

ADIRONDACK  
CHAPTER

*North American Rock Garden Society*

# Green Dragon Tales

March 2026

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**MARCH 21, 2026 1 PM (BROWN BAG LUNCH AT NOON)**

*Terry Humphries, Program Chair*



## **Sandra Schaller Wave Hill Public Garden & Cultural Center Auricula Primulas**

Our March program will be presented by one of our favorite gardeners anywhere: Sandra Schaller from Wave Hill. An active member of NARGS, Sandra loves to share her enthusiasm for plants and eye for design in creating stunning floral combinations. Her talk will take us deep into the parentage, culture and adaptation of primula, with particular focus on the auricula section of hardy perennials native to the mountains of Europe. Auriculas are particularly outstanding for their wide range of colors and cultivars.

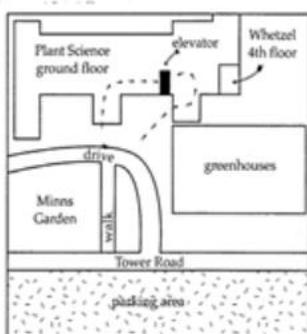
Sandra has been a member of the Wave Hill team since 2019, when she joined as a Nally Intern. She holds a degree from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale and following a 30-year career in marketing, she decided to pursue a career change where she could best leverage her eye for aesthetics and design whilst working with plants. She enrolled in the certificate program at the New York Botanical Garden, focusing on Horticulture for Sustainable Gardening. She currently oversees the Alpine House, Wild Garden and Lavender Border. She is eager to build the collection of true alpines to continue to improve space's quality as an inviting and inspirational destination for visitors. Her favorite gardening task is to create definition within a garden bed, either by adding to existing plants or through editing.

In particular, she is interested in restoring bulbs that have been lost over the years and relying upon historical perspectives to inform decisions moving forward.



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**Our regular meetings are held in Room 404 Plant Science, 236 Tower Road on the Cornell Campus.**



Currently, the west wing of the Plant Sciences Building has been shut down for renovations. Other than having those hallways walled off, everything should look pretty much as it did last time you were here. Remember the elevator to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and then exit right down the long hallway. You will be facing the Whetzel Room.

**Just a reminder**, we ask all attendees to be fully vaccinated.

Additionally, we will be following CDC, NYS, and Cornell covid protocol, which at this time does not require masks though you may choose to do so. Please do not attend if you are not feeling well.

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## FROM THE CHAIR

*John Gilrein, Chair*

We have some interesting programs coming up in March and April, so I hope we can lure more members out of their comfy homes to attend those meetings. Other upcoming spring events are our May plant sale at Myer's Park on May 16 and potentially a brief reception celebration at CCE (Extension) where we're working on a new shade garden, which is replacing the pond.

Spring is just around the corner and with luck it will be spring-like for our March meeting on March 21. I know I'm seeing more of the sun in cloudy Syracuse as well as more days with the temperature above freezing. Syracuse has had 130 inches of snow this winter (more than the winter season average for snow), and I bet Terry has had even more snow. The plants should be happy as they still have their protective snow blanket, in spite of last week being pretty warm. I may not see my first spring cyclamen blooming this month (*C. coum*) like I usually do, as there's still a lot of snow cover.

Through a variety of sources, I'm finding out about some of the new (or at least current) ideas about gardening. These sources include BBC Monty Don's Gardener's World, Gardens Illustrated magazine, as well as other gardening magazines. My intent isn't that we should be practicing all of these ideas but at least be aware of them.

- Peat free – this is very big in the UK, Britain being a small and heavily populated island where many of the peat bogs were overharvested and/or destroyed due to gathering peat,

including for use as heating fuel. The gardening world in the UK is close to becoming peat free, with replacement for peat generally being coconut coir, a waste product from processing coconuts for food. Most of our commercial potting mixes are peat based. Coconut coir is a renewable resource, but it does require energy to deliver it from the tropics.

