



The Trillium

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 3
SUMMER—SEPTEMBER 2015

Piedmont Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

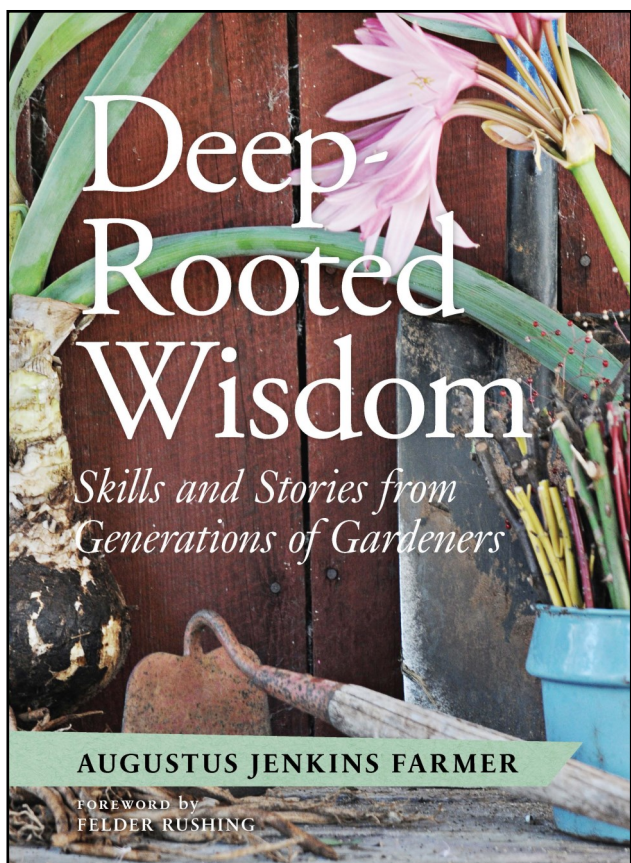
An Introduction to Jenks Farmer

Just yesterday, a month before my NARGS presentation, I was asked to design a front yard where the mature, healthy trees will be cut in order to allow light to new solar panels. My heart is heavy. Do I have to argue, do I have to quantify the ecological value of those trees again? To pit living parts of our earth, things we are intimately connected with against modern technology that offers a new tax break? Do I preach and argue, or just walk away while some landscape company gets paid to do the dirty deed?

My favorite chapter from this book is also the most frustrating. It's a plea for people to value the connections of diverse gardens, parking lots and public landscapes. Not to chart only the quantifiable values, but the soulful recognition that we are a part of, stewards of, a whole, a thing bigger than we know. There have been trends of naturalistic planting before. Today, a new movement of inspired, ecologically sound design is sweeping our professions. But it's among us, professionals, well-read enthusiasts and people who have time to feel connections. Good planting is far from the norm.

This chapter, and the upcoming presentation for NARGS touches on people and places that encourage me to preach and argue and take the less profitable, more rewarding jobs. I'll share pictures of my family farm, the renowned Beaufort, SC, gardener Frances Robinson, philosophy of Dr. David Haskell and stories of recent public and private landscapes I've been working on that I hope, capture the spirit of their place. ♪ *Jenks Farmer*

Taken from *Deep-Rooted Wisdom* © Copyright 2014 by Augustus Jenkins Farmer.
Published by Timber Press, Portland.



Finding the Spirit pp. 224–227

On our little farm, where there's a lot of history to build on, finding the spirit might seem straightforward. It is, but sometimes embracing that spirit can be difficult. Our farm is a tad trashy, a little rusty and rough. The basic flow of it happened organically over centuries. Buildings, trees, and people came and went. For a while in the 1960s and 70s, the place was basically abandoned. A grove of paper mulberry edged into the barns; a banksia rose literally engulfed the two-story smokehouse; Carolina cherry laurel took over the fig patch; and a jujube tree colony lined the drive, everything running a bit wild. We roped things in, and my parents enhanced the spirit of a sustenance farm. No tarding up was allowed.

