



Growing Interests

Watnong Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society
✧ Volume XLIII ✧ Spring 2019 ✧ Number 3 ✧

Upcoming Programs

Annual Plant Sale April 27 & 28
The Leonard J. Buck Garden
11 Layton Road, Far Hills, NJ 07931

Saturday, April 27, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Free Lecture at 1 p.m.,
Dorothy Smullen presents
'Butterflies and Dragonflies'
Free Guided Garden Tour at 2 p.m.

Sunday, April 28, 12 noon – 5 p.m.
Free Lecture at 1 p.m.,
Rachel DeFlumeri presents
'Composting'
Free Guided Garden Tour at 2 p.m.

Members Only Field Trip is filled!
Saturday, May 11, 2019 8 a.m.
Please be prompt!

Members Only Picnic & Plant Swap
Saturday July 27, 2019
At The Hay, Honey Farm
130 Stevens Lane
Far Hills, New Jersey, 07931
Details on page 3.



Ray Waksmundzki brought a selection of beautiful blossoms to the meeting.

The Plant Sale is coming soon! Plants That I'm (Particularly) Excited About

By Melissa Grossmann,
Plant Sale Co-Chair

I always say about plants that you can have too many, but you can never have enough. Here are some of my favorites of those that were ordered for the sale.

The dark stems of *Amsonia tabernaemontana* 'Storm Cloud' make the blue flowers really stand out.

Anemone 'Elfin Swan' is of rock garden proportions, and has that long-blooming-hybrid thing going on.

Athyrium 'Godzilla': Don't worry, this massive painted fern will not eat anything.

Baptisia 'Pink Truffles' adds pink to the *Baptisia* palette.

Carex oshimensis 'Everillo': Imagine all the gorgeousness of Bowles' Golden Grass (*Carex elata* 'Aurea'), but this one's also evergreen.

Epimedium 'Domino' really is an improvement, being evergreen and extremely floriferous.

You can grow *Gentiana* 'True Blue' without extreme measures, and it flowers for many weeks.

Helianthus salicifolius 'Low Down' and *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* 'Little Henry': The big yellow daisies of late summer are too tall for some situations; these give you more design options.

Heucheras in a variety of colors. As with jelly beans or cupcakes, combining colors makes everything cuter.

Ligularia 'The Rocket': Plantings in shade can lack excitement in July, but if you plant these, you'll want to schedule your parties for when they're in bloom. For your meadow, we have some tall selections, including, but not limited to *Coreopsis tripteris* and *Dalea purpurea*.

Oenothera 'Lemon Sunset' will carry your sunny border through the hot months with style and verve.

Ratibida columnifera 'Red Midget' is one of those "what's that?!" plants, and now it's compact enough for your rock garden.

Silene virginica is uncommon among native plants because it is a red-flowered spring bloomer, and it is also a nectar source for ruby-throated hummingbirds.

There will also be loads of other carefully selected perennials, ferns, wildflowers, trough and rock garden plants, troughs, shrubs, and (fingers crossed) snazzy primroses. Come see us!

The Plant Sale still needs you!

Please print a copy of the plant sale flyer on page 9 and post it at your favorite local business, or on the window of your parked car.

Can you pot up and label some extra seedlings or divisions? **Donated plants may be dropped off at The Leonard J. Buck Garden Saturday, April 13 until Thursday, April 25, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.**

Would you volunteer your time? We still have the following shifts open:

Thursday, April 25, we need two people for set up.

Friday, April 26, we need one plant sitter from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday, April 27, we need plant sitters for all shifts (9 a.m. – noon, noon – 2:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

Saturday, April 27, we also need a cashier and/or plant adviser for both afternoon shifts.

We are set with volunteers for Sunday, April 28.

As a reminder, set up for the sale will begin on Thursday, April 25, at 9:30 a.m. at the Leonard J. Buck Garden. Volunteers will insert price labels into all of the pots and arrange the pots on tables. This process takes several hours. Lunch is provided.

'Plant sitter' volunteers will watch the sale tables on Friday, April 26, 10-12, 12-2 or 2-4 and inform visitors to the Buck Garden that the sale does not open until 10 a.m. on Saturday. On Saturday and Sunday plant sitters manage the holding area, where shoppers may temporarily leave their plants.

Saturday April 27 volunteers will serve as cashiers, plant advisors, and plant sitters. The shifts are 9:45 a.m. -12 p.m., 12 p.m. -2:30 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. -5 p.m.

Sunday April 28 the shifts are 12 p.m.-2:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. -5 p.m.

To volunteer, please contact Martha Podilchuk, plant sale volunteer coordinator, at marthpod@comcast.net or 908-507-6487.

NEWS FROM THE WATNONG CHAPTER

Save the dates!

4/27 & 28, 2019, Plant Sale at The Leonard J. Buck Garden

5/11/2019, Bus Trip to visit Edgewood Gardens in Exton, PA., and The Gardens at Mill Fleurs in Point Pleasant, PA.

