



# Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society  
Berkshire Chapter July 2008

## **Next Meeting**

**Saturday, August 9, at 10:30 AM**

Berkshire Botanical Garden Exhibit Hall  
BBG is located 2 miles west of Stockbridge MA  
at the junction of Routes 102 & 183

**Chapter Business:** Show & Tell, Ask The Expert, and any other relevant or irrelevant activities, as long as they are interesting.

**AM – Plants of The Woodland Realm –  
Tom Clark**

Not even elven magic could enhance the many charms of the myriad plants that grace the woodlands of the world. Our native eastern North American forests, as well as those of eastern Asia, have particularly rich floras that have for years contributed to the beauty and diversity of our gardens. Still lurking in the shadows, however, are many choice and enchanting plants and recent selections of long-time favorites. Join Tom as he shines some light on many of these exciting plants.

### **Lunch ---BYO**

We welcome dessert contributions. Lunch will be followed by our plant sale, so please bring something of interest.

### **PM – Panel Discussion on Seeds**

Several of our Chapter members, including Elisabeth Zander and Robin Magowan, will be discussing seeds. They will include germination, seed mix, sources, and other seed related subjects that are of general interest to our membership.



## **Editors Message – 6/22/08**

*Asclepias asperula*, pictured above, is one of our many native milkweeds, found in the southwest United States, primarily in highly mineralized soils where it has little competition. I happen to have a fascination with milkweeds, and each year I add another one to my still modest collection. I tried to germinate this one for 3 years, but finally gave up and bought one from Ellen Hornig, who has the same odd fascination and sells several otherwise unobtainable species to crackpots like me. In any case, I planted it in a particularly hot and dry spot last May, and within a few days it disappeared, which to me meant it was gone for good. But I have learned to leave the label alone for at least a year in these kinds of situations, and I was quite surprised to find it growing well this spring, and three weeks ago it bloomed. It's a strange plant, and I was curious to see what insects were attracted to it, but over the 2 weeks of bloom the only insects I observed on the flowers were ants. I don't know if they succeeded in pollinating it, but

in another week or so I'll find out. Perhaps I'll get some seed, and maybe this time I'll get it to germinate.

Tom Clark is our next speaker, and I hope to see a lot of you there on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Tom is extremely knowledgeable, and his talks are always interesting and relevant. He's given a lot to our Chapter over the years, and even though he is working and living on Martha's Vineyard, he still maintains close contact with many of our members. Robin and Elisabeth are bringing us terrific speakers, and we need to support their efforts by attending. Our September meeting will feature Lori Chips and Anne Spiegel, who will give us the program that was originally scheduled for the Winter Study Weekend. Lori had the flu, and Anne improvised something, but this will be the real thing, and it should be a terrific complement to the Annual Plant Sale. The date is September 6. Mark it on your calendars!

The afternoon segment of the August meeting will be devoted to a discussion of seeds. Robin, Elisabeth and I will be addressing everything and anything seed related. I assume I was asked to participate because I excel at buying seed, and like many of you, need help from the experts on how to grow it. Thinking about the forum, it occurred to me that since I've been a member of the Berkshire Chapter, the quality and quantity of plants offered at our plant sales has diminished considerably. Geoffrey and Norman were the backbone of our sales, and now it seems that unless some others pick up the slack, the excitement of the sales, which were such, an important part of the Chapter meetings for so long, will fade into a distant memory.

