



# Saximontana

Rocky Mountain Chapter  
North American Rock Garden Society  
Newsletter

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## Lesotho and the Drakensberg Mountains

by Carl Wilson

Saturday, January 27, 2018

12:15 pm Social, 1:00 pm Program

Gates Hall, Denver Botanic Gardens

### Refreshments, last names beginning A to B—see below about beverages

Mike Bone is well known to us as our chapter's Immediate Past President and DBG's Curator of Steppe Collection. At our January meeting, he will speak about a trip he made a year ago to the mountain kingdom of Lesotho, southern Africa's high elevation flower garden.

This trip was planned by Harry Jans and designed to explore the high elevation flora of the Drakensberg Mountains. Many plants from here may thrive in Denver. His time was spent targeting the highest elevation areas, as well as a na-



*Helichrysum milfordiae*

Photo by Mike Bone

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**Beverages:** Coffee and tea drinkers will be pleased to hear that a high-capacity, self-serve Keurig beverage machine will be ready to brew one of your favorite hot beverages at all club meetings. You will be able to select and brew gourmet coffee (high test or decaf), tea, or hot chocolate for **\*just a dollar a cup\*** (bring \$1 bill), dropped in a box. A beverage coach will help you learn the routine.—Glenn Guenterberg

### It's Renewal Time for ALL!

Dues are due in January, regardless of your month of joining the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS dues renew all year long, but we will take them for you now). See pp. 3 and 11 (coupon).

## Lesotho and the Drakensberg Mountains

Mike Bone

12:15 Social, 1:00 Program

Saturday, January 27

Gates Hall

Denver Botanic Gardens

# President's Outcrop

By Glenn Guenterberg

The first snow of the season was a whopper in my neck of the woods. Seven inches of snow yielded 0.8 inches of water in my rain gauge on October 9, a week or so earlier than often. Leafed trees bent but didn't break. The predicted plunge to 19 degrees luckily missed the mark. Naturally the freeze mashed the coleus that had been a star among the few tender plants we grow. A hand full of plants bought on a very warm Sunday weathered the storm unplanted. I press the limits of the planting season until forced to quit. No regrets, though. Another eight weeks of incredibly mild weather and the garden was cleaned and ready to rest.

## North American Rock Garden Society [www.rmncargs.org](http://www.rmncargs.org) Rocky Mountain Chapter Since 1977

### 2016 Persons of Responsibility

President	Glenn Guenterberg
Vice President	Carl Wilson
Secretary	Greg Hewgley
Treasurer	Kenneth Ray
Members-at-Large	Nora Morgenstern (Metro)
Membership Committee	Mary Mastin (Nonmetro)
	Gesa Robeson
Membership Committee	Joan Schwarz
	Lori Giesecke
Immediate Past President	Mike Bone
Website Administrator	Hugh Mac Millan
<i>Saximontana</i> Editor	Sally Boyson
NARGS Representative	Panayoti Kelaidis
Refreshment Chair	

### Objectives of the Rocky Mountain Chapter

To support the goals, purposes and activities of the North American Rock Garden Society; to promote the appreciation and cultivation of rock and alpine plants and wildflowers; to assemble and make available information on the culture of rock and alpine plants and their evaluations as garden materials; to secure and distribute species of rock plants not already in cultivation; to encourage protection of endangered species by preservation of native populations; to encourage rock gardeners to share knowledge, enthusiasm and friendship.

*Saximontana* is published 10 times a year. Material is due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication. Copy, artwork and suggestions may be sent to the editor at [ag8stache@comcast.net](mailto:ag8stache@comcast.net).

Then there was the fall clean up routine, planting the last of the bulbs before the ground froze, watering the tufa garden in December while hoping for a soaking snow or maybe rain. Wait, one more thing... a neat mound of finely-tilled dirt popped up along the edge of our crevice garden. Yikes! Now I have to learn how to relocate gophers before winter locks them under drifts where they could eat alpine roots from the bottom up. I guess there's no rest for the wicked ... gardener. By the time this issue goes to press the season will probably have shifted to snowbound cold and our gardens will rest for a month or two until the earliest bulbs and longer days signal Spring.

Last fall, thirteen innovative, energy-efficient homes were designed, built, and shipped to Colorado by university students from across the globe for the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon competition. Several of the houses included compact xeric gardens to demonstrate water conservation practices. There were plantings of small grasses like *Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue,' the larger *Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition,' and *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem); portable plant walls were placed to supplement insulation and a vertical moss-garden growing on fabric was suspended on a north-facing wall. The gardens were irrigated with filtered grey water and collected rainwater me-

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tional park on the border of South Africa.

