~ MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT ~

WAVE HILL - SATURDAY JUNE 5, 2010, 1 PM
TAMSIN GOGGIN will speak on

Millstream: The Garden of H. Lincoln and Laura Louise Foster

Horticulturist Tamsin Goggin presents an intimate view of Millstream, the celebrated woodland rock garden of the late H. Lincoln and Laura Louise (Timmy) Foster. Linc wrote prolifically on gardening topics. Their six-acre garden in northwestern Connecticut featured alpine and woodland plants thoughtfully designed with ecological principles in mind. Millstream, along with their book Rock Gardening, inspired countless rock garden enthusiasts to pursue their passion for alpine plants. Miss Goggin was the only person to assist the Fosters in planting and preserving their garden. She shares images, plant profiles and personal letters from Linc about working with and observing nature. Lecture is followed by a tour of the T.H. Everett Alpine House with Gardener Gelene Scarborough. Co-sponsored with Wave Hill.

Directions to Wave Hill: Take the Harlem Line train from Grand Central to Riverdale, leaving every hour at 45 minutes after. A free shuttle meets the train and goes to Wave Hill. The shuttle leaves Wave Hill at 20 minutes past each hour and returns to the Riverdale station.

Or take subway, the #1 train to the end, West 242nd Street. Meet the shuttle to Wave Hill in front of the Burger King on Broadway at 10 minutes past each hour.
Early settlers called this area the Pine Barrens because they couldn’t grow traditional crops in the sandy, fast-draining, acidic soil. What does grow is diverse and often unique. Sticky sundews and other carnivorous plants get nitrogen by eating insects. Blueberries and cranberries thrive in the acidic soil. Pine and pine-oak forests are home to thousands of animals like the yellowthroat, and plants like the turkey beard and Pine Barrens gentian. There are no natural lakes, but wetlands, including streams, bogs and cedar swamps, cover over 385,000 acres, 35% of the Reserve.

You have selected the Pinelands National Reserve in New Jersey for the next fieldtrip of the Manhattan Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. Zabel Meshijian is our Tour Coordinator for the chapter and we are very excited to offer this activity to our members. We have engaged the able assistance of a knowledgeable guide, Ted Gordon, who will accompany us through the bogs and fields for about a four-hour hike beginning promptly at 10am. Bring your tramping shoes (and insect repellent), cameras and prepare for a long and exciting adventure with nature.

The chapter is paying a stipend to the Guide and we ask that each member (with the exception of drivers) pay $25 toward the other expenses of vehicles (rental and otherwise, gas and tolls). It is a two-hour drive from Manhattan to the location where we will meet our guide which means leaving the city at 8am – please eat your breakfast prior to that. We will NOT stop for lunch, but will eat “on the hoof”, our guide says that “eating takes too much time”, so bring a sandwich or snack and beverage to be consumed as you desire.

Insect advisory: Wear long pants that can be tucked into boots/shoes and long sleeves. Use insect repellent (DEET 30%) liberally, if that works for you. The Mosquito is considered the “state bird” of Southern New Jersey, although we will be early for their peak season. Early-emerging Tunga penetrans (chiggers) are a possibility, but the insect repellent will deter them also.

The second part of the trip is to Rare Finds Nursery in Jackson NJ and our guide will lead us there. You are most likely familiar with this nursery that specializes in rare plants and if you wish to peruse their offerings on the Internet, their website is: www.rarefindnursery.com We suggest that you preorder directly to the nursery by Thursday, May 19, 2010 so that they can prepare your order for “PICKUP ON SATURDAY, MAY 22ND.” The nursery is only open until 5pm so we can not stay later and this will enable a return to the city by about 7pm.

Sound like fun?? You betcha! Anyone planning to drive who can take passengers, please contact Zabel, immediately at 212-242-2459, in order to coordinate the driving. Those who wish to be passengers in other vehicles, please make your reservation and pay your $25 (checks payable to Manhattan Chapter of NARGS) either to Zabel in person, or by mail.

