



ADIRONDACK
CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

Green Dragon Tales

June/July 2026

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FROM THE CHAIR

John Gilrein, Chair

Summer's finally here. We did want it to stop being cold, and now it's heading to 90 degrees. Well, the vegetables should grow faster. We had a nice ceremony at Cooperative Extension recently, thanks to Carol, to celebrate our chapter's 50th anniversary. If you didn't get to see the new shady rock garden there, check it out sometime. It's already looking good and will only get better. We have a healthy chapter made up of interesting people, good gardeners, and always find interesting plants to share at our plant sales. Our chapter is a great resource. For me, I really value being able to discuss gardening/plants with people with shared interests.

We had another successful plant sale a few weeks ago. Thanks again to all who contributed their plants, effort, time, food, etc.. to make it all work. It is surely a measure of appeal that some folks will drive 1-2 hours to attend our sale (I'm one of those people) – and I'm glad we get those people from afar. If the person who donated the canna rhizomes read this, one of our purchasers wants the variety names – email me pls. Hope to see you at our next sale.

I hope your summer is filled with happy plants and regular rain!

MEMBERSHIP

Mary Stauble, Membership Coordinator

Please welcome 6 new members! 5 joined at the ACNARGS booth at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Garden Fair and Plant Sale on May 15 at the Ithaca Farmers' Market and one joined after joining NARGS. They are:

Lauren Cruvellier from Ithaca

Amanda Barreno from Freeville

Robbie Love relocating to Olympia, WA

Candy Filios from Trumansburg renewing - ACNARGS visited her wonderful garden many years ago

Marla Coppolino from Groton

Katherine Schoenfelder via NARGS

I will be attaching the 2026 ACNARGS Membership directory to the June email. It lists current ACNARGS members. Those with an open garden have an asterisk next to their name; visitors are asked to make an appointment to see the garden ahead of time. Since we are not touring local gardens this year, you might want to contact a fellow ACNARGS member and arrange for a tour!

If you have not yet renewed for 2026 dues are \$15 for individuals, \$20 for a household. Membership benefits include plant-of-the month and the August plant sale! Check my email announcement of the newsletter link for your membership status. The renewal form is at <http://www.acnargs.org/join.pdf>. Contact Mary Stauble at mes2@cornell.edu if you have any questions.

ACNARGS: LOOKING BACK

Steve Whitesell

I met **Nina and Jack Lambert** in the 1990s when they came to speak to the Manhattan Chapter of NARGS and Larry Thomas, then chapter chair, would host dinners for them at his apartment. Jack taught drawing in the Architecture Department at Cornell and his watercolor sketches of people's gardens and terraces were much coveted. I admired the sketches of Larry's terrace, as well as those of Ellie Popper and Abbie Zabar. Both were intelligent, accomplished and opinionated horticulturists, and I longed to see their own garden in Cayuga Heights.

The opportunity came in September 2001, after I had succeeded Larry as chapter chair and Nina invited me to escape NYC, which was a sad place to be after the 9/11 attacks, and speak to the Adirondack chapter. They were wonderful hosts and I can still see their exceptional garden in my mind, with dry laid raised beds, carefully composed views from the windows and a fantastic collection of species peonies, Daphnes and other treasures not much grown at the time. I still have a piece of their *Paeonia mascula* ssp. *mascula*, moved from garden to garden and always the first to emerge from dormancy and the first to bloom. I've divided it several times and passed it along to friends, including Mermer Blakeslee, a fantastic Catskills gardener whose garden is often featured on Garden Conservancy Open days, who refers to it as "boyboy".

Nina and Jack made sure we visited other Ithaca gardens including those of Robin Bell and Cornell Botanic Garden. In addition to several choice plants Jack also gave me a Latin inscription in his exceptional calligraphy that roughly translated to "All visitors are appreciated; some on

arrival, some on departure” which I gave to my Classics Professor cousin, and I’ve never heard him laugh louder. There are so many friendships that have developed over the decades of my NARGS membership, and Nina and Jack’s are among the most appreciated.

Celebrating our Chapter’s 50 years of Rock Gardening

On May 30 Chapter members got together to celebrate our anniversary and to view the new shady rock garden at the Wurster garden. Thaks to Carol for organizing the party!