He also visited the 42-acre Katse Botanic Gardens that is situated at mile-high elevation. The garden began as the result of a plant rescue project from con-

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(Continued from page 2)

tered through drip systems. (Two 55-gallon rainwater collection cisterns per house are now legal here.) Xeriscape, a word, a movement born in Denver, is recognized globally as an important part of our drier, energy-efficient future. It's worth implementing its concepts in our own gardens.

So, keep gardening on, whatever the season.

### Board Actions

Once in a while it's good to look back. The turn of the new year is one of those times to recall what has been going on in our neck of the gardens. The list of good ideas our club has carried out is impressive.

For example, three grants were funded. A \$3,000 travel stipend enabled RMC member, Kenton Seth, to attend the May 2017 Third Czech International Rock Garden Conference in Prague where he shared his knowledge about crevice gardening in the West and absorbed scores of ideas, while interviewing world-class crevice gardeners and touring their stunning gardens — ideas that will influence gardening here for years. Kenton will share insights from his trip at our February 24 club meeting, along with related presentations by two other attendees (Panayoti Kelaidis and me).

### Renewal: Dues are Due!

Dues are due in January, regardless of the month of joining, for RMC members (NARGS renews in the month in which you join). Please **completely fill out** the coupon on p. 11, so Gesa Robeson does not have to do this for you (this is our ultimate record of your membership).

We bring you so much for your membership!

Chapter meetings feature slide lectures of local, national, and international experts, including plant hunters who explore mountains and steppes worldwide to collect seeds from plants with horticultural promise. There is also time for socializing.

struction of the Katse Dam, a joint project with South Africa to generate hydroelectric power and hold water for development.

Join Mike for a photographic tour of this far off and wonderful part of the world.

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The second RMC grant was an incentive offer to join our parent organization, the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) at a reduced cost. Fifteen of you who had never been members got a half-price membership for just \$20. The club treasury paid the other half (\$300 total).

Finally, a RMC Challenge Grant matched contributions made to NARGS by other chapters up to a total of \$10,000, during 2017. The program was a huge success. Through early December, \$5,848 had been sent by our treasurer, Ken Ray, to NARGS matching contributions ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 made by 13 chapters: Sierra, Wasatch, Adirondack, Mason-Dixon, Potomac Valley, Siskiyou, Wasatch, Manhattan, Piedmont, Great Lakes, Berkshire, Minnesota, and Nova Scotia. NARGS officials have expressed their gratitude for our generous leveraged contributions as we collaborate with sister clubs to assure the national organization will continue to benefit all members by publishing the Rock Garden Quarterly, coordinating speaker programs, running tours, conducting national conventions — benefits we all appreciate.

Thank you for supporting our 2017 initiatives. Happy New Year!

(See p. 11 for Board photo.—Ed.)

Events include field trips to study rock alpine plants in their native habitat, visits to members' gardens, workshops (e.g., make troughs, build a member's rock garden) and plant sales each Spring and Fall.

The newsletter *Saximontana* features plant and gardening articles and information about coming events in 10 issues per year.

Membership entitles you to volunteer at meetings, plant sales, and other events. This is the best way to get to know other members and increase your knowledge about rock gardening and plants. (<https://rmcnargs.org>)

Gesa will also accept your NARGS dues. For NARGS benefits, see <https://nargs.org/membership-benefits>.—Sally Boyson and Hugh Mac Millan

# Kiwi Wanderings: Plants and People of New Zealand

By John Brink

Guests at the Chapter's Annual Banquet on November 11, 2017, were treated to Panayoti Kelaidis's travelogue on his speaking tour to New Zealand in November, 2016. Beautifully illustrated by photos taken by Panayoti and Jan Fahs, and peppered with anecdotes about their travels, the presentation struck an informative balance between New Zealand as it is and New Zealand as it was.

"New Zealand as it is" is a verdant land of sheep and dairy animals, and – of particular interest to gardeners – a place chock full of gardening enthusiasts, nurseries and stunning gardens. The South Island alone is home to *nine* chapters of the Alpine Garden Society of New Zealand.

Private and public gardens Panayoti and Jan visited featured New Zealand natives, like *Leucogenes leontopodium*, and exotics like *Embothrium coccineum*, both of which drew gasps of admiration and envy from the audience. Clearly, Kiwi gardeners have an enormous plant palette from around the world to choose from and the gardeners he profiled know how to use it masterfully.