Picnic and Plant Swap, Saturday, July 27, from Noon until 3 p.m. at The Hay, Honey Farm, 130 Stevens Lane, Far Hills, 07931. RSVP by July 20 to Hilary at hilaryh.clayton@gmail.com or 908-781-2521.

9/14/2019, Elizabeth Zanders, Connecticut & Berkshire Chapters NARGS, 'Hardy Northeast Rock Garden Plants'

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'

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.

We need hospitality volunteers for our September 14 meeting!

October 13 Lillie Dorchak and Shirley Rovinski

November 16 Michele Guitierrez and CarolAnn Baldowski

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

Our March Speaker: David Culp, 'Residential Meadow Planting' Summarized by Hilary Clayton

Our March speaker, David Culp, spoke of his experiences creating meadows and 'meadow-ettes' (one doesn't need extensive acreage to enjoy a meadow) at and near his home, Brandywine Cottage, in Downingtown,

Pennsylvania. He admitted that the meadows he designs are a 'thinly veiled' attempt to do away with lawns and to create habitat.



Program Chair Noel Schultz, left, with speaker David Culp

Meadows can be described as a planting in a single plane punctuated by taller accent plants. As meadow plantings became popular in the 1980's and '90's, they were mostly planted to species of midwestern tallgrass prairies, and so featured sweeps of tall plants. Since the east coast is by nature forest, meadows here have historically been pastures or forest glades. In keeping with that aesthetic, David designs with shorter plants, generally waist high and below.

Some of his favorite grasses are *Sesleria autumnalis*, Autumn Moor Grass,

Eragrostis spectabilis, Purple Love Grass, *Eragrostis trichodes*, Sand Love Grass, and the *Schizachyrium* cultivars 'Standing Ovation' and 'Blue Hills'. He also enjoys using *Calamagrostis brachytricha*, Korean Feather Reed Grass, which stays upright through February.

Some suggested accent plants are *Eryngium yuccafolium*, Button Snake-Root, and multiple species of *Pycnanthemum*, *Amsonia*, *Eupatorium*, *Liatris*, and *Monarda*.

This is a great time of year to start a meadow! Allow three years from planting for your vision to be realized. Once established, meadows are maintained by mowing twice each year to keep woody plants out.

The Canadian Hemlock, Provider of America's First Dwarf Conifers

By Frank Goodhart

Part 2, continued from the Late Winter Newsletter

The Canadian Hemlock has special significance to keen gardeners. It was formerly a major source of conifer cultivars in the United States and hundreds have been found and named. In the early twentieth century it was the most common dwarf conifer in the collector's garden. The first conifer cultivar of our native Eastern Hemlock to find notoriety is Sargent's Weeping Hemlock, which can now be seen at

several arboreta in the northeast including Arnold Arboretum, New York Botanical Garden, Planting Fields, Longwood Gardens, and Bayard Cutting Arboretum. These magnificent specimens are over 100 years old and well maintained. Other cultivars whether miniature, dwarf, or of intermediate growth rate offer textures and colors to the garden that are quite different from pines, spruces, and firs.

The first ACS Bulletin (VOL.1, Summer 1983, NO. 1) contained an article, *The Hemlock Arboretum at "Far Country"*, the first of a series of articles that were reprints from the Hemlock Arboretum Bulletin written by Charles Francis Jenkins. Jenkins was well known in the Philadelphia area as a member and leader of many charitable and educational organizations. He established the Hemlock Arboretum at his seven-and-a-half-acre residence, 'Far Country', in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. It was here that he planted a collection of Canadian hemlocks as well as other hemlock species and cultivars. Seventy-four bulletins were issued starting in 1932 and ending in 1951. This has become an important historical database and has continued to have a strong influence to keen conifer collectors over the years. Jenkins obtained hemlocks from nurserymen, horticulturalists, and collectors throughout the country and in 1946 the card catalog showed 211 accessions.

Jenkins was further interested in developing additional knowledge about hemlocks and advertised in the Hemlock Bulletin #19 (1937) for someone to perform his work. John Swartley applied for the job. He was a 1930 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a B. S degree in mathematics education. He soon found that teaching was not of interest to him and took a job at Morris Arboretum where he carried out various horticultural duties such as seed collection and propagation. Jenkins selected Swartley for the job and sponsored his education at Cornell. His M. S. thesis was *Canada Hemlock and its Variations*. Soon afterwards he enrolled at Ohio State University and obtained a Ph.D. degree in horticulture in 1942.

After the war he returned to the Philadelphia area where he lived and worked the rest of his life. Swartley explored nurseries, arboreta, and estates and collected many hemlock variations that were planted at the Hemlock Arboretum that he viewed as his laboratory. He was well known and respected by all the important and well-known plantsmen of the day whether they were the heads of arboreta, outstanding nurserymen, or hobbyist collectors.

