



The Trillium

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

Stone—A Satisfying Garden Element

By Cyndy Cromwell

In August of 2011, I relocated from Connecticut to a hilly, wooded property in South Raleigh near Swift Creek. The shallow back yard ran precipitously downhill to the back of the house and the bright red clay soil was studded with weedy yellow pines and gums.



The “Before Garden”

walls punctuated by steps connecting to the rest of the backyard.

I knew professional help was needed if this area were to become a garden. Luckily, I found Shannon Hathaway and her stone artist, Daniel, of the now defunct Green Heron Landscaping to design and construct two



December close-up

The project was fun and exciting – especially the trips to the stone yard to put together pallets of lichen-y, mossy rocks and boulders of character. Shannon and Daniel executed a masterpiece of quirky placement and off-kilter sensibility – the idea I had in my head, but even better! - with lots of nooks and crannies for planting.



A December View

With the hard work finished, the beds filled with top soil and compost, it was at last time for planting. Mistakes were made, as they say: I'm new to gardening in the Southeast, so plants from the north, like *Alchemilla mollis* died fairly quickly! In addition, it took a while to figure out that the beds, underlaid with native clay, were slow draining.



Early Planting—March 2012



Early Spring

Happily, there are many plants that do well in the damp, part sun conditions, particularly primula and pulmonaria species, as well as hostas, acanthus and fall blooming anemones. For early spring ephemerals like *Ficaria verna* 'Brazen Hussey' and *Thalictrum thalictroides* occupy cozy homes among later emerging herbaceous plants. I prefer a very full look and would much rather "mulch" with plants than pinestraw. Lately, dwarf conifers have found places among all the herbaceous plants.

Though these walls were made five years ago, long before I was even thinking about alpines, they turn out to be a wonderful staging area for a current obsession, fish box troughs. So many of the tiny treasures that didn't perform for me, even on a well drained, sloping site, are doing well in their containers now.



June 2012



June 2012

Starting out with a beautiful, structural foundation of stone has made all the difference in this area. I appreciate so much my good fortune in having this favorite garden right outside the back door! ☺



Trough close-up



Trough Garden

All photos by the author.



Introducing Belvedere

By Gail Norwood

Dear Garden Friends,

I look forward to sharing the history of my garden with you at our upcoming meeting. The garden has been my pride and joy for many years and continues to be an important focal point in my life.

My late husband, Mike and I moved to this property in 1992 so it is 25 years in the making. More than once during those 25 years it was suggested that we name the garden but nothing ever seemed to fit. Just recently I gave some more thought to that issue and decided on the name "Belvedere." Now I'm trying it out on you! I hope you will indulge me during the presentation, in explaining how the name came to be.

Being from Williamsburg, VA, I naturally found our colonial style neighborhood in Chapel Hill appealing. The architecture, signature paint colors and picket fences made it feel like home but the big draw was the two acres of natural beauty allowing me to picture the garden of my dreams. There were very few plantings but the bones were there. The front and sides were fairly sunny and open and the back was a large area of untamed woodland, full of poison ivy and Japanese honeysuckle vines. It took several years to clear it



and see how paths and planting beds might evolve. Over time it took shape and reached an enjoyable level of maturity in about the last ten years.

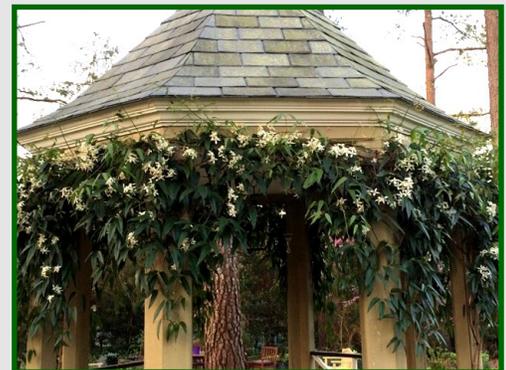
Garden elements were chosen in keeping with the colonial theme and flavor of the house and neighborhood. A black ball and chain keep the entry gate closed, and there are two small out buildings and brick paths near the house, reminiscent of a colonial kitchen, or smokehouse. There is an herb kitchen garden by the back deck near a bricked patio with seating. Nearby beds filled with hydrangeas and roses put on an early summer show.