Mail to: Zabel Meshijian, 125 Washington Place, #4B, New York NY 10014

Reservations must be made, paid and received by Monday, May 17th.
What a Spring Season; every diversity imaginable, in terms of “weather” ... what the heck is WEATHER, anyway? I just love the expression, when I’m waiting to fly into a New York airport, and they make an announcement “We Have Weather In New York.” GREAT, I think ... until I realize that what they really mean is that no planes with that destination are departing – Ugh! But, I’m still glad that “we have weather.”

The excitement of the season so far has been SITTING ON JOHN BIEBER’S BENCH. I am very serious, when I explain that ... Francisco and I went to Planting Fields Arboretum where we judged a Long Island Gesneriad Society Flower Show. After a grueling morning of judging such lovely tender plants, we took a tour of the greenhouses (always a delight), the Camellia Greenhouse with lingering blooms of fabulous flowers, even though the “indoor camellia season” is over - the hardy camellias were in full bloom outdoors. This led us to the other flowering shrubs, which led us to the rock garden and, John’s Daphne Collection and ... JOHN’S BENCH.

Yes, to sit there and ponder the enormous Edgeworthia papyrifera and all of the blooming plants and enjoy the fragrance, was such a pleasure. Daphnes don’t necessarily all bloom at the same time, but it seemed as if the command had been given (by John, I’m sure) and the show was spectacular.

A hearty THANK YOU to Co-Chairs Lola Horwitz and Colta Ives and their committee for the best Plant Sale ever. We had record volunteer help and record traffic delays (thanks loads to Tom Stuart and Steve Whitesell for their perseverance and plant deliveries) and record profits, which made it a thoroughly enjoyable event.

Make sure you read Lola Horwitz’s article in the latest issue of the NARGS Quarterly, she describes the assembly of her chimney-flue mountaintop crevice gardens, and all in the backyard of her Brooklyn brownstone. The photographs illustrate the article nicely. In the same issue is an interesting article by my friend Ernie DeMarie on a new-ish hardy gesneriad. This Seemannia grows from underground rhizomes and has proven quite hardy for Ernie in his Upper-Westchester garden. I must try it! Now, the common-thread topic at every plant meeting this spring is ... “Which Heirloom Tomatoes are you growing?” Everyone has been so inspired by Amy Goldman’s book and talk, it has become ingrained in our schedules to - get those seeds sown, and up, and strong, and in the sun ... eagerly awaiting the first fruits. Ah, rock gardening has never been so sweet!

Join us in the Pine Barrens on May 22nd and we will see you for the June meeting at Wave Hill.
~ PLANT PORTRAIT ~

Hemiboea subcapitata in the Garden

Last year, Michael Riley was kind enough to give me two clippings of Hemiboea subcapitata. This gesneriad, sometimes called the "Glossy False Sinningia," is a Chinese representative of an Asian genus. Reported to be hardy to USDA Zone 7A, I decided to try it in a shade garden I had planted in our local community garden.

The plants rooted easily in sphagnum moss in my propagation tank. I planted them in late April in the shade garden, which abuts a north-facing wall of a building. I watered frequently, as Michael advised me that while Hemiboea can take some sun, one thing this plant will not tolerate is prolonged drought. Every two weeks, I fed it with 30-30-30 tomato food, in the soil and on the leaves. They grew into shiny, robust plants over a foot across and flowered in September; the flowers are white with purple-spotted throats (see photo).

They began to decline fairly quickly after blooming. In early November, I mulched them with a couple of inches of dead leaves; the goal was to protect the plant's rhizomes from a hard freeze. Well, we all know how cold this past winter was. But even before the first day of Spring, I noticed two growths poking up through the mulch. I also noticed several horizontal green growths on the soil surface; these are fleshy (as opposed to "scaly") rhizomes, by which the plant spreads. As of today (April 5th), there are nine new growths, and they all look quite healthy.