PFG

## Geoffrey



The innovations in rock gardening these days are coming from gardeners looking for a less labor-intensive pursuit, less watering, weeding, kneeling, all that. For Geoffrey, all these devices, sprinkler systems, groundcovers, crevice gardens in the Czech manner, were anathema. For him, a garden was still the locus amoenus of the ancients where you spent as much of your day as you possibly could. It was only with great reluctance that, in late age, he allowed himself to be persuaded to take a couple of hours off in mid-afternoon before returning to the daily fray. Geoffrey writes about his gardening as if it were an indefensible obsession, a madness shared with a few other like-minded adepts, and one that needed to be surrounded in big cautionary signs. But in his own life he was anything but an obsessive and, for him, the garden was the perfect place to enjoy what it meant to be alive. That's why he objected to the British putting so much warrior effort into exhibiting show plants. A plant in Geoffrey's book did not belong in a pot, or even the alpine house, but out in the garden taking its chances in the open. What better place could there be than a garden for experiencing the moment to moments shifts of light in a day, the play of wind and rain and summer muggs, the combat with the insect elements and plant diseases, all that activity of circulating within a space beginner than oneself? His books offer a manual for spending as much time as possible in the garden, productively

engaged, from mid-March to early November.

Geoffrey was an adept at a great many different arts: an excellent painter, an accomplished Morris dancer, a world-class mathematician, even something of a poet; a man who could do anything he set his mind to--run a graduate school, say. But a garden allowed him to savor what being alive is about in a way no other activity could. If he wasn't out there, he was likely to be found rummaging through his copious notes and files, sorting his photographs, doing the thousand and one things required to advance the science of his craft. He was the complete gardener.

Like all gardeners, Geoffrey had his interests; he was a plantsman, first and foremost. From an early age he wanted to grow every possible rock garden plant, experiencing it as best he could. His curiosity about the 8,000-9,000 species of alpine plants was as prodigious as his appetite for seeds, the 1,000-1,800 different sets that he and Norman sowed every year. Memory being the faulty thing it is, he did his best to keep a record of each and everyone: photographs to prove to himself that he had done it, made it sprout; in the absence of a photograph, there might be a testifying label. He was even heard to claim that the surviving label was more important than the plant (did he put them in front or behind the plant?). And the plants that carried his personal label were better,

bigger, and more handsome than everyone else's.

Geoffrey had no compunctions about purchasing plants from nurseries that he couldn't otherwise obtain. But he much preferred to grow plants from seed and subscribed to any number of plant societies that offered seed lists. He was, we must remember, a mathematician and mathematicians deal in more than the single entities of a rock or botanical garden. Seeds, of course, suit this multiplying point of view, budding mathematicians that each and every one of



them is, constantly calculating how best to take advantage of the available light and the various conditions to maximize their hold on the terrain. A plant might have arrived at Geoffrey's as a single entity. It emerged multiple, to be passed around, it and all its progeny. An obsessed gardener sounds like an elitist. Geoffrey was anything but. The alpine plant kingdom constituted his republic and the garden in which he laid out his plant subjects, between cinder blocks, or long strips of rotting wood, or on the top of an old compost heap, was the kind of visual mess that suited a democratic ideal. The plants and not the garden took precedence. Rocks, crevices, the look in miniature of a little alp, the search for the right plant for the right place, all those aesthetic concerns seemed to him immaterial. As were the issues of size that preoccupy most of us. A garden was simply a space large enough to accommodate one's ambition, the vast

variety he wanted to grow. With time it could come to be a repository as well, of the various treasures--crucifers and their like--he had taken to heart; gifts designed for the rest of us.

*Robin Magowan*

## Wildflowers of Glacier National Park

*Judith D. King*

With elevations ranging from 3,000 to 10,000 feet, Glacier National Park is a great place for rock gardeners to botanize. I have just returned from a week's stay there with my husband Steve.

Glacier is also known as Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, reflecting the decision of the U.S. and Canada seventy-six years ago to join the two parks straddling the Montana-Alberta border. The Continental Divide bisects the park. The park encompasses no fewer than five floral zones: arctic, boreal, eastern plains, Pacific Northwest, and Rocky Mountain, helping to earn the area its designation as the Crown of the Continent. Of course the flora changes as one ascends the mountains, but the plants on the western side of the park also differ somewhat from the flora on the eastern side. In all cases the soil seems far sweeter than our acid woodlands.