We use the old stuff, but we also add new stuff—we layer things to keep the spirit. Our crinum packing shed is in an old chicken house. We've made a little classroom in an old woodshed with rebuilt mud and horse hair walls and a digital projector. A smoke house, car park, troughs, and now solar panels determine the flow and are the focal



points of the meandering garden. Crinum and other crops extend in the same lines as the old vegetable garden. As a child, I was dismissive of daddy’s vegetable style—a garden made with taut strings and tilled in super straight rows—but today, our nursery follows his rows. There’s a certain irony to it, because as a garden designer, I’m constantly complaining about too much formality and straight lines. But our fields elicit the history of small sustenance farms.

Part of the spirit of this farm is that it’s always been a gathering place. We cherish a 1900 photo of a group of African-American men in the barren winter yard kicking back in kitchen chairs around a fire with a boiling kettle. A man who grew up here in the 1930s told me what a paradise for children it was—the half-way point on the dirt road where all his cousins lived. My parents made it a gathering place, too.

Today, serious plant lovers come for little gatherings and cocktails made from crinum tea. Old friends and young friends bring lawn chairs just to sit under the giant pecans. Garden clubs host their plant sales here. Gardeners are closer to the earth’s spirit no matter where they garden, town or suburbs, but sitting on a quiet farm under big trees, over thriving soil, and refreshed by the air of fields and magnolia forest is an immersion that even the most avid gardeners love.

Photo by Jenks Farmer



My farm. Last week, we were thrilled to confirm that we’re doing things right; quail started nesting in our production field.

In places with big histories and spectacular nature, finding the spirit of gardens seems easy. Oceans, mountains, rivers, and deserts tell their own stories. Finding the spirit of and telling a story on abandoned agricultural land or blighted urban blocks is more difficult. Sometimes you look deeply and realize the story needs enhancing. I was once asked to make a garden in a huge, enclosed museum courtyard. The ruined urban soil had been the foundation for an old hospital and later became the red clay construction staging site. New bleak, beige

walls soared around three sides, and on one end, a massive, old brick wall ended the view. The job: “Can you bring life to this? Can you plan a garden that celebrates the working yards of poor Southerners and at the same time is a place for elegant parties?” Instead of getting it from the land, we found the spirit in the museum’s collections. The plants we selected share geographic origins with objects from the museum’s collection. African crinum lilies connect with the tribal carvings and ceremonial masks of West African slaves. Cypress and tupelo trees connect with the Carolina rice planters’ dugout canoes. In doing this, we’re finding the spirit of all the people and plants that had been part of the area’s history—we found the spirit of the place through diversity.

We are stewards of this diversity. Professionals, home gardeners, people who sit on tree-selection committees, and people who might become any of these have influence on how our world is planted. We have to select, plan, and plant things that thrive, that encourage more diversity without causing havoc. There are just too many great plants in the world for us to plant the same things over and over or to plant disease-prone monocultures. In some early American landscapes, the trees were diverse, in forests like canopies. Our forebears captured the spirit of that American forest in new American towns. But we’ve slowly moved toward monoculture: streets and parking lots are planted with just one type of tree, all genetically identical. Gardens of diversity are more resilient, survive threats of pests, and encourage other kinds of diversity. The mix makes for better gardens, gardens with more creativity and gardens that recognize the diversity of biology. David Haskell, author of *The Forest Unseen* and biology professor at the University of the South, gives a mantra for gardeners, designers, and anyone choosing plants:

Life thrives on diversity. So a botanically mixed collection of plants will attract a wider range of creatures than a collection of just one or a few plants. Most animals only make use of a small range of plants, so a wide taxonomic palate in the garden will result in a wider range of animals. This is probably more important than lushness.



Photo by Jenks Farmer

The Florence Museum, SC in it's first summer. The original concept by landscape architects called for turf and 10 Italian Cypress. The garden now includes over 40 taxa of plants all of which represent connections to items in the museum's art or science collection.

