



# The Mason-Dixon LINE

Newsletter of the Mason Dixon Chapter,  
North American Rock Garden Society

January 2015

## Spring Visit to Stonecrop Planned with Rob Gimpel



*Rob Gimpel*

Stonecrop is a jewel of a public garden nestled in the Hudson Highlands above Cold Spring, New York. It is the former summer home of the late Francis Cabot, noted philanthropist, Plantsman, and founder of the Garden Conservancy. It has been open to the public since 1992 and has continued to grow and evolve since that time. Stonecrop has many of the features of a larger public garden, packed into a much smaller space. Approximately 12 cultivated acres include a conservatory, display and production greenhouses; systematic order beds, flower, woodland, water and gravel gardens, and of most interest to us, rock gardens galore. There are numerous raised alpine beds featuring conifers and larger specimens, a collection of 50 or more troughs, and an alpine house for growing the particularly difficult plants. My favorite part of the garden is a breathtaking rock ledge with pools, waterfalls, and a stone staircase. The ledge should be smothered with blooming alpines when we visit. I could write in greater detail about the garden, but it is better to come and experience it for your self. There is a self-guided tour available, but I will treat everyone to a guided tour with plenty of history, design concepts, and insider information. I'll be particularly proud to show off some of the personal projects I worked on while I was an intern.

I first visited the garden just to see the rock gardens while traveling for work. Within 6 months, I had quit my previous job (and career!) to become an intern at Stonecrop! The internship program is really a school of practical horticulture. Interns are housed, paid a stipend, and work and study at least 40 hours per week. Interns come from all walks of life, and all levels of experience, and range in age from teenagers to retirees. Each intern works in all parts of the gardens and greenhouses, learning basic horticultural practices, plant propagation, green-

house management and plant identification, as well as taking field trips, researching plants, and maintaining an ornamental vegetable plot. The work and study is intense; I would put my Stonecrop Certificate against any 2-year associates degree program.

The village of Cold Spring is located on the Hudson River, and provides numerous meal options from pub fare to fine dining, as well as 17 antique shops for finding treasures you didn't know you needed. There is a fine view of West Point on the opposite side of the river. For the nature buffs, Stonecrop is surrounded on three sides by Fahnstock state park, and there is excellent birding in Constitution Marsh, just south of the village. Other attractions in the immediate vicinity are Boscobel House and Gardens and the Russell Wright home of Manitoga. Further afield are a number of historic gardens and estates, including Franklin Roosevelt's Home in Hyde Park, NY, Innisfree garden in Millbrook NY, and Wave Hill in the Bronx. We may attempt to visit one or more of these sites as a group, depending on timing and interest.

Reasonable accommodations may be found at any number of hotels in Fishkill, NY, a 20-minute car ride away. There are also numerous B&Bs in the area, for those interested. The closest that I know of is The Bird & Bottle Inn in Garrison, NY. (I have never stayed there, but it comes highly recommended.) We will presumably be traveling by car, but Cold Spring is served by commuter rail, which can be accessed from our area via Amtrak to NYC, and I'm sure some car space could be found for anyone who chose to take the train.



*Alpines (from the Stonecrop website)*

For more information, visit the Stonecrop webpage at [www.stonecrop.org](http://www.stonecrop.org).

**It's Membership Renewal Time!**

Annual membership dues of \$10.00 are now due. Please mail your check to:

Jerry Hudgens  
3115 Woolsey Drive  
Churchville, MD 21028

Or pay in person by cash or check at the regular meeting. Your chapter dues support our programs and workshops.

**Thank you!**

**The Mason-Dixon Chapter Officers**

The New Year brings new opportunities for you to volunteer for official responsibilities for our chapter. The positions are unpaid, but deeply rewarding, and we will be glad to get you up and running. Please join our informal leadership team!

