



Winter robin and Ilex verticillata
photo M. Mattus

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society February 2014

-2014 Calendar- Saturday Programs this Spring

**February 22, 2014 - Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

10:30 a.m. Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies and set up.
11:00 a.m. *Peggy Taylor's slides: Alpine gardens and Plants of Switzerland*
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own) and check out the plants for show & tell.
1:00 p.m. *Dee and Bob Stewart* – Presentation: growing *Ramonda* and *Haberlea*

**March 29, 2014 - Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

10:30 a.m. Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies and set up.
11:00 a.m. *Ed Bowen – The Unusual*
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own) and check out the plants on show & tell.
1:00 p.m. *Ed Bowen* –show and tell plants from his nursery.

**April 26, 2014 Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

10:30 a.m. Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies and set up.
11:00 a.m. **Mark Richardson, Horticulture Director, GITW**
The Trillium Collection, & Sustainable Horticulture.
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own)
1:00 p.m. **Rare Plant Auction.** Even if you don't have plants to donate, please come ready to buy.

May 31, 2014 - Garden tours

11:30 a.m. *Gardens to visit: Ellen Hornig, Shrewsbury, MA and John Trexler, West Boylston, MA*

Notes from the Co-chair

Other Views: New York City

I have just returned from a visit to New York City and while there I walked along the High Line. The original High Line was the elevated section of the New York Central Railroad which ran down the west side of Manhattan. It opened in 1934 to service warehouses, meat packers and factories and did so until the 1980's. It lay abandoned for 20 years and during that time drought tolerant trees, shrubs and grasses grew in the rail bed. In 1999 a group of residents mobilized themselves when New York City began to talk about demolishing the High Line. The activists were very successful and in 2009 the first section of the High Line was opened as a City Park. Today one mile of the old railway has been converted into an aerial greenway with over 200 different trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses growing on it. As I walked I thought about Nate's presentation to us on Winter Gardens and how important structure and profiles are during the winter. The structure of the plantings effectively builds on the angular structure of the overhead railroad while the rails themselves are used to define the boundaries of the planting area and the walkway. Even the pattern of the wooden railway ties was creatively used. In January, it is the structure which dominates the park and only the Hamamelis was in bloom. Other trees and shrubs above the hustle and bustle of the streets below were hydrangeas, ilex, junipers, magnolias, pinus, rhododendrons, rhus, betula and viburnums. It was a wonderful walk for a winter's day and I can only imagine how spectacular it is during the growing season. The number of people out walking was a testament to its success.

The calendar for this year is included in this newsletter and I do hope you will be able to attend the meetings as it's 'members who make a meeting'.

Best wishes for the New Year.

Rachel Ross



High Line abandoned tracks



High Line route under angular cantilever



High Line path inserted between rails

High Line photos: Rachel Ross

Notes from the Tandem

Other Views: Kentish Town, London

One of the things I love about spending Christmas in London with my daughter and her family is that I can walk around the area and see flowers blooming outside. She lives in Kentish Town, near the Dartmouth Park area, just south of Hampstead Heath, which is, of course, another great place for a walk. But back to the flowers. Here in Sudbury if it's warm enough to walk outside, there is nary a flower to be seen, whereas in London there were still roses in bloom, winter jasmine, mahonias, and blooming viburnums, including one in my daughter's garden. Many of the houses there have low walls out front, so that one can look into

the gardens and see all the exciting shrubs and plants in them. My walks involve much stopping, staring and drooling! Also very popular for window boxes were miniature cyclamen, which are so colorful and cheerful. In addition there were still masses of holly berries on the huge tree right outside my grandson's bedroom window — obviously no flocks of hungry American robins there, although some years the wood pigeons do a good job of trying to strip the tree. So, when it wasn't raining and blowing a gale, I headed outside to get a flowery 'winter fix'.

Helen du Toit

Mark your calendar for February 22, our first meeting of 2014.

The morning session will be devoted to a slide presentation and discussion of alpine gardens and plants of Switzerland. The slides are a selection from Peggy Taylor's collection taken on her memorable trips to the high Alps. The slides were given to the Chapter and we've selected a group of the best. Rosemary Monahan and Helga Andrews have agreed to comment and lead the discussion as we view the slides.