NEWS FROM NARGS NATIONAL

By Carol Eichler, *Recording Secretary, NARGS*

May

Last month, a good number of NARGS chapters (and over 25 people) got together over zoom to share experiences around membership recruitment and engagement. These are shared issues for most of us. In general, membership is aging, and we are challenged to attract younger people to our “esoteric” interest.

Some things became abundantly clear. In order to recruit new members, Chapters must reach out and become more visible in the community. There is no one approach, but rather different methods should be used from plant sales and workshops to website, social media, and print information. Invite your friends to come to a meeting. Any “newcomers” should be warmly welcomed so we can demonstrate what great people (and what great organization) we are! The NARGS Membership Engagement Committee coordinated the webinar and is in the process of summarizing the discussion and sharing the video.

Some tips for retaining members were shared too. Participatory activities draw people in and can be as simple as asking someone to bring refreshments or share pictures of their favorite plants. The reality is that most members are not rock gardeners (and may never be) but they are intrigued by rock gardens; they like plants so meet them on that level. They may not be prepared to assume a leadership role, but ask them to do things, and they will likely respond.

Both recruitment and retention efforts may take additional time from what is generally a small group of chapter leaders who already feel overcommitted. But the long-term future of our chapters depends on an engaged membership. Experiment with different outreach activities to see what works best for your situation. If what you’re doing isn’t working, try something else.

I want to share something from my own experience of this past weekend. It was somewhat revelatory. It happened when I was in Philadelphia during the Delaware Valley member plant sale (I recently joined that Chapter, so I got the notice). My son and his partner, whom I was visiting are both gardeners, so I gifted them a membership. Not knowing quite what to expect, I felt reasonably confident there would be a broad variety of great plants for sale at bargain prices. Indeed, that was the case. They were in awe and in truth brought home more plants than I did.

The Chapter had scheduled a garden tour the following weekend and they are excited about going on that and thinking about inviting friends. The comment I heard from them was “Why haven’t I heard about this organization before?” I’m not sure about the answer because this Chapter does engage in numerous outreach efforts, not to mention that I talk about NARGS all the time. Perhaps it was the timing, but personally, the plants at the plant sale spoke volumes that no

amount of “mom chat” could convey. I hope their enthusiasm will attract some of their gardening friends and that they will continue to be engaged.

Hope springs eternal.

June

Is it Life or Death for NARGS Annual Meetings?

Do I have your attention with that heading? Let’s hope so.

As I write this, I am counting the days until the NARGS annual general meeting (AGM) in Calgary. I might add that I am very much looking forward to those few days – four to be exact – for all that this meeting encompasses: field trips to natural areas, visits to gardens, inspiring talks, and a plant sale. I'm also anticipating reuniting with friends I've gotten to know through NARGS - sometimes in person through these meetings, sometimes through a NARGS tour, or maybe through a friendship that has developed through online exchanges. Great conversations abound at these meetings, often around plants as a common bond. For those of us enamored with plants (maybe obsessed is a more accurate word) and the joys and challenges of growing them, these meetings are close to perfection.

On average over the last 5 years or so, the AGM's have been attracting only about 100 attendees. Historically, it used to be many more. I wish more people would attend them now and I'm a bit puzzled as to why they don't. They do cost more than a chunk of change – the increasing registration fee is just the beginning. Add to that, the expense of lodging and transportation. Timing can also be an issue. Inevitably the AGM's are held in the spring or summer when it's hard to leave our gardens. I know for me, sometimes the meetings have conflicted with our Chapter's plant sale (and as sale coordinator, I do need to be there) or with our busiest time of spring planting. Sometimes the meetings have conflicted with a NARGS tour (even though we try to avoid that). And frankly, NARGS tours could be a factor in that they may compete for our travel budget. Sometimes the reason for attending is simply that our lives feel too busy!

