

# The Urban Rock Gardener



Volume 30, Issue 5

November/December 2017

## NOVEMBER MEETING

Monday, November 13 at 6 p.m.

NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room A

## THE POMEGRANATE: HISTORY AND USES OF A DIVINE FRUIT

Speaker:

**Bernd Brunner**

Pomegranates are among the earliest types of fruit cultivated by humans, along with olives, figs, grapes, and dates. Yet despite this long history, they remain shrouded in mystery. Was the "forbidden fruit" that Eve used to tempt Adam actually a pomegranate? Does the name – which means "seeded apple" – reflect a real kinship between these two fruits? How do cultivated pomegranates differ from wild varieties? Why has one type of pomegranate conquered the globe while another grows exclusively on Socotra, an island known as the "Galapagos of the Indian Ocean"?

The pomegranate tree probably originated in the region south of the Caspian Sea, but became part of the agricultural tradition across a wide region that stretched from the Himalayas to the Mediterranean. At the same time, the fruit's rich associations – especially as a symbol of fertility – can be traced through the cultures of antiquity. Pomegranates continued to be featured in art throughout the centuries, appearing in works such as Botticelli's *The Virgin and Child with a Pomegranate* and countless still lifes. Eventually, however, they were overshadowed by the citrus fruits, which are fragrant and somewhat easier to process.

This history is still evolving: today the pomegranate is often hailed as a "superfruit," thanks to the high levels of antioxidants and nutrients it contains. Pomegranates are now grown around the world in locations with sufficiently warm summers and mild winters, including Armenia, Iran, Afghanistan, China, and Japan, where it has special cultural significance. India also plays a role, since many experts in phytomedicine there are researching how different parts of the pomegranate tree affect the human body. This interest has a basis in tradition: pomegranate blossoms, bark, and roots have long played a role in Ayurvedic medicine.



Georg Öllinger, *Magnarum Medicinæ herbariæ et zoographiæ imagines* (1553)



Jacob van Hulsdonck, *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Pomegranate* (1620-40)



**BERND BRUNNER** is the author of nonfiction essays and books that explore the history, science and culture behind deceptively commonplace subjects. He has published "histories" of the moon, bears and aquariums, and has written about the sound of languages, the invention of the Christmas tree and the "art" of lying down. His *Birdmania: A Remarkable Passion for Birds*, has just been published in English by Grey-stone Books. Our talk is a foretaste of *Das Granatapfelbuch*, slated for publication in the spring of 2018 by Insel Verlag. Mr. Brunner divides his time between Istanbul and Berlin.



A market in Kandahar, Afghanistan

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.

## DECEMBER MEETING

Monday, December 18 at 6 p.m.  
NYBG Midtown Education Center, Room A

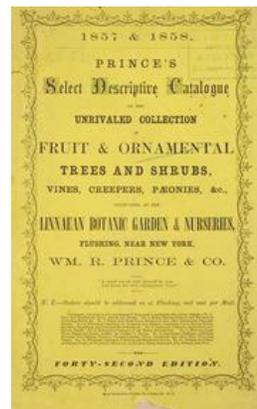
# THE FLUSHING NURSERY LEGACY: THE CENTER OF 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN HORTICULTURE

Speaker:

**Steve Whitesell**



Flushing's historic role in American horticulture is a largely unknown aspect of New York City's national and international legacy. Eighteenth and 19th century Flushing nurseries supplied a multitude of plants unrivaled today, providing plants to private estates, royal parks and a ravenous public. That history and its lasting impact will be discussed.



**STEVE WHITESELL** is a landscape architect, recently retired from the NYC Parks Department, and a longtime MCNARGS member. He is building a garden upstate in rural Schoharie County. Steve recently quadrupled the size of his property and plans to plant a cherry orchard.



Upper left: Illustration from Parsons Catalogue, 1845  
Lower left: Weeping Beech, Flushing, c. 1930

Upper right: Title page of Prince's Catalogue, 1857-1858  
Lower right: Kissena Park Grove

## THE FLORAL TREASURES OF TURKEY REVEALED AT TRI-STATE MEETING

If you wanted to buy hard-to-find plants for your garden and troughs, add a book once owned by Larry Thomas or Tom Stuart to your library, learn about the fascinating flora of Turkey, or simply gather to meet old friends and make new ones, the place to be was the Planting Fields Arboretum on Sunday, October 22.