In the afternoon members Bob and Dee Stewart invite us to share their joy in growing plants from the genus *Ramonda* and *Haberlea*. Dee says, "*Ramonda, Haberlea and their relatives are Gesneriads and are generally thought of as tropical plants. Actually, there are a few that are hardy here in New England. In addition, there are many more that will thrive in an alpine house. We'll discuss both groups and tell you how we grow them.*" Those of us who visited their garden last September for the seedling sale know how attractive those plants are having seen their collection first hand.



Haberlea



Ramonda myconi

Annual Meeting Review - November 16th 2013.

Our Annual Meeting was held at Garden in the Woods on November 16th 2013 and twenty seven members attended. We were pleased to be able to welcome past members Bob and Joan Means whom we have not seen for far too long. Bob and Joan now live in Peabody and unfortunately they are not able to travel to our meetings. They said they had a marvelous time and thank everyone for the hugs and joy they received. The morning was spent socializing, discussing plants that were brought for 'show and tell' and bidding on plants and books that were ably auctioned by Ernie. The business meeting was also held before lunch, Ellen Hornig was proposed as Vice Chair and was unanimously agreed upon by members. Thank you Ellen for accepting this position, we will all benefit from your extensive knowledge of Alpine plants and horticulture. Ernie Flippo, our treasurer gave details of our Chapter's financial position; he said we had a net zero year as our income covered our expenses. We would like our income to grow through membership and fund raising so we can continue to invite professional speakers to our meetings. We were delighted when Nate McMullin our speaker in the afternoon joined our Chapter of NARGS - welcome Nate.

After lunch Nate McMullin a Horticulturist at Garden in the Woods gave us a presentation on Winter Gardening - building a 4 season landscape. Today is a typical

winter's day and I'm trying to visualize how different our garden would be if it had the elements Nate discussed. He described the phases of winter - the initial frost where seed heads and grasses excel, a dusting of snow highlights and defines structures and branches. As winter progresses from the first snow fall through the many snow storms when the landscape resembles a moonscape, relief comes from varied plantings which include specimen evergreen and deciduous trees. A variety of understory trees and shrubs with different profiles provide interest in winter. A viewer's attention is captured by key elements which include a skeletal outline or bones, focal points, points of interest and wildlife. The elements should be seamlessly integrated into the landscape to enhance and respect the site and surrounding area so that the garden can grow and develop into a natural environment. Nate discussed in detail specific trees, shrubs, ferns, grasses and seed heads with unusual and interesting features and colors which he recommends for a winter garden.

He also discussed light in the winter garden and emphasized the benefit of softer natural light especially at sunset. Artificial lighting should be used selectively and when appropriate with up lighting preferable to down lighting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Preview of Coming Events

Horticultural Director, Mark Richardson from the Garden in the Woods will speak to us about *Sustainable Horticulture* and in addition he will report on the award of certification for the Trillium collections at GITW by the North American Plant Collections Consortium. Since NARGS national provided financial support to The Garden to help with expenses for enlisting the certification experts, we have a special interest in this project. Congratulations to GITW. The Trillium plantings were examined and deemed worthy.

The Rare Plant Auction April 26, 2014 1:00pm

Our always popular, exciting, and number one fund raiser the *Rare Plant Auction* will be held in April at the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge. Come and you will surely find something new and wonderful for your garden.

Vice- Chair Position

It is our pleasure to announce that Ellen Hornig has agreed to fill the position of Vice-Chair for our Chapter. Ellen is familiar to us as the former owner of Seneca Hill Perennials, Oswego, NY, a plant business which offered many desirable selections. Since her move to Massachusetts Ellen's special interests "*currently include more large plants than small: different forms of Yucca filamentosa, silphium species, many asclepias, some solidago. As well there is her pet hardy fig trees, and large numbers of small tree and shrub seedlings that she will never be able to accommodate in her yard as they grow; but she is learning to appreciate the smaller plants as well. To this end she has constructed one rock garden and has plans for more. This winter she sowed countless seeds of mat-forming penstemons, lewisias, auricula primroses and gentians large and small, and looks forward to having many extras to donate to the chapter seedling sale.*" We look forward to those seedlings and to sharing garden lore with Ellen.

Book Corner

***The Drunken Botanist: the Plants That Create the World's Great Drinks* by Amy Stewart** (Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2013).

