a putting green, but didn't like squirrels, so the task of

'trap and transport' was added to the gardeners' duties.

It was President John Kennedy, not the First Lady Jacqueline, who was motivated to improve the grounds, and hired Bunny Mellon to design the Rose Garden still in use today. Lady Bird Johnson oversaw its installation, and dedicated it to Jacqueline Kennedy.

First Lady Michelle Obama made some of the first changes to the grounds since the Kennedy Administration, installing a vegetable garden in the South Lawn to encourage healthy eating as part of her 'Let's Move' initiative. At last report, First Lady Melania Trump plans to continue growing vegetables on the grounds.

As a testament to the satisfaction of gardening at the White House, there have only been thirteen head gardeners since 1800, and Marta shared some information about them as well. She finished with a quote from Irv Williams, who served as Chief Horticulturist for 45 years, from the Kennedy Administration through George and Laura Bush: 'What's great about the job is that our trees, our plants, our shrubs, know nothing about politics.' As Marta added, whether one leans left or leans right, it's a beautiful place.

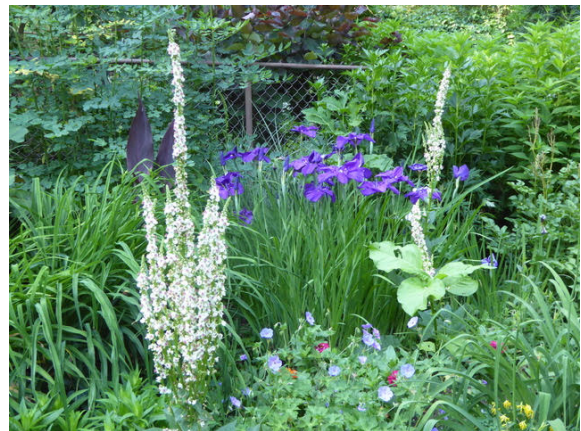
Timber Press publishes Marta's book, *All The Presidents' Gardens*. If you purchase through Amazon Smile you can chose the North American Rock Garden Society as your charity!

THEY GROW FOR ME: SELF- SOWERS IN MY GARDEN

By Sid Jones

I have had self-sowers in my garden for decades, but I began to deliberately introduce and place them after seeing the effective use of self-sowers in mixed borders at Great Dixter in 2002. Now I think of self-sowers as falling into two groups: those plants that I want in various mixed borders, and those that need more specialized growing conditions, which I just leave in place where they are happy.

My definition of self-sower is a desirable plant which may be annual, biennial or perennial and which seeds itself in my New Jersey garden. It may be short, medium or tall, but usually has a small footprint, so it takes up limited space. Sometimes I collect seeds to germinate under lights to insure that I have plants that mature earlier than self-sown ones.



Verbascum chaixii 'Album'; photo by Sid Jones

Self-sowers have many positive attributes. They can fill in gaps in the flowering sequence, as do foxgloves, they may be early spring contributors, such as Forget-Me-Nots, or they may be long and/or repeat bloomers, as are *Verbascum chaixii* 'Album'.

My preferred method for establishing a self-sower is to grow it from seed so that I can learn what the seedlings and young plants look like. The plants are then set in locations where they may do well in a border. In future years I can recognize the emerging seedlings and not weed them out! Alternatively plants can be purchased or acquired from friends. Remember that seeds need to be near the surface for good germination. If you add mulch or compost to your border in the fall or early spring, gently mix it into the top few inches to bring the seeds to the surface.

Once a self-sower is established in your border it is easy to regulate where they are and how many you have by judicious thinning, transplanting and removal. Over the years you will establish a seed bank of many, many short lived, floriferous plants that add variety, lengthen the season, and bring a unique presence to your garden.