We began our visit on the eastern side. Many plants looked familiar, but I was reluctant to jump to the conclusion that they were the same as the plants we have back home. Surprisingly, many are. One example is false hellebore (*Veratrum viride*). In other cases, the western cognate is similar enough that the genus is obvious (e.g., *Amelanchior alnifolia*). It took me a while

to identify Alumroot, never having seen a *Heuchera* before in the wild.

We were lucky enough to ask about the mountain lady slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*) within the hearing of a fellow who not only could tell us, but who also was willing to tell us where to find it. So often folks in the know are loath to tell strangers where rare ladyslippers are for fear that they will be dug up, and rightly so. We must have looked trustworthy—or from back east! We followed his directions to the Walton campground and found three blooming specimens of the small white lady slipper to photograph.

This fellow, an employee of the Izaak Walton Inn, also gave us some tips on good places to botanize in the park. We never would have ventured down the unpaved Cutbank Road without his recommendation, and we were rewarded by views of wildflower meadows and a roadside stand of *Phlox hoodii*. It was the only population that we saw in the park.

Even more exciting than finding the mountain lady slipper was finding the Calypso orchid (*Calypso bulbosa*). It was



Calypso Orchid (*Calypso bulbosa*) – Judith King

an unexpected discovery made while hiking to Running Eagle Falls. The same color and height as shooting star (*Dodecatheon*

*jeffreyi*), it was only when I looked more closely that I recognized what I had found. We had hunted Calypso down in Yellowstone back in 1976 and had seen it again, once, in the late seventies in Wilderness State Park in Michigan. What a thrill to stumble upon it!

After admiring Queen's Cup (*Clintonia uniflora*) at Glacier, I am going to see if I have any chance of growing it in my garden. I have never cared for the eastern beadlily (*Clintonia borealis*). Its leaves resemble the pink lady slipper's, disappointing me when I realize that it's "just" *Clintonia*. I do not find the yellow flower impressive. But the western beadily has a showy white one-inch flower that is quite appealing, even though its leaves, too, look at first glance like *Cypripedium acaule*.

Glacier is committed to restoring disturbed areas with plants native to the park, and to that end they have a Native Plants Nursery. All of their stock comes from plants in the park. The nursery is open to the public, so Steve and I toured it. As an unexpected



*Phacelia sericea* – Judith King

bonus we were able to identify a couple of wildflowers that were not in our field guide to flowers in the park.

Late June is a wonderful time to visit Glacier National Park. The lakes and snow-topped mountains would be spectacular

anytime, but in late June the wildflowers are abundant and the waterfalls are full. So heavy was the snowfall last winter that the Going-to-the-Sun Road was still not open at the highest point and was not expected to open until mid-July. But we were able to go as far as the Jackson Glacier Overlook on the eastern side and the Trail of the Cedars at Avalanche Creek on the western side.



Wildflowers growing in a rocky outcrop with *Penstemon albertinus* in foreground – Judith King

The high snowfall also delayed the opening of the boat ride season on Two Medicine Lake. The water was too high to put the dock in. We took the boat ride on the first full day of service and had a somewhat wet hike to Twin Falls on the far shore. Park workers were busily cutting planks to put across the especially wet portions of the trail even as we approached. The Twin Falls were definitely worth getting our feet a little wet. Magnificent. Along the way we saw some of the earlier wildflowers like western spring beauty (*Claytonia lanceolata*) and glacier lily (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) that had already gone by in other areas of the park.

During the week that we were visiting the park we saw moose, beaver, fox, elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, a bald eagle, and countless deer. I am happy to say that we saw no bears, although they are definitely present. The park boasts 1,500 plant species including twenty-five species

of trees, over 270 species of birds, and more than sixty species of mammals. There are also eighteen native species of fish, plus six introduced species.

I hope that I have encouraged you to plan a trip to Glacier. It is a nature-lover's paradise.