"New Zealand as it was" is an entirely different landscape. It is home to what's left of New Zealand's native ecosystems and it is even more fascinating than the parts of the country that are now overtaken with

## Winter Watering

Don't forget to water every winter, especially establishing plants. If you did not do so in November-December, your plants are already suffering, but there is no need not to change that now. As a general rule, troughs need to be watered when the top is just dry (check often),

exotics. These areas of native vegetation are reminiscent of alpine and steppe ecosystems elsewhere in the world, dominated by grasses and forbs adapted to harsher conditions and lean soils.

In contrast to the Ireland-like green of lower elevations, a tapestry of plants in multiple shades of grey greens and browns is spread over the rugged landscape during most of the year in these higher and dryer parts of New Zealand. Here is where New Zealand's celebrated "vegetable sheep" (members of the genus *Raoulia*) make their homes among the islands' equally noteworthy *Hebe*, *Dracophyllum*, *Chionochloa* and *Celmisia* species.

As much as Colorado gardeners might salivate over things we can't have here – like thickets of rhododendrons and grand sweeps of orchids and Pacific iris – the landscape that resonates best with our own is seen in places like the slopes of Mount Southey in the Canterbury Mountains or Mount Edwards in the

Otago Mountains of New Zealand. Panayoti's enthusiasm for these areas shined through in his photos and his remarks, and banquet attendees left with a greater appreciation for the beauty of these high-mountain areas and their affinity with our own beloved steppe and alpine landscapes.

although this may not apply to specialty troughs—check with the seller if you are unsure of how to water a plant. Rock gardens (except cactus gardens) should be treated like other perennials, shrubs and trees. If there has not been 1 foot or more of snow in the month, then water well, each month, when the temp is above 40F. For crevice gardens with sand for soil—??? Let us know!—Sally Boyson



Panayoti Kelaidis with "vegetable sheep," *Raoulia mammillaris* (the white cushion) and *Haastia pulvinaris* (the yellowish one) on the summit of Mt. Southey, NZ.

Photo by Jan Fahs

# Awards for the North American Rock Garden Society's Rocky Mountain Chapter

By the Awards Committee and Glenn Guenterberg

At our Annual Banquet, it was time for drum rolls, cheers, and applause honoring several of our members! We presented the following awards at the 2017 Annual Banquet and Awards Ceremony:

The **Award for Service**: given for exceptional service to the local Chapter and NARGS.

The **Andrew Pierce Award**: given for leadership and enormous contributions to the chapter — for those who have already received the **Award for Service** and have kept on giving of themselves, their time and talents to the benefit of the Chapter and its members. Andrew Pierce was a beloved leader in the RMC, at the Denver Botanic Gardens and in the Colorado gardening community. Andrew was an alumnus of Kew Gardens, early innovator at DBG, and mentor to many horticulturists.

The **T. Paul Maslin Award** is the highest award given by the Chapter and recognizes a Chapter member who is a nursery person, propagator, hybridizer, or plant enthusiast who has actively engaged in extending and promoting the world of rock gardening on behalf of the Chapter. Paul Maslin was the first president of the RMC, a distinguished professor at CU, plant explorer, and gardener extraordinaire.

First, we honored the team of RMC veterans that selected the award recipients from a list of worthy nominees and then designed the elegant certificates and artwork they received. It was a very big job for the team chairman, Panayoti Kelaidis and his co-chairs, Mary Hegedus and Rebecca Day-Skowron.

Rebecca generously provided her original artwork for the awards.

The identity of the recipients had been a closely held secret; now the audience was ready for the reveal:

## The Service Awards



Awardees Bill Adams and Karen Lehrer (other awardees absent)

Photo by John Brink

**Linda Boley** is one of only a handful of charter members who joined in October of 1976. Although she has lived and gardened in Boulder all this time, she has participated in a wide range of Chapter activities consistently over the years. She has a real passion and interest in the chapter and rock gardening. She has opened her garden to Chapter, and her love of people and plants is evident in her winning smile and always-cheerful presence. It is high time we honored her!

**Mike Bone** has served the Chapter as Vice-President and President and continues to serve the Chapter as past-President and chairman of plant sales. Mike is not just a leader, but also a

passionate plantsman who has sought out alpines all over the American West, in Central Asia and now South Africa, where he will be returning in a few months. He has created an outstanding crevice garden at his home, and volunteers at the APEX Heroes garden, as well as leading the team of horticulturists who designed and maintain the Steppe Garden at Denver Botanic Gardens—a fabulous new showcase for alpines and rock plants.