So, for those who have access to an outdoor shady area, I highly recommend this Hemiboea. Keep fairly moist, mulch it in the winter, and enjoy one truly hardy gesneriad!

{George Axiotakis gardens in the The Claremont Garden, Clay Avenue between 169-170th Streets in the Bronx, a New York Restoration Project community garden.}


(Reprinted with permission from the April 2010 edition of Gloxinews, the publication of the Greater New York Gesneriad Society)
I first heard Abbie’s ‘Voice’ in her own words. As she spoke at the 2006 Eastern Winter Study Weekend in Manhattan, I could tell that she had a slant on things unlike anybody else. So we at Oliver Nurseries are happy that Abbie has written a piece for our online newsletter. If you are lucky enough to be familiar with her work then you already know how engaging her writing is. When I flip or scroll to any article of hers, I settle into place for a few moments that will be enjoyable. Plus I almost always learn something. Whether it is the history of NYC’s water towers, to a jewel of a birthday memoir about a famous rock gardener, to a recipe for sugared sempervivum flowers, I can always count on Abbie to deliver a fresh take on the world, a way of looking at things I hadn’t considered before. And that, I think, is one of the most satisfying reasons to read anything. To subscribe to the Oliver Nurseries Newsletter go to <www.olivernurseries.com> and to read Abbie’s piece, ‘An Ode to Sempervivum,’ in the upcoming July /August issue click on ‘Nursery News.’ ~ Lori Chips, Alpine Manager at Oliver Nurseries, Fairfield, CT. and NARGS Berkshire Chapter Member.

~ STONECROP ALPINE PLANT SALE, 2010 ~

{ Written & Illustrated by Abbie Zabar, © 2010 }

The sky was blue, there was a breeze, and even with a rising temperature the mercury was nowhere near that eighty-eight degrees everyone remembered – with a sigh – from last year. You couldn’t ask for a more perfect day or setting.

Saturday, April 24th was the 4th ANNUAL STONECROP ALPINE SALE, a burgeoning rite of spring and the only reason for any gardener with a growing ‘punch list’ to abandon their own back yard on a gorgeous weekend in the momentary hiatus when ephemerals have been overtaken but fiddleheads are still unfurling and tulips continue to bloom, yet there’s so much to see and do because nature’s moving faster than at any other time of year.

Suspecting we’re too early, I detour with Pat and Jim – enthusiastic newcomers in the world of alpines – to Cold Spring for coffee and hammentaschen, more famous for bric-a-brac emporiums. But not one of the shops lining Main Street with its iconic river view was open; unlike gardeners, the antiques crowd sleeps in on weekends.

When we return to Stonecrop – ready for bear – serious shoppers are hauling booty back to their cars while other flats of plants, all loaded with itsy-bitsy treasures – and previously spoken for – are in a holding pattern behind the vendor’s tables, where one might think these are unsold goodies meant to be brought out for latecomers. Think again. It was only 9:50 AM and though the sale was scheduled from ten to five this tribe was working faster than Mother Nature in early spring.

Tables from Darrell Probst’s, Garden Visions, in Massachusetts are covered end-to-end with Epimedium species and cultivars. It could be the floor in a woodland forest, at hip height. Spider-like flowers dance above delicate looking – but robust – heart-shaped leaves on wiry stems. Darrell has been a major player in bringing new species of epimedium into cultivation that he’s discovered on plant hunts in China, Japan and South Korea, while his own hybridization program has yielded several new introductions. Appropriately, all this splendor is presented in the shade of a great big tree, where I was comfortably drawing and observing. My bench-mates looked equally content with gonzo homemade sandwiches for sale in one of the barns.
For their brief moment in the sun DON DEMBOWSKI of Pelham, NY brought along pots of spring ephemerals and woodland wildflowers that he grows and propagates right in his own back yard. Things like *Podophyllum peltatum, Pulsatilla vulgaris, Anemonella thalictroides* and a favorite acquisition from last year that I see blooming beyond the computer screen as I write, *Androcsace sarmentosa* ‘Chumbyi.’

