



Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter October 2007

Next Meeting

Saturday, November 3, at 11:30 AM
Berkshire South Community Center, located at the end of Crissey Road, off Route 7 (Stockbridge Road) in Great Barrington.

Chapter Business: This meeting is our **Annual Luncheon Meeting**, and we will focus on the interpersonal and the culinary during the run-up to the program itself. Please make sure that you contact Harold Peachey about your contribution to the meal.

It is a POT LUCK luncheon!

Program – William Mathis, PHD, *Growable Terrestrial Orchids*

Bill Mathis became interested in native terrestrial orchids in 1970 as a graduate student at the University of Arkansas. In 2001, after years of work in agriculture as a research scientist, he turned his hobby of propagating and growing terrestrial orchids in to a business, The Wild Orchid Company. His company focuses on the production and sale of a variety of terrestrial orchids that are hardy in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Currently, he is working with hybridization and induced polyploidy of several *Bletilla*, *Cypripedium*, *Calopogon*, *Arethusa* and *Calanthe* species in an effort to select specific plants for horticultural use.

Bill especially enjoys the excitement of the typical outdoor gardener when they realize that orchids can be grown in their backyard without a greenhouse.

Bill will be bringing with him copies of his book, *The Gardener's Guide To Growing Hardy Perennial Orchids*, and has promised a good supply of orchids for sale to us!



Chairman's Message – 8/21/07

Harold L. Peachey

A brief introduction of the new Chairperson

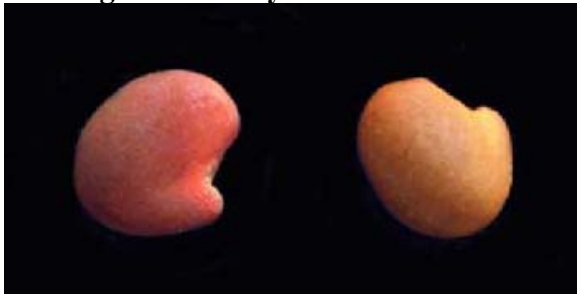
My name is Harold Peachey, a member of BNARGS for about eighteen months and serving as vice-chair for the past year. I was drawn to BNARGS by a Berkshire Botanical Garden newsletter announcing that Don Dembowski would be speaking about woodland gardening, a relatively new interest of mine since moving to Upstate NY a few years earlier. I was immediately impressed with the quality of programming and membership involvement in this organization and joined that day. It is with some trepidation that I accept the position of chair of this organization in which I feel like a seedling in a great Redwood forest among the general membership. I hope to serve the organization well and welcome input and

guidance from the general membership in the execution of my duties as chair.

Annual Luncheon

This year's Annual Luncheon looks to be a continuation of good programming, camaraderie and general merriment. General consensus dictates that we will be going with paper plates, plastic utensils and paper tablecloths this year. Members are requested to bring a dish of their favorite offering, enough for five servings and to bring serving utensils appropriate to the dish. Festivities begin at 11:00 am and some help will be needed for set-up about an hour earlier. Please contact me to sign-up pfirsich@nycap.rr.com or (518) 674-1676.

Getting a bit "seedy"



Having been the recipient of an interesting and challenging collection of seed from NARGS last year, I am busy collecting, cleaning and preparing seed for this year's great seed exchange. The benefit of the seed exchange only serves to add fuel to the flames of my increasing passion for propagation. I am completely overwhelmed by the sheer number of seed varieties offered, especially the alpines and other rock garden offerings that are foreign to my experience. This benefit of membership in NARGS alone is worth the pittance of dues and in addition to the wonderful Rock Garden Quarterly. I expect to be contributing several varieties of *Gentiana* and a few other odds and ends including *Sabatia kennedeyana*, the

Plymouth Gentian, that grows nicely in a little bog garden.