We find wonder in unlikely places when we slow down and pay attention. This takes some practice. We have to decide to pay attention, then repeatedly return our attention to our place. The mind wanders—it is seldom content to remain in place, so we gently bring it back and literally come back to our senses.

It's so easy to let your mind race ahead in the garden, missing those chances to ask pertinent questions, to learn the story of a place. In the early part of my career, I paid attention to almost nothing but plants and gardening. I took long road trips in trucks outfitted for plant collecting, forged great friendships, built dramatic gardens, and even stimulated the garden economy. Surrounded by plants, seeking those plant people, I built entire relationships based in the garden. On that first trip to see renowned Beaufort, South Carolina gardener, Frances Parker, and on dozens of trips since, she and I have talked only about plants. If we ate, we ate lemons or nuts while we walked in gardens. Our conversations were of seeds, nurseries, and new plants. I saw her husband only once or twice. I never asked about the history of her house. I wasn't asking the right questions, seeking the connections that David Haskell encouraged me to seek. Twenty years later, while writing this book, Frances's husband Milton brought out a small history book from which he read a history of their house that ended with, "Built in 1810 by a Henry Tudor Farmer"—my sixth great grandfather.

That's a cool connection. The fact that it took me twenty years to make it is a great reminder to slow down and try not to be such a hasty looker. Gardening can be so many things: industry, production, art, therapy, and grueling work. We need to wipe off our lenses so that we can see more clearly. In doing so, we can help others, with less time, less connection, to share in that

Still, many of us desire that lushness; we work hard in our gardens to achieve it by adding lots of water and fertilizer. But we can learn to see beauty in the diversity and read the stories told through our gardens. David's a great teacher of this:

I'm a big believer in exercises that open the senses. We tend to be hasty "lookers" and, thereby, miss so much. Our minds, also, tend toward dissatisfaction with the present moment, always yearning for something better in the future. The advertising industry does a good job of exploiting that yearning and never letting it settle into acceptance of what we have. There is nothing wrong with planning for a better future, but unless we can find existing beauty in the now, we're unlikely to be happy with the future.



Photo by Jenks Farmer

Frances Parker's Beaufort garden. I visited for 20 years before asking some of right, deep questions and realizing a special connection to this place.

focus. Look at this amazing world that we are a part of. We're part of the process, part of the dirt, and part of the spirit. Everything we do in the garden, we do to others, our children, and ourselves. We garden to share this story with those who might be focused on other things. That's our job as teachers, parents, and gardeners: put good stuff in and keep bad stuff out. We have a lot more to filter out these days. Remembering how we got to where we are today affects how we go forward. By focusing on the basic skills and the plants, we can meld the lessons of the old and lead ourselves to places we never knew existed. ❧

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Piedmont Chapter Award for Service

Bobby G. Wilder has been an enduring presence in the Piedmont Chapter, having attended its organizational meeting in the fall



of 1985. Over three decades, Bobby has served as Chapter Chair in the early 1990s and Treasurer from 1994 until 2015. Bobby has also served on the NARGS Board of Directors and acted as treasurer for two

national meetings and two winter study weekends. During two NARGS Seed Exchanges that our chapter hosted, Bobby gave up a considerable portion of his home to provide space for seed distribution and also processed orders from the members. He has graciously provided housing for out-of-town speakers and hosted numerous chapter dinners. We are deeply grateful to Bobby for his tireless dedication to the Piedmont Chapter and also to the greater NARGS community. ❧ *Submitted By Charlie Kidder, Piedmont Chapter.*



Chapter Plant Sale

September 19 Meeting, 9:30 to 12 noon.

Share your plants with others.

We need your contributions to support chapter activities. Join Tony Avent in giving generously to the chapter sale.

Good plants of all sizes, shapes and maturity are needed. Bring plants in clean pots and label each pot: we will not have time to do this that morning.

Please print label information.