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## Andrew Pierce Award

**Bill Adams** has been a leader in the Rocky Mountain Chapter from the time he first joined the Chapter in the early 1980's. He has hosted innumerable field trips to his exquisite private gardens, and he's helped create many pocket gardens in the Pueblo area that often feature rock garden plants. Bill has been treasurer for the Rocky Mountain Chapter for extended periods of time, has helped put the Chapter on a sound fiscal footing and trained his successors on Quickbooks. He has done the same for the North American Rock Garden Society, where he served on the Administrative Committee for many years. Bill's special niche, however, has been Sunscapes—a mail order and wholesale nursery that focuses on only the best alpine and steppe plants—which Bill grows with extreme skill. He has made a whole suite of choice natives, including many rare Eriogonums, Penstemons and Astragalus, which are otherwise not grown or sold by anyone in North America. He has tamed exotic gems like *Pelargonium endlicherianum* and *Moltkia petraea*, which are rarely found outside his catalogue. He was the first to hybridize a wide range of *Aloinopsis* and *Nananthus* species, for which he coined the name *x Aloinanthus*, a fantastic new arena for rock garden hybridization. Bill's steady temperament, deep love of nature, and everlasting good humor has helped guide the Chapter from its beginnings and continues to do so.

## T. Paul Maslin Awards

**Karen Lehrer** is co-owner of Laporte Avenue Nursery, and for decades has been the premier propagator of choice alpinists not just for this nursery, but

## Scholarships and Grants

An article about the availability of RMC-NARGS scholarships and grants (see Board Actions on p. 3)

## Thank You to Contributors

The *Saximontana* brings you lots of information about chapter activities, coming and past, announcements, articles about plants and gardening and more.

providing them nationally and internationally through mail order. Karen has made the nursery available for Chapter plant sales, and has attended many Chapter activities, including tours and conferences, despite her tremendous responsibilities maintaining thousands of demanding plants. It has been suggested that Karen has the capacity to generate roots on match sticks (!): to see the variety of rare plants she propagates regularly, this may not be much of an exaggeration! She is always a cheerful presence at Chapter sales where her offerings—usually in glorious technicolor bloom—cause a veritable Oklahoma land rush of greedy customers who stampede to get the best plants there every April.

**Kirk Fieseler** — Laporte Avenue Nursery was established at Kirk's home, and Kirk has been at the cutting edge of rock gardening regionally and nationally for many decades. Kirk has been the first regional nurseryman to provide a wide range of choice native dwarf conifers by grafting and is the premier source of Jerry Morris's selections. But many groups of classic alpinists — particularly our Rocky Mountain species — owe their presence in gardens to Kirk's research. The native herbaceous clematis in particular: *Clematis hirsutissima*, *C. fremontii* and *C. scottii*—were first offered commercially by Kirk and he is consistently the only source of these. Kirk taught Horticulture for many years at Front Range Community College in Fort Collins and educated several generations of professional gardeners and landscapers about rock gardens and rock gardening. Another of his many achievements has been the creation of the stunning rock garden at the Gardens at Spring Creek in Ft. Collins, which he helped design and provided many of the plants to furnish it. Kirk is a giant of regional horticulture, and we're fortunate that alpinists have been his special love.

will be published in the February *Saximontana*. If you need information about these before that time, you may contact Glenn Guenterberg (p. 2).—Ed.

How do we do this? Only with the contributions of many volunteer writers, whom we now thank. It is you writers who make the *Saximontana* what it is. I, personally am so grateful and I know our members are, too. I hope to see more from you and others in 2018!—Sally Boyson, Ed.

# NARGS trips and travel

By Panayoti Kelaidis

Over the years I've attended conferences from a dozen or more horticultural groups: most have day-long sessions of presentations or meetings and a few have garden tours. The North American Rock Garden Society is the only club that regularly schedules hikes and field trips along with most of the annual meetings. Funny thing, this wasn't always the case. Prior to the very first A.G.M. scheduled in Denver for what was THEN the American Rock Garden Society, our annual meetings were pretty vanilla as well—long days in a chair.