Chairman	Joan King <i>Acting Chair</i> jsking121@gmail.com
Membership	Jerry Hudgens gahudgens@comcast.net
Secretary	Open Please volunteer!
Treasurer	Bill Yonkers Billyonkers@gmail.com
Programs	Marika Sniscak marika123@verizon.net
Newsletter	Susan Stiles Susan.Stiles@zoominternet.net
Plant Sales	Susie Leslie seleslie111@verizon.net
Website	Open Please volunteer!

**Winter Garden Letter**

*from Rene Monaghan*

Winter is a great time to rejuvenate the mind and the garden. It is a time to re-evaluate your garden. Decide what will need to be divided and what to do with the divisions; plant elsewhere, give to a friend, sell at a plant sale. Make choices for the new additions to the garden and if you are one who starts with seed, begin the process of acquiring the supplies and ordering the seeds or transplants.

If you are thinking of changing the design and layout of your garden, then now is the time to sketch your thoughts. Here is a timeline to help you get ready for Spring:

- **January & early February:** Plan, Plan, Plan. If you start with seed or transplants then this is the time to research and order those seeds and gather your supplies.
- Continue to feed and water the birds. This is the hardest time of year for them!
- **Late February – Early March:** Cut down the grasses (if it was not done in late Fall), prune roses down to 8" to rejuvenate or to keep them shorter and bushier through the growing season.
- Lightly prune hydrangeas.
- Cut back Spirea to 4-6" to get a healthier, bushier plant.
- While you are doing these chores look for the sprouting of bulbs!
- **Late March— Early April:** Remove mulch and leaves from the crowns of your perennials. Remove any deadwood in shrubs, especially Hydrangea, Red Twig Dogwood and Yellow Twig Dogwood. Might even have some early weeds to pull!

*Rene Monaghan provides gardening services in the Harford and Baltimore County areas of Maryland. Please contact her for design, maintenance, installation, mulching, and more.*

**Garden Time Designs**



Design  
Consultation  
Specialty Gardens  
Installation available

Rene Monaghan  
443-910-3918  
rene@gardentimedesigns.com  
gardentimedesigns.com

## Building a Rock Garden by Nicholas Klise

*Editor's Note: Mason-Dixon chapter member Morris West passed away in October 2014. He was the spouse of Nicholas Klise. This article, printed in the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly in 1988, describes the construction of Nick and Morris's garden at their Red Lion, PA home. We are reprinting it here with his permission, and with our thanks.*  
— Susan Stiles

I'm not sure my experience with building a rock garden could ever be duplicated by anyone else because the circumstances under which it was built are unique and the lessons to be learned and the methods of execution can only be applicable to a very few; yet it makes an interesting story. First let me introduce the principal players: Morris West and Shorty Deller. Morris is my companion and partner of 25 years. He, like me, is an avid gardener and he, moreover, is a knowledgeable plantsman. Shorty is our friend and neighbor whose family business is that of an excavation contractor; he had access to and is a master operator of a yellow 280E Construction King Case backhoe that can move and position 2-ton stones. Every rock gardener should know such a person as Shorty. I'm an architectural illustrator, both an architect and artist who pictures architecture long before it is built and, many times, long before it is designed. It's a very esoteric profession to be sure but one that fits hand-in-glove with my current avocation: that of garden design. This is the story of the three of us and how we built a rock garden.

Morris and I met Shorty Deller 16 years ago soon after buying raw and undeveloped farm land in York County, Pennsylvania, as a weekend recreational place, a place to garden mainly, with no thought of living there. There was no house or other structure on the 8 acres. What it *did* have, however, was a rock-filled, 20-foot-wide creek winding its way through the middle of the property, so we owned both sides. Shorty was building a bachelor cabin on an adjoining property for the hunting and fishing that are his avocations. From the very beginning we seemed to be friends, although our backgrounds, our philosophies of life, our social *milieu* would suggest polarization. Shorty had never met anyone from the city; we had never met anyone from the country. We did realize, of course, right from the beginning, the advantage of friendly neighbors in uncharted lands, and we cultivated the friendship by demonstrating, whenever we could, the value of it. If he were to ask a favor, for example, we would fulfill it immediately, or we volunteered our services for chores around his place. He, correspondingly, was helpful with information, and if in the course of his "landscaping" he came upon unwanted plants he thought we might like, he would dig and deliver them to us. We have dozens of plants that are testaments to his generosity and thoughtfulness.

