

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 32, Issue 1

January/February 2019

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 25 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room D

GARDENING IN THE TERMINAL MORaine

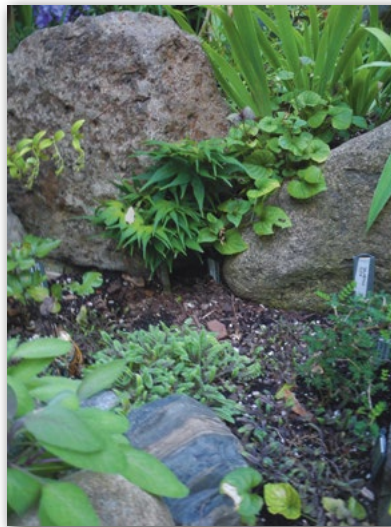
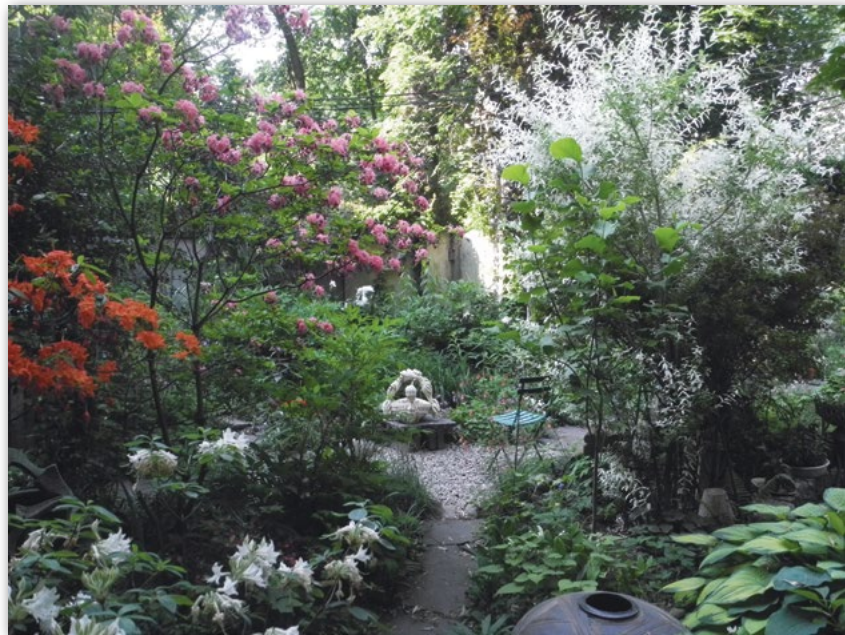
Speaker:

Ragnar Naess

Brooklyn has Long Island's geology. Our bit of the island is composed of sand, gravel and river stones dumped by the last retreating glacier. Its endowment is superb drainage, almost non-existent organics, and naturally flat terrain with diverse climatic niches. Furthermore, in my neighborhood of Fort Greene, sunlight is at a premium, with less than 50% at best.

I have used these features as guidelines for laying out and nurturing my garden, and in my presentation will share the story of its evolution from 1973 to the present.

—R.N.



Photos by Ragnar Naess



RAGNAR NAESS grew up in Connecticut and Vermont, and has gardened since childhood, always in shade and with poor soil. After following a variety of academic pursuits in California, he turned to pottery-making. He apprenticed with the Bauhaus master potter Marguerite Wildenhain at Pond Farm, and was inspired to embrace ceramics as a career. For the last 47 years Ragnar has worked in clay, fashioning everything from abstract sculptures to teapots. He has taught the craft at the 92nd Street Y and elsewhere, and it was pottery-making that brought him to Fort Greene. Finding himself unable to rent space for a kiln and workshop led him, early on, to buy the property where he now works and lives. Ragnar has been a Brooklyn resident for 45 years. (ragnarclay.com)

NYBG Midtown Education Center is located at 20 West 44th Street, 3rd floor, between 5th and 6th Avenues (General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen Building). This location is two blocks from Grand Central Terminal and near several subways.

ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

by Brendan Kenney, Chair



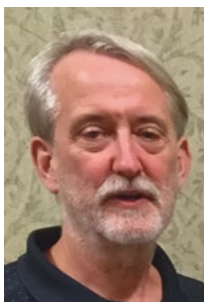
IN SPITE OF THE PRESS, the highly anticipated reopening of the Ford Foundation Atrium to the public has been delayed. The 10,000-square-foot garden designed by Dan Kiley in 1964 was rethought by Raymond Jungles. With improved wheelchair accessibility, new plantings and new Saturday hours, the reconfigured building will soon continue to be a welcoming oasis in midtown. The destruction of Kiley's Damrosch Park and Beaumont North Court at Lincoln Center reminds us to appreciate good landscape restoration. Currently, Kiley's grove of chestnut trees at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee (1965) is scheduled to become a lawn. Thankfully, Miller House (1955) in Columbus, Indiana has been permanently preserved.