In 1982 Conference Chairman Andrew Pierce arranged for docents and buses and all the attendees were carted up to Mount Goliath and made to trek down through the bristlecones. A post-conference tour was arranged for Pikes Peak. I remember sitting next to Linc and Timmy Foster and, as the big bus took narrow turns on that mountain, occasionally seeming to careen over the side of the road with steep drops down thousands of feet, I heard Timmy nervously say to Linc "this is a little more like flying in a plane than taking a bus ride."

The Rocky Mountain Chapter hosted the Second Interim International Rock Plant Conference in Boulder in 1986, and three of the five days of that meeting included drives up to Rocky Mountain National Park, to Mount Evans again and also to Pikes Peak—three long days of field trips. This changed the tenor of NARGS meetings forever more. Now if you attend a NARGS conference, you will like as not be trundled into a bog to look at pitcher plants, wafted to the top of the Sierra Nevada, go through an eastern woodland in full bloom or visit tundra in Alaska. Or next year, you can take a pre-tour and walk through acres of tiny yellow lady slippers.

Even in the early days of A.R.G.S., Harold Epstein hosted many semi-official NARGS tours to Japan off and on for decades. The Tour Program has

picked up speed in recent years. We have had not one, not two, not three but FOUR NARGS trips to the Big-horn, Beartooth and Yellowstone the last two years. NARGS members have traveled to the Dolomites and I have led two NARGS blessed trips to South Africa in the last fifteen years.

This coming summer I'll be leading a band of plant lovers to the Southeastern-most Province of China: Yunnan, which has Denver's sister city Kunming as its capital. The tour will start in the World Heritage city at the base of the Chinese Himalaya named Lijiang (better known as Likiang in the accounts of Joseph Rock, George Forrest and Frank Kingdon Ward). This magical town has had its medieval buildings preserved and the local ethnic minority citizens, called the Naxi people, maintain their language and a strong local folk music and artistic tradition, as well as a strange alphabet and long cultural history.

Behind Lijiang, the Jade Dragon Mountains rise precipitously to over 18,000' with snow fields and one of the richest floristic concentrations of plants on the planet. Hundreds of species of trees have been recorded from these mountains and the diversity of wildflowers must be seen to be believed. I visited here in early June of 1998 and took two day-long forays on these mountains, where I saw hundreds of kinds of wildflowers in amazing profusion. From here, the trip goes further and higher through various ranges ending up in a village now called Shangri-La near the Tibetan border.

I hope some of the members of the Rocky Mountain Chapter will join me on what I know will be one of the peak experiences of my life—and a wonderful homecoming to China, "Mother of Gardens" as the great plant explorer E. H. Wilson once dubbed the country.



Invitation to China

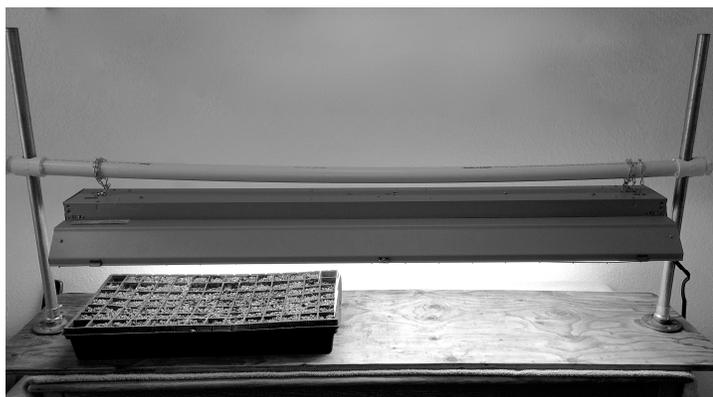
Photos by Panayoti Kelaidis

# A Simple Grow Light Stand

By John Brink

Grow lights for starting seeds and raising seedlings come in all shapes, sizes and (mostly high) prices. This article describes a simple and inexpensive option that is well suited to one or two 11" X 21" trays, depending on the size of the light fixture you choose. It is adjustable, so you can raise or lower the light, and it is easy to disassemble and store when it's not in use.

You can build one like this using common hardware and lumber items and household tools like a measuring tape or yardstick, saw, drill, screwdriver, and sandpaper. If you're a pack rat like me, you may already have some of the materials on hand. The photo below shows what it looks like.



The light stand with a newly-planted tray and uprights allowing for growth.

Photos by John Brink

Start by deciding how big a fixture you want to use. I built mine with a 4-foot T-8 shop light, so I used a 14-inch wide piece of 5/8" plywood long enough to accommodate two grow trays set end-to-end, allowing an additional four or five inches beyond each end of the light to accommodate the hardware.