One of the main features in the garden is the Gazebo, seated deep in the wooded area. It is an exact replica of the one in Williamsburg's Benjamin Waller Garden. This garden is one of the most popular open-to-the-public gardens, and is often featured in Colonial Williamsburg publications, calendars, etc and sometimes used for weddings. I call this the Crown Jewel of the garden as it draws you



back, and then invites you to stay. A ring of dogwoods surround the gazebo and light it up in spring. Two *clematis Armandii* have grown up around it and the fragrance of the spring blossoms it produces is always a welcome surprise. In fall, the setting sun illuminates the dogwood leaves for a dramatic effect.





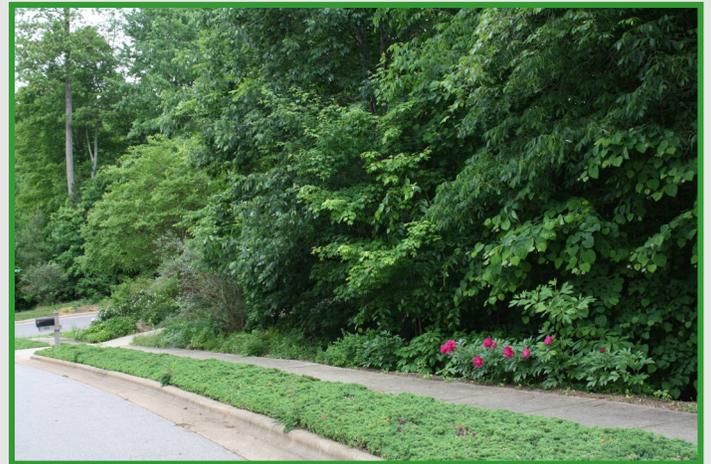
The installation of a deer fence in 2009 brought about new changes. For many years I had successfully used a home made deer repellent but that eventually started to fail. Perhaps the deer population was increasing but it clearly wasn't working any more. So the deer fence was built just in the back area and I no longer try to garden in the front and sides where deer can graze. This has allowed me to concentrate plantings, and rearrange some beds. There are a few different treatments of the deer fence to keep it as aesthetically pleasant as possible. One part is a double picket, creating a baffle to keep the deer out. It really works and doubles as a support for some climbing roses!

The garden has been a place for family, friends and neighbors to gather and provided some rich memories of special events. From my daughter's engagement party, to my grand-daughter's "Fancy Nancy" party, to a neighborhood pot luck, to a Teddy Bear Picnic, the garden has provided the perfect back drop for people to get together. It has been an honor and pleasure to be on several garden tours, and to be featured in four magazines, which has been most rewarding. As is true of most of us, I love to share my garden with other gardeners!  All photos by the author

Joy – Plants – Friends

By Tom Harville

When Bobby asked me to talk about my garden, I immediately knew that I wanted you all to know what my garden means to me. Not just all the different plants but what it does to my psyche, to my soul. So after a lot of K.I.S.S, I distilled it down to these three words, Joy, Plants and Friends. So I want to show you some very special places in my garden, followed by a whirlwind tour of spring 2016. 





Closing the Garden Gate

By Bobby J. Ward

We closed the gate to our garden and house in late May, a scant 15 minutes before the legally agreed upon time to officially sell, leaving behind 41 years of memories. We turned the property over to an exuberate young couple, who excitedly fumbled with the keys, embarking on their own garden adventures, including (but they may not be aware of) the annual raking and composting of 60 bags of leaves from the paths, unless, that is, they remove the trees.

We moved there on a cold day in March 1975 and the first plant I identified along the pathway to the house was *Podophyllum peltatum*, and thus became the name we gave to the house and property: MayApple. The 0.80 acre wooded lot contains a stream that cuts through the property—spring fed as it pours forth cool water continuously even during the driest weather and droughts, disappearing underground a few blocks upstream. The bedrock of the creek is slate aggregate, which provides a pleasant sound as the water cascades over it in a series of gradual stepdowns. The wooded land on the north side of the property is sandy, the result of the creek's depositing sand and sediments as it meandered over the property for hundreds of years. The south side, where the house sits, consists of heavy, red clay. Thus I had two gardens to tend—a sandy soiled, shady area and a clay, sunny site.

My brief talk will show some of the plants I grew at MayApple over the past four decades. ↪





New Feature This Year: *Introducing New and Long Time Members*



Anna Berry

Anna Berry recently joined the Piedmont Chapter at the suggestion of her friend Gail Norwood. Anna's favorite planting in her own garden is a blue and yellow border. She and her husband Meredith - whose plant interest is container-grown succulents - garden on four acres in Apex.