It was in their spacious Conference Center that the annual NARGS Tri-State Meeting was held, bringing together five local chapters: Manhattan, Long Island, Hudson Valley, Watnong and Connecticut, as well as vendors such as Oliver Nurseries, John Lonsdale, Ernest DeMarie and Dom Dembowski. The doors opened at 10 a.m., and after a hour of browsing, buying and selling, the assembled took to their seats as Brendan Kenney welcomed everyone, then introduced the guest speaker, Yasemin Konuralp, author of *Wild Flowers of Turkey I, Bulbous Plants*.

Ms. Konuralp has operated Runner Tourism for 28 years and conducts field trips throughout Turkey. In her travels she has been alarmed by the disappearance of many endemic species of bulbs, due in part to voracious bulb collectors, both private and commercial. She wrote the book to educate the public about the bulbous plants in Turkey, which has the greatest abundance and variety of bulbs of any country in the world. This is due in part to its unique location, sandwiched between the steppes of Central Asia, the Syrian deserts, the Mediterranean and the mountains of Central Europe. She divides Turkey into three main floral sub-regions: Euro-Siberian to the north, Mediterranean along the western and southern coasts, and Irano-Turanian in the central mountains and east. She treated us to beautifully detailed photo-

graphs of the various geophytes found in these regions, which are especially rich with crocus, fritillaria, and colchicum. Tulips, of course, abound, as well as iris and many orchid species.

After the lunch break, Lola Horwitz took to the podium to remind everyone that registration was open for a NARGS-sponsored tour of Yunnan, China in June 2018. Ms. Konuralp then gave her second talk, this time covering Turkey's alpine plants, again discussing each region in turn. Members of the mustard, daisy and borage families are well-represented, as well as geraniums, campanulas and many other genera. She is especially proud of *Silene konuralpii*, which she discovered in Eastern Anatolia, growing at 8,300 feet and bearing five pink, divided petals. The only drawback – it smells like pastrami!

After the lecture, John Rommel conducted a lively auction of some of the choicest plants. These had been donated for auction by individuals, chapters and vendors. One *Pollia japonica* came with a bonus – a monarch butterfly, which had just emerged from its chrysalis and was clinging to the plant, stretching its wings. Sabine Stezenbach was the highest bidder, and she released the newly-emerged butterfly after the meeting. The auction was followed by the raffle, energetically conducted by Kathy Gaffney, who circulated through the crowd with her bucket of tickets. The final event was the 50/50 raffle, won by Carrie Ho, who generously donated her prize to the Manhattan Chapter. Brendan then bade everyone farewell and we dispersed, carrying our prized purchases and winnings to our cars, a day well spent.

JACK KAPLAN



Patti Hagan preparing the plants



The MCNARGS book table



Plants for sale



The raffle prizes



Ms. Konuralp at the podium



On the auction block



Our auctioneer: John Rommel



Our "raffler": Kathy Gaffney



Sabine Stezenbach and friend

Photos by Jack Kaplan



A lively discussion



Anne Mehlinger helping Brendan pick the 50/50 Raffle winner



Examining Ellen Borker's "haul"

## ANOTHER HOOSIER IN MANHATTAN

By Brendan Kenney, Chair



The image of a tree growing in Brooklyn in the mind's eye has certainly changed!

Lola Horwitz harvested a bounteous crop of the "Hoosier banana," *Asimina triloba* from her Park Slope garden this year. She shared the delicious fruit with Michael Riley, Francisco Correa and some lucky Brooklyn squirrels.

FAR ABOVE THE RODENTS, a multitude of vegetables are being grown at Brooklyn Grange at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and in Long Island City. On a recent visit to the original LIC site, the bounty of the one-acre garden was quite impressive. Local restaurants utilize the delicious produce. A CSA and a market stand on-site are good resources for zero-mile food which is fresher than what is found in stores.