Once you've cut the plywood to the desired size, you can round the corners if you want to and sand it for a smoother surface. I treated mine with linseed oil to protect it from moisture damage in case of spills.

The uprights are two 24-inch long pieces of 3/4" (inside diameter) electric metallic conduit (EMT). They are seated in EMT set screw connectors screwed into 3/4" cast metal floor flanges attached to the plywood base, as shown on the next photo.

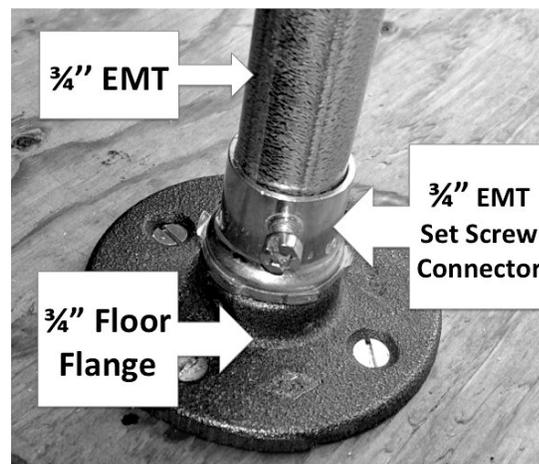
To make the crossbar, measure the shortest space between the uprights (i.e., their inside edges) and cut a piece of 1" (inside diameter)

Schedule 40 PVC pipe to

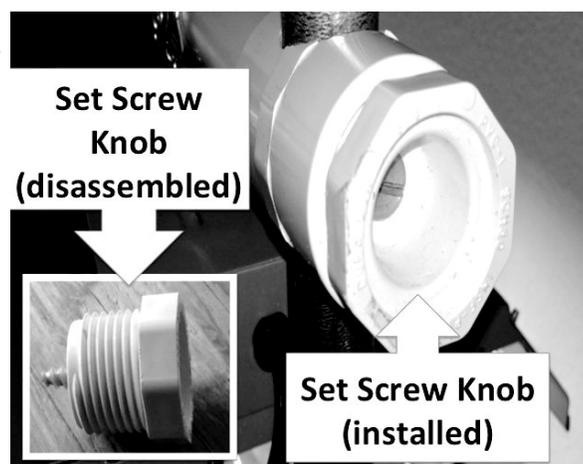
that length. Glue a threaded female PVC pipe adapter to each end of the PVC pipe. The glue doesn't have to do anything but hold the adapters in place, so any glue that works on plastic will do.

Next, drill 7/8" or 1-inch holes through the adapters where they will slip over the uprights. This part can be a little tricky in a couple of ways. First, you'll want to make sure that the holes on each end of the crossbar are parallel to one another and spaced at the right distance for the uprights to slip through them. Second, it's easier to drill the holes if the pieces are tightly clamped.

You may have to use a file to round out any uneven edges and assure that the



Uprights connected to base.



Close-up showing crossbar end and adjusting knob; insert shows screw through the knob.

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crossbar assembly moves smoothly up and down the uprights.

The set screw knobs that adjust the height of the crossbar are made from PVC plugs that screw into the threaded ends of the adapters on the crossbar. To give them the “bite” they will need to hold onto the uprights, drill a hole in the center of the plug and run a screw through it. Adjust the crossbar to the desired

level and tightly turn the knobs at each end to hold it in place.

Shop lights are usually suspended by chains, so all you have to do to finish the project is wrap the chains around the crossbar so the light is suspended just below the bar and then adjust the bar to the desired distance between the light fixture and the seed trays or seedlings below. To keep water from spilling on the light stand or floor, I keep my seed trays in flats without holes in them.

## More than *Muscari armeniacum*

By Panayoti Kelaidis

The poster boy of winter active bulbs is the common pass-along grape hyacinth, variously ascribed to *Muscari armeniacum*, *M. botryoides* or sometimes *M. neglectum*. This universal scourge of gardens produces masses of foliage in late summer that singe and look tattered and unattractive when the relatively blah flowers come out. They produce masses of seeds so that soon you can have this making a messy presence

all over your garden. Whatever its real name, this universal curse of gardens has effectively turned gardeners away from a wonderful genus of fragrant, spritely and variable plants that really are worth growing. Many produce foliage in the autumn, like *Muscari chalusicum* which I’ve grown for years—but the foliage is trim and not unattractive and looks good in spring when the flowers arrive. Two of



*Muscari chalusicum*

All photos by  
Panayoti Kelaidis

the cheapest and most indispensable species: *Muscari azureum* and *M. aucheri* don’t put up above ground until late winter—and only produce short leaves that tactfully die away before late spring even—I can’t imagine a garden without these—in fact I grow hundreds (maybe thousands) and encourage them to spread far and wide. *Muscari latifolium* is also inexpensive—produces small rosettes of leaves and taller stems with wonderful dark almost black flowers. Another one I can’t have enough of!