Minutes of Sept. 8 Meeting

Peter George led a discussion about the March, 2008 Winter Study Weekend that the Berkshire Chapter and the Connecticut Chapter are hosting. The discussion took place after lunch on the 8th of September. This sounds like a lot of fun and a great party. Some positions have been filled and others are open. The NARGS web site lists the positions and tells the duties of all the committees involved in running a WSW. Members are urged to check this listing and volunteer for the tasks that are needed.

Robin McGowan is heading Garden Visits. One possibility is visiting Nick Nickou's garden.

FIELD TRIPS New York Botanical Garden will open for us privately if we desire it. Brooklyn Botanic Garden is available Friday before 4:00 and Sunday afternoon. No one has volunteered to run this.

HOSPITALITY involves greeting and registrar Jacque Mommens has agreed to be registrar again for us. But we need someone taking care of hospitality.

CONFERENCE BADGES Don Dembowski will head this.

AUDIO VISUAL Joel Berman will handle this.

PLANT SALE discussion questioned whether or not we need this since we will have up to 20 VENDORS. Bill Jordan is handling the vendors.



PLANT SHOW Matt Mattus displays in most shows as well as John Londsdales.

RAFFLE AND AUCTION AND SILENT AUCTION is still open for workers.

LOGISTICAL PERSON Peter George, plus another person, is needed to track what is going on with all committees. Pam Johnson is working on our web site.

ADVERTISING Elizabeth Harmon working on the insert for the national quarterly magazine as it is needed by October 1.

REGISTRAR Jacques Mommens has agreed to continue do this again for us.

TREASURER Someone is needed to fill this position. NARGS is writing checks for the various deposits that are needed and they might support a deficit if a budget is submitted in advance. Pam will put up registration forms on the web site. Elizabeth will do the needed link. We are not set up to handle credit cards so the form needs to be printed out and a check sent for individuals wishing to attend. There may be a possibility we can use the NARGS site to facilitate handling credit cards, but this must be investigated.

SPEAKERS Robin Magowan and Peter George are arranging these and they have all been secured.

Carol Hanby
Secretary

THE GARDENER, WINTER



As dawn spreads like wildfire
Conjectures interrogate the horizon.

In a moment the day's pencil will make a note
And I'll be wondering what happened

Buried in wool, back from the closet
As hands hold their grip in the dark cold.

Everything else falls towards incompleteness.
How can I reduce forking paths to one design?

Prune, I say, be bold with sky!
Let the earth's unpublished virtues

Stake a future, land
That awaits a thousand names.

Robin Magowan

Meeting Notes 10/6/07

Barbara Von Achterberg of the Connecticut Chapter provided some notes for the AM portion of the meeting—thank you Barbara, hopefully a member will step up to be the regular recorder for future meetings.

The meeting was opened by outgoing Chairman, Peter George. The nomination committee presented their nominations for the new Board, no other nominations were advanced and the new board was approved by the membership. New Chairperson, Harold Peachey, took the floor. Some books donated by Howard Pfeiffer were made available for sale. A few copies of Janis Ruksans' new book were also made available for purchase and signing. Carol Hanby brought in blooming branches of *Rabdosia longituba* extolling the beauty and ease of propagation of this species. Elizabeth Zander announced that she is making cages of hardware cloth as “Defense against the dark creatures”. She brought in several examples to share with members. David Burdick brought in some miniature daffodils hybridized by the speaker, Janis Ruksans that were auctioned in a lively bidding process. John Spain was reported to be in the hospital but should be well soon anticipating return for the next meeting.

Janis Ruksans made a detailed presentation of bulbous Iris. Janis recommended not

cleaning Iris bulbs too much and stated that planting deeper will result in better flowering while planting shallowly will result in less flowering but more vegetative reproduction. Mr. Ruksans detailed his many excursions in the Mideast and Orient in search of new and interesting Iris species. His adventures included climbing high mountains, traversing mine fields and at one point being arrested as a spy. Janis also warned about virus in Iris species, noting



especially *Iris reticulata* 'Kathryn Hodgkins' stating that the telltale signs of blue streaking should prompt all growers to immediately destroy infected plants.