ON A RECENT TRIP TO INDIANA I was concerned about the many deer tracks until the snow melted to reveal extensive vole tunnels in beds of tulips, crocus and allium. At least the alliums survived, but it is an urban luxury to not give much thought to voles and deer.

BACK IN NEW YORK, rats, though an endless source of internet

WHY DON'T YOU?

by Steve Whitesell



Plant your seed exchange packets outdoors soon after you receive them so they can undergo the stratification many species require for germination. Clever apartment dwellers with limited outdoor space for seed pots can mimic stratification by storing seeds in the refrigerator for several weeks and plant out in the spring. *Seed Germination Theory and Practice* by the late Dr. Norman Deno, familiar to many members, can be consulted for the specific germination requirements of many species.

Treat cabin fever by finally attending to interior projects you've ignored during milder months. Fix those things already that have driven you crazy for months! Launder or dry clean the curtains. Repair or rewire the lamp or whatever, rather than discard it and purchase a new item. Consult your own expanding list for priorities.

Examine the print and online catalogs of nurseries unfamiliar to you and place orders. Small family-run nurseries are an endangered species and need our support. I recommend Geraniaceae.com, Edelweiss Perennials, Quackin' Grass Nursery and Digging Dog Nursery. Other specialty nurseries can be found in the back of the NARGS Quarterly.

Research local and regional gardens you would like to visit later this spring, summer and fall. Sign up for tours or open days that provide access to notable private gardens not normally open to visitors. Pencil or enter them into your calendar so you don't overlook them when you're busier. One of the best ways to learn about gardens and glean ideas for your own is to see and experience what others have done.

entertainment, are a constant scourge of urban gardeners. A recent study, "Spatial population genomics of the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) in New York City," (Combs, M. et. al., *Molecular Ecology*, November 2017) revealed that uptown and downtown rats are genetically distinct.

Surely the Bowery rats which John Rommel has battled for many years at Merchant's House garden are a tough breed. His advice: never collapse the holes, but put poison in them; utilize ½" x ½" wire mesh fencing going down one foot to block tunneling; and never touch traps with bare hands, as rats have an excellent olfactory sense. In his experience, the ubiquitous black plastic baited boxes have little effect.

Beyond the threat to plants, there were 103 deer vehicle collisions on Staten Island in 2018. Borough President James Oddo is looking at new ways to bring down the deer population.

Oddo told the Staten Island Advance he is working toward discussing the possibility of bringing a cull, or a controlled hunt, to the island to better manage the deer population. Recently Mayor De Blasio was asked whether he would be open to a cull once the vasectomy program ends. The mayor indicated he would not rule it out.

Essex County, N.J., has been experimenting for two years with deer avoidance technology. On roadways, detection devices are triggered by headlights and emit a high-pitched sound to scare deer away. That technology is also under consideration in NYC.

ON A MORE PLEASANT NOTE: *American Eden*, by Victoria Johnson (Liveright, 2018) is highly recommended for anyone interested in New York horticultural history. This biography of David Hosack provides context to the scant knowledge that most New Yorkers have of Elgin Botanic Garden. The author will speak on her book to the Linnaean Society of New York at the Linder Theater at the American Museum of Natural History on February 12 at 7:30 p.m. The program is free of charge.

Clearly, a deep understanding of our landscapes and their histories is essential to their maintenance, preservation and enjoyment.

Brendan Kenney



Yukie Kurashina, our former treasurer and Instagram webmaster, has returned to Japan. After twenty years at the New York Botanical Garden working in the rock garden, alpine house, and on the kiku show, she leaves a solid legacy to build upon at NYBG as well as in our chapter. Her deep knowledge, patience and excellent ideas will be missed! B.K.

NARGS WEBSITE BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Book of the Month feature on the NARGS website needs reviewers and you could be one of them! In return for writing a 250–350-word review of a book that would interest rock gardeners, the book will be sent free of charge for you to keep. Suggested titles can be provided or you can propose one related to your own interests, subject to approval. They can be newly published works or classic titles worthy of reconsideration. Reviews will be posted for approximately one month and will potentially reach hundreds of NARGS members. Please contact Steve Whitesell at elysium214@aol.com for more information.

NARGS' WORLD-WIDE WEB OF SEED DISTRIBUTION



Thanks go to a longer list than usual of MCNARGS members who showed up in late November and December to sort seeds. I still get a kick from the travels of those seeds: they start in, let's say, my Brooklyn garden, get sent to Michigan for sorting into sleeves by Laura Serowicz, then sent in large boxes to chapters all over the U.S. By the end of the year all the filled glassines (that's what *we* did) go to a volunteer chapter whose job is to fill members' orders, so by the time they arrive back at your doorstep, they may have crisscrossed the country a number of times.

