



*Uvularia perfoliata*

# CURIOS GARDENERS

## the Newsletter of the New England Chapter of NARGS

### April 2016

## April 30, 2016 Meeting Tower Hill Botanic Gardens

Because our meeting coincides in both time and space with the annual meeting of the New England chapter of the American Primrose Society, we can all look forward to a delightfully full day on April 30th, one replete with plant talks, plant viewing, and plant acquisition. Our Chapter schedule follows; below it you will find suggestions for other activities that are part of the Primrose Society meeting and are open to the public.

Note: NARGS members will be admitted free to Tower Hill on April 30. Please identify yourself at the admissions booth. Also, Tower Hill asks that you preregister by phone or on line for Jody's talk, so they know how many people will attend (there is no charge for this): Phone: (508) 869-6111, ext 124

On line: <https://towerhillbg.thankyou4caring.org/pages/event-registration-form---between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place>

**Morning Session 11:00 a.m.:** Jody Payne, speaker (in Auditorium)

**Lunch 12:00-12:45 p.m.** – BYO. You may sit in the Southeast Link, where the auction will be held

**Afternoon Session 12:45 p.m.:** Rare Plant Auction (in Southeast Link)

Jody Payne – 11:00 a.m. in Auditorium

***Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Building & Running  
the Rock & Native Plant Gardens at the  
New York Botanical Garden***

From 2006 through 2012, Jody Payne worked at The New York Botanical Garden, first as Curator, and then as Director, of the Rock Garden and the Native Plant Garden. The latter was developed and installed during her tenure, and has been widely praised for showcasing the garden uses of the beautiful and diverse plants native to northeastern North America. In order to accomplish this, Jody had to understand the plants and their needs, build the collections, oversee design and construction, and work with gardeners, volunteers, and students. Jody will talk about “doing it all at the NYBG.”

Jody Payne’s long career has taken her from graphic designer (2005-2012) through gardening (2001-2004) to horticultural administration (2005-2012). Now retired (sort of) and equipped with a brand new studio, she paints and with her husband, owns and runs The Lodge at Camden Hills in Camden Maine.



The Native Plant Garden  
at the New York Botanical Garden in Spring

## Rare Plant Auction – 12:45 p.m. in Southeast Link (the room beyond the Limonaia)

The auction is a major source of funds for paying speakers' fees. Please make it a point to contribute generously, as well as bid early and often. If you don't have "rare," "nice" is always welcome! - there will be takers. The more plants we have, the more fun we have, and the more money we make. It's that simple.

Please deliver your plant donations between 10 -10:45 a.m. to the Southeast Link so that we can get everything set up in advance. If you're only bringing one or two plants, carry them in through the main entrance and thence to the Southeast Link. If you have larger numbers, you may deliver them to the loading dock on the west side of the building (facing the reservoir), south of the terrace (see photo). We will have a volunteer there to receive your donations and take them to the auction venue. Please DO NOT PARK at the loading dock; just unload and leave.



west side loading dock

You will be able to eat your lunch (BYO) in the Southeast Link between 12-12:45 p.m. The Chapter is not allowed to provide beverages, but you may purchase tea and coffee in the main lobby. We will start the auction at 12:45 p.m. in the hopes of being done before Ian Christie speaks at 2 p.m. (see below).

We need 2 volunteers to help set the room up for the auction (lay plastic sheeting on the tables and arrange the plants) and to move donations from the loading dock to the auction venue. You will have flatbed carts and an elevator to facilitate the latter. If you can do this, please e-mail Ellen Hornig ASAP at <[hornig@oswego.edu](mailto:hornig@oswego.edu)>.