Anna is a dedicated list maker and labeler, keeping her organized on such a large property. On the “woody or herbaceous” question, Anna notes an increasing interest in conifers, adding, “really, I would like to have one of most everything!” Anna and Meredith struggle with poor soil, which they frequently amend, though they are blessed with both sunny and shady areas.

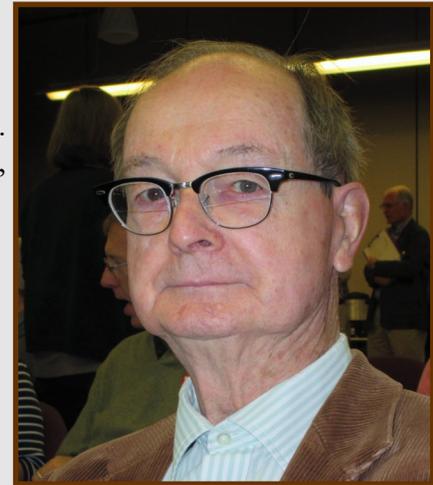
Anna concludes, “My husband likes to say that he is just 'the shovel' but we really have done it all together. We have just added a gazebo and it is really our favorite spot at the end of the day and gave the garden a sense of completion. We hope you all will come and visit!”

Maurice Farrier first joined NARGS in 1988 and the Piedmont Chapter in 1990 after a career as a professor of entomology at NC State. He and his late wife began overseeing the refreshments soon after, and Maurice continues in that important job.

He has particularly enjoyed learning from other Piedmont Chapter members, as well as participating in the seed exchange. Maurice feels he has “traveled the world” via seeds, growing alpines such as edelweiss as well as the original form of Japanese iris, now known as *Iris ensata*.

He is a knowledgeable contributor to the Trillium, notably on the subject of capillary-fed bottle pots for seed starting, and is currently working on a piece about “cone-tainers”, designed for maximizing root growth.

An avid vegetable gardener, Maurice plans to have greens growing inside all winter.



Maurice Farrier



Sandy Horn

Sandy Horn recently joined the chapter, attracted by the quality programs, as well as the opportunity to learn from other members.

She is a conifer specialist, but her Perma-til berms boast quite a few lovely rock garden plants, including a low growing woolly yarrow, *Achillea tomentosa* 'King Edward', summer dormant *Oxalis fabaeifolia*, and *Bulbine frutescens* 'Orange'. Sandy joined last year, and comments that she really misses the plant auctions.

On the subject of labeling: “I'm a labeling fanatic. I use Kincaid stainless steel markers and clear Brother labeling tape with black letters. Each plant is labeled with scientific name, cultivar, and common name, when available.”

Sandy welcomes garden visitors anytime, whether she is home or not: “Stop in anytime!”



Laddie Munger first joined the Piedmont Chapter in 1984 after relocating from Arkansas. He enjoys the opportunity to learn the chapter meetings provide.

After retiring from the NC Agriculture Department in 1999 Laddie became a volunteer at JCRA, working for many years in the Lath house and continuing today as a plant labeler.

His yard is full of unusual woody and herbaceous plants, many originating as seedlings and cuttings from the Arboretum. Laddie does not allow garden visitors to leave empty-handed - I came away from my visit with some very special plants! Next spring, the fabulous Mr. Maple brothers, Matt and Tim Nichols, will be offering one of Laddie's maple seedling selections, a gold barked *acer palmatum*, under the name 'Gold Digger'.



Laddie Munger reaching into one of his seedlings *acer palmatum* 'Gold Digger'.



Chris Smith

Chris Smith, new to NARGS this September, was prompted to join the Piedmont chapter to learn more about gardening after a move from Cary to an over two acre, wooded property in Chapel Hill.

She loves any plant the deer don't eat, in particular *Salvia microphylla* 'San Carlos Festival' and a Chinese may apple, both from Plant Delights Nursery, as well as a mountain laurel, *Kalmia latifolia* 'Ostbo Red'. Friend Marlyn Miller has shared some of Chris's favorite perennials, yellow wood poppy and Chinese foxgloves, *Rebmannia elata*. Sadly, the deer don't touch her despised stilt grass.

Chris enjoys a mix of both herbaceous and woody plants, with an emphasis more on foliage than flowers.