I have been lucky enough to visit the botanic garden in Gothenburg in April, when many of their grape

hyacinths were blooming. They have the world’s best collections of hardy bulbs—and they had dozens—probably hundreds of collections of *Muscari* in full bloom.

There are a few that look so different that they’re even being given new names—like *Leopoldia*, *Pseudomuscari*, *Hyacinthella* and on and on... The splitters keep making new genera for the weirdies... and at the fringes the genus seems to merge into *Hyacinthus* at one end and the predominately South African *Lapeirosia* at the other.

And there are no end of wierdies: the white *Muscari ambrosiacum* and the intensely fragrant yellow *Muscari moschatum*. Both of these seem a little tender in Colorado, but have grown well in microclimates and are worth any effort to tame.



*Muscari aucheri*

There is a pink one I’ve been avoiding. Somewhere I picked up *Muscari tenuiflorum*, which blooms later than most and has attenuated, wonderfully strange flowers. Then there is *Muscari comosum*, which has a commercial form (*plumosum* or ‘Plumosum’) that’s almost as weedy as the *M. neglectum/armeniaceum/botryoides* plague (which I think it may be allied to). It is intriguing nonetheless if you can restrict it to someplace safe. I did see the true, wild *Muscari comosum*

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in both Greece and Turkey in 2015. This blooms much later than most grape hyacinths—in early summer—and has long, graceful wands of bloom worth every effort to obtain.

I have added several dozen other species of *Muscari* to my garden in recent years: the lovely white form sold by Dutch Bulb firms, and the icy blue ‘Valerie Finnis’—which is another fall emerger. I have not found any of these to be anywhere nearly as invasive as the common passalong plant...and



come to think of it, I do have a “back forty” along the fence where I could use some of that weedy sort! So pass along a few to me, if you’d like!

Oh yes, and when your daffodils, crocuses, tulips or *Muscari* start to show up in the fall or winter, don’t panic: they’re SUPPOSED to!

*Muscari latifolium*

## A Call for Fall Alliums

By Kenton Seth

2017 put me on a course to have a brush-by with Fall-blooming alliums and in writing an article I want to share what little I have found and stir up information from others as well as inspire a following so I’m not the lone one obsessing around here.

Well, to begin with, it’s been seed exchange season. I’ve grown and killed and not even managed to germinate so many hundreds of packets of seeds from seedexes. They’re great. But one genus which has paid off has been allium—they don’t “sell out” soon on the list, they germinate reliably, grow easily in a home nursery, mature to flower in a year or two or three, all have been easy in the garden, and, finally, they easily make enough seed, which is easy to collect, to donate back to the exchanges. Not what I can say for most. So alliums, conveniently topping the alphabetical seed lists, get my attention because of the promise of satisfaction. If you missed the NARGS seed exchange, remind me to cry a little for you and shame you into participating next year; it’s easy! But the allium love goes deeper this year for me.

It started with a grocery-bag clump of fresh diggings from a friend who was moving house—you know that kind of heirloom plant gift. They usually grow because they are locally suited. Anyhow, it was a species I’d not heard of, *Allium koreanum*, and she said it was good. I trust her taste, and forgot the name immediately. But when the golden leaves fell on this plant’s new home at my house, and it woke up from under those covers, stretching its fists of plump pinkness in



I got this as a dwarf form of *A. thunbergii* but could it be *virgunculae*?—Todd Boland

Courtesy [NARGS.org](http://NARGS.org)

October, I was besotted. I called my friend up to be reminded what its name was, like an excited teenage girl in love after seeing a new boy at a dance. And that was the first time I found little info on Fall-blooming alliums as a group. But I thought—how useful, how fantastic is it to have a bulb which tends to be even more reliable than all the classic Fall bulbs—and which stands up a bit higher from fallen leaves? I was addicted at first sight.