**Thanks again,  
Ellen**

### Other Events on 4/30/16 at Tower Hill

10 a.m.-2 p.m., 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.: Plant sales (primroses and more)

10 a.m. onward: view the judged Primula exhibition

2-3:30 p.m.: Ian Christie talk (Christie's Nursery, Kirriemuir, Scotland)

***From Early Beginnings*** (in Auditorium)

Remainder of day: enjoy Tower Hill, revisit plant sales and Primula exhibition

## Calendar

**May 28, 2016 Arnold Arboretum and Mount Auburn Cemetery**

**9:45 a.m.** meet at Hunnewell Visitor Center Parking on the Arborway

**Ellen Weinberg, guide: *A Day in the Boston Area: The Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, and Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge***

First stop Bonsai display. Bring your own sandwiches for lunch somewhere along the way. A map and a full schedule for the day's outing will be provided in the May issue of Curious Gardeners. You can join the group any time your schedule and logistics permit.

## The Honey Bees are Back

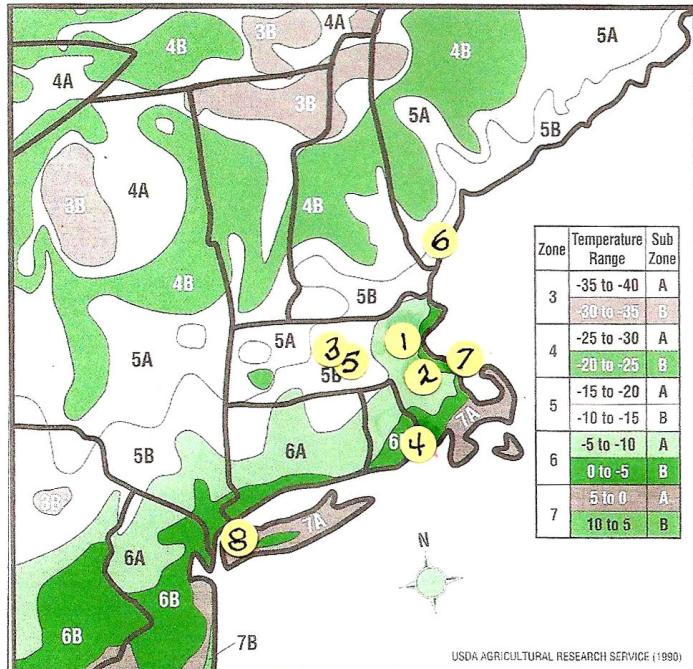
Did you notice in January's warm spell when chrysanthus crocuses were popping up that there were honey bees all over the blossoms gathering nectar and pollen? It is a big change from the last two years when I saw hardly any honey bees at all.

Coincidentally, the Boston Flower and Garden Show sponsored a session entitled, "Urban Beekeeping," and I overheard the speaker, Noah Wilson-Rich, founder of the Best Bees Co. suggest that, indeed, Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) appears to be over. Fewer and fewer owners are reporting that their hives have collapsed over the winter. What I hadn't understood about the disease was a proper definition of the hive population loss. It isn't that the hives were full of dead bees when they are opened in the spring but that there were no worker bees in the hives - only a "lonely" queen. The worker bees had simply vanished, giving rise to theories that something is interfering with the bees' ability to find their way back to the hive. In the last two years the situation seems to have improved. When hives were opened after the 2014 and 2015 winters they held a certain number of live worker bees and a quantity of dead bees. The hives were not "empty." Wilson-Rich published an article in the New York Times, "Are Bees Back Up on their Knees," on September 24, 2014 in which he summarizes some recent findings that note while the bees are faring better there is still no conclusive evidence to explain the causes of CCD bee troubles. He emphasizes that efforts to investigate the disease shouldn't stop just because of this recent improvement. We need better answers and science-based remedies because so much of the pollination of our food plants is dependant on bees and their allies.