Note, my next comments are strictly my own opinion, as I speculate on the future of the AGM's. With no host in 2028, will that mean the end of the AGMs? Will we move to meetings every 2 or 3 years? Since we'll still need a host, I'm not sure that will solve the issue. Will we move to regional, quite possibly less labor-intensive gatherings? From my own experience, we are already seeing a bit of this happening "organically" as in the annual Tri-State Meeting of the Manhattan, Hudson Valley and Long Island Chapters (to which we are all invited). Or the overnight tour that the Adirondack Chapter organizes each year in late April, which again invites other nearby chapters.

Or will our AGM's become virtual? Oh, let's hope not! It's really the old-fashioned camaraderie of face-to-face interactions that have made the AGM's invaluable. Lifetime friendships have been and continue to be formed through these meetings. In an ever more online world, we dare not lose this personal contact, please!

I don't have the solution. But you do. We need chapters who are prepared to take on the commitment to host an AGM. Admittedly, it is a lot of work, and I have written about this before. It is also very rewarding, but not necessarily monetarily. This leads to more ruminations as to what is holding you – being the chapters – back from hosting? Is there a way for NARGS to be of greater assistance?

Do we need to change the format of the meetings? This might keep down planning time and costs. These are questions I'm tossing out there. I don't have the answers. But maybe collectively we can find a workable solution.

What a shame if we were to lose these national meetings! Let's work together to figure out a way to keep them going!

NOTES FROM OUR MEMBERS

Carol Eichler, *Musings of a Rock Gardener*

It's always exciting to create a new garden. A new garden represents a fresh start in which maybe I am wiser and won't repeat mistakes I've made from the past, only to make new mistakes of course. This year I have two new gardens to plant and I'm very excited!

One is a very small rock garden at my home – my 3rd rock garden – and each very different. At the AGM in Cheyenne last year I was inspired by one style at the demonstration rock gardens at the Colorado State Horticulture Center in Ft. Collins. I felt compelled to build another rock garden, this time a crevice garden using tightly-fit blocky stones, each not much bigger than my fist as seemed suited to the size of the planting bed. Altogether the bed measures a mere 6 x 3 feet. Small as this space is, there's room to fit 50 – 75 plants, maybe more (more than my current inventory anyway).

The second new garden is at the Wurster Garden, actually a public garden, and it is an extension of our 25-year-old rock garden located in the city of Ithaca. Since I've been the lead tender of that garden all these years, I have been responsible for its longevity. So, I feel it's not too much of a stretch to call it my rock garden #4. Two years ago, our Chapter took the leap to convert an adjacent water feature—long neglected and now too shady to support water plants — and replace it with a woodland garden.

It has been quite an undertaking requiring first draining the pond and adding fill, adding topsoil and more topsoil and finally to plant it, which we just did this last weekend. We had help from Master Gardener Volunteers to haul several cubic yards of fill and topsoil over the course of the last 2 years. Finally, we were prepared to plant a selection of fancy ferns from where else? - Fancy Fronds Nursery.



The rock gardeners in us couldn't resist but turn this planting area into another rock garden for the shade. While this is still a work in progress with more ferns to plant and other shade lovers to add such as cyclamen, primulas, and sanguinaria, this new garden is well on its way to reality. I've attached a rather bad photo of our accomplishment so far. If not for the stones, it wouldn't look like much yet. Most of the ferns are still dormant. I cannot wait to see this garden unfold.

Now if only I could just get those extra hands to come work in my gardens...!

Invitation to a Garden Visit

On Thursday, June 18th, from **10 am to 1 pm**, the gardens of the senior-living community at **Kendal Ithaca** will be open to visitors. The 105-acre campus contains a large variety of creative small gardens accessible by paved walkways. Gardens on show include that of chapter member Glennys Button. The address is 2230 Triphammer Road in Ithaca, New York. There are several parking lots. Look for signs for "*Kendal in Bloom*".

UPCOMING ACNARGS EVENTS

The next event will be the August member plant sale. Keep checking your gardens for those special plants you want to donate.

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:
cctompkins.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.hgeny.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

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

Program Coordinator: Terry Humphries, terryhumphries@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

Plant of the Month: Marlene Kobre, mkobre@ithaca.edu

Membership: Mary Stauble, mes2@cornell.edu

New Member Hospitality: vacant

Newsletter Editor: Susanne Lipari 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

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) 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

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