### A PARADE ON MOUNT OLYMPUS



The path, intact, leads past lilies  
to a meadow's undiscovered door  
where buttercups strut  
and a cuckoo orchestrates the view.  
Higher, pinnacled threads cling  
as inching bounty drips out of bodices  
afloat with dew. Seedling belles,  
each from its lintel peering, pout  
while insect inspectors debate  
the niceties of pollen,  
stripes, shapes, cup size.  
The thundering remorse of moss  
staggers its remarks.  
Soon the names of unfolding buds  
spread the picture of a distinct succession:  
nodding bells, flamboyant brasses, swirling  
reeds;  
their ranks swell slowly past our tears,  
celebrating the brief season's  
affair with the sun.

*Robin Magowan*

## Spring in the Veld with Panayoti Kelaidis

Hardly a drop of rain in two months, and spring is definitely a memory. For many of us, spring may not return for another eight months unless you consider joining me in South Africa in late September and October of this year. I love sneaking two springs into a single year, and September/October is daffodil season in the Cape (although these may be upstaged with *Strelitzias* and *Proteas*, I admit). There are four places available on a tour that I designed to hit the Cape Floristic province at its floral peak. Half the trip will be spent in the Fynbos area visiting private gardens as well as a day at Kirstenbosch and hikes in a number of natural areas.

The other half of the trip will concentrate on the Karoo—the vast interior steppe of South Africa where bulbs, succulents and tiny shrubs and perennials proliferate with unbelievable biodiversity. We will be visiting a swath of the Roggeveld Mountains where many of the hardy plants introduced by Denver Botanic Gardens in recent years originate.



*Romulea subfistulosa* – Pacific Bulb Society

The dollar being weak, this is not as inexpensive as the last NARGS sponsored

trip—but the accommodations are stunning and airfares to South Africa right now are very reasonable (around \$1500 round trip—cheaper than going to Europe).

I hope some rock gardeners will join our Denver Botanic Gardens' contingent to fill out what I believe will be a trip of a lifetime. You can find out more by clicking on <http://www.africanarttours.com/>. Or you can call Pam Rathke: Phone: 720.746.0748 Email: [pam@africanarttours.com](mailto:pam@africanarttours.com) .

*PK*

## SUMMER'S UNFOLDING DETONATIONS



Recognizing what sprouts  
requires the distant morning  
of an eye turning over a leaf.  
Seeds, budding mathematicians,  
calculate the sun,  
using the disposition of dials  
opening the ground  
to plot a new order.

When they erupt,  
everywhere I stoop  
strikes golden handles.  
Grounded in blossom I walk  
three times as fast  
through the kingdom of wind.  
Meadows blow by, fast-closing,  
undeciphered. Who in such profusion  
speaks for me? I stand whole minutes  
mesmerized by jostling buttercups  
all raising their skirts and stamping.

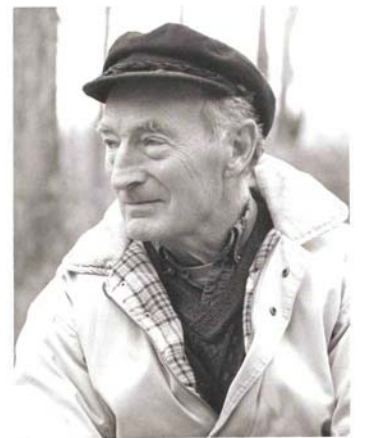
*Robin Magowan*

## Some Recollections

*John Spain*

I had known Geoffrey for perhaps twenty years. I considered him a friend, though who didn't? Strangely enough, I have no vivid memories that seem to come to mind. He was a 'gentle man.' Although he must have seethed inside on occasion, I never saw him angry. He never seemed to give a raucous laugh, but he chuckled often. His humor was legendary. He traveled to many places, but seldom spoke of his adventures. He was not what I considered to be a vigorous lecturer, nor an orator, though he spoke with and wrote with elegance.