Pot them up now to bring next month.

Questions: Kirt at 919-489-7892 (h) or kirtley@ncrrbiz.com

MONARCHS

Laurence Avery

I had thought the Grand Canyon something. But butterflies that find the high fir forests of central Mexico from as far away as Hudson Bay – how do they know the place when no one of them completes the yearly round-trip? And why do they bother? No other butterfly migrates on that scale. Besides which, *how?* One-way could be five thousand miles, weather foul some of the time most likely – sleet? blustering wind on butterfly wing? Still, they manage. Moving northward in the spring, mating along the way, they leave eggs anticipating a circuit the species perfects. At the edge of our meadow in June milkweed flickers flames as egg-heavy females swirl and light, frantic, then calm.

Editor's Note: If you enjoy this sonnet, perhaps you would enjoy others from his new book of poems Mountain Gravity, (Chapel Hill, NC: New Atlantic Media, 2013). It is available at Barnes and Noble and online.



Message from the Chair

Charlie Kidder

Welcome back from another hot summer—which is still not over! I hope you and your gardens are thriving. Lots of goings-on with the Piedmont Chapter, so let me provide a brief recap, with details to follow in the rest of the newsletter.

First a brief look back. We ended the year in May with a trip to the Croatan National Forest led by Tim Alderton. Tim was his typical energetic and enthusiastic self, and we thank him for showing us Venus Flytraps, Pitcher Plants, Sundews and other wonders of the North Carolina coastal plain.

Bobby Ward has done his usual amazing job of lining up horticultural talent for the upcoming season, with speakers coming in from across town, across the country and even across the Atlantic. One note: a couple of talks will **not** be taking place on the third Saturdays of the month, so please check the schedule carefully before heading over to the Arboretum.

The Piedmont Chapter is now in its thirtieth year, so “Congratulations to Us!” We will have a celebratory cake at the November meeting, and are exploring options for a special event in May.

We are offering a special discount on NARGS membership to those joining for the first time. See David White’s article for complete information.

We have a few changes on the Piedmont Chapter board, so check out the short article below and be prepared to vote on officers at the September meeting. And please note: that meeting will feature our annual plant sale; details will follow via email. ↪

Financial Incentive to Become a NARGS Member

David White

At its summer meeting, the Piedmont Chapter board of directors voted to encourage chapter members to join NARGS by subsidizing 50% of the annual membership fee for any chapter member who has not previously been a NARGS member. The following story discusses some reasons for this decision and provides details on how to take advantage of the chapter’s offer.

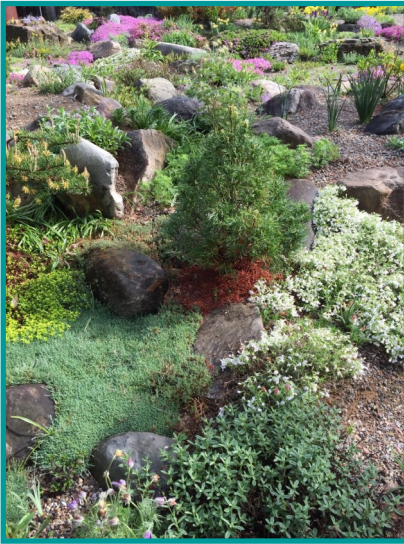
Some background information on NARGS (the Society) would probably be useful. The Society was founded in 1934 and operated as a national organization without local chapters until 1965. Since then local chapters have been started in multiple locations in the U.S. and Canada (the Piedmont Chapter was organized in 1985). The chapters provide an opportunity for avid gardeners to get together on a regular basis, but there is no annual payment to the Society and the relationship between the Society and the chapters is to a large extent voluntary. Services provided by the Society include a quarterly journal about the Society’s activities, rock garden and hardy plants, a speakers tour, a website, annual meetings and an annual seed exchange. Currently, approximately 30% of total chapter membership, as well as for the Piedmont Chapter, are members of the Society.