Department of Agriculture conferences have identified at least three factors that may contribute to bee loss: diseases, chemicals (i.e., pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides) and habitat loss. For those of us with suburban gardens, even though our arena is small we can contribute in a positive way by being judicious about using systemic poisons, avoiding the lawn poisons, and being sure to plant more shrubs and plants that provide food for bees. For work being done on a macro scale about CCD, the "Report on the National Stakeholders Conference on Honey Bee Health," is an interesting discussion about the different approaches to investigating bee health and their CCD related decline. See: <http://www.usda.gov/documents/ReportHoneyBeeHealth.pdf>

## Snow Drop Survey Records

1. Jim Jones, Lexington, MA Feb. 6  
*G. elwesii* 2 months earlier than 2015
2. Ernie Flippo, Abington, MA in bloom about Jan. 28 with *C. tomasinianus*
3. Helen du Toit, Sudbury, MA *Galanthus* in bloom about Feb. 5
4. Diane Huling, Greenwich, RI Feb. 20 not up yet too cold next to the ocean
5. Marilyn Beaven, Sudbury, MA Mar. 20
6. Annie Hill, Portland, ME Feb. 26
7. Susan Anthony, Situate, MA about Mar. 5
8. Steve Whitesell, Flushing, NY *G. elwesii* in bloom on Dec. 15th, 2015 almost two weeks ahead of the first bloom noticed the previous year on Dec. 28.2014, which itself was weeks early.



In mid January we were enjoying rather warm weather in Metro-West Boston when we first considered the idea of a snowdrop survey. The earliest respondent was Jim Jones (Lexington, MA) who had *G. elwesii* buds up about Jan. 20 and first blooms by Feb. 3. But he might have been preceded by Ernie Flippo (Abington, MA) whose emerging *Galanthus* as well as *C. tomasinianus* were up by mid January both of which came into bloom by Jan. 28. Helen du Toit (Sudbury, MA) had some snowdrops blooming in a sheltered spot on Feb. 5. But winter was not to be denied. The traditional eastern Massachusetts February blizzard roared in on Feb. 6 and left a blanket covering all the early bulbs. The snow stayed through Feb. 19 when 56° weather encouraged melting. Diane Huling reported that her *Galanthus* in Greenwich, RI were not up even by Feb. 20. She said, “they are never early because of the cold winds coming off the nearby ocean.” Susan Anthony (Scituate, MA) who also lives close by the ocean saw her *Galanthus* up about Mar. 5. It was only by Mar. 20 that my snow drops bloomed in Sudbury, MA. Helen du Toit, just a few miles north, has clearly chosen a sunnier spot for her bulbs. In fact, my Sudbury results were later than those of Annie Hill (Portland, ME) who reported her bulbs in bloom on Feb. 26!



Snowdrops Hill garden Portland ME days and even to -3° on Feb. 13 and 14. But Sudbury has its own special eco-system in a pocket west of Route 128, north of the turnpike and east of Route 495.  
**Marilyn Beaven**



Sudbury MA Feb 8, 2016

Just to make us envious, Steve Whitesell, from the NARGS-Manhattan Chapter, saw our survey request and sent in his outlier data. His garden in Flushing, NY had *G. elwesii* in bloom on Dec. 15, 2015. And this was almost two weeks ahead of the first bloom noticed the previous year on Dec. 28, 2014. What we can suggest judging from our un-scientific sampling is that here in New England it is getting warmer earlier. But more threatening to gardeners the weather is also getting more erratic. How will some of our plants stand these radical changes in temperature? In Sudbury I recorded temperature variations from a record high of 60° on Feb. 1 to a change on the Feb. 8 when it plunged to the 20s for eleven

## FYI

Ellen Hornig will be bringing the chapter's allotment of surplus seed from the NARGS seed exchange to the April meeting. These will be available during lunch and the auction

**New England Unit of the Herb Society of America (NEUHSA)** will hold its Annual Plant Sale at the **Gardener's Fair** at Elm Bank in Wellesley, MA, on May 14, 2016  
at 9:00 a.m..- Fabulous herbs and other plants will be available to purchase. We will also host tours in our Teaching Herb Garden and have Children's Gardening Activities