Shorty introduced his fiancée to us a few years later and showed her around our property. They married and Shorty built, again with his own hands, a " r e a l "

house near the bachelor cabin. We subsequently also built a house on our property. In 1981 we built a dry wall for the display of small-scale plants, or, I should say, Shorty built the dry wall. Using our unlimited supply of stone from the creek, he laid up a beautiful stone wall while we backfilled and planted a variety of choice plants in it. We also built a semi-bog, a lined reservoir of wet peat (the bog) over which we put a 12-inch layer of scree (the thing that makes it "semi"). In it we try to grow gentians.

In 1982 we built a flight of steps from 6 by 6 timbers and also a small frog pond at the top of the steps which surprises visitors with its unexpected appearance. This time Shorty used the backhoe for digging the foundations and pond as well as for the final grading. He delivered several very large rocks with it from his property and we collected hundreds more of a small size from our property. I arranged them in a naturalistic manner which gives the impression the pond was always a part of the natural landscape. This new landscaping gave Morris and me new opportunities to grow choice plants in an appropriate setting; we used a whole range of shrubs, herbaceous perennials and small-scale rock plants along with the aquatic plants we were now able to grow. I planted a yew backdrop for the tree peonies we moved from another location to the far side of the pond; they reflect and effectively double their show-stopping capability. But all of this was just a prologue to the building of *the* rock garden in 1985.

The site was a slope facing north adjacent to the parking area which is remote from the house. Years ago, when I designed the house, I made a decision to separate the house from the car so that the house retains the feeling of being romantically detached from civilization and seems always to be a holiday house deep in the woods of south central Pennsylvania. From the house one cannot see the parking area or the rock garden, which would please Reginald Farrer, who advised that a rock garden should never be anywhere near a house. From the parking area, the visitor walks past the rock garden, past the dry wall and semi-bog, up the timber steps, past the frog pond to the little redwood house with the big screened porch overlooking Beaver Creek. The site had two constraints: an electric pole on the east and a clump of birch on the west that I wanted to save. The electric pole will be removed this year when the electric service is put underground at a point before the parking area, but, nevertheless had to remain while the rock garden was being constructed. My plan was to excavate the slope between the electric pole and the birch in a large semi-circle and to construct a crescent-shaped dry wall that only a giant, or a Shorty Deller, could lay up with huge refrigerator-sized rocks. At the bottom of this mountain of rock would be a scree and, at the lowest point, a bog.

Since the bog would be directly adjacent to the parking area and at a level with it, I immediately imagined a worst case scenario: someone would drive into the rock garden and get bogged down. I needed something to differentiate the garden from the parking area. A heavy trough would suffice if

*(Continued on page 4)*

only one existed. We put an advertisement in the local paper to see if any farmer might have a big stone trough in the barnyard that he might be persuaded to sell. We got one call and looked at a derelict trough made of sheets of slate held together with cast iron fittings and threaded rods. The slate was broken and pieces were missing; it wouldn't do even if in good condition because it didn't seem substantial enough to confront a vehicle.

A third constraint that I had to be aware of was that of the height limitation of the lift of the front end loader scoop on the backhoe. Shorty could lift and drop a huge stone only within the absolute limits of his equipment and that established the top course of rock, and consequently, the depth of the bite we took out of the existing slope. The plan was conceived as a semi-circle between the electric pole and the birch tree and the elevation tapered from ground level (the parking area) at those points to a crest as high as Shorty could place rock with the backhoe. I drew the entire plan to scale showing imaginary boulders, hypothetical scree and bog and a 6-foot nonexistent trough. I showed the plan to Shorty and he was excited about working on such a large-scale project. But how would it be done? Where would the rock come from, not to mention a 6-foot trough?