Most of the Society’s annual income comes from membership fees (~70%) and donations (~25%). Unfortunately, membership in the Society has decreased by approximately 50% over the past 15 years and income from membership dues are insufficient to cover current operating expenses. As a result, the Society must either cut the scope of its services or increase income. Based on feedback from members indicating that further cuts in services would be counter-productive, the Society’s board of directors has voted to increase annual dues (for an individual membership, the dues increase is from \$30/year to \$40/year) and to encourage members of local chapters who are not currently members of the Society to join.

As a result, the Piedmont Chapter board of directors has agreed to cover 50% of the Society’s annual membership fee for one year for any chapter member who has not previously been a NARGS member. The board’s hope is that these new members will discover that the benefits they receive are worth the annual membership fee and will renew their membership in future years. To take advantage of this offer, please print and complete the application form, and either bring it to the September meeting or mail it to David White along with a check for \$20 for a regular membership or \$7.50 for a student membership if you have a current student ID. David’s mailing address is 3 Ontario Ct, Durham, NC 27713. ↪



2015 NARGS Ann Arbor Meeting Photos of Featured Gardens All photos and captions by Bobby Ward.



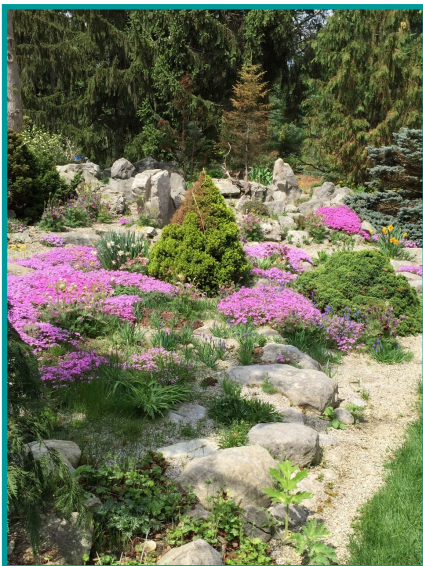
Don and Mary LaFond Garden

This is an eclectic garden, started 25 years ago, including an animal watering trough of rock garden plants. The overall garden won the NARGS Millstone Garden Award for a Rock Alpine Garden at the NARGS Ann Arbor meeting in May 2015.



Tony and Susan Reznicek Garden

This limestone crevice garden is on a substantial slope. The overall garden won the NARGS Millstream Garden Award for a Unique Garden at the NARGS Ann Arbor meeting in May 2015.



Jacques and Andrea Thompson Garden

The two-acre garden includes a rock garden that contains native rounded rocks from local glacial till.



Bev and Bob Walters Crevice Garden

This limestone crevice garden was constructed in 2007 and is surrounded by a seepage area for runoff.



**Piedmont NARGS Speakers
Fall 2015/Spring 2016**

September 19, 2015

Jenks Farmer

*"Deep-Rooted Wisdom: Stories
from Generations of Gardeners"*
1521 Maple St.
Columbia, SC 29205

October 31, 2015 [note special date]

Jimi Blake

*"A Plantsman's Pick: Best New Plants from
European Nurseries"*
Hunting Brook Gardens
Lamb Hill, Blessington
Co. Wicklow, Ireland

November 21, 2015 – 30th Anniversary of
Piedmont Chapter

Panayoti Kelaidis

"Rock Garden Nation"
Denver Botanic Gardens
1244 S. Quince St.
Denver, CO 80231-2531

January 16, 2016

Piedmont Members' Presentations

("Gardens and Travels")
Limit of 5-6 members/max.
10 minutes each.
Contact Bobby Ward to participate.