GARDENERS REQUIRE FOOD FOR THE SOUL TOO. Supporting those who grow the plants we admire for their beauty is an important part of the Tri-State meeting. Remember to patronize your favorite sources of well-grown plants. Michele Paladino at Gowanus Nursery provides an incredible resource for urban gardeners. The curated selections available include the eye-catching *Morus alba* 'Nuclear Blast'.

SEEMINGLY NATURAL BEAUTY CAN BE FOUND in surprising locations. The Naval Cemetery Landscape is a delightful meadow with a boardwalk which opened last year at the edge of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The roar of traffic from the BQE is easily forgotten as one finds respite in this tranquil spot. A meadow requires a lot of effort to look "natural."

FOR ANOTHER TYPE OF BEAUTY, head up to the Bronx. Now in its tenth year at New York Botanical Garden, *Kiku: Spotlight on Tradition*, runs through Sunday, November 19. Kiku (chrysanthemums) are trained into impressive forms in the Japanese tradition. Yukie Kurashina, trained by kiku masters at Tokyo's Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, continues the tradition at NYBG. Don't miss her beautiful efforts!



*Brendan Kenney*

## WHY DON'T YOU?

by Steve Whitesell



Cut down the most profusely seeding perennials and grasses so you don't have to pull hundreds of seedlings next year. Asters, miscanthus, solidagos, etc., will produce LOTS of viable seed. Some people enjoy the appearance of dead stems and leaves in the winter landscape, but there is a downside you'll have to deal with next season.

Prune broadleaved evergreens for seasonal wreaths and decorations. Boxwood, cherry laurel, hollies, etc., reveal their structure when deciduous leaves are down and can yield lots of greens, as well as benefit from attentive pruning.

Plant more bulbs. Most will increase over time, so if you plant a couple hundred minor bulbs, which are small and easy to plant, there eventually will be hundreds more from clumping and re-seeding. Most bulb companies have end-of-season sales that allow you to buy cheaply. Wear bicyclist's gloves with padded palms to prevent blisters when planting.

Do more to help your chapter better reflect your own interests. There is a small core group of overworked volunteers who could use your help planning programs, writing newsletter articles, planning field trips and organizing plant sales. Offer to help or initiate and complete a new project of your own invention.

## SEED SORTING SEASON IS UPON US

Once again, the Manhattan Chapter is doing its part to aid the NARGS Seed Exchange. This is one of the Society's most valuable services and we are proud to participate. Please join us to sort and package seeds at 446 Sixth Street in Brooklyn on the dates below. I request that those who would like to help give me a heads up via e-mail: [llhorwitz@gmail.com](mailto:llhorwitz@gmail.com). Evening sessions will be from 7 to 9 on:

**Wednesday, November 29**

**Sunday, December 3**

**Wednesday, December 6**

**Tuesday, December 19**

Other dates will be added as needed. Those good folks who have taken fifteen sleeves (each species has a sleeve) home in the past are welcome, in fact urged, to do so again. Who knows what letters of the alphabet Laura will be sending us? It's always a surprise. I actually love getting to know what the seeds of each genus look like, be they aquilegia or yucca (hint: aquilegia can bounce off the table, but yucca stays put). Come join in the fun! I'll send directions once you contact me.

LOLA HORWITZ



Ellen Borker, Jack Kaplan, Brendan Kenney and Loretta Darby sorting seeds in Lola's kitchen, 2016

Photo by Lola Horwitz

### REGISTRATION STILL OPEN!

2017 NARGS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



ROCK GARDENING IN  
THE SOUTHEASTERN U.S. –  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

RALEIGH-DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

NOVEMBER 17-19, 2017

Sponsored by the Piedmont Chapter. Details and registration form available at [www.piedmontnargs.org](http://www.piedmontnargs.org)

## MCNARGS 2018 MEMBERSHIP – TIME TO RENEW!

Attention all MCNARGS members! It's time to renew your membership for the upcoming year. And with the holidays coming up, consider giving a gift membership to a friend or gardening colleague who might enjoy attending our monthly talks, receiving the *Urban Rock Gardener* and participating in MCNARGS tours and field trips.

**PLEASE PAY YOUR 2018 DUES BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2017.** Yes! This is a change from the past, when the renewals were due in January.

