

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS)

FALL NEWSLETTER, September 2013



CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS

****SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21: FALL GARDEN TOUR & PLANT SALE**

MEETING: 11:30 AM – ca. 3:30 PM
PLACE: Patrick & Bonnie Ion's, 1456 Kensington Dr. Ann Arbor
– see map insert
BAG LUNCH: While touring the garden
PLANT SALE: 1:30 PM

****MONDAY, October 28: FALL MEETING**

MEETING: 7:30 PM – ca. 9:00 PM
PLACE: Matthaei Botanical Gardens, Ann Arbor – see map insert
PROGRAM: Ian Young
High Rise and Time Share

PLEASE NOTE: This is an unusual meeting for us, being in the evening. But it was the only way we could get Ian Young from Scotland through the NARGS speaker's tour. See the inside of the Newsletter. Please do try to attend.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NEXT YEAR:

Saturday, January 18, 2014: Annual winter meeting and potluck lunch at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Our speaker will be Bill Brown, a member of our Chapter, though living on Long Island, presenting *Springtime in Istanbul*, covering plants of Turkey and Cyprus. This is not to be missed, as so many Turkish plants do well in Michigan gardens.

Saturday, May 10, 2014: Spring Garden Tour and Plant Sale.

Details will be in our usual timely Postcard and the Spring Newsletter.

UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETINGS:

Details for the 2014 Annual Meeting have not been set as of this newsletter mailing. But check the newly re-done and very nice NARGS website (<https://www.nargs.org/>) or up-and-coming issues of the Quarterly for up-to-date information.

Ohio Tufa; National Meeting; and Miscellanea

by Patrick Ion, Chapter President

Whatever else can be said of the recent summer it is clear it has been a good growing season locally. The result can often be lots of weeds, but at least we've had pretty good gardening opportunities with its never having been really too hot and quite a lot of rain on average. The Plant Sale will be in my small back yard because of the convenient location, not because there's much of a garden to see, though I'm happy with my comparatively tiny crevice garden [ca. 36 sq. ft.]. I hope to have my new tufa (*vide infra*) installed, but not planted, by then.

My wife Bonnie, whom I replaced as Chapter President, actually left for Burkina Faso June 1; she reports very little in the way of plant information from the difficult conditions there. I did myself visit England in July and get inspired by being able to see Kew Gardens again (including the new Davis Rock Garden center; when I first went to Kew it cost 1 penny, now it costs 10 pounds Sterling, which 2,400 times as much), Aberglasney (with a grove of *Cardiocrinum giganteum* in bloom, and ca. 200 feet of blooming Asiatic Primulas--e.g., *P. florindae*, *P. sikkimensis*, *P. bulleyana*, *P. beesiana*, *P. prolifera*, and *P. vialii*), the nearby new Botanic Garden of Wales (with the largest single span greenhouse in the world, containing especially South African and Mediterranean plants), and the Royal Horticultural Society's Wisley Gardens (with its famous Alpine Garden and Alpine Houses, showing uses of tufa, aside from a great deal else).

Here, we are grateful to Ed and Colleen Weiss for organizing the Great Ohio Tufa Expedition in July: Several different groups followed Ed and Colleen to an area south of Sandusky Bay, about two hours from Ann Arbor, where they had located tufa for sale at a very good price. First there was a flat-bed trailer full that Ed had snapped up for \$100. Several people's needs (and cars, trucks or trailers) were filled by what they could get there, and they set off home thereafter. The remaining group went on to a nearby farm, where, led by and ATV and the Greanya's truck and trailer, we went back into the fields to be shown a pile of tufa maybe fifteen feet high and a hundred long. We picked from that and were given a good price by the farmer, whose family had apparently sold tufa to a few chapter members for years. Don Lafond, Tony Reznicek, and Mike Greanya selected some particularly nice pieces, which Mike brought back to be items that the Chapter can put up for Auctions. A good time was had by all in spite of its having rained hard the night before making much mud, and a very

happy group of 'tufa hounds' went back home. Thanks, again, Ed and Colleen.