Both FedEx and the USPS have a big hand in keeping the seeds moving. What's more, many seeds first cross oceans and continents to get here, because NARGS has members in more places than you can imagine. The best part of this very participatory project is that, with luck, we can grow plants that we can't buy, and share them at our plant sales!

So thank you to: Ellen Borker, Mary Buchen, Nancy Crumley, Kristy Delfausse, Kean Teck Eng, Patti Hagan, Carrie Ho, Jack Kaplan, Brendan Kenney, Michael Riley, John Rommel, Lisa Shufro, Susan Steinbrock and John Tweddle.

LOLA HORWITZ



A special tour offer to GREECE for NARGS chapter members

Dear fellow rock gardeners,

NARGS has had such a successful tour program the last few years that this year's tours are already filled. However, space is still available for GARDEN OF THE GODS, a tour I will be leading in April to my other homeland—at the very peak of spring flowering. Originally designed for our local cactus club, Thalassa Journeys has extended a \$500 discount to NARGS chapter members as well. I feel comfortable offering this opportunity to our community since nowhere are you apt to see more fabulous rock garden plants in full bloom this April than in Greece!

Rains in Greece have been steady this winter and a banner spring flowering is expected—peaking in April during our visit! Thalassa Journeys has a great body of experience in Greece. The tour will visit many of the premier archeological sites (which, protected from grazing, are often abounding in special flowers such as terrestrial orchids) and several of the most spectacular islands including a fabulous tour through Crete, where my parents were born.

What better way to launch the spring? If you would like to know more, go to www.thalassajourneys.com/tours/garden-of-the-gods-2019/. Don't hesitate to call me at 856-633-3611, or you can sign up with colin@thalassajourneys.com.

Sincerely,
PANAYOTI KELAIDIS



ROOTED IN DIVERSITY NARGS SPRING STUDY WEEKEND MAY 3 – 5, 2019

Hosted by the Delaware Valley Chapter
Sheraton Great Valley Hotel in Frazer, PA
Pre-Conference trip to Shenks Ferry and
New Jersey Pine Barrens, May 2–3

For details and registration, see the
Winter 2018/2019 NARGS *Rock Garden Quarterly*
or online: www.dvcnargs.org/studyweekend.html

Deadline for registration is March 1, 2019

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2019?

We value your involvement in MCNARGS and hope you are planning to re-up for 2019. Renewals were due in December, so please do not delay any further!

If you have a multi-year membership and aren't sure of your status, feel free to contact Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) at 718.788.3306 or nancycrumley@gmail.com. All others, please take a moment now to mail your check. If possible, please include the membership form (below).

MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: _____

Complete this form and give it with your payment (cash or check payable to MCNARGS) to Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) at the next chapter meeting.

Or, mail a check with the form to Nancy Crumley at:

324 Seventh Avenue #4R
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Check one:

- 1-year Membership \$30
 3-year Membership \$75

PLEASE PRINT NEATLY:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Check all that apply:

- I am renewing my membership I am a new member
 I would like to receive a paper copy of the newsletter
 I would like my newsletter via email only

We are a volunteer organization and would like your participation in our activities. How can you help?

- Plant Sale Committee Help increase our presence on Social Media
 Serve as Webmaster Contribute articles to the newsletter
 Other: _____

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THE MANHATTAN CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society, founded in 1987, is a group of gardening enthusiasts who are dedicated to the propagation and promotion of an eclectic range of plants, with emphasis on alpine and rock gardening selections. Our Chapter programs, designed for a sophisticated mix of professionals and amateurs, cover a broad spectrum of special interests such as rock and alpine, woodland, bog, raised bed and planted walls, as well as trough and container gardening.

The Urban Rock Gardener is a newsletter published by the Manhattan Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society.

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Our gratitude to Michael Riley for donating the printing and mailing of the *Urban Rock Gardener*.



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WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL THE UPCOMING MEETINGS

Submission deadline for March/April issue: February 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

5½ Jane Street #4R

New York, NY 10014

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Monday, March 18

The Anza-Borrego Desert in Bloom

BEN BURR *via Skype*

Monday, April 1

The Best Alpines of My Life

GER VAN DEN BEUKEN

THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



JOIN TODAY. NARGS is for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials and woody plants. Annual dues in the U.S. and Canada are \$40, payable in U.S. funds. VISA/Mastercard accepted.

Benefits of membership include: *Rock Garden Quarterly* with articles on alpines and North American wildflowers; annual Seed Exchange with thousands of plant species; study weekends and annual meetings in either U.S. or Canada; and book service.

Join online at www.nargs.org. Or write: Bobby J. Ward, Executive Secretary NARGS, P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604.

The NARGS *Quarterly* is now online and members have free access at www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly.

SAVE THE DATES!

ANNUAL MCNARGS PLANT SALE

Saturday, May 11

PROSPECT HEIGHTS GARDEN TOUR

Saturday, May 18

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Please recycle this publication. Thank you!