February 13, 2016 [note special date]

Damon Waitt

*"Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and
Texas Wildflowers."*
Director, NC Botanical Garden
UNC Campus Box 3375
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3375

March 19, 2016

Tim Alderton

"NARGS Trips: Santa Fe and Ann Arbor"
JC Raulston Arboretum
NC State University
Box 7522
Raleigh, NC 27695-7522

April 16, 2016

Pam Beck

"Creating Intimate Garden Spaces"
337 N. Fallsview Lane

Slate of Officers for September Vote

Chair	Charlie Kidder	Secretary	Marlyn Miller
Chair-Elect	Amelia Lane	Treasurer	David White
Vice Chair	Bobby Ward		

Changes in the Piedmont Chapter Board

Many changes are occurring with our Chapter's Board. After several years of service, Vivian Finkelstein and David Duch are stepping down from the board. We thank them both for their dedication and hard work. As most of you know, Bobby Wilder has stepped down as Treasurer after more than twenty years of service. Also, at the completion of my three-year term as Chair, I will be stepping down at the end of next summer. Subject to approval by the members present at our September meeting, we have nominated the following individuals to fill the vacant positions. We will also be taking nominations from the floor.

David White, our past Piedmont Chapter Chair, has graciously agreed to take on the Treasurer job. Bobby Wilder will still be serving as unofficial Gatekeeper and Guardian of the Name Tags at most meetings, however.

Amelia Lane will be serving as Chair-Elect for the next year, and will assume the Chair position at the end of Summer 2016. Amelia is a Cary native and has lived in Raleigh for the past 25 years. Those of you who frequent the JC Raulston Arboretum will probably recognize Amelia as the Garden Leader for the Mixed Border. She is also currently serving on the JCRA Board of Advisors. Amelia and her business partner Beth Jimenez own Lasting Impressions, makers of hypertufa troughs and garden sculptures. Amelia and Beth also conduct workshops to teach others how to craft decorative and useful items for their own gardens. We are very fortunate that Amelia has agreed to join the Piedmont Chapter Board. ❧



Photo by Richard Lane

Amelia Lane

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NARGS Piedmont Chapter Meeting

JC Raulston Arboretum
Ruby McSwain Education Building

September 19, 2015, 9:30 am

Jenks Farmer

*“Deep-Rooted Wisdom: Stories
from Generations of Gardeners”*

Columbia, SC 29205

Book Sale

Jenks Farmer available to autograph
his book, *Deep Rooted Wisdom*.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charlie Kidder, Chair chas36kid@gmail.com
919-377-2938

Amelia Lane, Chair Elect*
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919-787-6228

Bobby Ward, Vice Chair*/Program Chair
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David White, Treas.* dmwhite_nc@yahoo.com
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919-918-3580.

Bobby Wilder, Distribution Manager
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919-755-0480

Bobby Ward, Quality Review Editor

OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:

Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox

Refreshments: Gwen and Maurice Farrier

* Proposed, awaiting September vote.

Application Form to Join NARGS Member for Half Price

The Piedmont Chapter has agreed to cover 50% of the Society's annual membership fee for one year for any chapter member who has not previously been a NARGS member. To take advantage of this offer, please print and complete this application form and either bring it to the September meeting or mail it to David White along with a check for \$20 for a regular membership or \$7.50 for a student membership if you have a current student ID. David's mailing address is 3 Ontario Ct, Durham, NC 27713.

Last Name	First Name	Area code/Phone		
Street		City	State	Zip

Food Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letter below,
please consider bringing something to share.

September	A—C	January	I—M
October	D—F	February	N—S
November	G—H	March	T—Z
		April	Any and All!

Saturday, August 29

Workshop for making Hypertufa Troughs and Concrete Leaf Birdbaths

9am - 12 noon Hypertufa Workshop

All materials provided. You will take home your completed trough.

\$70 payable to Lasting Impressions

1—4pm Concrete Leaf Workshop

All materials provided. You will take home your completed leaf sculpture.

\$60 payable to Lasting Impressions

Registration deadline August 25

4904 Hermitage Dr., Raleigh, NC 27612

For more information, contact Amelia Lane and Beth Jimenez at
Amelia_Lane@gmail.com

www.lastingimpressionsleaves.com; 919-787-6228