- Low water use – this is much more applicable in areas that are hotter and/or drier. But for some of us, limiting water usage is helpful and possibly imperative at times. Some of us have wells with limited flow capability or live in a city that has experienced water use restrictions (e.g. Ithaca) in recent years. A corollary to reducing water use is to harvest rainwater and use that for watering. Rainwater is soft, mineral free water and usually doesn't require electrical energy to use it (I know here it does, however, require a lot of my energy to deliver it).
- Living with mollusks – i.e. not killing slugs and snails. I'm finding it hard to get on board with this idea, as all my mulching makes mollusks happy. I'm fine with the mollusks, as long as they stay in the woods.
- Gardening for wildlife – this is an extension of the native plant movement. Targeting wildlife for planting is more specific than just planting native plants. One can plant cardinal flower to feed hummingbirds, sunflowers to feed finches, umbellifers to provide nectar for bees and flies, and various milkweeds to feed monarch butterfly larvae and adults. Cutting down your perennials in the spring also helps overwintering insects.
- Deadhedges – I only recently heard this term. A deadhedge is normally a wall of sticks, which could be neatly cut to the same length and piled into a "hedge", and could even be neatened further by containment in a gabion (like a frame of dimensional lumber and wire mesh). It makes habitat for insects, spiders, other invertebrates and possibly birds. Basically, it's an orderly pile of sticks.
- Material self-containment – this is the newest concept to me, and I haven't heard a concise label for it, so I made my own. The idea is basically to reduce or eliminate gardening related material coming into, or going out of, the property. This is easier said than done. I'm all for keeping my compost, prunings, wood waste, etc. onsite, and I can stash piles of branches, etc. in the woods relatively out of sight. Not quite so easy if you have a small city or suburban lot. But any gardener ought to be composting their vegetation-based kitchen waste and tree leaves, if only for the free leaf mold, etc. For now, I can't generate enough of my own mulch and fertilizer onsite, though I could make a lot of mulch if I bought an expensive chipper. Obviously, one can save money by reducing purchased inputs like fertilizer and mulch. Large garden estates with staff and lots of equipment may be able to make all their own compost and mulch. One can however do a lot by reusing materials and finding a use for material that would otherwise be waste (pruned woody stems make good stakes to hold up tree cages or supports for peas and beans).

Coming up is a weekend of visits to gardens and nurseries the last weekend of April, Friday April 24 through Sunday, April 26, centered around the annual Alpine Plant Sale at Stonecrop Gardens on Saturday, April 25. Even if you only want to spend a day trip attending the plant sale, it's a great day of shopping for plants and visiting a fabulous garden accessible in a long day. NOTE: Stonecrop is very slow about posting information on their website regarding this event, but the website will show you photos of the garden. You can contact me ([jgilrein@twcny.rr.com](mailto:jgilrein@twcny.rr.com)) if you want more information.

If you have not already discovered this, if you have a Roku TV, or a subscription to BritBox, you can stream Gardener's World on your tele and at least be entertained seeing gardens and what gardeners are doing in the UK, if not learn about some plants you haven't yet grown. For me, it's great lunchtime entertainment.

Hope to see you in March.

## MEMBERSHIP

*Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator*

If you have not yet renewed for 2026, you should do it now, so you'll be eligible for our many membership benefits. You can renew at the March meeting or by mail (\$15 for individual, \$20 for household). Your membership will allow you to purchase the Plant-of-the-Month, which we sell at a discounted price. The renewal form is at <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>. Your membership status is reported to you in the email with the newsletter link. Contact Mary Stauble at [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu) if you have any questions.

### **Announcing a special NARGS National membership promotion.**

For a limited time, NARGS (national) is offering free one -year memberships for NEW members under age 40. And NARGS is offering \$20 memberships (regularly price \$45) to chapter members who have never belonged to NARGS (national) previously. Anyone interested in this offer should email Bobby Ward [nargs@nc.rr.com](mailto:nargs@nc.rr.com) and include postal mailing address. Put "Membership Promotion" is the subject line.