That winter Morris and I, sometimes joined by Shorty, would drive the rural roads around us looking for rock. We not only had to locate potential monoliths but be mindful of the fact that they had to be accessible with the backhoe; many big, beautiful boulders had to be left to enjoy the sleep of eternity because there was no way we could get to them with the equipment. We discovered quite a few on the property of two neighboring landowners. One was a farmer named Snyder who some years ago sold Shorty the piece of land on which the Deller house was built; they were adjoining neighbors. Shorty told us that Farmer Snyder was always in need of fill "ground" since the unlucky farmer had inadvertently broken the seal on his pond and was attempting to remedy the situation by rebuilding the berm that formed one end of it. Shorty had assured us that Snyder would gladly exchange rocks for several truckloads of fill. So we were relieved to find out that we had a commodity that had value to farmers: the cut from the original excavation of the rock garden slope.

Shorty talked to Snyder and reported that the farmer would be happy to part with any stone on his property in exchange for the ground we were taking out. The second landowner happened to be Shorty's uncle. Mr. Douglas did not farm but rented his fields to someone else and the tenant had last year broken his plowshare on a huge subterranean monolith right in the middle of a cultivated field. Both the tenant and landowner would be happy to part with that obstacle; and furthermore, Shorty reported, Mr. Douglas would be happy to part with any other stone on the property if Shorty would dig out and remove with the backhoe the huge boulder.

Later while executing the rock garden, I was with Shorty on the backhoe when we went to unearth this rock. Shorty spent 2 hours trying to coax the thing to rouse from

its subterranean sleep, but it was a giant. At first, of course, we thought of transporting it back to the rock garden construction site in the front end bucket, but it was too large in every direction and we resigned ourselves after a struggle to drag it slowly to the edge of the field with the backhoe arm where we let it resume its sleep. We had to spend the time removing this rock because that was part of our agreement with Mr. Douglas.

Morris and I knew we wanted the large rock in the garden to be backfilled with a planting mix and not just the clay subsoil of the excavation. We wanted a true rock garden scree that would be appropriate to the nurture of a wide range of rock garden plants. We thought we would purchase the individual components—the sand, gravel, and compost—and mix them in a wheelbarrow by hand and place the mix as each large stone was placed. It seemed like a monumental but inevitable task that was part of building a rock garden.

One cold and rainy Sunday, Shorty invited us to go with him to the gravel supply company in York. There we stepped over the chain at the entry and inspected dozens of piles of various types of sand, gravel, and stone, picking up each to feel the quality. In a corner we discovered a mountain of black humus that looked and smelled like composted sewage sludge; we later found out that it was sold as a lawn topping—to golf greens keepers, mainly—and no one seemed to know how it was made. We were delighted to find out that the sand and gravel company sold compost since we could buy all our planting mix components from one source. We found the sand we wanted, big grained and clean, and the stone, from **V2** inch screening. The golf green humus would do just fine.

When Shorty inquired for us about the purchase of these components, the salesman asked if the sand, gravel, and humus could be delivered in one truck and if it mattered if they got a little mixed up. "Hell, no," Shorty responded, "we want them mixed." Well, if that was the case, the sand and gravel company could mix the three before it was loaded onto the truck to be delivered to the site, explained the salesman. What a relief! Now the part that we dreaded the most, because of the labor involved, was eliminated, and we felt confident that we would not be overwhelmed.

We ordered a mix of three parts sand, two parts gravel, and one part golf green topping and it was delivered to the site in a gigantic twelve-wheel dump truck. Even though it made a mini-mountain on the parking area, we decided it wasn't going to be enough, so we ordered another batch; but this time we got more gravel in the mix because the first load seemed too sandy. The black humus was barely visible but was there in sufficient quantity to make the scree stink. The gravel was crushed limestone, the sand was collected somewhere, and nobody knew where the black stuff came from, but when all was mixed together the pH turned out to be 8 which seemed acceptable.