After his death I learned of many talents, which Geoffrey had that I knew little or nothing of. He did not share my passion for hardy cacti, even though he grew them and maintained a quiet curiosity about them. A great grower from seed, but he never thrust his secrets upon anyone. You had to ask. A great plantsman, but you had to ask. He was a listener; I never saw him try to dominate in action or conversation. He was always everyone's friend. We all loved him and admired him for what he was – a gentle giant among us all.



*Editor's Note: Those of you who attended this past Winter Study Weekend and were present at Geoffrey's final talk, will enjoy this reprise of some of his wry and candid observations about his fellow gardeners. Those who missed the talk will appreciate the opportunity to peek into his talk preparation. Pam Johnson, Geoffrey's executor, provided these notes which Geoffrey must have used in preparing his EWSW talk.*

## Gardeners and Gardens

### Ev Whittemore

At first I thought I would have a category: Maverick; but then every gardener is a maverick. Ev is beyond sui generis and is in a category unique in commitment, devotion, and total expenditure. She is on her fourth major garden since the 1970s. First Westfield MA, then three gardens in the Penrose, Brevard area of NC. Before Bruce retired Ev commuted to NC from MA sleeping and eating in a garden hut so that she could get the garden started while the house was being built. They would drive to MT or the west coast more than once a year to bring back rocks and plants from Grand Ridge, Siskiyou etc. Before it required three chapters to run the seed exchange, Ev and Bruce, Norman and I, Judy and Paul did the whole thing. But Ev did the most: she packed nearly all the seeds and packaged all the orders. She started a chapter in NC and the meetings were in her garage. She even made cookies. She invited Graham and Iris Nichols to stay for two weeks before she knew them. She said, "Well they are gardeners aren't they?"

**Linc Foster** was a legend in his own time. President of ARGs, Guru of the CT chapter. He wrote books and articles. He showed a plant in every category at every show i.e. at every meeting of the chapter. He propagated



Czechoslovakia.

many saxifrage hybrids and was crossing rhododendrons when he died. The name Millstream is attached to many plants. His biggest thrill was getting a chocolate box at Christmas filled with saxifrage cuttings from

**Timmy Foster** was editor of the ARGs journal for several years. Linc and Timmy brought Norman and me into the CT chapter. Timmy's aunt Do was a music lover in NY when Norman was running The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. She owned Millstream but allowed Linc and Timmy to live there. She told Norman to get in touch with her peculiar nephew-in-law. They were each other's second spouse and brought two children each to the family. Timmy wrote a charming book about how the family adopted a wood duck. Timmy said Linc refused to weed and that she weeded all the paths once a year.

**Ted Childs** was the biggest landowner in CT. On his property Yale University had a collection of trees; the story goes that every tree in the world hardy in CT was represented there. He collected plants by helicopter in Alaska. Linc designed one of his small gardens with a Japanese flavor. His rock garden was the face of a quarry. Ted always said come visit the garden and bring a trowel. But we never got any plants.

**Howard Pfeifer** knew everything botanical. He was a taxonomist at the Storrs campus of the University of CT. He was an amusing speaker and a persuasive auctioneer of plant material. His garden was noted for an allee of pleached lime trees. He designed many gardens including the Harvey garden in NE



CT. Howard said all plant name pronunciations were OK if you said them in a loud firm voice.

**Chris Fenderson** was a rock garden prodigy. He wrote a treatise on the bibliography of Primula. His garden was visited by hundreds of primula lovers and gardeners of all kinds. He raised Highland cattle.

**Ellie Spingarn** built all the walls in her Connecticut garden and fireplaces in the house. Her first husband was named Brinkerhof, hence the name Phlox Ellie B. After they divorced he lived in a house overlooking hers. When she married Joel Spingarn of LI who was a conifer man and a numismatist, they had to decide where to live. Joel sold most of his conifer collection and moved the rest to Ellie's garden where he continued to propagate them.



**Ted Kipping** is a tree shaper in San Francisco, a photographer of trees and rock garden plants. He

liked beautiful close-ups. He said with a shrug you can only grow so many eriogonums. This bowled me over as I was having trouble with a few.