She has very much enjoyed the programs she has attended so far, and appreciates the welcoming nature of our members. ☺



Botanizing Colorado Highway 131

By Tim Alderton

Nancy Doubrava and I were on our last leg of the trip to the 2016 Annual General Meeting of the North American Rock Garden Society being held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. After a stop at the Betty Ford Alpine Garden in Vail, we continued west on interstate 70. Turning north at Wolcott, Colorado, we began the drive through the steppes along CO-131. A dry rolling landscape of browning grass highlighted with hills spotted with sage brush, juniper and other scrubby growth providing protection for dots of color. Spikes of hot pink brought our car to the first of several stops as we drove north toward Steamboat Springs. The color came from the inflorescence of *Oxytropis lambertii*, “purple locoweed”, scattered across the sloping hill of low scrub. The 12” tall spikes of pink pea flowers erupted from clumps of pinnate leaves spaced out across the bare ground interspersed with small clumps of grass and other plants. Stunted bushes of *Rosa woodsii*, “Wood’s rose”, blossomed with pale pink fragrant single flowers. Three inch-tall carpets of *Penstemon caespitosus*, “mat penstemon”, with sprinklings of clear sky-blue blooms crept between taller growing neighbors. A few large white goblets of *Calochortus gunnisonii*, “Gunnison’s mariposa lily”, stood on wiry stems above their shorter cohorts.

A few miles further on brought us to another stop, pulling over at the entrance to a dirt road winding up over a hill. The location, very similar to the last, but with a few different wildflowers growing on the disturbed soil eroded after excavation for the road. Dry loose soil and rock provide homes to *Cryptantha sericea*, “silky cryptantha”, a white flowered forget-me-not relative. Spikes of five petal pristine white flowers dotted with a yellow center, curved out from scorpion tail-like spikelets from the main inflorescence above the hairy stems and leaves. A few feet away, butter yellow spikes of four petal flowers followed by swelling siliquae relaxed over the fleshy silver green spatula shaped leaves arranged in a rosette of *Physaria floribunda*, “pointtip twinpod.” Among shards of broken stone a beautiful mat of blue *Penstemon caespitosus* flowed down next to a bushy *Heterotheca villosa*, “hairy false goldenaster.” Higher up on the bank, a few silver haired seedheads of the bushy *Clematis hirsutissima*, “leather flower”, stood well above the cut foliage.



Cryptantha sericea

Our third stop edged a pasture field. Down a low bank between a fence and the road, at least three different species of blue penstemon blossomed. In a county where all the *Penstemon* species are blue that makes identification a bit challenging when some of them are separated by where the hairs are located on the flower’s lip. *Penstemon caespitosus* and *Penstemon strictus*, “Rocky Mountain penstemon”, clearly were present. *Penstemon watsonii*, “Watson’s penstemon”, appeared to be the third species with smaller individual flowers arranged around the entire stem while the *Penstemon strictus* held larger flower on one side of the stem. To add to the blues at this stop, tall spikes of *Lupinus argenteus*, “silver lupine”, mingled with the penstemon and sagebrush. A scattering of *Linum lewisii*, “Lewis flax”, delicately stood with their 1” wide sky-blue flowers above thin foliage.



Lupinus argenteus

On a steeper bank across the road 8” tall plants of *Sphaeralcea coccinea*, “scarlet globemallow” grew between tall tufts of grass. Their red-orange blossoms with yellow centers appeared like fire above the deeply lobed grey-green foliage. Higher up on the bank a 15 inch-tall specimen of *Packera fendleri*, “Fendler’s ragwort”, stood glowing with bright yellow flowers over the fleshy dark green dentate lobed leaved. On the open ground just above the ragwort; an *Oenothera caespitosa*, “tufted evening primrose”, with morning flowers already drooped in the mid-afternoon sun.



Sphaeralcea coccinea



Heading down the road a few more miles, we began to encounter masses of what would become one of the most ubiquitous yet spectacular wildflowers. Hills of yellow *Wyethia amplexicaulis*, “mule-ears”, indicated moister soils than what preceded our drive earlier. Stopping along a pasture with goats, the strip between the road and the fence held just a few of the *Wyethia* for close observation along with views of the masses on the hillside above. The strip also contained several other wildflowers of note including *Phlox longifolia*, “longleaf phlox”, with soft pink five petal blossoms in small clusters emerging from the grass. Clumps of *Geranium richardsonii*, “Richardson’s geranium”, 15-20”



Eriogonum umbellatum

tall stood with the palest of pink blooms above the deeply cut foliage. Close to the fence creamy umbels of *Eriogonum umbellatum*, “sulphur-flower buckwheat”, provided nectar for a fritillary butterfly (*Speyeria* sp.). This highly variable species would make appearances for much of the trip, but only in the creamy shade, never the deep yellow that it is named for. A tall growing forget-me-not relative, *Heckelia floribunda* the “manyflower stickseed”, towered over most of the neighboring plants despite only growing about 3’ tall. Tiny clear baby-blue flowers topped the branching flower stocks preceding the small Velcro-like seeds that it is named for.