There has never been a better time to join NARGS and check out the benefits of membership including a subscription to NARGS's The Rock Garden Quarterly, access to botanical tours around the world, Zoom webinars presented by leading horticulturists, participation in the seed exchange, and the opportunity to join other garden enthusiasts at annual meetings held throughout North America

## PLANT OF THE MONTH :

*Marlene Kobre, POM Guru*

### **POM #1: CYCLAMEN COUM**

Spring brings us many joys, including the chance to offer Cyclamen coum, another treasure from the genus Cyclamen supplied by Edelweiss Nursery, which we can always count on to deliver beautifully grown and safely shipped plants. The owner, Urs Baltensperger, says of this species, "If I would have to name the 10 best perennials, I could never decide on the 10 but I know this plant would be one of them." High praise coming from so fine a plantsman.

A member the family Primulaceae, the Cyclamen genus includes 23 species that are native to the Mediterranean area, spreading as far north as Central Europe and as far east as Iran. Coum is distinguished from other species by being earliest to bloom—even in January in Oregon, but more likely in February here. It does start to go dormant in April, so be sure to mark the spot where you plant it. Well-suited to placement under small trees and shrubs.

DESCRIPTION AND CULTIVATION REQUIREMENTS:

- Flowers and Fruit: Dark pink to magenta flowers with 4-5 reflexed petals nod on the end of 3-5” stems. The early pollinator bees will enjoy feasting on them, and ants will also help disperse the seeds that form after flowering. Those seeds are coated with elaiosome, a fat-rich substance that the ants can’t resist.
- Bloom Time: January-April in Oregon, so here probably a little later.
- Foliage: Leaves are variegated with green and silver mottled blotches rather than the regular patterns of some other species.
- Light: Light to full shade.
- Soil/Water: Plant the corms just below ground surface, covering them with humus-rich, mildly alkaline, well-drained soil.
- Hardiness: Zone 5-9
- Other Virtues: Fragrant, deer, and rabbit resistant.

## **POM #2: DODECATHEON ‘RED WINGS’**

Our 2nd POM selection for March is a member of the genus *Dodecatheon* (family Primulaceae) that includes more than 12 species, all North American natives. The genus name derives from two Greek words meaning twelve gods,\* and ‘Red Wings’ belongs to the species *pulchellum*, from the Latin word for beautiful. These plants have also been grown by Urs Baltensperger, owner of Edelweiss Perennials in Canby, Oregon.

### **DESCRIPTION AND CULTIVATION REQUIREMENTS**

Dodecatheons live up to their common name, Shooting Stars, putting on a showy display in the woodland spring garden. In spring the flowers arise from a basal rosette of “lance-shaped” leaves on leafless reddish flower scapes up to 18” tall. The payoff comes in late spring when 8-18 flowers open at the end of each umbel, with 1-inch-long flowers comprised of 5 upward reflexed petals joining at the bottom to form a downward facing point surrounded by a white ring. Flower color can vary from shades of purple and pink in the north to white in the south.

- Light, Soil, and Moisture: We might expect so beautiful a flower to be temperamental, but Dodecatheons are unusually accommodating about their cultivation preferences. They will be happiest grown in a woodland setting in moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil in part shade, but they will tolerate clay soil, full shade, and even full sun providing they have enough moisture.
- HZ: 4-8
- Bloom Time: April/May. Dormancy begins in mid-late summer when the basal rosette fades.
- Height: 8”-12”, perhaps a bit taller
- Foliage: see above
- Flower: dazzling magenta with a complex structure described above
- Propagation: by division in fall when dormant; hard to grow from seed
- Benefits: complex, graceful nodding flowers; neat foliage; deer resistant; attractive to Bumblebees and other native bees, but not honeybees because the flowers don’t provide nectar.