In research, I found a *Colorado Gardener* article our Marcia Tatroe wrote on alliums, and what’s more, our club hosted a talk on alliums, which I was very sad to miss because I was working in North Carolina. Ironically, I was working at the attached beneficiary institution of Plant Delights’ nursery, called Juniper Level Botanical Gardens. As curator Jeremy and I finished a section of our crevice project, owner and famous international plant-hunter Tony Avent was all over the new area like flies on stink. He started planting immediately—perhaps less out of urgency to have a project looking done for the then-upcoming NARGS AGM, which happened there, than out of sheer boyish excitement, in my opinion. Out came loads of funky plants from his greenhouses full and behind a recently planted glorious *Agave montana*, I saw the sparkle of yet another allium in bloom—and this time in October! You can find his *Allium kiiense* in the Plant Delights online catalogue. I know I will.

An excited newbie, I am aware of only three of

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## Membership Form: Rocky Mountain Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society

All RMC renewals are due in JANUARY, regardless of date of joining.

Rocky Mountain Chapter Options (circle one; see [www.rmcnargs.org](http://www.rmcnargs.org) for benefits): paper *Saximontana* is \$10 added.

Individual =\$15; Household =\$20; Supporting =\$55; Patron =\$105; Life =\$305. PAPER SAX +\$10 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

North American Rock Garden Society dues \$40, \$10 each addit'l hsehold member. See [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org). \$ \_\_\_\_\_

To participate in **NARGS online Seed Exchange**, [join/renew here by OCTOBER 31](#) (RMC dues will be for 2018).

Check One:  New  Renewing Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL DUE \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names and contact information are published in the annual Roster, which is password-protected online. The Roster is labeled for members' use only. Name and physical and email address are forwarded to NARGS.

Please choose \_\_\_EMAIL (PDF in color) OR \_\_\_PAPER (B/W) newsletter, *Saximontana* (add \$10 above for paper).

Name(s) as you wish them to appear in listing: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email (please!): \_\_\_\_\_

This is NEW INFORMATION: \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No. This is a CORRECTION for current Roster/ mailing: \_\_\_Yes.

**Make check payable to RMC-NARGS. Mail to Gesa Robeson, 1648 Yosemite St., Denver, CO 80220.**

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the Fall alliums: *A. virgunculae* v. *kiiense*, *A. koreanum*, (which was given species status in just 2004) and *A. thunbergii* (of which, a cultivar 'Ozawa' is grown). I know that there are more out there and hope I find I am not alone, perhaps rubbing shoulders of another truly besotted slave like myself, upon finding

the next one. They are a cold pink—the color of nothing else in fall—like pink highlighter on boring newsprint! And they are alliums—so easy! And they are bulbs—they can be mixed with others! Get addicted, my friends, but please don't order all the seeds before I get a chance.



### 2018 RMC-NARGS Persons of Responsibility

Kneeling: Hugh Mac Millan, Website Administrator. Second row: Sally Boyson, *Saximontana* Editor; Gesa Robeson, Membership Co-Chair; Lori Giesecke, Membership Committee; Mary Mastin, Member-at-Large, Non-Metro; Panayoti Kelaïdis, NARGS Representative. Third row: Nora Morgenstern, Member-at-Large, Metro; Greg Hewgley, Secretary; Carl Wilson, Vice-President; Glenn Guenterberg, President; Kenneth Ray, Treasurer. (Not pictured: Joan Schwarz, Membership Co-Chair, and Mike Bone, Immediate Past President.)

See p. 2 for contact information.

Photo by Bill Adams

# Rocky Mountain Chapter, North American Rock Garden Society

## Calendar ~ Winter-Spring 2018

Winter meetings are held on Saturdays at Denver Botanic Gardens, and others are variable. Please always check current issue or [www.rmcnargs.org](http://www.rmcnargs.org) for changes. Major updates are also sent by email, so please be sure Lori Giesecke (p. 2) has your current email address. **Login to [www.rmcnargs.org](http://www.rmcnargs.org) is individual for *Saximontana*, Membership Roster and Chapter documents.**

January 27 Saturday	Mike Bone, Lesotho and the Drakensberg Mountains
February 24 Saturday	Panayoti Kelaidis, Glenn Guenterberg, Kenton Seth; Pilgrimage to the Czech Republic - Recap of the 2017 International Rock Garden Conference
March 24 Saturday	Michael Guidi, Plants and Landscapes of the American West
April 20, 21 Friday, Saturday	Spring Plant Sale, Mike Bone coordinating Friday evening, members only; Saturday open to public.
May 9 Wednesday	Speaker TBA

*Saximontana*

Sally Boyson, Editor

Rocky Mountain Chapter  
North American Rock Garden Society