Unfortunately, Swartley's thesis at Cornell was not published. Many horticulturalists in the U. S. as well as others throughout the world were disappointed and were hopeful that he

would write a book that summarized his findings over the years. However, he was struck by a disabling disease that prevented him from doing this. The lack of formalization of Swartley's hemlock information became more critical with each passing year. Finally, two editors were found that had the knowledge and skills to complete the book about hemlocks; one was a world-renowned writer about dwarf conifers, Humphrey Welch and the other was Dr. T. R. Dudley, a research botanist at the U.S. National Arboretum. The book, *The Cultivated Hemlocks*, was finally published in 1984.

This book remains the major reference source on hemlocks today. The first 62 pages contain botanic and other information on virtually all topics related to hemlocks. Following this there are monographs of cultivars with a description of each and information about its finding and origin. The cultivars are listed by groups such as pendulous, spreading, miniature, golden, etc. The collection of this data spanned a period from 1938 to the 1970's. Swartley travelled extensively collecting virtually every Canadian hemlock in existence at that time.

Many similarities exist between the various cultivars. This problem was recognized resulting in a classification into various groups such as spreading, weeping, white tipped, golden, dwarf, extremely dwarf, etc. This is helpful also for placing various cultivars into the

current ACS size category. He also found discrepancies and duplication of names; some of which still exist today. The latter part of the book describes the other species of hemlock both those native to the U. S. and Asia. Cultivars are also listed. The book ends with short chapters on propagation and pest and disease problems.

The Canadian hemlock is distinctive among other hemlocks since so many different forms were found and propagated. The tendency for it to produce atypical forms exceeds all other species in the *Tsuga* genus as well as many other ornamental conifer genera that are used in today's gardens. Early named cultivars were found as wild seedlings in the forest. Later nurserymen intentionally planted hemlock seeds and looked for unusual forms. Many new and different forms and growth rates were noted in these experiments resulting in the naming of some. It was concluded that the variations that were consistently found in Canadian hemlock were a peculiar genetic property. It may be that the mutant selections of it could have come from both seeds from the tree as well as from witches' brooms seedlings.

It appears that cultivars from witches' brooms of Canadian hemlock were during the later phase of cultivar selection. Swartley reports seeing many witches' brooms in the forests as well as in gardens. The monographs for the cultivars sometimes list the source as a

seedling or witches' broom, but the source of many are unknown.

Production of Canadian hemlock cultivars by some nurseries diminished starting about 25 years ago because of two insect and disease problems that were infecting the species. In the eastern United States cultivars were available from a number of small nurseries that no longer exist. Fortunately, many cultivars are now available from some west coast specialty nurseries. It appears that Canadian hemlock cultivars may be making a comeback in areas where the tree had been severely affected by several insect and disease problems.

To be concluded in our next newsletter

OUT AND ABOUT

'After The Fall- Nature's Fall Beauty Exhibit', the work of former Growing Interests Photographer Albert Martin, will be on display from March 10 through April 28 at JCC MetroWest, 760 Northfield Avenue, West Orange, NJ 07052.

A number of local gardens, including The Mountsier Garden in Nutley, Greenwood Gardens in Short Hills, and The Hay, Honey Farm in Far Hills, will host Open Days to benefit The Garden Conservancy on Saturday, April 27. Admission is \$10 per garden. Visit www.gardenconservancy.org/open-days for more details.

WATNONG CLASSIFIEDS

HYPERTUFA TROUGHS



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 Summer Newsletter is June 30, 2019.

**Leonard J. Buck Garden &
Watnong Chapter of North American Rock Garden Society**

2019 Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, April 27 10am-5pm

Sunday, April 28 12pm-5pm



Spring is finally here and there's not a better way to refresh and rejuvenate than to come to Buck Garden's annual plant sale for botanical treasures! Exquisite selections of perennials, ferns, alpines, woody plants including deer resistant and pollinator-friendly varieties. Handmade troughs will also be available to purchase.

Buck Garden staff and Rock Garden Society members will be on hand to advise visitors about plants and gardening.

- ◆ Free inspiring garden talks given each day at 1pm
- ◆ Free guided tours of Buck Garden each day at 2pm



Somerset County
Park Commission

SOMERSET COUNTY PARK COMMISSION LEONARD J. BUCK GARDEN

11 Layton Road, Far Hills, NJ 908 722-1200 Ext. 5621 www.somersetcountyparks.org

If you have individualized needs due to a disability, please call 908 526-5650 after you register for the program and we will be happy to arrange reasonable modifications. Three weeks notice is required to ensure that appropriate modifications can be provided.

2019 WATNONG CHAPTER OFFICERS

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**THE WATNONG CHAPTER
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY
c/o The Leonard J. Buck Garden
11 Layton Road
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