GROUP 1: SELF -SOWERS FOR MIXED BORDERS

Ammi majus, Lace Flower +

Angelica gigas, Korean Angelica
Aquilegia vulgaris, Columbine
Atriplex hortensis 'Atropurpurea', Red Orach
Cleome 'White Queen' +
Corydalis ochroleuca, White Fumitory
Corydalis lutea, Yellow Fumitory
Digitalis purpurea, Foxglove
Dipsacus fullonum, Teasel
Erigeron annuus, Annual Fleabane,
Lobelia siphilitica, Blue Cardinal Flower *
Myosotis, Forget Me Not
Perilla frutescens v. *crispa* 'Purpurea', Red Shiso *
Persicaria orientalis, Kiss Me Over The Garden Gate
Rudbeckia hirta, Gloriosa Daisy or Black Eyed Susan
Thalictrum rochebrunianum, Lavender Mist Meadow Rue *
Verbascum chaixii 'Album', White Nettle Leaf Mullein
Verbena bonariensis, Verbena On A Stick
Viola odorata, Sweet Violet
Viola alba, White Violet

*plants can be large

+better started early indoors

GROUP 2: SELF -SOWERS FOR SHADE/SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Begonia grandis, Hardy Begonia
Corydalis solida, Fumewort
Crocus thomasianus, Tommies
Eranthis hyemalis, Winter Aconite
Lilium superbum, Turk's Cap Lily
Mertensia virginica, Virginia Bluebells,
Paeonia obovata, Obovate Peony
Primula japonica, Japanese Primrose

Scilla siberica, Siberian Squill
Trillium

OUT & ABOUT

The Somerset County Park Commission will be giving away native trees on Arbor Day at the Environmental Education Center and Colonial Park on Friday, April 27, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Species available for adoption will include *Cercis canadensis*, *Cornus amomum*, *Hamamelis virginiana*, *Juniperus virginiana*, *Lindera benzoin*, *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Prunus maritima*, *Quercus bicolor*, *Rhus aromatic*, *Salix discolor*, *Viburnum lentago*, and *Viburnum prunifolium*.

The 2018 Friends of the Frelinghuysen Plant sale will be held May 4 – 6, 2018. The weekend of the sale, exclusive shopping will be offered to members from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. on Friday, May 4th. The plant sale will be open to the public that weekend between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, with plant advisors on hand throughout to help with recommendations of what will work best in your garden. For more information, visit the plant sale website,

www.arboretumfriends.org/plantsale.

The Hay, Honey Farm at 130 Stevens Lane, Far Hills, New Jersey, will host an Open Day on Saturday, May 13, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. to benefit The Garden Conservancy. The nearby Stone House Garden will also be open. Admission is \$7 per garden. For directions and additional information visit www.gardenconservancy.org

WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

HYPERTUFA TROUGHS



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

**Deadline for inclusion in our Spring
Newsletter is May 25, 2018.**

Leonard J. Buck Garden Spring Plant Sale and Earth Day Celebration

April 21 & April 22, 2018

Enhance your garden with some spectacular new plant treasures, and help us celebrate Earth Day. Weekend highlights include a plant sale featuring many choice selections of perennials, ferns, alpines, woody plants and troughs, as well as garden lectures.



Saturday 10am-5pm and Sunday 12pm-5pm

Garden Lectures begin at 1 pm

Guided Garden Tours at 2 pm following lectures

This event is co-sponsored by the Watnong Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. Buck Garden staff and Rock Garden Society members will be on hand to advise visitors about plants and gardening.



SOMERSET COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

LEONARD J. BUCK GARDEN

11 LAYTON ROAD, FAR HILLS, NJ 07931

www.somersetcountyparks.org 908 722-1200, ext. 5621

www.facebook.com/LJBuckGarden



For individuals with hearing/speech impairments, use the NJ Relay Service @ 711. If you have individualized needs due to a disability, please call the Therapeutic Recreation Department at 908 526-5650 and we will be happy to arrange reasonable accommodations. Three weeks notice is required to ensure that appropriate accommodations can be provided.

2018 WATNONG CHAPTER OFFICERS

Chair	Please Consider	Your Name Here!	
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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Digital Projector	Michael Wilson	862-397-9339	miwilson@ramapo.edu
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Plant Sale Co-Chair	Jim Avens	908-234-2677x 22	javens@scparks.org
Plant Sale Co-Chair	Melissa Grossmann	908-604-8060	donmliss@msn.com
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**THE WATNONG CHAPTER
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY
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