The problem of the car-deflecting super trough remained until Shorty asked us if a pre-cast concrete storm water collection box would do. No sooner had we answered, "Of course," than Shorty took us, again, for a ride in his pick-up to Monarch Concrete Products Company in Dallastown, Pennsylvania. There they cast many different shapes of con-

*(Continued on page 5)*

crete pipe and elbows, boxes and tanks, manholes, well casings, and hundreds of shapes whose use was a mystery to me. We drove into a yard where these pre-cast shapes awaited orders and parked next to an open concrete box, 7 feet long, more than 2 feet wide, and 3 feet high. It had a steel angle frame cast into the top edge of the 5-inch-thick concrete sidewalls and several large holes in the sides; the steel angle provided a lip for some sort of lid and the holes received inflow and outflow pipe.

While we inspected this massive concrete box, a black Buick pulled in the yard, stopped quickly with the motor running and a man in a trench coat ran into the office; he didn't notice the three of us. "That's Mr. Wagman, the owner of this company," said Shorty, "I'll talk to him when he comes back out." We walked around the yard looking at all the shapes. The round ones would make nice underground bamboo planters. Mr. Wagman appeared. After first name greetings, Shorty said, "Let me introduce you to two friends of mine who want to buy a concrete box to use as a planter." We told him that the 7-foot one would be perfect except for the holes in the sides. He said to tell him what we wanted and he'd have it cast for us. Did we want the angle around the top? We told him that we would prefer it without the angle and that we needed several holes in the bottom. He assured us this was no problem. It could be cast the next week for delivery anytime after that. Later, when Shorty officially ordered it, we were told the cost: \$300.00 delivered in place for a 6-foot 9-inch by 2-foot 3-inch trough with walls 5 inches thick. It was 3 feet high, but the height didn't matter because I could sink it into the ground any distance. Morris found a big piece of vinyl we could use in a storage room of the small factory where he works as a microbiologist. This piece of vinyl (*vinyl*, not polyethylene) was almost perfect for the liner of the bog. It was a big piece—maybe 10 by 12 feet—and it was thick; its flaws were several holes in the middle. We cut patches from the corners and mended the film using aquarium sealer (silicone rubber) to cement the patches over the holes. We know for a fact that aquarium sealer works under water. For the substance of the bog, we bought six bales of peat moss. Now all was ready to begin.

When Shorty arrived the first morning I asked him to start by stripping the site of the couple of inches of topsoil. He objected, saying that the topsoil was so poor and thin that trying to remove it was a time-consuming and useless exercise. Was I working for the Environmental Protection Agency? I insisted that even if the topsoil were thin and poor it was a little bit better than the sub-soil and would, consequently, be worth the effort to set aside. I won. Shorty stripped the site and laughed at the quality of the soil we saved. Then he started to eat away at the slope and load the dump truck which was periodically driven three-quarters of a mile down the road to Mr. Snyder's farm, dumped, and brought back for more. Shorty decided that he would first excavate the big crescent-shaped bite from the slope and forget about excavating the bog hole until all the large rocks were delivered and placed with the backhoe because he needed to traverse the bog area with

equipment to place the rock. The next day that we worked on the project, Shorty hired for us a strong young man because we were now ready to start collecting and placing rock and we just didn't know how it would go and how much brute strength would be needed. Even though we had spent the winter scouting rock and had quite a few spotted, the magnitude of that expanse of raw clay at the site worried me that we would not find, we could not find, the amount of rock it would require to build this mock mountainside.

