THE URBAN ROCK GARDENER

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY

MANHATTAN CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 2  WWW.MCNARGS.ORG  MARCH/APRIL 2016

~MARCH MEETING~

ON MONDAY, MARCH 21st @ 6:00 pm
KATE JAMISON AND WENDY LINDQUIST
WILL SPEAK ON

MAKING THE MOST OF GARDENING IN SMALL SPACES

Kate Jamison

Kate Jamison and Wendy Lindquist will discuss design and implementation practices that will enhance the experience of gardening in small spaces. They will discuss important ecological design trends and how they can be used in rooftop gardens, containers, troughs and vertical gardens. Greater value is now being placed on understanding how plants relate to one another in communities for increased resilience and success in the garden. The same concepts apply to vertical gardens, troughs and containers. The talk will cover specialty plants with an emphasis on plants that provide pollinator support. When Wendy installed her first green roof, the bees were present before the installation was complete.

Wendy and Kate will also review current gardening practices and how they can be improved for greater success in small places. They will bring tips and tricks and suggest some ideas for soil mixes and containers.

NEW MEETING LOCATION: NYBG Midtown Education Center, 20 West 44th Street, 3rd floor, Room D (Quince), between Fifth and Sixth Avenues (General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen Building). This location is just two blocks from Grand Central Terminal and near all NYC subway and midtown.
South Africa includes one of the most diverse floras in the world. Not many people realize most of South Africa experiences periodic freezing temperatures in winter, and in some high altitude areas it can get quite cold for extended periods of time. Thus a distinct flora has evolved which ranges from subtropical to temperate. It is from the latter that perennial plants and bulbs can be selected for use in many gardens in the USA. Even among the subtropical species there are a number of annuals that will reseed faithfully each year in the garden, requiring minimal maintenance to keep them going. There are also South African species that are adapted to withstand periodic frost and thus provide flowers through autumn until severe frosts. Many South African species flower in summer as well, providing much color during a time when many gardens, especially rock gardens, are past their peak blooming period. Growing South African plants is a way to add both novelty to gardens and have something in bloom from spring to well past the first frosts of autumn. Ernie has a blog, "A Not So Simple Garden" www.geraniosgarden.blogspot.com and is a member of many Facebook plant groups, including several that discuss South African plants.

In this talk Ernie will show and discuss what he has learned about cultivating many novel South African species and a few of the hybrids he’s developed which provide interesting foliar textures and colorful flowers in his gardens. He will also provide sources from which plants and seeds can be acquired.

**MEETING LOCATION:** NYBG Education Midtown Center, 20 West 44th Street, 3rd floor, Room A, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues (General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen Building).
After a great deal of exploratory work, the MCNARGS Board decided that our chapter will not host the 2017 NARGS Annual General Meeting. Thanks to everyone who exerted themselves to try to make it happen. Some of the knowledge gained will be useful to our chapter in the future.

Many of us are mourning the passing of Harry Dewey with fond memories of Alpine-L in the 1990's and beyond, which connected so many of us to the increased knowledge and contact made possible by the internet. As his obituary in The Washington Post was brief, the individual remembrances of other gardeners have been appreciated.

As Jane Allison's dear friend Donald Smith remarked in her obituary, “She went everywhere, looking for people from Indiana for her column. I worshiped Cole Porter, he was a Hoosier, born in Peru, Indiana, and I had a party on his birthday every year since his death. Jane would come to all of them.” What many people don’t realize is that much of Manhattan is constructed of oolitic limestone from Southern Indiana. It isn’t only people who have made their mark in New York. The Empire State Building is a Hoosier, too.

Our new meeting location has piqued the architectural curiosity of many. A bit of information follows. Constructed as the Berkeley School (Lamb & Rich, 1890), The General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York purchased the building in 1899. Look up from the entrance and you will see a cast of the frieze from the Parthenon, which was copied from the one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is the fifth home of the Society, which was founded in 1785. A gift from Andrew Carnegie made possible the expansion and renovation of the building (Ralph Townsend, 1903-1905). The original drill hall of the school became the library. The Hammer and Hand sculpture in the lobby originally hung over the doorway of the Mechanic's Bank at 33 Wall Street.
A recent visit to Wave Hill found spring in all its glory: Galanthus and Crocus in profusion and Idesia polycarpa with its scarlet fruit maintaining winter interest into spring. The Alpine house looked great with many species of Oxalis in bloom as well as Narcissus.