Since my roof garden will be destroyed this year – in the name of progress and NYC’s Local Law 11 – I’m on a restricted diet. Still, greenish flowers with farina-dusted leaves continue to seduce me. Or maybe it was for old times sake that I allowed myself just one plant from this year’s Stonecrop Alpine Sale - *Primula auricula* ‘Silverway.’ “A masterpiece dusted with frost,” to quote the label from WRIGHTMAN ALPINES, Ontario, Canada. I have no plans to grow this show-stopping little number with silver-grey edged flowers on a rocky limestone site, but rather in a humble terra cotta vessel – same way ‘florist flowers’ were featured in the 17th century when potted-up auriculas were all the rage. In later centuries, those with the means and the important estates created ‘Auricula Theatres,’ (talk about architectural charm!), rows of open shelving housed in customized enclosures where potted-up auriculas were staged for best effect, as well as shaded from direct sun and rain that could mar farina dusted leaves. Yet appreciation of these beauties crossed all socio-economic lines during the British Industrial Revolution. Blokes who lived and worked in
mill towns displayed equally fine prize-winning potted auriculas down at the local pub. Everyone was in on the act once it was discovered that these endearing ‘lookers’ stood up to the onslaught of sooty, acrid conditions better than most plants in the new northern factory towns. If that doesn’t give me hope – after all the demolition and debris has settled – what will?

While still circling the Wrightman tables, I was also tempted by the smallest frosty blue grey leaves of *Mertensia asiatica*. Lori Chips was equally smitten. With a caveat, I handed the little grower’s pot over to her because she’s planning on propagating it for Oliver Nurseries and I told her I’ll be looking for it when I’m back in the garden again.

POPE’S POTS of Auburn, Massachusetts offer some of my favorite hypertufa containers. I’m praising the distinguishing characteristics of Debra Pope’s work to friend and fellow gardener, Amy, whom I suspect would rather be planting her new passion, ‘heirloom aubergine’ seeds at this moment, but was right in there anyway cherry picking all those worthies with the capacious size and shape of New Year’s Eve punch bowls, each with a basket-weaving design or fluted motif encircling their form. This year, no longer in need of plants – or containers for that matter – I’m hugging a large lion’s head that Debra did in hypertufa but reminds me of a formidable mask the Romans might have carved from Carrara marble. It’ll be perfect on my exterior stucco walls that are scored to look like blocks of limestone because everything in my garden seems to be impersonating another material.

Shopping completed, it was time for a walkabout through the STONECROP GARDENS, visiting with old friends, not least of all Cholmondeley, “Head of Rodent Control,” as his doghouse plaque explains. Then over to the Alpine House where I check on other friends as I pat some memorable buns on the left just upon entering, making sure that *Draba longisiliqua, Draba mollissima* and a very choice ancient plant of *Gypsophila aretioides* ‘Caucasica,’ and one of *Gypsophila aretioides* are as inviting as ever to the touch. A pure white charmer, *Clematis x cartmanii* ‘Little Joe,’ is in flower and the great big tufa rock in the middle remains the supreme growing architectural statement of all time.

I could easily spend the rest of my day at the Conservatory, perched over the surrounding pond on little chairs and tables painted the identical color as the structure’s framing, the grey-green of an encrusted *Saxifraga*. In the distance are the emerging leaves of *Petasites*; several potted-up batches were under the ‘Sale’s Benches,’ an area where Stonecrop offers alpines and woodland perennials from their own inventory, all the time. This lath-canopied setting is right next to the sunken lichen-covered Pit House, another favorite feature displaying dwarf bulbs and plants of various *Cyclamen, Primula, Galanthus* and *Helleborus* species.
The Potting Shed, where I’d be very happy to camp out while my demolition is going on, has tool placements outlined on the wall, reminding me of Julia Child’s kitchen and “Just like at Rosemary’s,” says Caroline Burgess. She should know because Caroline worked at Barnsley House while still a student at Kew, ultimately becoming Head Gardener for Rosemary Verey. Caroline, now the Director of Stonecrop, is an expert plantswoman and very generous with her information and insights. I should know, because every time we meet up again I think of us working the Philadelphia Flower Show together as judges.