With a great and delicious approach to the new year, this book answers all of your questions about what to imbibe and why. The reviewer has been blender bound with beverages from the garden for years, yet she really found this book to be informative and fun. Agave is all the rage and this book tells you why it's such a great substitute to sugars. I never knew that sloe berries made sloe gin. I do like a sloe gin fizz but who knew? As the reviewer says, there is so much to know and do after reading this

book. The book also informs us on where to find some interesting concoctions and distilleries during our rock garden botanizing. Enjoy. In fact, buy two copies through our Amazon portal and give one to a friend.

The review is by NARGS member, Holly H. Shimizu, executive director at the United States Botanic Garden, Washington, D.C.

The full review can be found on the NARGS Web site (www.nargs.org). Click on "Plants" and then "Book of the Month."

Betty Spar, Book of the Month Club Chair
Email: <bettyannespar@gmail.com>=

A Notice for our Chapter :

Offer of books for the Library

Tom Stewart the executor for the estate of Lawrence B. Thomas sent us this note.

"The late Lawrence B. Thomas, founder of the Manhattan Chapter, was an avid reader and book collector. He left a library of horticultural books that would provide a fine foundation for a chapter library.

Recognizing that housing a library of 30+ feet is not trivial, an immediate response is not expected, but do reply before March 1. There will be no charge, but please indicate who would benefit."

Let's discuss this offer at our next meeting. The membership can then decide if this would be a useful contribution to our existing library. Rachel Ross

Other Views: The Emperor's Rock Garden, Beijing

There were many astonishing sights on my trip to China last November but none more so than the Emperor's Rock Garden. The Garden is hidden in the far north corner of the Imperial Palace grounds. A visitor emerges from the narrow corridors of the living quarters, to suddenly step into a giant rock quarry. Here massive boulders of *karst* stone have been grouped within an acre and a half complex. These ancient stones, chosen for their sculptural qualities, were once conglomerates of hard and soft materials in a river bed. Millennia later, the stones, subjected to the erosive action of rushing water dissolved the soft layer leaving only a skeleton of the hard layer.



The design of the garden seemed to me like an intricate maze. The entry point begins at floor level and the guest is obliged to view all the rocks with an upward gaze. Walking further into the garden the pathway rises uphill to viewing terraces which overlook a middle zone and downward to the floor. On my first circuit, I missed the Tea House hidden in a secluded rock room. But its tile roof and painted pillars that cast splashy colors against the grey stone finally caught my attention. There is a bird's eye view too. A second or third floor balcony on the adjacent palace wing allowed the family to relax and sweep their gaze across the tops of the rock groups. Nevertheless, given the stroll-garden nature of the complex, it would be hard to sit back



and merely observe in such a passive way. The continually unfolding views around each corner almost demand that a guest be a participant and engage this work of art by walking through.



Once I recovered from the mind-numbing, exotic nature of the garden I realized that here the focus was on the rocks themselves. This is not a stone showcase for Alpine plants such as we construct. There is not even moss or lichen on the boulders. The big rocks are not set in a sand bed like a Zen Garden. Instead, the slate pavers abut the base of the rocks. The only plant life is old cypress trees. The aesthetic is age; immortal stones and ancient cypress. **Marilyn Beaven** *photos: author*



Directions to Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge

**680 Hudson Road,
Sudbury, MA.**

from Route 95/128 and the East: Take Route 20 (Boston Post Road) West through Weston. Turn right onto Rt. 27 and follow this into Sudbury. Stay straight on Hudson Rd. and go about 3 miles to Winterberry Lane on the right. The Parking/building is 0.4 miles in on the left.

from Route 1495: Take Exit 26 to Rt. 62 for 6.5 miles as merges with Sudbury Rd and go another .5 miles on Hudson Rd. On the left is Winterberry Lane and the parking/building is .4 miles in on the left.

Directions to Garden in the Woods

**180 Hemenway Road
North Framingham, Massachusetts.**

*from North, South, East --*Take Rt. 128 to Rt. 20W; go 8 miles on Rt. 20 to Raymond Road (2nd left after traffic lights in S. Sudbury); go 1.3 miles to Hemenway Road and follow the "Garden in the Woods" signs.

from West -- Take Massachusetts Tpk. (Exit 12) to Rt. 9 E; go 2.4 miles to Edgell Road exit; turn left at the lights at the top of the exit ramp on to Edgell Road (Rt. 9 overpass); go 2.1 miles to the traffic lights; take a right on to Water St. and a left onto Hemenway Road and follow the Garden signs.

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