

The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 31, Issue 3

May/June 2018

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 21 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room A

CONIFERS AND ACERS FOR FOLIAR IMPACT ACROSS THE SEASONS

Speaker:

Bruce Feller

Conifers, large and small, and Japanese Maples for durability, versatility and seasonal interest – Bruce will talk of some things learned and some things lost over a 29-year gardening adventure on eastern Long Island using these plants in various combinations. He will share his thoughts and observations about timelines, sun/shade patterns, pest resistance and “long term behavior.” He offers this presentation in the spirit of discourse, with a backdrop of illustrative images to support and stimulate dialogue.



BRUCE FELLER and his wife, Marianne, retired in 1998 from successful business careers in New York City, assuming full time residence at their Long Island home in Old Field to pursue other interests – largely horticultural. Over the last 29 years they have designed, installed, maintained and enhanced an extensively planted landscape of two acres, creating a tapestry of color, texture and form. Rhododendrons, azaleas and Japanese maples are integrated

with conifers – large and small – for riotous spring color and seasonal interest throughout the year. The Feller Garden has frequently participated in the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program.

Both Bruce and Marianne are active members of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS). They were each awarded the organization's Bronze Medal in 2009 for their tireless efforts teaching the public to grow and appreciate the genus *Rhododendron*. Bruce has served as President of the ARS New York Chapter, Director of District Seven Chapters, Eastern Vice President, and President of the Society. He has been invited to speak at many ARS meetings and has taught courses in residential landscape design at Suffolk Community College.

Bruce's son Colby is a horticulturist with Gresham Lang Garden Design. Colby and his father collaborated on the dwarf conifer garden on the rooftop of the Arsenal in Central Park, which has been designated an American Conifer Society Reference Garden.



Photos by Bruce Feller

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.

MAY GARDEN TOURS

Wednesday, May 16 at 6:00 p.m.

189-15 50th Avenue in Fresh Meadows, Queens

Open to NARGS and MCNARGS members only.

RSVP: Brendan Kenney at nycbeard@gmail.com or 917-544-3288.

Please note: This is a group tour only. Gardens are not open for individual visits.

Paul Dambrosi has invited us to visit his extensive tufa garden in Fresh Meadows which includes a wide variety of alpine plants. In Lisa Parvin's garden in Little Neck, Paul has created another impressive rock garden which amazed us on our last visit. Both gardens are not to be missed.

Public transportation: No. 7 train to Flushing-Main Street and Q27 bus (takes about one hour from Manhattan). Brendan will lead a group leaving the Fifth Avenue station (Manhattan) on the 7 train at 4:45 p.m. Parking is easy if you are traveling by car.

Please contact Brendan to confirm your attendance and to get further details.

PAUL DAMBROSI'S GARDEN



Photos by Brendan Kenney

LISA PARVIN'S GARDEN



SOUTH FORK GARDEN TOUR

Sunday, June 24

Tour begins in East Hampton at 11 a.m. and ends in Bridgehampton at 5 p.m.

Open to NARGS and MCNARGS members only.

Please note: This is a group tour only. Gardens are not open for individual visits.

GLADE GARDEN

East Hampton

Abby Jane Brody will share her extensive knowledge of woody ornamentals with us as we view the rarities in her garden of over 35 years. Many shade-loving perennials are featured, as well as a range of *Stewartia*, a purple-leaved *Styrax japonicus*, hydrangeas, and much more.



Photos by Abby Jane Brody



ENTWOOD GARDEN

Bridgehampton

Marlene Marko and Loren Skeist expanded the original garden of less than an acre by another six acres. With a team of garden specialists, they have added new gardens and features over a period of twenty years, creating a strolling garden of rocks, ponds, waterfalls, and exotic trees.