### **Herb, Knot, and Cottage Gardens**

Please come to the NEUHSA Program On April 26, 2016 with Kelly Orzel of Bowery Beach Farm, Cape Elizabeth, Maine 10:00 a.m. in the Putnam Building, Elm Bank, Wellesley, MA.  
non-members \$10.00

Kelly Orzel is a horticulturist, Master Gardener and grower of green things. When she began working at a local nursery at 15, she fell in love with plants and dirt. Now with more than 20 years of experience and a MS degree in Horticulture, Kelly's affection for plants and flowers has manifested itself with the opening of Bowery Beach Farm in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. As a sustainable, organic farmer she grows and sells scented geraniums, culinary herbs and fresh cut dahlias among other things.

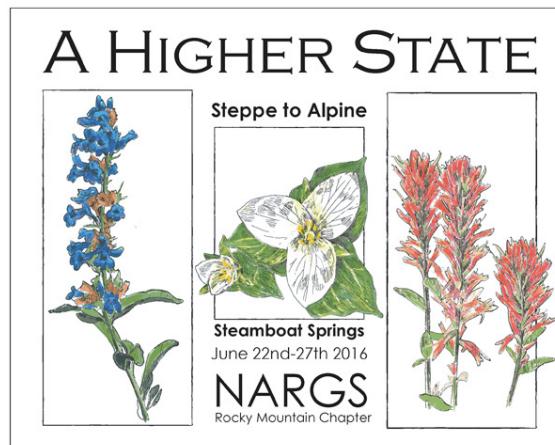
### **NARGS-New England Chapter Membership and Dues**

**Membership** in NARGS-NE is \$10.00 a year payable January 1 to Ernie Flippo, 264 Wales St., Abington, MA 02351. Payment may also be made in person at our meetings.

**Local Chapters:** –There are thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Chapter events include lectures, an on-line Newsletter, garden visits, field trips, demonstrations, and plant sales. These friendly gatherings provide a wealth of information; offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners in your region. Our Chapter meets 6 times a year, February, March, April, September, October and November, and organizes garden tours in May and June.

**National Organization:** We encourage you to join the national NARGS organization. [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org) Dues are \$40.00 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS national also conducts winter study weekends and holds their Annual Meeting in interesting places.

**Make your plans for this year's Annual Meeting now**



## **Directions to Tower Hill Botanic Gardens 11 French Drive, Boylston, MA**

*from Boston:* Find your most direct route to Route 495 and its intersection with Route 290. On Route 495 that is Exit 25B for Route 290 west. Once on Route 290 W, take Exit 24, Church Street, Northborough/Boylston. Follow to Boylston 3 miles. Entrance to Tower Hill is on right with a dark red sign.

### ***Chapter Officers for 2015***

**Chair:** Ellen Hornig: [hornig@oswego.edu](mailto:hornig@oswego.edu)

**Vice-Chair:** Ellen Weinberg: [weinbergellen@gmail.com](mailto:weinbergellen@gmail.com)

**Past Co-Chairs:** Rachel Ross: [h.rachel.ross@comcast.net](mailto:h.rachel.ross@comcast.net)

Helen du Toit: [NJGarden@aol.com](mailto:NJGarden@aol.com)

**Secretary:** Rosemary Monahan: [rosemonahan@comcast.net](mailto:rosemonahan@comcast.net)

**Treasurer:** Ernie Flippo: [fortknox4rocks@gmail.com](mailto:fortknox4rocks@gmail.com)

**Editor:** Marilyn Beaven: [mmbeaven@comcast.net](mailto:mmbeaven@comcast.net)

The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is published 3-4 times a year, January, March, June, and September as well as additional notices when needed. ed.



Photo credit: Ivo M. Vermeulen

The summer rock garden at the New York Botanical Garden features lush, shade-loving ferns and rare perennials line the stream and cascade. Beside the path troughs filled with dwarf plants invite visitors to inspect their contents at close range. Sun baked sand and scree beds are filled fragrant lavender, spikes of colorful beardtongue, and hardy succulents.