Christine Datz-Romero’s talk on "Composting in NYC" to the Manhattan Chapter in February inspired me to start composting coffee grounds at work. Many people were perplexed initially but it started a conversation and has created awareness. Now plant leaves and citrus peels are being added and others are considering composting at home. Composting is not difficult, even in the city, and remember that the Union Square Greenmarket is a good resource to purchase compost as you plant this spring.

*.Jane Allison who lived in the Village for 60 years, wrote a newspaper column called “A Hoosier in Manhattan” for many decades.

BRENDAN KENNEY, CHAIRMAN

~A DEFENSE OF ROCK GARDENS~

[Editor's note: One of America’s most knowledgeable and articulate garden writers, Louise Beebe Wilder, wrote this essay first published in her 1935 collection What Happens In My Garden. Some pertinent paragraphs are repeated below.]

“So far as the right construction and setting of a rock garden go, there is a recently published [1931!] book that shows us just how to go about it. It is “Natural Rock Gardening” by B.H.B. Symons-Jeune. It is a true counsel of perfection, and more than likely when you have studied the any fine and illuminating illustrations and assimilated its incontrovertible precepts you will go out and view your won humble congeries of assorted rocks and what not, garnered from hither and yon, with deep dejection. Untill! Until your straying glance happens to light upon the way some diffident and captious imp of a planting from the high Sierras, the Caucasus, the Mojave Desert, preens itself and flourishes as if at home in the surroundings you have made for it with your bungling hands and with a prayer in your heart. It is then that your crushed spirit will lift and soar, and feeling a little like God (or a god of sorts, anyway) and only slightly chastened by the memory of those beautiful illustrations, you will go forth and collect another rock or two from the roadside, or from your neighbor’s wall, and scan the catalogues, seed and plant, with a renewed sense of power and impending adventure.”

“It is more than beauty – any sincere attempt at growing alpine pants – It is release to seek beauty, which is better by a long shot than finding it done up in a parcel on the doorstep. Perhaps with equal truth this my be said of all sincere gardening, but I believe that no other type of gardening so fully engages all the faculties, so successfully meets all tastes, so nicely fits itself to the scope of all pocketbooks and of all physical resources.”

“That perhaps is the real secret of the fascination of rock gardening, if we must define its fascination. While working among the little plants of the far places of the world we forget the narrowness of our own orbit; we recapture the freedom we felt on some hill-spent holiday and breathe again the delicious clearness of the ambient air.”

“I could tell much that is significant about the persons who find their way to my garden to discuss their hobby, always with that look in their eyes of seeing things beyond the general ken that is common to rock gardeners, or who write to me from all parts of the country of what it has meant to them personally. Many of these recitals are full of pathos, of courage; they tell of almost insurmountable obstacles overcome, of burdens more easily borne because of one of those little rock piles at which
some of us are wont to smile or scoff. It is such testimony that makes me say that even if many of our rock gardens are crude and unbeautiful it is no matter. Each serves a useful purpose. People, more

people than you perhaps have any idea of, many of them far from the centers, dwelling on the bleak prairies, in lonely mountain districts, in little isolated towns, who do not belong to garden clubs, who have little money to spend on their pleasure, whose lives hold little gaiety, are getting delight out of them and are finding in them something that they seek — solace from sorrow, from care, an end to boredom, that dread disease, what you will. And they are accomplishing an amazing amount with so little to work with.”

“And so I reiterate: Enjoy your rock garden whether or no. Let it do for you what it will. And do not worry if it falls short of what you know to be ideal. There is much happiness to be found in a lower atmospheric stratum than that in which swims the particular star to which you have hitched your horticultural chariot.”

LOUISE BEEBE WILDER

~ A NEW EDITOR ~

Your editor will be stepping down regretfully after several years and relocating after the May/June issue. He would like YOU to consider becoming the next editor of The Urban Rock Gardener, the official voice of the Manhattan chapter. The work is collaborative and would suit a chapter member who could communicate with the chairman, the program chair, and other members about chapter activities, speakers, plant sales, garden tours and NARGS activities, and assemble them into a coherent bi-monthly newsletter. There are five issues published each year, so the task isn’t onerous and work can be spread out over several days close to the deadline early in the month of distribution. Nancy Crumley has been a skillful and observant proofreader and Michael Riley has been invaluable assembling the copy into pleasing layouts and distributing the newsletters electronically and by mail. Abbie Zabar produced the graphic template. Several members have been regular contributors and as editor you’ll receive the newsletters of other NARGS chapters, which are full of relevant and interesting stories for inspiration. The newsletter can be tweaked or modified to become whatever you make of it, so why not give it a try? Please contact me or Brendan about your interest. Basic training and a copy of the newsletter template can be provided and will set you on your happy way. You’ll have the entire summer to prepare your first issue, so please accept this fun and essential chapter role.