We started, logically, at the very beginning with the first rock, the biggest one we knew of close at hand; we didn't know any other course of action than to just plunk it down and backfill it with the scree planting mix. After the rock was dropped Shorty just drove over to the pile of backfill mix and scooped up a load, drove back to the rock and dropped the load behind it. The strong young man shoveled it into all the pockets under and around the stone where it did not fall on its own while Shorty went to fetch another rock on the backhoe. Morris and I made sure that the rock was seated and backfilled properly. Shorty made sure with all of the rock that it tilted backwards into the earth so that water would run *into* the structure. There would be no justification for the placement of the first rock—it was just kind of dropped—but with the second one, and continuing until the last one was placed, the new rock had to be evaluated in relation to the rock that had already been placed, and so, inadvertently, the first rock established a pattern by its disposition and strata as did the cumulative structure of rock. I became aware of the fact that it would be advantageous for me to go with Shorty on the backhoe when he pulled the rock from the earth because I could evaluate the nature of it, see it from every angle, study the strata, or, in effect, get to "know" the rock before I had to make a decision about its placement. Morris's and Shorty's input was weighed with consideration, of course, but everyone agreed that, as the official "designer," it was I who would have to take final responsibility. Morris thought it should go this way; Shorty thought it should go that way; and the young man leaning on the shovel thought it should go yet another way. It was a committee meeting for each rock. It was slow—very slow—but we didn't know how to do it any faster.

None of us had built a mountain before. As we approached the top I realized that there now existed a mountain that the cartographers didn't know about and would need a name for future maps; I named it Mt. Deller. The backfill mix was an ugly gray color that did not blend with the beautiful rock we had scavenged from the local area. I wanted a topping of brown creek gravel which would blend with the large rock. Shorty drove the backhoe down to our creek and all of us shoveled sand and gravel into the front end scoop; he drove back to Mt. Deller and we scattered the creek gravel all over the surface. I brushed the excess off with an old broom. One last detail had to be attended to before we went on to the next step. The gigantic dry wall laid up more vertically than we thought it would and there was a gap at the summit between the stonework and grade. The cut Shorty made in the hillside angled more than the rock work stacked up, resulting in this chasm. We filled it with backfill mix, but the grade at the top still needed to be pulled

(Continued on page 6)

forward to make the transition at the top from rock to grade seem natural. Shorty couldn't reach it with the backhoe and so we had to move several cubic yards of soil by hand which turned out to be the most physically exhausting job of the whole project. Later, when Morris was planting tiny baby plants in the mountainside, I repaired all the scarred areas above and around the rock garden, but outside of it, with woodchips over thick newspaper which is our typical non-rock-garden mulch. The

1-inch sections of newspaper are laid flat, like shingles, and covered with woodchips or shredded bark. Now we were ready to make a scree and a bog. The scree was easy because it was nothing more than the backfill mix piled at the base of the rock face as it would be in a mountain environment. We studded it with relatively small rocks (the size of microwave ovens) and mulched it with a topping of sand and gravel from Beaver Creek. The bog was more complicated. For one thing our custom trough was one side of the bog and *that* had to be delivered and placed. Shorty made all the arrangements again and even told the concrete form company the *hour* he wanted it delivered. Since our custom trough was 3 feet in height, Shorty excavated the bottom of the hole for the bog and trough a little more than 2 feet so that the trough would be out of the ground a foot. He put some backfill mix in the bottom of the hole to get a smooth, flat, horizontal surface for the massive concrete form to sit on and as soon as he was finished smoothing out the gravel foundation, the trough arrived—at the appointed hour—on a big truck equipped with an electronically controlled crane. The driver held an instruction panel in one hand that controlled the movements of the crane. In a moment the massive thing (which looked something like a burial vault) was hoisted into the air, swung over the excavation and dropped exactly into position on the prepared foundation. It took just a few moments to place this piece of concrete that weighed at least 2 tons. Having two thirds of it buried with only a 12-inch height visible made it look much more like a traditional trough even though it was an intrusive and incompatible new concrete color. Later I colored the concrete trough by drizzling oily black and brown paint on it and although it might look suspicious at close range, to the casual eye at a moderate distance, it is quite convincingly stone. As the plants grow over the edge, of course, the effect will soften and as time marches on, the prosaic concrete will acquire a dignity only age can bestow. We shaped the bog excavation by hand and got it somewhat smooth before putting down a cushion of newspaper as a precaution against a stone