If you have a question about your membership status, feel free to contact Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) at 718.788.3306 or [nancycrumley@gmail.com](mailto:nancycrumley@gmail.com).

Please take a moment to complete the form to the right and mail it with your 2018 dues to our treasurer, Yukie Kurashina, or give the form and payment to Nancy or Yukie at one of our upcoming meetings.

### MCNARGS WELCOMES OUR NEW MEMBERS

**Trish Becker  
Mary Cole  
Bob Harmon**

**Carrie Ho  
Jennifer Kalb  
Catherine Orrok**

### WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE A GANDER AT NEWFOUNDLAND

There may be some of you who wonder why western Newfoundland is, of all places, a "destination" for an eight-day tour by NARGS (July 9–15, 2018). Let me explain, since I've been there.

First, it's an obvious choice given that the Newfoundland Chapter is hosting the 2018 Annual Meeting on July 7 and 8 in St. John's, the provincial capital. There will be speakers from both eastern and western Canada as well as Scotland with several of them speaking on the theme "Where Alpines Meet the Sea." As days will be long in early July, attendees will have time to stroll around St. John's which is a delightful city.

After the meeting, it is a mere "hop and a skip" by air to Deer Park in western Newfoundland, which is what I did with my daughter in 1995. We rented a car in Deer Park and took off up the coast. Strangely, I remember the lilacs blooming in early July, which tells you that you can enjoy a second spring just when New York City is heating up big time.

I didn't carry the appropriate plant I.D. books, but I knew enough to recognize cushion plants, wildflowers and orchids that are very uncommon or non-existent in the middle Atlantic area. There was a memorable patch of *Campanula rotundifolia* only a few inches high growing out of the rocks where it appeared perfectly happy in a strong wind. In another spot where it looks like you're a stone's throw from Labrador (well, not quite), I recall tight cushions, maybe saxifrages, huddled only steps away from the ocean. That seemed both impossible and wonderful, and is the primary reason for anyone to take the NARGS tour. You will see alpines and orchids where you've never seen them before and you'll be glad to have witnessed many of nature's unlikely juxtapositions. GO!

See the itinerary and price in the upcoming *Winter 2017/2018 NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly*.

LOLA HORWITZ

### MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS

#### MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form and give it with your payment (cash or check payable to MCNARGS) to Nancy Crumley (Membership Secretary) or Yukie Kurashina (Treasurer) at our November or December chapter meeting.

Or, mail a check with the form (by December 31) to:  
Yukie Kurashina, 3217 Hull Avenue, Apt. 8D  
Bronx, NY 10467

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: \_\_\_\_\_

### TOUR OF YUNNAN, CHINA JUNE 13 – 29, 2018

From our tour leader Panayoti Kelaidis: "The Snow Mountains of Yunnan are the southernmost extension of alpine flora in China: this region possesses some of the greatest biodiversity on the planet – here we'll follow Forrest's, Kingdon-Ward's, Rock's (and Harry Jans') footsteps through several mountain ranges northward towards Tibet. Expect to see a vast range of primula, androsace, rhododendron and no end of roscoea, anemone, alpine gesneriads, aroids and woodland treasures galore – a living encyclopedia of alpines!"

*Get Ready! We expect this to sell out fast!*

Minimum number of participants - 15; maximum - 22.

Shared room price - US\$4,500; single room supplement - US\$1,000.

NARGS membership required.

**For questions please contact Jody Payne or Lola Horwitz:  
[jodycpayne1@gmail.com](mailto:jodycpayne1@gmail.com)    [llhorwitz@gmail.com](mailto:llhorwitz@gmail.com)**

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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 EVENTS

*Submission deadline for January/February issue: December 20*

### MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

5½ Jane Street #4R

New York, NY 10014

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Monday, January 22**

**Bellingrath: A Garden For All Seasons**

TOM McGEHEE

**Monday, February 26**

**To Be Announced**

## 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, illustrated in color photographs and pen and ink drawings; 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](http://www.nargs.org). Or write: Bobby J. Ward, Executive Secretary NARGS, P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604, USA.

The NARGS *Quarterly* is now online and members have free access at [www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly](http://www.nargs.org/rock-garden-quarterly).

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