\*Note about the scientific name: I was intrigued by the meaning of the name in Greek. Most sources provided the translation of 12 gods but without commenting on the connection between this plant and the gods governing the Olympian world. Finally one source ventured a plausible explanation: Dodecatheons were once classified as belonging to the *Primula* genus, and those plants were believed to be protected by the gods. Forgive my foray into name nerdiness.

## SPRING MEMBER PLANT SALE

Carol Eichler, *Plants Sale Coordinator*

### Spring is Plant Sale Time!

It seems a little early to think spring. Or is it? Gardeners are ever hopeful, and our days are filled with optimism and visions of beautiful gardens. This winter has been an especially tough one. So, let's continue to dream on!

Actually, it's not too early to look ahead to two big May events – our information booth at the Cooperative Extension plant sale and, the following day, our member-only plant sale and picnic.

First up on the calendar is the Cooperative Extension plant sale on May 15. This is a Friday, and it is being held from 1 – 7 p.m. at the Ithaca Farmers Market. Our information booth last year attracted lots of interest and we gained 4 new members. It was so worthwhile that we will have an information booth again this year. If you want to work a 2 -3 hour shift, please let me know (Carol, [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)).

The Cooperative Extension Garden Fair and Plant Sale is an annual event that has been continuous for plus or minus 50 years. Vendors come from a broad radius around Ithaca (including very possibly two of my favorites - Hazelmor Nursery and Coldwater Pond). Come to browse but be prepared to buy those irresistibles!

The following day, Saturday May 16, we scheduled our members-only plant sale. We'll be back at Myers Park in Lansing. Expect our usual routine with the set-up and sale in the morning followed by a picnic lunch. And yes, I will need volunteers for this event too. More details will follow. Since this year is the 50th year of the founding of our chapter, there may be some surprises in store.

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF OUR CHAPTER!

Carol Eichler, *Chapter Historian*

Hail the Golden Jubilee Year of the founding of our chapter on January 1, 1976. This year the Adirondack Chapter turns 50! By my count we were the 15th Chapter to form of the now 30+ Chapters. (Initially ARGS/NARGS members were organized into geographic regions, and surely we were included in one of them, but by 1972, chapters were being formed).

Thanks to Marnie Flook, NARGS archivist years ago (and apparently a host of other people who gathered material), we have a record of NARGS early history from 1934-1955. Betty Corning from Albany, where the Chapter first held its meetings, is attributed as our founder. We got our name from the meager 40+ alpine acres in our state, located in isolated areas of the high peaks of

the Adirondacks. Perhaps our name makes more sense given that Albany was where meetings were held in the early years.

As more and more members came from the Ithaca area, enhanced by the close association to horticultural faculty at Cornell, the meetings were eventually moved to Ithaca.

Even as a new chapter, the Adirondack Chapter presence was evident on the national scene. Several members took leadership on the national level. Bernard Harkness was president from 1968-1972, from before our founding. He led the seed exchange for 12 years and authored the Seed List Handbook. Later his wife Mabel Harkness became the editor.

1983 was a big year. The Chapter hosted the Annual General Meeting, co-chaired by Lee Nelson and Elva Link. The Chapter has since hosted two national meetings: a winter study weekend in 2000 and just recently the Annual General Meeting in 2022 (after a covid-cancelled 2020 attempt).

Bill Hamilton received the Marcel LePiniec Award in 1985, given for his work as a propagator and hybridizer. In 1984 the Chapter established and funded the Carleton R. Worth Award. Mabel Harkness was recipient of this award in 1993, given for her work on the Seed List Handbook. These awards are still presented each year. Bill Plummer managed the slide library (now defunct) for many years, and it is likely that other members served on national committees. These and additional early members are mentioned in Flook's *A History of the American Rock Garden Society 1934 – 1995* as assuming leadership roles in the chapter: Kathy Lippitt, Joan Keefe, Norbert and Ira Markert, Bill Dress, Lois Petrie, Dorothy Clar, and Robin Bell. They are likely our founders. I am grateful for this archived history, since many names are unfamiliar to me. One person who was involved in the past and remains involved with the Chapter is Lee Nelson.