Continuing north we parked at a pull off along the road without knowing what we would find. Down a bank on the adjacent side of the road a reward of hundreds of white goblets spread out among the sagebrush. The porcelain flowers of *Calochortus gunnisonii* stood above short brown grass and forbs grow-

ing between the silver foliage of the sagebrush. Torches of chartreuse *Castilleja flava*, “yellow Indian paintbrush”, emerged from the brush and grass as well. Here and there



Castilleja flava

touches of aging *Castilleja linariifolia*, “Wyoming Indian paintbrush”, added spots of scarlet to the landscape. The now seemingly common blue of a small flowered species of *Penstemon* also poked up through the thicket of sage. On close inspection of the ground in a few areas, the senescing white flowers of the carpeting *Phlox multiflora*, “flowery phlox”, could still be found above their dark green needle like foliage.



Castilleja flava

After driving for about ten minutes and crossing the Colorado River, a rock outcropping with tall spikes of yellow flowers leaning out from the boulders came into sight and brought us to a stop. On exiting the car, another airy yet bushy plant caught my eyes, the thin grey-green foliage and stems of *Mentzelia multicaulis*, “manystem blazingstar”, held now sleeping yellow blossoms of the nocturnal bloomer. Climbing up the outcrop to the spires that stopped the car; *Stanleya pinnata*, “desert princeplume”, presented itself. The cabbage relative grew at home next to a pale yellow flowered form of *Opuntia polyacantha*, “plains prickly pear”. Just before leaving the Colorado River behind a cliff skirted by a colony of *Yucca glauca*, “Great Plains yucca”, stopped the car again. Growing in the scree at the cliff base were about 30-40 mature yucca in flower with three foot tall un-

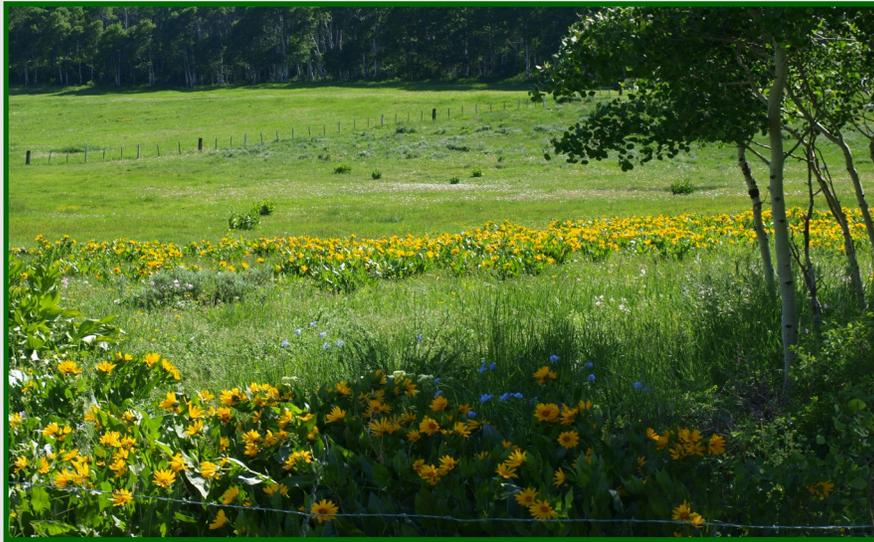


Stanleya pinnata



branched inflorescence of ivory flower. A hand full of two-and-a-half foot tall and wide clumps of *Medicago sativa*, “alfalfa”, covered in tight clusters of amethyst flowers having been untouched by browsing animals grew interspersed with the yucca. More *Opuntia polyacantha* also made an appearance at this hot dry sunny location.

As Colorado 131 turned north away from the Colorado River the vegetation pointed to the fact that water was much more available. *Wyethia amplexicaulis* covered more and more hillsides as we continued. Pulling into a driveway leading to a small farm, we made our last stop to admire a particularly large field of *Wyethia*. The drive crossed a ditch lined with one of the many shrubby *Salix* species. At the edge of the drive skirting this wet situation a variety of mesic



Wyethia amplexicaulis

growers made their home. In the wettest of areas *Veratrum californicum*, “California false hellebore”, with its corn like foliage stood in dense patches with clean pleated foliage. In grassy areas around the *Veratrum*; *Polygonum bistortoides*, “American bistort”, pushed up countless wands topped in the pales pink flower clusters. A lone five foot tall specimen of *Aconitum columbianum*, “Columbian monkshood”, topped with a few freshly open florets of cobalt blue flowers rose out of the surrounding grass. On the higher ground in the surrounding pasture the meadow of *Wyethia* also provided homes for budding *Penstemon procerus*, *Geranium richardsonii*, joined by pale lilac flowered *Allium geyeri*, “Geyer’s onion”.

