



Epimedium sempervirens 'Violet Queen'

CURIOUS GARDENERS

the Newsletter of the New England Chapter of NARGS

February- March 2018

**February 24, 2018 – Ames Hall, Memorial Congregational Church
26 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies. Members A-M please bring nibbles
11:00 am ***Karen Perkins: Epimediums: Jewels of the Shade***
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own), chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting
1:00 pm ***Group Discussion: Ask Karen: Bring your questions about epimedium culture and join a discussion with Karen that will help you get the best from your plants.***

**March 24, 2018 Ames Hall, Memorial Congregational Church
26 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies. Members N-Z please bring nibbles
11:00 am ***Mark McDonough: Garden Lab Seedy Experiments, Part 1***
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own), chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting
1:00 pm ***Mark McDonough: Garden Lab Seedy Experiments , Part 2***

**April 14, 2018 The Presbyterian Church in Sudbury,
330 Concord Rd, Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies. Members A-M please bring nibbles
11:00 am ***Julia Cordon: The Explorer's Garden***
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own), chat
1:00 pm ***Julia Cordon: Bhutan in the Footsteps of George Sheriff.***

**May 19, 2018 Ames Hall, Memorial Congregational Church,
26 Concord Rd, Sudbury, MA**

- 10:30 am** Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies. Members M-Z please bring nibbles
11:00 pm ***Rosemary Monahan & Patsy Highberg: Traveling in the Dolomites with NARGS***
12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own), chat
1:00 pm ***Rare Plant Auction***
Donate what you can, bid early and often, and we will all have a great time!

Note from the Chair

As you can see from the photo below, Ernie's snowdrops are already poking up through the soil, so spring is coming; just ignore the chilly forecast. I haven't checked on my snowdrops, but I suspect Mr. Flippo has the advantage of me.



Galanthus in Abington, MA
February 4, 2018

It is great to see something green, even if just photographically! BUT I have checked on my little pots of seeds out in the garage and found *Narcissus rupicola* and *Paeonia suffruticosa* sprouted. Those seeds were planted just about a year ago and so have been through the temperature fluctuations that so many genera seem to need before they'll consent to germinate. To me it just seems miraculous. I recently planted some Delphinium and Impatiens seeds from a big national company and they germinated very quickly and uniformly. That was nice, and I was pleased, but it can't match the thrill of having the seeds that I planted a year ago magically sprout out in the freezing cold garage. If only I can succeed at growing them on! Many's the slip...

I hope many of you participated in the NARGS seed exchange. I've got quite a few of my selections sown; I'm trying to keep up so I'll be ready for the Second Round on March 1! Do check the website on that day for all the goodies still available at a bargain price. And after that, I expect that we'll get a portion of the leftovers, which I will bring to the April or May meeting for sharing.

Snowdrops notwithstanding, we have plenty of winter left and the best cure for the winter oughs is to come to chapter meetings! We will welcome Karen Perkins on February 24 and will enjoy both her presentation and a more informal time for us to talk together about epimediums and whatever other plants suggest themselves. Then, in March, Mark McDonough will be our speaker and by then, spring will truly be on its way.

Remembering Robert L. Means Sr.

I regret to inform you that we received an email from Bob Means' son that his father passed away on January 20, 2018. Bob was a long time stalwart of NARGS-NE. Those of you who might wish to contact the family may do so by emailing Rob Means Jr. at robroymeans@comcast.net.

Vivien

Preview of coming attractions



Eranthis hyemalis



Salix chaenomeloides



Crocus tommasinianus

Meeting on Saturday February 24, 2018

Ames Hall, Memorial Congregational Church, 26 Concord Road Sudbury MA



Karen Perkins Epimediums- -Jewels of the Shade

Morning Session 11:00 am

Only miles to the west of Sudbury, Karen Perkins owns *Garden Visions Epimediums*, a small, rural retail nursery established in 1997 and featuring the best selection of Bishops caps, Barrenworts and Fairy wings for sale in the United States. Epimediums make the perfect addition to your woodland shade garden. Known by many as a simple ground cover for dry woodland shade, Epimediums are finally getting the appreciation that they deserve. This "perfect shade perennial" possesses a delicate beauty that belies its surprisingly tough, long-lasting nature. Karen will illustrate the many and varied types now commercially available, including some of the exciting new evergreen species from China. Characteristics, growth habit, growing and propagation, pests and diseases, and combining Epimediums with other shade perennials in the garden will also be addressed. We will even get a glimpse into the collecting trips to China made by Darrell Probst.