Another major Chapter accomplishment was the building of our public rock garden, the Al Wurster Memorial Rock Garden in 2000 and 2001. While plants have come and gone, we have been tending the garden continuously ever since. It seems many of our current leadership became engaged with the chapter at about this time. That also means much of our institutional memory only goes back 25 years.

I've consulted some long-time but now inactive members Anne Klingensmith and Tom Myers (at least they predate my involvement) to help me recollect other names from our past. Here are some of them: the Wilkinsons - Toni and Robert, for whom we dedicated the bench at Wurster. Jack and Nina Lambert, Graham Edgerton, Billie Jean Isbell, and Marcia Meigs. More names keep surfacing from the archives of our memories.

In subsequent issues of the Green Dragon, I'd like to share stories from our past. Please feel free to write up your stories and memories about our chapter for publication. Send them to ([carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)). Let's savor our past and look forward to many more years as a Chapter!.

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## NEWS FROM NARGS NATIONAL

By Carol Eichler, *Recording Secretary, NARGS*

Where were you 50 years ago? Were you gardening? Or were you even born yet? Thinking back, I was a renter at that time but I still managed to garden. I had an outrageous number of houseplants

(a lot of coleus shared by other plant enthusiasts), a vegetable plot I found by advertising for space (shared not very successfully by a woodchuck), and a budding interest in flowers (annuals of course). I never imagined I would turn into a rock gardener many years later. However, gradually my interests have evolved in that direction, considered by some as one of the more esoteric of garden passions.

It was at least 25 or more years ago that I joined my local Chapter - the Adirondack Chapter – of NARGS, because I had been invited by a friend. As yet, I had no particular interest in rock gardens, but I loved seeing the pictures of such beautiful and unique flowers from the program presenters. Shortly after that, I became a chapter officer, because I had been invited by a friend. It seemed administrative skills (which I possessed) were as valued as plant knowledge (which I did not). I have been engaged in various leadership roles in our Chapter ever since.

As a board officer in my chapter, one of the first things I did was to join NARGS National, not because it was required but because it felt like the right thing to do. Joining the Chapter gave me access to rock garden plants, so I started growing rock garden plants in troughs. You might see where this is headed, right? Eventually, not so many years ago, I built a rock garden. Now I have three and I've become completely hooked (if not terribly good at it).

My message here is: don't shy away from becoming more engaged with your chapter. The more you invest, the more benefits you will reap.

Admittedly, a turning point in my interest in rock gardening was going to a NARGS conference in Colorado and seeing alpine plants growing in the wild. It was a wow! moment – eye-opening and life changing. Of course, I wanted to grow those precious plants and of course, they're next to impossible to do so – especially in my climate.

My message here is to strongly suggest you make an effort to visit plants growing in situ in their natural habitats and not just cultivated rock gardens.

I write all this to say: you have a great opportunity coming up to do this. Please consider attending the 2026 AGM in Calgary. Situated in the shadow of the Canadian Rockies, the field trips look amazing and of themselves, are worth the price of admission. And yet there is so much more that is being offered. Come be inspired! Come join other like-minded plant people. Come and fall in love with rock gardening all over again. Register now on the conference website CRAGS High and Dry while there are still spaces available.

## UPCOMING ACNARGS MEETINGS AND EVENTS\*

- **April 18, 2026:** Michael Hagan, Curator of the Rock Garden and Native Plant Gardens at New York Botanic Garden
- April 24-26, 2026: Trip to Stonecrop
- **May 16, 2026:** Our Members-Only Plant Sale at Myers Point
- May 30, 2026: Party to celebrate our years of involvement with the Wurster Garden. 2:00-4:30 PM at Cooperative Extension Headquarters.
- **August:** Members-only Plant Sale (details to be announced)

*\*Note: this will be updated monthly. Feel free to send notices for this informal listing to [sel3@cornell.edu](mailto:sel3@cornell.edu).*

## CALENDAR OF SELECT AREA GARDEN EVENTS

For the latest information, visit the websites of these gardening organizations.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Online class information:  
[ccetompkins.org](http://ccetompkins.org)

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society monthly meetings – a hybrid of in-person and zoom:  
<https://flnps.org/> Recordings of past programs are available to view online.