WILFRED HEILBUT GARDEN

Bridgehampton

“He has the most comprehensive collection of mature European beech selections that I’ve seen in the U.S. or Europe, from very small to very large, planted so each can be viewed and admired as an individual specimen.” – Abby Jane Brody



MARDERS GARDEN CENTER

Bridgehampton

The nursery is set on 40-acre grounds in the middle of Bridgehampton and is filled with rare and unusual trees and plants. You are free to wander through the oyster shell paths among the exotic flowers and extraordinary garden statuary. Marders is committed to using and selling only organic products and their grounds are free of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.

Marders was established by Charlie and Kathleen Marder in 1975.

See www.marders.com for more info.

If you would like to attend, contact Brendan Kenney at nycbeard@gmail.com or 917-544-3288.

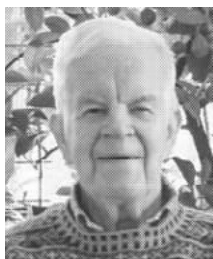
Please indicate whether you need a ride, or, if you are driving, how many passengers you can accommodate.

Please note that departure from NYC must be no later than 8 a.m. due to summer traffic. Bring a brown bag lunch.

JOHN JACOBUS (1929–2018)

Long-time MCNARGS member John Jacobus passed away on March 26, 2018 at the age of 88 in Chelsea, Massachusetts.

TRUSTED TREASURER, SMART INVESTOR AND LAWYER



John Jacobus joined MCNARGS, I believe, from the outset in 1987. He had retired from a corporate position and either volunteered to be the first treasurer or was gently lassoed into the position by Larry Thomas, the chapter chairman and founder.

Since the chapter was newly established, it had to go through various hoops to be legal, to accept money from members, to rent a space for meetings, etc. Larry Thomas has always been

recognized as an inspired leader whose enthusiasm for rock gardening was contagious, but John had a gift with numbers and finance that was indispensable. He was very active in helping Larry and Steve Whitesell run the chapter's first Winter Study Weekend in 1995. That meeting definitely put MCNARGS on the map of young, vibrant chapters.

When we planned a second Winter Study Weekend for January 2006, I was the chairperson who suddenly got a call from the downtown Marriott Hotel in the late summer of 2005, informing me that the hotel would be closed for a major cleaning over our scheduled weekend. We had a contract, but since we were being moved to the midtown location, they wanted to raise the room and banquet rates. We had already sent out information, registration fees, etc., to NARGS members and felt badly used. John accompanied me to the meeting with Marriott personnel and truly did himself proud as a litigator. This mild, soft-spoken man got his back up and wouldn't let them charge a cent more for the new location. I was very impressed! In the end, attendees were happy being in midtown in an historic building close to shows and museums. After that year, John respectfully asked to be replaced. Twenty years of keeping track of our funds and investing them wisely had earned him an honored position in our history!

John had an apartment in Manhattan but shared a family house with siblings in Princeton. That's where he spent weekends and developed a fine garden. Chapter members had the pleasure of a garden tour some time in the '90s.

LOLA HORWITZ

Vivid images of John Jacobus hiking at Cedar Breaks in 2006 remain etched in my memory. That year's AGM held at Snowbird in the Wasatch Mountains was the last NARGS meeting we both attended. His vigor and enthusiasm climbing rocks seemed surprising for a man of such quiet elegance at an advanced age. We were inspired not only by the beautiful plants, but by John himself.

BRENDAN KENNEY

John Jacobus was a man of many interests and accomplishments, but I was mostly familiar with his horticultural interests, which were wide-ranging. He spoke fondly of his gardens in Princeton and Nantucket. After much needling, the chapter was invited to visit Princeton one fine May Saturday to admire the town garden surrounding the grandly proportioned stucco Arts and Crafts weekend house John shared with his siblings. The gardens were mostly cast in deep shade by the house and large trees. I remember he was growing a number of epimedium species and varieties before they were as widely available as they've become lately, as well as other North American and Asian woodland plants.

John was an avid grower from seed and experimented with gibberellins and other growth regulators to break dormancy and induce germination in seeds that normally required two or more growth cycles. John shared his methodically recorded experimental results with the chapter

many years ago and with the larger national audience during the first Winter Study Weekend hosted by the Manhattan Chapter in January 1995.