GBC

## Editor's Letter

*From the July-September Issue of the Mason-Dixon Newsletter, with permission of the Editor, (and author) Marika Sniscak*

Here we are at the beginning of July and the summer is flying by. This has been a much more enjoyable season than last year, when the lack of rain had already had an impact and the prediction was for drought all

summer. The spring season started with the Winter Study Weekend in Hartford, in late March. I had hesitated before signing up. Mike did not want to go ("too alpine," in his opinion) and I couldn't talk my sister into



meeting me, although she lives in Boston. In the end, the 5-hour drive didn't seem too long or expensive, not like a plane ticket. And I definitely wanted to take advantage of the chance to hear Geoffrey Charlesworth speak.

Being someone who reads garden books for pleasure, I have accumulated a couple of hundred. I probably need to bring half of them to the January meeting and sell them, but I am always thinking I will have time to read them all. I use a couple of dozen all the time for reference, but my favorites are the ones where gardeners write about gardening. It's a pleasant way to spend an evening, learn about plants without reading lists, find a morsel or two of useful insight on every page, and feel like you were out in the garden even in the winter or in the evening when it's dark. I like some of the big names like Helen Dillon, Penelope Hobhouse and Christopher Lloyd, but the scope of their gardens is way beyond mine. I get more enjoyment from George Schenk, Ken Druse, Nancy Goodwin, Willian Cullina, Eleanor Perenyi or Rosemary Verey. But my favorites are the ones who overdo it or write about those who do, among them Henry Mitchell, Allen Lacy, and Geoffrey

Charlesworth. His book “A Gardener Obsessed” seemed just what I needed.

As an aside, where do I get all these books at affordable cost? Beside our Chapter’s January book sale and some picked up at NARGS meetings, I use Daedalus Books, which is just down the road in Columbia, MD. They sell remainders, books that the publisher did not sell and just wants to get rid of at a low price. They have 3 tall bookcases full of garden books at all times (it used to be five) and prices are almost always under \$10. For instance, Dan Hinkley’s “The Explorer’s Garden” still has their sticker on it for \$9.98. I seldom use Amazon.com, because my favorite source is alibris.com, which has or can find almost any book I want. That’s where I ordered Geoffrey’s book about a year ago (on their website today it is available for as little at \$4.07, used) and read it through in one sitting. I totally identified with his obsession and the stress of having way too many things to do because if you don’t, something will die or the weeds will multiply more than you thought possible. Even though he gardened extensively with his partner Norman Singer, his passion was growing plants from seed. I seldom do that, but I do work full time so there is never enough time for what I must or want to do.



*This image of Geoffrey and Norman Singer was taken for use in the book The Unsung Season: Gardens and Gardeners in Winter  
Karen Bussolini, Garden Photographer*

One of the chapters in the book is “Gardening in Old Age”. He writes: “So here are a few resolutions I made on my seventieth birthday: 1. Give up one bed each year from now on. 2. Sow at least two hundred fewer pots of seed each year. 3. Stop trying to grow *Dianthus alpinus*, *Eritrichium nanum*, *Physoplexis comosa*. 4. Hire a landscape architect for an hour a year. Just for weeding. 5. Stop photographing every Penstemon as it flowers. 6. Sit on a bench once a week. 7. Stop buying dwarf conifers and rhododendrons.” There is a postscript: “That year I made eight new beds. For the next three years I sowed even more packets of seed. .... In 1993 I constructed four more crevice gardens mostly to accommodate the unusually large number of seedlings I ended up with. In 1994, I sowed over 2100 packets of seed. Oh, well.”

