



*Allium 'Constellation'*

**CURIOUS GARDENERS**  
**The Newsletter of the New England**  
**Chapter of NARGS**  
**Spring 2020**

**All Spring 2020 Chapter meetings and activities are CANCELLED.**

**TENTATIVE fall meetings (all Saturdays)**

**September 12              Seedling Sale/Plant Auction**

**October 10                Gerard van Buiten**

**November 14            Harriet Robinson; Annual Meeting**

**From the Chair**

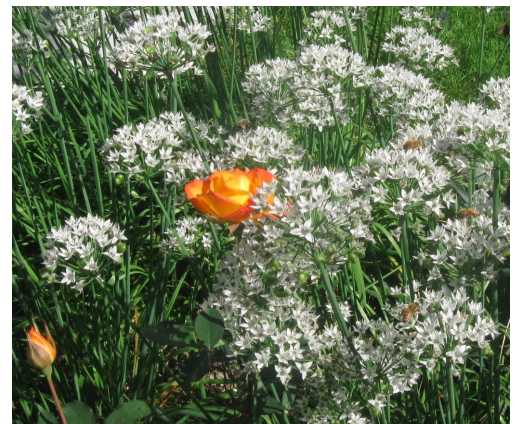
Thank you to those who sent photos and/or just let me know they're okay. This too shall pass; I hope very much that we'll be able to meet in the fall. Please stay in touch.

*Vivien*

**From the Editor**

I miss the meetings, a lot! As well as the many other fine things that take me off the property: coffee downtown, Debbie's recitals, even grocery shopping (we depend on the Neighborhood Brigade). So what to do, what to do?

Well yes, there is the garden, which is having a fine, however weird, year. A big part of my gardening is catch-up from last year, particularly dealing with leaves, but on the joyful side, there is also dealing with all the things I had wintered over in the greenhouse. Among them are 7 lusty cuttings of *Rosa* 'Autumn Splendor', looking for just the perfect spots in the garden. And I imagine you're thinking right now, 'There could have been no better spot than a plant sale'.



Still, there is gardening fatigue and there are bad days, and then I turn to books. That is not as easily done as might be. The bookcases, once full of tomes that might well be read again, were stripped way down during our down-sizing and renovation, and, panic!, the libraries are closed. So I scrape together what I can, with gratitude for the bits and pieces I left behind. And, in some desperation, actually buy a new book.

Two excellent gardening books are saving the day for the moment: 'The Founding Gardeners', by Andrea Wulf (2011), and 'This Other Eden', also by Wulf, along with Emma Giebm-Gamal (2005). The first one I never would have discarded, I liked it so much when I read it a number of years ago. It closely examines how founding fathers Washington, Jefferson, Adams and Madison, passionate gardeners all, applied the matter-of-fact cast of garden thinking to political decision making – even as they longed to be back on the farm. It's well written and loaded with novel insights. The other one applies the same gardening/politics insights to 7 English gardens, spanning 300 years, beginning in the early 1600's with Sir Robert Cecil, powerful minister to King James II. The book tells how Cecil poured money and ego into his castle garden until he deemed it ready for the king's inspection, mounting an elaborate mask for the visit, which turned into quite the orgy, much to James' delight. As the king was making his wobbly exit he turned to Cecil and made a request that couldn't be refused: give him the palace and garden. Which, perforce, Cecil did, receiving a battered spare castle in exchange.

My garden, as I said, is having a good season. Granted, though, without the drama of melting snow lifting the veil from my treasures. All in all, I find I appreciate the convenience of snowlessness.

A few scenes I particularly note:

*Narcissus* 'Wee Bee' and *Helleborus x hybridus*. I got the narcissus bulb at Wisley 32 years ago when my daughter was having her junior year abroad in London. It has only now started self-sowing, and all on its own chose to nestle against the hellebore. I applaud. The hellebore trajectory, however, is a different matter. My goodness, I have a lot of them, each with lots of leaves to be trimmed in the spring. Enough! I am well embarked on a serious effort to thin them out, aided by the plant lust of the local garden society.



The good forms of *Corydalis bulbosa* have a major impact even singly, but, at least in my garden, resist clumping. Have some of you developed a way of digging them up and putting them together? Failing that, it's rewarding to catch a few arranging themselves in a special picture.



Finally, this primula showed up in my garden and, lord help me, I can't identify it. Can anyone help? As a wild guess, I'm thinking *P. elatior* ssp. *pallasii* (which I have quite a bit of by now) as one parent – the foliage and form are different but the flower color is much the same. In any case, I'm going to keep it.



*Lomatium columbianum*. Desert Parsley, blooming 18 years after sowing! We'll see where it goes from here.

*Jim*

### More Happenings in the Garden – Snippets from Members (thanks for sharing!)

**Helen du Toit:** I am indeed well and hearty. I find that my time is spent in doing all the other things that we all have to do, and not much time left over for gardening. However I am encouraged by the fact that Spring is just around the corner, although it seems to be taking its time to arrive!

I am also delighted to see that my corydalis have seeded in nicely and are making a splash of colour. The hellebores I've photographed are both self-seeded, red and white, what could be prettier? They have seeded in the base of a shrub, (whose name I can't recall at the moment, a more frequent happening than I would like). And of course there are always *Houstonia*, or Bluets which have seeded all along the front of my house, as well as *Viola labradorica* to add another splash of colour.





**Jeremy Franceschi**—many of us remember some years back when Jeremy was doing a lot of experimenting with hypertufa. It's just possible that he may share some of his experiences with us in a future newsletter. But in the meantime, he is sharing some photos of his work.



**Marilyn Beaven's** *Primula elatior*:





Marilyn also has snowdrops and would like input from other galanthophiles:

### ***Galanthus nivalis* "In the Green"**

For the last three years I have been planting a sweep of snow drops on a 12' x 12' slope that catches the first warmth of Spring in my yard. I planted one half with a drift of *G. nivalis* and the other half with *G. Elwesii* which blooms three weeks earlier than *nivalis*. This year I added more clumps of *nivalis* that I dug "in the green" from corners of my yard where they had self seeded over the years. To my surprise many plants had two bulbous areas, one at the end with roots and a second bulbous area a few inches higher. (see illustration) My interpretation of this phenomenon is that the bulb was initially planted too shallowly and that later the roots extended downward and grew a new thickening at a depth that "felt" better to the plant. Or was it the other way around? Perhaps I planted the bulb too deeply and the higher bulb enlarged at a better depth? What have you experienced with this growth habit?



**Vivien:** I've never been more grateful for my spring garden. This is the time of year when my treasures accumulated from NARGS auctions and seedling sales are most in evidence.



*Corydalis nobilis* just starting to bloom



*Sanguinaria multiplex* multiplying nicely now.





*The joy of rampant spring growers that then tidily disappear for the summer! You have to look carefully to see the Trillium pusillum 'Roadrunner' on the right, next to Anemone ranunculoides, with Sanguinaria canadensis in front.*

**Finally, from Patsy Highberg:**



## 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 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 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.

Chair: Vivien Bouffard: [chair.ne.nargs@gmail.com](mailto:chair.ne.nargs@gmail.com)

Secretary: Rosemary Monahan

Treasurer: Ernie Flippo

Newsletter Editor: Jim Jones

The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is published 3-4 times a year. In 2020 expect February-March, April-May, September-October, November issues and occasional notices of special events.