John was already active in MCNARGS when I joined in 1989 and I believe he was a founding member. He served many, many years as Treasurer and recommended investments of funds raised by the two study weekends that supported speakers, field trips and other chapter activities for many years. John was a steady and very active presence in MCNARGS and contributed generously to our continued growth and stability.

STEVE WHITESSELL

SPRING FORTH

"March" is anticipation, followed by a disclaimer.

With each recurring snowstorm, you hoped it would be the last. Your fingers are crossed, but so are your eyes. You are looking for any positive sign, while counting the hours 'til spring. We keep wondering, "Is Mother Nature with us, or against us?"

I am searching for measly hints, even if the last frost date in my zone is a month away. You try to be optimistic every time you walk out into the garden. Or pass a barren street tree pit. You stare down deep into the topsoil. As if overbearing breath can warm the earth to make it happen. And then you notice how similar 'breath' and 'earth' are, after writing those words.

But then one morning I catch the first green activity – more a miracle than a reward.

It is tight and tiny, the patch of *Asplenium trichomanes*, a fern that grows on short rhizomes but has a name longer than its fronds. Seeing the earnest little bit of emerald energy has me wondering, "At that marginal time of year for terrace planting, what else did I transplant in late November?" Until yesterday I had forgotten about such a little fern, completely. Do squirrels have this problem, remembering where they buried the goods? Or do they just go on instinct, knowing you need to plant for tomorrow?

It was the end of the year 2017, almost too late to still be shoving things into the soil, especially if your growing medium is in containers. No matter how large the pots and troughs might be, container gardening simply does not offer the same insulation as when you go down into the belly of the earth.

But the cacophony of hardhat crews and daylight-blocking scaffolds had just been removed from my little garden that grows fifteen stories above New York City sidewalks. I wanted to be out there mucking around more than ever when I transplanted a small and sprightly tuft of green. Besides, they say that *Asplenium trichomanes* is valued in cultivation for its hardiness down to minus four degrees. With the ability to colonize stone walls and gritty spaces, it sounded perfectly suited to the alpine conditions of my cold, windy and unforgiving rooftop garden.

The botanical name – along with the grower's initials – were written in pencil on the label. It was comforting to have that information. Provenance goes a long way, in and out of the garden. Moreover, what could be a more propitious sign than another city gardener who was successfully passing along her division?

I look forward to doing the same.

ABBIE ZABAR



Asplenium trichomanes

YUKIE IN WONDERLAND: A PEEK INSIDE THE ALPINE HOUSES AT NYBG



Yukie leads the way



Echium candicans in the Nolan Greenhouses



Violas headed for mass planting



Inspecting the treasures



Ready for the auricula theater

Yukie Kurashina met our group of ten at the New York Botanical Garden on March 28, and led us to the Nolan Greenhouse propagation area, where we were joined by NYBG intern Ethan Fenner. After she provided some details and answered questions, we all headed to the Alpine House. The group thrill was palpable as we admired the exquisitely-grown plants profusely blooming. Yukie continued her talk until Michael Hagen joined us and carried on with the tour. After proceeding to the adjacent pit houses, we headed to the still seasonally-closed Rock Garden. Many of us had long wondered what was happening behind that closed gate. Beyond our dreams turned out to be the answer. It was a beautiful spring day, and with much in flower, the troughs, crevice beds and entire garden thrilled all of the participants. Kudos to Michael Hagen and his staff, and thanks to Yukie for treating us to a rare glimpse into a remarkable greenhouse.

BRENDAN KENNEY

Photos by Brendan Kenney, except where noted



Saxifraga 'Millstream'



Primula auricula



Pseudotrillium rivale



Primula allionii cultivars



Draba hoppeana in crevice bed



Helleborus spp.