Afternoon Session 1:00 pm

Ask Karen: For our afternoon session Karen will discuss her insights into epimedium culture and methods of propagation. So bring your questions for an informal question and answer session. Be sure to check out Karen's blog at www.epimediums.com/ and look at the photographs of epimediums in rock garden settings and more wonderful epimedium selections.



Variegated leaves of E. x 'Asiatic Hybrid'



E. grandiflorum 'Spring Wedding'



E. grandiflorum 'Purple Prince'

Karen graduated from Cornell University with a B.S. in Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture and from the University of Delaware with a Master of Science in Public Garden Management. She has worked or interned at several botanic gardens including: the Cornell Plantations, Longwood Gardens, The Arboretum at Flagstaff, Royal Botanic Gardens- Kew, England and Royal Botanic Gardens-- Edinburgh, Scotland. She served in the Education Department of the Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, MA for 17 years. Karen is currently the owner of Garden Vision Epimediums, a Massachusetts based mail order nursery, started by Darrell Probst, and offering over 170 species and varieties of Epimediums along with other choice companion shade perennials.

Meeting on Saturday March 24, 2018

Ames Hall, Memorial Congregational Church, 26 Concord Road Sudbury MA

Morning Session 11:00 am

Mark McDonough: Garden Lab Seedy Experiments, Part 1

NARGS-NE members know our colleague Mark McDonough perhaps best for his decades-long devotion to the genus *Allium*, exploring the ornamental potential of the single largest genus of bulbs (*Allium*), garnering him the nickname of "*the Onion Man*." However, Mark's gardening interests reach well beyond that of *Allium* and in this morning's session he will share his cultural insights weaving together several themes: passive "in situ" propagation, benefits of "low effort - high yield" sowing techniques, using seed to overcome propagation challenges, and other useful aspects of growing from seed. Throughout the discussion there will be a particular focus on "multi-attribute" plants for all seasons.

Afternoon Session 1:00 pm

Mark McDonough: Garden Lab Seedy Experiments, Part 2

The afternoon presentation continues to explore the theme of growing from seed, with Mark's plant hybridization efforts as the main focus, illustrated by two examples:

1. the past: *Allium* hybrids & selections - lessons learned
2. the future: Epimedium hybridization, a personal journey



Early growth of *Allium schoenoprasum* 'Curly Mauve'

Mark recently retired from a 40 year career in architecture, his last 4 years as CAD/BIM Manager (BIM = Building Information Modeling, e.g. designing buildings in 3D) for a hi-tech cloud computing company servicing North American architectural & engineering firms. His horticultural passions include plants and gardens of all types, including alpines & rock gardening, hardy succulents, wildflowers and North American native flora, with particular emphasis on woodland gardening. Mark's recent area of serious study is Epimedium, building an extensive collection and developing his own hybridization program. Be sure to check out Mark's blog <http://www.plantbuzz.com> for a delightful excursion into the garden when it is too snowy or rainy to be outside.



prostrate curly leaf allium seedling



Allium schoenoprasum 'Snow Cap'

Rosemary Monahan reports on the National Convention

Rock Gardening in the South: Past, Present, and Future

This was the title of the 2017 NARGS Annual Meeting, which was held in Raleigh, NC November 17-19. Attending that meeting meant I missed our Chapter's annual meeting and the great demonstration on bonsai, but it gave me a chance to hear other great talks, see wonderful gardens, and visit with family members who live in that area. The meeting was organized by the Piedmont Chapter, and they did a terrific job. The timing - in the late fall - is unusual for a national meeting, but I have to say the weather was an improvement over that of the previous annual meeting in Raleigh I attended about 10-15 years ago. That previous one was in the peak of summer, and was aptly entitled something like: Rock Gardening in the South: They Kill Alpines, Don't They? It must have been 100 degrees in the shade at that one, and we dragged ourselves around gardens listlessly in the heat and humidity. This time the weather was bright, clear, and lovely, and what was in bloom contrasted well with the autumnal foliage.