in the subsoil puncturing the liner while we were filling the bog. Morris decided to use a black polyethylene film in addition to the vinyl. Why not? It couldn't hurt. Morris stood in the middle with bare feet and arranged more newspaper over the two layers of film. On this newspaper cushion he placed several large rocks to consume space because we foresaw a big problem. We were fast realizing that we did not have enough peat to fill this 7- by 9-foot bowl that was 2 feet deep. Six bales of peat moss would not even fill

a third of the volume required. We started to fill with a water/peat slurry; that is, we put the dry peat in while the water was being let in with a hose. The first few bales I wet by letting the hose slowly introduce water into the polyethylene-wrapped bale through a small puncture. It sounds like a good idea but has one disadvantage: once a bale of peat moss is saturated with water it is immobile, weighing almost as much as a rock that size. Should we run somewhere and buy more peat moss? What to do? Again, Shorty Deller came to our rescue. He reminded us that Farmer Snyder had kept a goat for years in a remote barn that was now a part of his farm but formerly had been an independent homestead. The barn stood solitary not far from our place and I had passed it many times; as a matter of fact, I had photographed it many times at various seasons and wondered what the house had looked like and wondered how and why it had vanished. I remembered the goat; I used to see him looking at me from the barn when I passed and even took several photographs of him. The goat did not live there anymore but, Shorty informed me, what *was* there was several years' accumulation of sawdust that had served as bedding for the goat. This sawdust was mixed with manure and had been composting for several years. Shorty asked Snyder if we could have just a few scoops of the stuff and since we had just plied him with many truckloads of fill, he was very accommodating. Shorty drove the backhoe over to the goat barn and we collected more than enough to fill the bog to the brim. We continued to run the hose into the lined basin and created, at first, something that looked like chocolate soup. We wondered if it wasn't a mistake, but by the next day the liquid mud had coalesced into a homogeneous mass that looked and felt like a bog. We trimmed the plastic liners and hid the edges with rock. We were almost finished with the construction. The last step was the reworking of the edge of the parking area and the laying up of stone around the existing birch tree. Shorty again used the backhoe to place the rocks, which at the lower courses were the size of garbage cans and which diminished in size to that of footballs around the base of the tree. I wanted the rock work to look very un-constructed, not like a laid-up wall, but rather like a farmer would pile rocks at the edge of a field, and I wanted it to look as if the birch had seeded itself in this pile of rock about 15 years ago. We backfilled this pile of rock with our backfill mix and it too is planted with a wide range of small-scale plants. Morris planted the entire rock garden with hundreds of plants. I wanted a weeping hemlock for the top and we procured a choice one from Jim Cross when we visited his place on the tip of Long Island. We got some very admirable slow junipers which are inching their way around the edges and there are a few other rare small shrubs including dwarf cotoneaster, spiraea, and lonicera, but the premier display is that of small rock plants. It is a motley collection from the four corners of the earth and only some are really alpine but all are small and unusual. We've been putting in more bulbs each year because they do so well here—especially small tulips. The plants display themselves well because every aspect of the rock garden is sloped up for the viewer to see easily from the parking area. Since the slope faces north, snow cover is maintained to the maximum. The rock garden has been a constant source

(Continued on page 7)

June 20, Saturday – Norrisville Pavilion

Annual plant sale starts at 10am. Those bringing plants please arrive by 9:30. Following the plant sale will be a trough planting workshop. Bring your own trough; planting medium will be provided. Use plants purchased at the plant sale or from home. A limited number of trough plants, mostly conifers and evergreens, will be available at a nominal charge. Fee \$20. Advance registration required.

July 18, Saturday – Jarrettsville, MD

12 noon, our hosts are Susan Stiles and Joe Donovan. Bring a dish to share.

August -- no programSeptember 19, Saturday – Norrisville Pavilion

We will have our plant sale as usual. Sale starts at 10am, those bringing plants please arrive by 9:30.