Narcissus bulbocodium

Photo by Abbie Zabar

Photo by Steve Whitesell

Photo by Steve Whitesell

ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

by Brendan Kenney, Chair



IN SPRING THOUGHTS TURN TO PLANTS and the mountains beckon, even in Manhattan. Where to head? The Palisades were long known as “the Mountain.” Hook Mountain is well-known as a prime location for spring wild flowers in our area. But the legendary Snake Hill, the highest point in the Meadowlands, recalls the story of Andre Michaux collecting acorns of *Quercus alba* and *Q. rubra* in December 1785. These were sent back to Europe with other seeds and plants in his effort “to replenish the forests of France.” Eighteen partridges (quail?) were also included.

I prefer the original Dutch name, “Schlangenberg” (Snake Mountain), which the English somewhat prophetically changed to Snake Hill. Hoping to diminish the negative associations of the lunatic asylum and almshouses located there, the official name was changed in 1926 to Laurel Hill, though almost 100 years later no one calls it by that name. It was once 50 feet taller and five times greater in width. Though a prison quarry had long existed, it was in 1962 that a demolition company began to remove a large part of the mountain.

German botanist Hugo von Rathenau in 1887 wrote a detailed description of the Schlangenberg flora in the *Abhandlungen der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft zu Görlitz*. Prepared with this and the Laurel Hill Vegetation Inventory (Karl Anderson and the Torrey Botanical Society, 2006)* I recently set out to see what might be growing on the storied mountain. The trees whose predecessors' acorns were sent back to the Jardin du Roi (Jardin des Plantes) still remain: *Quercus alba* and *Q. rubra*, as well as *Q. velutina*, *Prunus serotina* and many more fine American trees.

Lonicera japonica, *Polygonum cuspidatum*, and *Alliaria petiolata* have overrun many of the herbaceous plants. I am curious to return to the Schlangenberg to discover what else might be more apparent as the season progresses. Hook Mountain, another quarry site, also contains many invasive plants; the sighting of a native plant in this once botanically rich location would provide a special satisfaction and connection to botanical history.

LAST MONTH I VISITED GLOUCESTER, VIRGINIA with MCNARGS member Sabine Stezenbach. She had invited me to attend a regional meeting of the Garden Writers Association held at Brent and Becky's Bulbs. It was the perfect time to see spring bulbs in bloom, and a workshop planting of a layered pot of summer bulbs was a good reminder that summer bulbs are also full of anticipation. The very sociable group included past MCNARGS speaker Ruth Clausen. Becky Heath, current president of the GWA, put together an informative program of speakers and garden visits that ran from noon on Saturday to noon on Sunday, which allowed for easy and efficient travel. Gardeners love innovation!

A GREAT HOOSIER GARDENER, JIM DOVERSBERGER, did not live to see another spring. *Sanguinaria canadensis*, *Dicentra cucullaria*, *Arisaema triphyllum* and various trilliums under *Cornus florida*, *Cercis canadensis* and two massive *Platanus occidentalis* will long be his legacy in the Butler-Tarkington neighborhood in Indianapolis. Life continues.

*Sadly, Chris Christie disbanded the State of New Jersey Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission which was involved in the 2006 survey. There is no longer an umbrella organization to coordinate the 17 jurisdictions in the development of the Meadowlands.

Brendan Kenney

MOLLY THE WITCH – BUD OR BLOSSOM?



Two years ago I became the happy owner of *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* (given the moniker of “Molly the Witch” to avoid an unpronounceable name), due to the generosity of the late Tom Stuart. As MCNARGS members know, Tom grew an extraordinary selection of plants, some of them quite rare, and grew them to perfection. Molly lived in a large pot for a year and was then planted out into a new bed last year. From the first sight of her red ruffled foliage in March, to the budding and blossoming toward the end of April, she's been a gorgeous creature. I leave it to readers to decide which is lovelier...the bud or the blossom?