There was an opening reception and talk by Tony Avent and Jeremy Schmidt of **Plant Delights Nursery** on Friday night, followed by a day of talks on Saturday, including some speakers who have given presentations to our chapter such as Joseph Tychonievich and Bobby Ward. One speaker I had wanted to hear for years was Larry Mellichamp, recently retired Professor of Botany and Horticulture and Director of the Botanical Gardens at the University of NC at Charlotte. It was a great treat to hear him talk about gardening with bog plants and show slides of gorgeous bog habitats he had visited around the south. George Newman's talks to our chapter on pitcher plants and other bog dwellers were great preparation for Larry Mellichamp's talk, which was fascinating. Since I was visiting family, I missed John Grimshaw's evening presentation on snowdrops and other winter gems, but many in our chapter will remember John's

talk to our chapter a few years ago. For me, the highlights of the meeting were the garden visits on Sunday. That's what I love most about NARGS annual meetings: seeing great gardens or natural habitats with local experts. I heard rave reviews about the pre-meeting field trip to NC's coastal plain that was led by Larry Mellichamp, and made a mental note to try and sign up for these kinds of pre-or post-meeting fields trips in the future.

The three gardens we visited on Sunday were the display gardens at **Plant Delights Nursery**, the **JC Raulston Arboretum**, and the gardens of **Montrose**. The highlight at Plant Delights was the new crevice garden created with broken slabs of concrete ("urbanite"), as well as seeing the trial beds of just about every genus of interesting plants you can imagine. The highlight at the JC Raulston Arboretum was the rooftop garden, with plenty of rock garden type plants. But the most spectacular sight of the day were the sheets of snowdrops (*Galanthus elwesii monostrictus*) in beautiful bloom at Montrose. When I first started gardening, I took classes from Nancy Goodwin, owner of Montrose, which is a historic home and property in Hillsborough, NC. Having met Nancy before, it was no surprise that when she propagates snowdrops, she divides clumps into individual bulbs, and plants them carefully one by one. That's what it takes to create sheets of snowdrops over acres of woodland. They were accompanied by Cyclamen (hederifolium, I think) in bloom and the combination was breath-taking.



Snow drops at Montrose

If you haven't attended a NARGS annual meeting, consider this year's, which should be terrific - it will be in St. John's, Newfoundland from July 6-8, 2018, with an optional post-conference tour from July 9-16 to Newfoundland's limestone barrens, which George Newman says are botanically spectacular. See you there?



Tony Avent explaining trial beds at Plant Delights Nursery



Tony Avent describing new crevice garden



Planting detail of crevice garden

Rosemary Monahan

N.B. Ed. see <http://www.revolution-snowdrops.co.uk/galanthus-elwesii-var-monostrictus/> for a discussion of the nomenclature of *G. elwesii* var. *monostrictus* which has only one mark at the apex of the inner segments as opposed to the two marks, one apical, the other basal of typical *G. elwesii*. Also the Rock Garden Quarterly Summer 2017, 224-227 has an informative article by Nancy Goodwin about Montrose, her garden.

The Japanese Dwarf Tree Nursery.

Helen du Toit

Hearing Michael Levin speak about his early days in the bonsai world, reminded me of my family's own nursery efforts years ago when we lived in South Africa. Surprisingly, one of the ways in which we tried to earn extra cash, involved selling bonsai trees. Georges and Christine Boucher were good friends who lived one house down the road from us and as both couples were chronically short of cash they and my late husband Derek sought ways to supplement our income. One day Georges came round with a magazine article about bonsai, and suggested that if we started to sell these we should be able to make a fair profit.

Georges was, like me, a keen gardener, so he and I went off to the nearest nursery and bought up a number of rejects -small trees and azaleas that had been thrown aside because of defects or lack of growth. Derek commissioned a local pottery to fire up some suitably colored bowls without any glaze on the inside, complete with drainage holes. We all went for a walk up the mountain to collect moss from further up our stream. After a couple of hours of pruning and potting, we had some very acceptable-looking bonsai trees. We printed up a sheet of instructions and even supplied a plastic spray bottle to keep the trees moist. Then we ran an advertisement in the local evening paper, offering the "smalls" as they were known.