The humor is evident and sometimes laugh-out-loud funny. Geoffrey’s slide show and talk at the Winter Study Weekend was much as I hoped: irreverent, nostalgic, funny. I had his book with me for bedtime reading, so I brought it to the lecture for him to sign. As soon as the talk ended, he was surrounded by people who knew him well, and who helped him to his chair. It didn’t seem right so I didn’t approach him. After I got home from the meeting, I ordered his other book “The Opinionated Gardener.” The book was not new but was perfect, and inside the cover it was signed: “With best wishes, Geoffrey Charlesworth, Chapel Hill, November 1991.”

He died in May, two months later.

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**Please make sure your dues are up to date. If you aren’t sure, contact Pam Johnson, please.**

# July 12 Meeting Notes

*Joyce Hemingson & Elaine Chittenden*

Cliff Desch welcomed new members and guests, including Fran and Michael Hamberg, from Middlefield, MA, and Sasha Sampson, from New Lebanon, MA. John Spain introduced his friend Tony Leach, one of the founders of the Connecticut Cactus and Succulent Society, who was responsible for getting John started in rock gardening.

John Spain described his "lowest hi-tech" method of growing moss gardens. He places a layer of gravel in shallow clay saucers or plastic trays without drainage, adds pieces or small sheets of moss from his backyard, and then places them in dappled shade. After an initial watering, he depends on rain to water them (and sometimes needs to pour excess water off). Small rocks or a bit of cork give them the look of Oriental gardens in miniature.

Joe Strauch donated *Fothergilla gardenii* 'Harold Epstein' for auctioning. This dwarf shrub stays about 12 inches tall and full sun will keep the form tight. Becky Lynn brought plant photos from Alaska for anyone to take, and Elliott Jessen donated wire and explained how he bends it around a piece of tubing to make hangers for plant labels.

Elisabeth Zander invited new members to take a key chain, surplus from this year's Eastern Study Weekend in Farmington.

### Upcoming Meetings:

August 9 --Tom Clark, from the Polly Hill Arboretum; afternoon panel about seeds  
September—Lori Chips & Anne Spiegel  
October--A Tribute to Geoffrey Charlesworth

November--Annual Luncheon at the Berkshire Botanic Garden

Peter George announced that Harvey Wrightman would be bringing plants and troughs to the area during the last week of July/first week of August. Peter highly recommends the sand available through Harvey as well. Please send material to Peter for the newsletter, especially photos and notes about Geoffrey Charlesworth. You can email jpegs, or send photos and slides for scanning.



*R. keiskei* 'Dwarf form' – Sally Perkins

Sally Perkins A.M. presentation: **Ericaceous Plants for the Rock Garden** (Sally will be giving a similar talk to the CT chapter of the Rhododendron Society, Tuesday September 9, 2008 at 7:30 p.m., Agricultural Experiment Station, 153 Cook Hill Rd, Windsor, CT 06095 (860) 683-4977)

Ninety-five taxa (including species, subspecies, varieties and cultivars) belonging to the Ericaceae or heath family were shown and habitat and cultural requirements described for each. The largest group shown were 51 different Rhododendrons, most of dwarf form and most native to high elevation regions of the world. Many photos of the plants shared with us were taken in their native range, be it Mt. Ranier, Mt. Washington or high elevations of Korea. Sally dutifully noted the plants that were "impossible to grow"

like *Rhododendron chryseum* (syn. *R. rupicola* var. *chryseum*) or those lacking heat tolerance like *R. calostrotum* var. *calostrotum*. She noted that many hybrids are easier to grow than their parents. *Rhododendron* ‘Too Bee’, for example, mounds to 1 foot and is considered easier to grow than *R. campylogynum*, the parent providing its pink, bell-shaped flowers. Other rhododendrons I noted include *R. ‘Canobie Corsage’*, named for the lake that Sally lives on in New Hampshire. It is a sterile hybrid of *R. dauricum* x *R. mucronulatum* whose flowers last up to 3 weeks in cool weather; *R. keiskei* ‘Dwarf Form’ one of Sally’s favorites, ‘Ginny Gee’ (*racemosum* x *keiskei*) can be easily layered, as it grows much wider than tall; two reds: ‘Crimson Pippin’ and ‘Baden Baden’. Other ericaceous plants noted include: *Calluna vulgaris* ‘Blaze Away’ with screaming scarlet fall color; *Pieris floribunda* ‘Millstream’ needing an east facing slope, NO afternoon sun; *Loiseleuria procumbens* blooming on top of Mt. Washington in early spring; *Phyllodoce caerulea*, which Sally grows in a north facing sand bed with pieces of chalk in the soil. I appreciated Sally