With time running short before the start of the evening’s events, I told Nancy to not let

me stop anymore until we reached Steamboat Springs. Much more would greet us over the next three day, but this drive along Colorado 131 gave us a taste of what we would experience and a few things we would not see again. ↪

All photos by Tim Alderton.

Chapter Workshop Offered: Making Troughs from Fish Boxes

The chapter will sponsor a "fish box" trough-making workshop February 4, 2017 led by Cyndy Cromwell. It will be held at the home of Amelia Lane, Raleigh, in her basement studio. The workshop starts promptly at 10am and will be over by 12 noon. There is no fee for the workshop but participants will be asked to bring materials and tools - many of which you will probably have on hand. Maximum participants space allows is 10.

Sign up will be by email to amelia.lane@gmail.com and at our January 21 meeting. First priority will be given to Piedmont chapter members, then members of the JCRA. In case of inclement weather Amelia will email participants and the workshop will be held on Saturday, March 11.

Cyndy Cromwell’s Fish box Workshop Materials List participants should bring:

Paints and brushes – leftover paint is fine, black, greys, browns and beiges are best for a natural look. Outdoor/marine paint for a super duper durable finish. *If you choose to use spray paint, that must be done later on your own.*

Hacksaw blades, wire brushes, utility knives, any tool for adding texture. We will supply some tools, don't worry if you don't have anything to bring.

Styrofoam box if you have a particular size or shape in mind. I will have enough boxes for the group, but I may not have what you are looking for. Treat smelly ones with a bleach cleaner.

Sources for boxes:

Harris Teeter and other grocery store fish counters – early morning they often have boxes

Pet stores receive live fish in styrofoam containers – these are quite large

Containers for medical and food gift deliveries – Omaha steaks, etc.

Cyndy will supply a heat gun, boxes, tools and some paints and brushes. ↪



NARGS Piedmont Chapter Meeting

JC Raulston Arboretum

9:30 Gathering Time 10 am Program Begins

January 21, 2017

Enjoy Members' Gardens

6 members share their stories

Cyndy Cromwell

Tom Harville

Sam Jones

Gail Norwood

Robert Priess

Bobby Ward

Goodies to Share



Jan J—Me

Feb Mi—P

March R—T

April W—Z

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Refreshments: Maurice Farrier

Message from the Chair

Amelia Lane

Here we are in 2017!! I hope you all had a good holiday season and enjoyed the warmth of friends and family.

So far we are having a pretty mild winter and hellebores and galanthus are popping up to remind us that our gardening continues year round.

Our chapter is entering an exciting new year. We start off appropriately at our January 21st meeting with our own members sharing photos of their gardens or gardens they have visited in 2016. It's a great opportunity to learn and share our own garden passions with all our members and guests.

This year we will have a plant sale in April, interesting speakers each month, and a chapter picnic in May at the garden of Helen Yoest in Raleigh. And of course we will be planning and working toward the Annual Meeting of the North American Rock Garden Society that we are hosting November 17, 18, and 19, 2017. You can see there are many opportunities for you to participate and help make these events a big success.

We are making plans for a "fish box" trough workshop. Cyndy Cromwell will be leading us in creating this unique and lightweight trough for our gardens or patios. Details will be announced and you can sign up at our January 21 meeting.

Each of our members has unique knowledge, a special talent, and a variety of abilities that can make a difference in our chapter. I get excited just thinking about all that we can share with each other.

I look forward to seeing you at our January 21 meeting.



Piedmont Chapter Programs, Spring 2017

February 11, 2017 (note special date)

Tim Alderton

"Wildflowers of Northwestern Colorado"

JC Raulston Arboretum, NCSU

March 18, 2017

Annabel Renwick

"Creating a New Ecosystem: the Development of a Piedmont Prairie"

Sarah P. Duke Gardens

Durham, NC

April 15, 2017

Matt Mattus

[President of NARGS]

Topic TBA

Worcester, MA

May 20, 2017

Spring Picnic

Garden of Helen Yoest

Raleigh, NC