azalea smalls typical of our stock

The response was amazing, as we sold out the lot that weekend. Derek was our chief salesman and excelled in this role. As our marketing policy was geared towards making the buyers feel they were buying rare and valuable items, we followed the lead of the auction houses and priced on the basis of a guinea a year a guinea was £1.10. So if we felt the tree was five years old, the price was five guineas. The cost to us was usually 50¢ for the bowl and 1 rand for the plant. Sometimes the nursery just gave the plants to us, as they had come off the dump, so that the profit of 9 rand came in handy. By the time we came to sell the business when the Bouchers were transferred, we had a large stock of plants as well as a loyal customer base. We continued getting phone calls for years afterwards, often with pleas for help with sick trees.



azalea smalls typical of our stock

One amusing experience we had was when a customer phoned to ask us if we would look after her trees while she went on holiday. While this was not a service we normally offered, she was a good customer, having bought quite a number of trees from us and was drumming up business among her friends. So we agreed and I religiously sprayed her trees, including one which was her pride and joy, a magnificent specimen she had bought in Hong Kong. One day, after about a week, as I was spraying this self-same tree I knocked it slightly, and was horrified when the trunk broke off close to the base and fell to the ground. Closer inspection revealed that this tree had never actually been alive and was in fact a fake, having all the plastic leaves cleverly wired onto the trunk. I don't think the owner ever forgave us, although all the trees we had sold were most definitely alive!

(Thanks to my son, Gerard, for finding the relevant section of Derek's autobiography, "An Alien of Exceptional Ability", from which I have quoted generously.)

Afterthoughts: Some Christmas taxonomy

In December I went plant shopping at the Lyman Estates greenhouse in Waltham MA. I had intended to buy succulents but a lovely “Amaryllis” caught my eye. It had a medium-sized flower of a soft orange sherbet color with a delicate, translucent texture to the petals. Sold! I asked the manager, Lynn Ackerman about its name but she said she would have to check her records. A few days later she sent me an email saying it was *Hippeastrum puniceum*. I was puzzled to say the least so I went to the Missouri Botanical Garden web site for an



Hippeastrum puniceum



Amaryllis belladonna

answer. They said the bulbs we buy for Christmas decorations as Amaryllis are all hybrids of *Hippeastrum* species indigenous to Central and South America. However, they noted there is one bulb properly labeled Amaryllis, *Amaryllis belladonna* from South America. It took the taxonomy gurus from 1753 when Linnaeus identified a bulb in the George Clifford herbarium as the type species of Amaryllis until the 14th International Botanical Congress in 1987 to decide that *Amaryllis* L. should be a *nomen conservandum* (conserved name, i.e. correct regardless of priority) and ultimately based on a specimen of the South African *Amaryllis belladonna* from the Clifford Herbarium. All the rest are now considered *Hippeastrum*. So, when is an Amaryllis not an Amaryllis... when it's a *Hippeastrum*. A detailed discussion of the taxonomic history can be found at the Wikipedia article <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippeastrum> .

Marilyn Beaven

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 a meeting.

Local Chapters: –There are thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Chapter events include lectures, an email 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 6-7 times a year (February, March, April, (May), September, October and November), publishes a newsletter in email format, and organizes garden tours in May and/or June.

National Organization: We encourage you to join the national NARGS organization. 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.

Reminder: BE GREEN Bring Your Own Mug

Directions to The Presbyterian Church in Sudbury, 330 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA

The Presbyterian Church in Sudbury is located in the town center of at the intersection of Route 27 and Concord Road next to the Town Hall. There is ample parking in the rear. The entrance to the lower meeting room is in the rear with easy access from the parking lot

Directions to Memorial Congregational Church, 26 Concord Road, Sudbury, (across from Goodnow Library)

from Route 95/128 and the East: Take Route 20 West through Weston and Wayland into Sudbury. At the first light in Sudbury turn right onto Concord Road. The church is 2 houses on the right. Turn onto Church St, parking is just up the hill in front of Ames Hall.

from Route 27 and the North: Follow Route 27 south into Sudbury. At the traffic light in Old Sudbury Center turn right (south) onto Concord Road. Follow Concord Road approximately 1 mile and turn left onto Church Street. Parking and the entrance to Ames Hall is up the hill on the left.

Chapter Officers for 2018

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The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is published 3-4 times a year. In 2018 expect February-March, April-May, September-October, November issues and occasional notices of special events.



Crocus hubertii