*Erythronium americanum* – Sally Perkins

bringing us up to date by using old nomenclature along with the new. *Orthilia secunda* (formerly *Pyrola secunda*) and *Pyrola* and *Chimaphila* (pipsissewa) all considered members of their own family

(shinleaf family or Pyrolaceae), are now considered ericoids. *Rhododendron groenlandicum* was published in 1990 over *Ledum groenlandicum*, the well-loved bog plant with small white flowers and rust colored indumentum on the underside of the leaves. The plants haven’t changed, only their names have; maybe it’s time for acceptance.

Sally Perkins p.m. presentation: **Blue Ridge Travels**. I thoroughly enjoyed this presentation but my note taking was scant compared with those in the morning. As with the a.m. presentation, this included many gorgeous photos of plants in their native habitat growing with their associates, along with cultural notes from Sally’s personal experience. It was a spring visit spanning Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee including views of mountains and mountainous views like the Biltmore estate’s view of Mt Pisgah. Sally covered nearly 100 different plants including woody (wonderful *Rhododendrons* including a new fragrant gold *R. calendulaceum*, normally considered NOT fragrant) and herbaceous with a few spring ephemerals. Some of the plants included were: Virginia bluebells, *Mertensia virginica* benefitting from chalk or limestone in Sally’s garden; the bicolor form of birds-foot violet, *Viola pedata* (a violet without “secret” or cleistogamous flowers) along with the more typical purple-flowered form growing profusely on the road bank; round-leaved (*Viola rotundifolia*) with early yellow flowers and arrow-leaved violet (*Viola hastata*) with its slivery surface; *Iris verna* tolerates drier soils and full sun while the crested iris, *Iris cristata* prefers more woodland conditions. The photo of brown flowers that give *Hexastylis arifolia* the common name little brown jugs, was excellent. It is very similar to our local wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) but with “little brown jugs” (for flowers) and evergreen leaves; it was caught growing

with the large flowered chickweed *Stellaria pubera*. Two species of the orchids called rattlesnake plantain: *Goodyera pubescens* and *G. repens* grew side by side. The black bead lily, *Clintonia umbellata* was said to bloom easier than the more northern *C. borealis*. Sally also learned that the cause of the large die off of Fraser fir, *Abies fraseri* is due to the woolly adelgid, rather than acid rain, which had previously been thought responsible.



*Erica cinerea* 'C. D. Eason' – Sally Perkins

## Ollalie Daylilies

Daylilies are not usually associated with rock gardening, but like many of you, I have lots of non-rock garden territory on my property, and daylilies are both beautiful and useful. Ollalie Daylily Gardens, in South Newfane, Vermont, is a great place to see and buy high quality daylilies, both hybrid and species, and right now the show at their place is incredible! (They are members of NARGS, too) Here is their website address, and I'd strongly recommend a visit.

<http://www.daylilygarden.com/>  
(802) 348-6614

PFG

## SENSITIVE APPOINTMENTS



a hundred attentive watches  
 propped on a rock face  
 call forth responses from the stone  
 along which they inch inflorescences  
 past mineral sills  
 for a better view,  
 undiscouraged  
 by the sheer night of a path  
 fallen moss of a door  
 armored insects investigating  
 a cleavage's  
 entanglements and unfoldings  
 whose several buttons flung open all at once  
 glisten up at me,  
 secretary of static,  
 propped on elbows at the pinnacle  
 their frailty legislates

*Robin Magowan*

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Vice-Chairperson – Robin Magowan  
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