STEVE WHITESELL

~ UPCOMING EVENTS ~

Saturday, April 23rd Stonecrop Plant Sale Cold Spring, NY

Saturday April 30 MCNARGS Annual Plant Sale 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM
Location: El Sol Brillante Community Garden, 522-528 East 12th Street (between Avenues A and B) Public transportation: L train to 1st Avenue
As always, we will have hundreds of plants, primarily perennials suitable for rock gardens, some carefully selected and purchased from wholesale nurseries, and many plants provided by our chapter members. Enthusiastic participation is the key to our success. More information to come on ways you can help. Cash, checks and credit cards accepted.

May 7 Hudson Valley Chapter Plant Sale at Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, NY
~ MEMBER NEWS ~

Marco Polo Stufano is one of five recipients of the Veitch Memorial Medal awarded annually by the Royal Horticultural Society to “persons of any nationality who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the art, science or practice of horticulture.” Congratulations to Marco on receiving this great honor.

~ WHY DON’T YOU? ~

PRE-SEASON ISSUE: Your fingernails are clean, your back and knees are supple, your outlook is untainted by failure or disillusionment. The road ahead is new and untrammeled. Pounce now with fresh resolve.

~ Take those first wobbly steps outside with cheer and optimism? Admire what your skill and good sense have produced. Then focus on the raveling edges. Nothing makes a garden look better with less effort than establishing a clean, sharp edge between planting beds and lawn. Use a turf edger, a spade, or a trowel to cut the line. Use a string stretched between two drain spikes or stakes, or a string attached at one end to a stake or spike to inscribe a simple radial curve dug into the lawn with a stake or spike to define the areas of turf to be removed. Some books ask you to produce an undulating line with a garden hose. Don’t listen.

~ Search your garden for choice plants that could be candidates for division? These divisions when repotted early and grown on will be the stars of the upcoming chapter plant sale. The plant sale is the major chapter fundraiser and it succeeds due the generosity of members and friends like yourself.

~ Plant containers now with mildly frost-tolerant annuals and perennials like large and small flowered Violas, *Primula vulgaris* and *P. x polyanthus* cultivars, and Ranunculus. Different lettuces, parsley, cabbages, and chard are surprisingly frost tolerant and decorative in containers, and useful as well. Woody *Erica carnea* cultivars start blooming in February and can live for years in large containers. Local nurseries, greenmarkets, and even big box stores are well stocked and the plantings will look good until summer heat arrives mid-June. Summer annuals can be tucked in around Memorial Day so they’ll have grown in some by the time the spring annuals expire.

~ Finish the last of your mail order plant and supply purchases? Sure, you’ve exceeded your projected budget and perhaps ordered more plants than you may have room for, but won’t you be happy when they arrive?

STEVE WHITESELL
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 $30, payable in U.S. funds. VISA/Mastercard accepted.

Benefits of membership include: Rock Garden Quarterly with articles on alpines 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 to members.

Join on-line at 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. The path is www.nxtbook.com/allen/roga/70-2

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~ MANHATTAN CHAPTER NARGS ~

2016 Membership Form

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<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
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<td>Gift membership</td>
<td>$15 (When renewing, you may give a Gift Membership to a new member.)</td>
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Members’ dues status is indicated on this month’s mailing label. Membership renewal was due in January, so if you owe chapter dues, please take the time to pay them now.

Send your check (payable to MCNARGS) with this form to: Yukie Kurashina, Treasurer

3217 Hull Avenue #8B
Bronx, NY 10467

PLEASE PRINT

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
Telephone _____________________________ Email _____________________________

The newsletter is delivered via email, except by special request. We do not use your email for commercial purposes.

Gift Membership

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
Telephone _____________________________ Email _____________________________

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

☐ Plant-O-Rama (last Tuesday in January at BBG) ☐ Annual Plant Sale

☐ Newsletter ☐ Hospitality at meetings
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THE MANHATTAN CHAPTER of NARGS, 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, planted walls as well as trough and container gardening.

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The yearly membership fee of $20 entitles members to five informative copies of THE URBAN ROCK GARDENER, to attend all meetings and field trips, as well as tours of unique and private gardens; plus participation in our much-anticipated Annual Plant Sale. If you are not already a member we invite you to be a guest at one of our upcoming meetings.

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~ WE’LL SEE YOU AT THE MARCH AND APRIL MEETINGS ~
{Submission Deadline for the May/June Newsletter: May 3, 2016}
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