The group broke for lunch and an informal plant sale was conducted in the parking lot. The afternoon program continued with Janis Ruksans presenting information about the genus *Corydalis*. Janis talked about early life experiences with *Corydalis* resulting in his lifelong interest in and

devotion to the genus.

A brief meeting followed the presentation and issues regarding the Annual luncheon were discoursed. Peter George stated he would get a count of members planning to attend. Treasurer, Pam Johnson and Independent Director, Elizabeth Zander agreed to provide paper plate, plastic ware and paper tablecloths for the luncheon. Members were urged to bring a dish, enough to feed five, and serving implements as necessary.

Respectfully submitted by Harold Peachey

Easy Does It

Plants For The Beginner

Aquilegia canadensis is about as easy as you can get. That's because it's native to this part of North America, and grows in shade, semi-shade and full sun in acidic soil. It's a very pretty plant, with a star of red outer petals surrounding an inner ring of yellow. It's fairly tall, with some plants getting to 2 feet, but in some areas of my property it has stayed quite small and delicate.

One of the nice things about this plant is that it seeds around, and the seedlings often are quite variable. I have about 20 this year, and some of the flowers have spurs, some are double, and they range from 12 – 20 inches in height.



Aquilegias are promiscuous, and they will hybridize with any other *Aquilegia* within a fairly large area, so you can expect an increasingly varied population of plants over a few years. Some find this annoying, but I

think it will be quite interesting to see what happens in nature over time when bees and flowers work together without our sense of propriety and decorum.

Rachel Flowers



BERKSHIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

Rtes. 102 & 183, P.O. Box 826

Stockbridge, MA 01262

Phone (413) 298-3926

Fax (413) 298-4897

October 1 2007

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Elisabeth Cary

TELEPHONE: 413-298-3926

FAX:

413-298-4897

November 2007 Programs

**All programs take place at the
Berkshire Botanical Garden unless
otherwise stated.**

Plant Health Care

**Mondays, November 5 - December 3, 6-9
p.m. NO class on November 13**

Cost: \$125 Registration required.

This Horticultural Certificate Program looks at the factors that affect plant health. Participants will learn basic diagnostic techniques and will learn how to minimize potential problems. Managing problems will be discussed with a focus on IPM (integrated pest management). Instructor **David Chinery, M.S.** is an extension educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension for Rennsselear County, NY

Ecological Gardening

Tuesdays, November 6 - 27, 6 - 9 p.m.

Cost: \$125 Registration required

This Horticultural Certificate Program teaches how ecological gardening blends beautiful design with sustainable gardening techniques. Participants will look at meadow and woodland gardens and learn practical ideas for plant selection based on site analysis. Program will also cover invasive plant control techniques. Instructor Drew Monthie, B.S. is a horticulturist, garden designer and ecologist working in upper New York State.

Introduction to Lichens

Saturday, November 10, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Lecture/Field Study

**Cost: Members \$20, Non-members \$25
Registration required**

All levels, Dress for weather

Learn about lichens and the important role they play in the ecology of different habitats. A field study/ walk to practice identifying some common New England lichens will follow a talk on the biology of lichens. Participants should bring a 10x hand lens to identify the smaller lichens.

Instructor **Elizabeth Knieper** is a teaching assistant at Harvard University and currently teaches lichen courses for the New England Wild Flower Society and Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum.



Rejuvenating an Old Pond

Saturday, November 10, 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Hands-on workshop

**Cost: Members \$16, Non-members \$21
Registration required**

All levels Dress for outdoors

This field study looks at what happens to water features years after they are completed. This case study looks at the upgrade and restoration of the aging man-made pond on the grounds of the Garden. There will be discussion on what can go wrong, how to avoid those problems, and how to fix them. Both hardscape and plant material will be covered. Instructor Steve Levine B.S. and owner of Country Landscapes, Sheffield, MA has designed and installed natural environments throughout New England and other parts of the country.