By now, Amy and I are standing on the manmade Rock Ledge admiring my favorite footbridge over water, an elongated, flat marquise stone with two baguettes on the side; no diamond solitaire had ever had a better setting. The majestic backdrop is a grove of Dawn Redwoods, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, that were originally planted in 1986 and – hard to believe – stood just five feet tall.

In addition to the plants, this sale was a time to meet up with garden friends that you don’t see often, and as Lori says in her March, 2010 story for the Berkshire Chapter Newsletter, “The knowledge and camaraderie are unmatched … these friendships are blessings worth celebrating.” And, too, the glorious day that Saturday was.

~ WHY DON’T YOU? ~

~ Take care to water the seed pots you started earlier this year? Add Turface or another calcined clay product to the planting mix in a roughly 50-50 proportion to retain soil moisture better than planting mix alone. When the seedlings have filled the pots, divide them carefully and pot them on to larger containers to bulk up further before planting them in ground.

~ Make a dedicated effort to remove all dead wood from trees, shrubs, and sub-shrubs in your garden? Your plants will look much better cleared of leafless twigs and will be much healthier in the long run. Like any garden task, working closely with and observing individual plants during the pruning process will teach you so much more about their growth habit, cultural needs, and ornamental character.

~ Learn to love weeding? A minute spent removing newly emerged or germinated annual or perennial weeds will save an hour at the same task after they’ve become established.

~ Take care to photograph the garden in all seasons? Ephemeral flowers pass out of bloom so quickly, if you delay, you may have to wait until next year, or the year after, to catch a particular flower.

~ Adopt a small public area to plant and maintain? It could be as simple as an area at the front of your building, a community garden space, or even a tree pit, like the lushly planted pits in front of Michael Riley’s building. Protect the planting against dogs and trampling as best you can, water with a pail as frequently as you can, and start a ripple effect of community improvement.

*Steve Whitesell is looking to local agricultural traditions to embellish a new garden-in-progress in Schoharie County. Growing hops on vertical poles, creating a water feature from livestock watering troughs, and adding ornamental fruiting trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants like pawpaws, gooseberries, and rhubarb.*
~ SAD NEWS ~

My good friend Daphne Guernsey died the other day. I and the plant world will miss her greatly. A long-time member of our Chapter, she was one of the great organizers and promoters of rock gardening, and lured many horticultural Great Names to her native Vancouver, B.C., to speak to the Alpine Garden Society of B.C., of which she was an honorary life member. The fallout from this was great as many NARGS West Coast Chapters were able to piggyback on her access to great speakers and share the cost. She was equally esteemed for her rock garden which was notable for both its rare plants and its steepness. An ardent believer in competitive plant showing, she frequently walked off with the gold both at local and international meetings.

I first met Daphne on a climbing trip we made in the Big Horn mountains of Wyoming with botanist Howard Pfeifer. The following year, she came East as my house guest to attend NARGS’ Annual Meeting hosted by the Hudson Valley Chapter. As we got ready to drive up, she asked what plants I was taking to the show. It hadn’t even occurred to me, and I doubted I had anything worth showing. Ten minutes later, she came in from my terrace with a basket loaded with plants she had chosen for my show entry.

The end result was that some eight hours later we walked back into my living room with five blue ribbons, a silver cup, a silver bowl and a pewter bowl. Wow! What an introduction to the excitement of growing and showing for the gold. I’ve loved it ever since, and I owe it all to my late friend with the exquisite taste. I shall miss Daphne greatly. – Lawrence Thomas

~ NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY ~

Join today. NARGS is for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials. 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 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.

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.