Cornell Botanic Gardens: <https://cornellbotanicgardens.org/explore/events/>

Habitat Gardening in CNY, local Wild Ones Chapter: <https://www.hgcnny.org/>

Liberty Hyde Bailey Garden Club: <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/LHBGC/>

To have your garden event listed send all pertinent information to Susanne Lipari  
[selj@cornell.edu](mailto:selj@cornell.edu)

## 2026 ACNARGS BOARD MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

*If you want to volunteer, we'd love to hear from you!*

Chair (aka head honcho): John Gilrein, [basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu](mailto:basecamp@alum.syracuse.edu)

Program Coordinator: Terry Humphries, [terryehumphries@gmail.com](mailto:terryehumphries@gmail.com)

Program Committee Members: Would you like to help? Share your speaker suggestions!

Secretary: Currently rotating amongst “Responsible People”

Treasurer (aka CFO): Marlene Kobre

Plant Sales Chair: Carol Eichler [carolithaca@gmail.com](mailto:carolithaca@gmail.com)

Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, [mkobre@ithaca.edu](mailto:mkobre@ithaca.edu)

Membership: Mary Stauble, [mes2@cornell.edu](mailto:mes2@cornell.edu)

New Member Hospitality: vacant

Newsletter Editor: Susanne Lipari [selj@cornell.edu](mailto:selj@cornell.edu)

Wurster Garden Coordinator: Carol Eichler

Wurster Volunteers: Elaine Caso, Ellen Lane, Sheila Stone; Others always welcome! Contact Carol Eichler if you wish to be added to the email list.

Book Order Manager: New NARGS program to offer NARGS’ members select books at deeply discounted prices. New Chapter position. Looking for a volunteer!

Webmaster, Program Tech: Craig Cramer, [cdcramer@gmail.com](mailto:cdcramer@gmail.com)

## ABOUT US – ADIRONDACK CHAPTER NARGS

We are an all-volunteer organization and one of thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Our annual Chapter activities include 6 program-speaker meetings, the Green Dragon newsletter, web and Facebook pages, garden visits, occasional overnight garden trips, hands-on workshops, two plant sales a year, and frequent plant giveaways. Our meetings are informal, friendly gatherings that provide a wealth of information and offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners.

The public is always welcome. Chapter membership starts at \$15 a year based on the calendar year. Membership includes these benefits: newsletter sent to you electronically (or option by mail for an extra fee), invitations to our garden day trips, opportunity to travel on our planned

overnight garden trips, annual membership directory, and plant sale discounts and member only sales, including Plant-of-the-Month sales.

## ABOUT NARGS NATIONAL

NARGS National is our parent organization: We encourage you to join (online at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)) for only \$45 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication focused on rock gardening, and an online website featuring a wealth of information including current and archived Quarterlies, recordings of past study days and more. NARGS National also holds its Annual Meeting in interesting places where attendees have the opportunity to visit gardens and take field trips, often to alpine areas, as well as hear talks by outstanding plants people from around the world. More recently, NARGS is offering botanical tours each year, both within the US and abroad.

## GREEN DRAGON TALES

Published eight times a year (Jan./Feb., March, April, May/June, July/Aug., Sept., Oct. Nov./Dec. Submit articles no later than the fourth Friday of the month preceding the monthly publication to Susanne Lipari, [sel3@cornell.edu](mailto:sel3@cornell.edu). Note: The next issue of *The Green Dragon* will be April 2026.