Home Inspection Workshop: Why and How to Hire a Home Inspector

Saturday, November 17, 10 a.m. - noon

Lecture/field study

Cost: Members \$16, Non-members \$21

All levels, Registration required

Buying and selling a home property has become more complicated over the years and home inspection has become essential to the process. This talk will inform homeowners of the importance of a home inspection, how to

select a professional and what to expect from the inspection. Participants will learn from an expert by taking a tour of a building, viewing the problems and discussing solutions. Instructor **John Set**, owns and operates

The Environmental Inspector, a full-service home inspection company in Lenox, MA.

Edible Birdhouse Workshop

Saturday, November 17, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Hands-on workshop

**Cost: Members \$30, Non-members \$35.
Material fee \$15 paid to instructor.**

All levels, Registration required

Construct a handsome reusable birdhouse decorated with seeds for feeding birds. The birdhouse will also serve as a home for nesting in the spring. Participants will learn how to resurface it for annual use. Instructor **Valerie Pierce**, owner of Foxfire Gardens, Salem, NH teaches horticulture and nature craft workshops throughout New England.

Wreaths from the Wild

Wednesday, November 28, 1-3 p.m.

Hands-on workshop

Cost: Members \$35, Non-members \$40.

Materials included in cost of class. Bring pruners and gloves.

Beginners, Registration required

Create a beautiful evergreen wreath for the holidays, using the bounty of the Berkshire fields and forests. Take it home and the knowledge to create wreaths for the holidays. Participants will learn about the wide variety of plant materials including evergreen boughs, berries, seedpods, fern and fronds. Instructor **Elisabeth Cary**, Director of Education at the Garden has been collecting materials from the wild and creating wreaths for over fifteen years.

THE PRIMROSE PATH

**Perennial Breeders and
Wholesale Propagators**

We are the breeders and selectors of the Primrose Path™ line of perennials. Our interests are primarily in heuchera, tiarella, and heucherella, but over the past two decades we have also introduced new varieties of Primula, phlox, aster, sedum, and the other genera into the trade. Licensed producers in North America, Europe, and other parts of the world propagate our patented varieties.

The Primrose Path™ also propagates our hybrids and selections of heuchera, tiarella, and heucherella. We produce these plants by tissue culture and offer them only in wholesale quantities and TC III plantlets that are shipped in the growing containers and then can be potted up like rooted cuttings.

Our introductions are some of the best cultivars in these genera. Our new heuchera combine brightly patterned leaves with large, showy flowers, good growth proportions for superior pot presentation, and superior winter survival in the northeast and Midwest US. They are replacing the old fashioned hybrids that have good foliage but ungainly stems of insignificant flowers.

<http://www.theprimrosepath.com/>



Primrose Path Plants -- heucherella 'quicksilver'_3_.jpg

REMINDER

Please remember to bring food with you to our Annual Luncheon, and PLEASE contact Harold Peachey to let him know that you are coming to the event. And don't forget about your 2007 and 2008 BNARGS dues.

Peter George

Positions of Responsibility

Chairperson – Harold Peachey
Vice-Chairperson – Robin Magowan
Secretary – Carol Hanby
Treasurer – Pamela Johnson
Archivist – James Fichter
Audio Visual Chairperson - Joe Berman
Greeter – Harold Peachey
Independent Director – Peter F. George
Newsletter Editor – Peter F. George
Meeting Recorder – **Open**
Plant Sale Chairperson – Bob Siegel
Program Chairperson – Robin Magowan
Proofreader – Cliff Desch
Refreshments Chairperson – Joyce Hemingson
Speaker Housing – Anne Spiegel

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Membership is open to all members of NARGS
Dues \$10.00 single, \$12.50 Family
Payable to the Treasurer
Pamela Johnson
PO Box 203, 140 Main Road
Monterey, MA 01245

Deadline for Next Newsletter is January 14,
2008

Please contact editor before reprinting
articles

Peter F. George, Editor
Berkshire Chapter NARGS
PO Box 833
Petersham, MA 01366