JUDI DUMONT

WHY DON'T YOU?

by Steve Whitesell



Grow *Corydalis solidia* if you don't already. They provide a very early jolt of deep pink, cherry red or deep purple color and increase rapidly when happy, before going dormant after flowering. The color of the species is less bold than that of the selected varieties like ‘Purple Bird’, ‘G.P. Baker’ and ‘Beth Evans’, which are well worth the extra cost. Make note now of potential locations and quantities for fall planting.

Divide primulas early so they'll establish good root systems before the onset of summer heat. You'll want many more clumps of good color forms, even if they suffer from summer mite infestation.

Source and plant some of the many Asiatic podophyllum species and hybrids coming into cultivation. They're all exceptional all-season plants for woodland and shady urban gardens, with good foliage, flower and fruit, and not as vigorous as native *Podophyllum peltatum*. Prices are still rather high, but to know them is to love them.

If you have lawn areas in your garden, define a crisp edge between the grass and planting beds. Nothing makes the garden look better with less effort.



MCNARGS WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBER
Stella Wong

MCNARGS CELEBRATES CINCO DE MAYO WITH UNA VENTA DE PLANTAS



Photos by Kean Teck Eng, Lola Horwitz,
Jack Kaplan and Brendan Kenney



IN MEMORY OF MIRJAM FARKAS

Field-tripping MCNARGS members will recall the second garden on our Brooklyn outing in June 2017. We were greeted at the front door by an elfin, bright-eyed gardener – Mirjam Farkas – the *genius loci* of a sunken, secret, back-of-brownstone garden, which we could only access by climbing through a rear window and gingerly descending a steep metal staircase. On Tuesday, April 17, Mirjam – in her 84th year – left her earthly garden. The First Lady of Brooklyn Gardening had helped launch the annual Brownstone Brooklyn Garden District Tour. When taken with a garden, or plant, Mirjam would exclaim, in an evocative Transylvanian accent: “*Eet ees exquisite!*” The same could be said for Mirjam and her rose-walled, clematis-climbed *jardin*. Plants exquisite enough to be chosen by Mirjam spread their roots in the bespoke soil of a textile designer turned gardener. (In spring she protected her blooming tree peonies under Japanese parasols.) I already miss her phone greeting: “Hello – eet’s Mirjam!” R.I.P.

PATTI HAGAN



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MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: _____

If you haven't yet renewed for 2018, please complete this form and give it with your payment (cash or check payable to MCNARGS) to Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) at our May chapter meeting.

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

324 Seventh Avenue #4R
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Please check one:

- ☐ Individual \$20 ☐ Individual - 3 years \$50
☐ Student \$15 ☐ Gift Membership \$15

Current members may give a Gift Membership to a new member.

PLEASE PRINT NEATLY:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please 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: _____

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2018

CHAIR

Brendan Kenney ManhattanNARGS@verizon.net

TREASURER

Yukie Kurashina ykurashina@hotmail.com

SECRETARY

Lola Horwitz llhorwitz@gmail.com

DIRECTORS

Nancy M. Crumley nancycrumley@gmail.com

Judith Dumont judi.dumont@gmail.com

Michael Riley riley2362@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Nancy M. Crumley nancycrumley@gmail.com

TOUR DIRECTOR

Brendan Kenney nycbeard@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jack Kaplan jkaplan1313@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER PROOFREADER

Nancy M. Crumley

NEWSLETTER FOUNDING EDITOR

Lawrence B. Thomas

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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WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT ALL THE UPCOMING MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

Submission deadline for September/October issue: August 20

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

5½ Jane Street #4R

New York, NY 10014

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Monday, September 10

**Hardy Bulb Favorites: Growing Colchicum,
Narcissus and Allium**

ARNOLD TRACHTENBERG

Pacific Bulb Society

Saturday, October 13

Annual Tri-State Meeting

Ross Hall, New York Botanical Garden

Speaker:

VOJTĚCH HOLUBEC

Chief Researcher, Crop Institute Gene Bank,

Prague, Czech Republic

Author, "The Tian Shan and Its Flowers"

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 alpiners 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.

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