October 17, Saturday – Norrisville Library TBANovember 21, Saturday – Norrisville Library TBADecember Seed packing workshop, TBA.

## Building a Rock Garden by Nicholas Klise (continued)

*(Continued from page 6)*

of pleasure and delight to Morris and me. Most plants have grown better than expected and the bog has been phenomenal. Little sundews generated spontaneously; we grow pitcher plants and *Andromeda polifolia* to perfection; bog primulas are happy there; and the sphagnum moss that Siskiyou Nursery uses as packing is patted into place and regenerates to form a lush ground cover. Occasionally the prime growing conditions of the rock garden and bog are too much of a good thing for the plants, with the result that they grow too large, but that can hardly be considered a complaint. We have something in bloom from mid-March to mid-December with most of the big splashes of color

coming in May and June. I feel very fortunate that fate has offered me the opportunity to design and build a large rock garden from scratch; it has been deeply gratifying. Morris feels very lucky to have such a place to garden. We collectively feel very fortunate to have Shorty Deller as our friend. The rock garden would never have come to be without him because even though Morris might want a rock garden and I might have the urge to design one, it never would have, or could have, been implemented without Shorty Deller, a rock gardener's dream come true—a sympathetic man with a backhoe.



*Morris West and Nicholas Klise married in their garden, spring, 2014.*



## 2014 Calendar of Events and Meetings

We meet at the Norrisville, MD branch of the Harford County Public Library, located at 5310 Norrisville Road (MD Rt. 23) in Norrisville/White Hall, MD 21161. The meeting room is open at noon for our lunch social. Bring your lunch! The meeting begins at 1:00 PM.

In the event of inclement weather, Marika will notify members by email by 10:00 AM on the day of the meeting if the meeting is canceled. If you do not have email, and are not sure if the meeting is canceled, please call Marika at 410-461-1923 before 10AM.

### January 17, Saturday – Norrisville Library

Don LaFond will present a program on his rock garden in Michigan. Don's plant additions include daphnes, irises and dwarf conifers. The garden will be featured during the NARGS annual meeting in May 2015.

**NOTE: The meeting room in Norrisville will be available at 1pm instead of noon. The social will be 1pm to 1:30pm and the talk begins at 1:30pm.**

### February 21, Saturday – Norrisville Library

Member's meeting

Bring pictures and slides to share and books to sell. Show us which tools, gizmos, and techniques you use in your garden.

### March 21, Saturday – Norrisville Library

Jacqueline Doyle of Doyle Farms Nursery (now closed) will present a talk on Maryland native plants with an emphasis on woodland plants at Shenks Ferry.

### April 11, Saturday – Highland, MD

Visit to the garden of Dick and Freddi Hammerschlag, members of Potomac Chapter NARGS

### April 25, Saturday – Alpine Plant Sale at Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Spring, NY

The plant sale starts at 9am. Rob Gimpel, a member of our chapter and a former intern at Stonecrop will lead a guided tour of the gardens after the plant sale.

### May 7-10 – Annual Meeting of NARGS in Ann Arbor, Michigan

### June 20, Saturday – Norrisville Pavilion

## The Mason-Dixon LINE

RETURN UNDELIVERED COPIES TO:

Jerry Hudgens, Membership Chair  
3115 Woolsey Drive  
Churchville, MD 21028

Yearly dues for the Mason-Dixon Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) are \$10 (single or joint at same address). Make checks payable to M-DC/NARGS. Mail to Jerry Hudgens at above address. Please contact Jerry for more information. Phone: 410-826-2469  
Email: gahudgens@comcast.net.

Susan Stiles, Newsletter Editor  
3716 Rush Road  
Jarrettsville, MD 21084  
Phone: 410-692-0293  
Email: Susan.Stiles@zoominternet.net

Newsletter is published 4 times a year and lists all events, plant sales, and field trips. Meetings are held at the Norrisville, MD Library, just south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Mailing Label Goes Here