The NARGS national office and President Peter George especially, has been encouraging this Great Lakes Chapter to host a NARGS national meeting. We have taken on the project for the NARGS Annual Meeting to be held May 5-10, 2015. This gives us enough time to do a good job, we expect. We hope we will be able to hold NARGS 2015 Annual Meeting, with about 200 attendees, at Weber's Hotel and Conference Center in Ann Arbor. Contracts have not been signed yet, but negotiations seem promising. An *ad hoc* committee has been set up and is doing the planning work. The NARGS National Meeting 2015 Planning Committee is chaired by Susan Reznicek, with Julie Caroff, Libby Greanya, Mike Greanya, Don Lafond, Tony Reznicek, Andrea Urda Thompson, Jacques Thompson, Ed & Colleen Weiss, and Patrick Ion, already playing various roles as members. There are some other essential Planning Positions to be filled (Publicity Manager & Art Coordinator), and we will need a good number of helpful volunteers as the time of the meeting approaches. The committee has already met and consulted several times, and carried out site visits to see what facilities are available at what cost.

We expect to keep the general full meeting registration under \$300 (including meals and excursions) as it has been in recent years. The emphasis of the meeting is to be on the fact that successful rock gardening can be carried out in the Midwest, and visits to such as the Reznicek, Thompson, LaFond, and Walters gardens locally will illustrate this well. A speaker from Holland, a US speaker, and a local luminary, will give the main talks, and workshops and vendor offerings are planned. We expect to arrange that larger quantities of tufa can be ordered in advance from us for pickup, which Mike Greanya will broker from Ohio. Choice pieces of tufa will also be in the traditional silent Auction. A guided post-conference trip to Northern Michigan is also being planned. Publicity efforts will include an issue of the NARGS Quarterly organized by Tony Reznicek, as well as all the conventional channels. Finally we hope to be able to cooperate with other local organizations interested in gardens and plants, both to generate interest and encourage ongoing participation in gardening. More details about the NARGS AGM 2015, and more calls for help will be following in the course of the coming year.

There's the Fall Plant Sale coming up soon (Sept 21), and then there are the Fall Meeting (Oct. 28), the Winter Potluck (Jan. 18, 2014) and a probable visiting speaker (probably Feb. 22), all to look forward to.

Houstonia canadensis

by Don LaFond

It's getting tougher to grow Alpines in Michigan. The weather is getting hotter and more humid. So to find a native plant that at least looks like an Alpine cushion, and is easily grown, well that's just grand.

Most of us know the little bluets *Houstonia caerulea* and *H. serpyllifolia*, found usually in wet areas sometimes creating wide swathes of color in the spring. In my gravel pit garden I can't seem to keep the little blue flowers alive. *H. canadensis*, on the other hand, isn't blue, but will grow in dry sand. As a matter of fact if you grow *H. canadensis* in a dry, and lean position it resembles an Alpine cushion with white flowers on 2-3 inch stems. Some flowers have a pink blush, so maybe a good pink will be found someday.



Houstonia canadensis in northern Michigan

I was first introduced to *Houstonia canadensis* on a sandy gravelly bank in the back end of a cemetery in southern Michigan. I have also seen it growing in very wet areas. Both times it was growing among other plants and grasses, and under shrubs. In wet areas it rambles about, nudging its flowers up through the herbage in a polka dot fashion. When not in bloom it becomes almost unnoticeable. Unlike in the wild where it always seems to be mixed up with other plants, growing it in a garden setting without as much competition, it can be a pretty good substitute for an alpine cushion. The leaves are 1/2" long and 1/4" wide forming a cushion up to 6" across. I grow it in the ground and in troughs. Grown with an *Asperula*, their white and pink flowers bloom together and make great friends. In the fall the cushions turn a nice rusty red and sometimes rebloom to boot. Individual cushions don't last too many years but its seedlings are always found in my garden. Perhaps for the gardener who is a bit of a control freak it might be a bit too aggressive, but for those of us who are a little more *laissez faire* it's a great plant!

Leila Bradfield

We have the sad news to report that Leila Bradfield of Fertile Crescent Nursery in Kalamazoo passed away peacefully in her sleep, Monday, 18 March 2013. Leila was one of our staunchest members, always active in the Chapter Plant Sales, and she hosted the Chapter at her wonderful woodland garden and Nursery at least twice. Leila was generous, always interested in new plants, and highly skilled at beating most of us to choice plants at our rock garden Plant Sales. She will be greatly missed.

Our March 16 Spring Meeting with Peter George

by Tony Reznicek

Our secretary Libby could not make this meeting, so I am doing the honors (trying to remember what happened!) This was one of our two-program meetings, but was unusual in that the two were at two places. In the morning, we looked at pressed and dried rock garden plants at the University of Michigan Herbarium, which has excellent collections of Asian plants, including one of the few sets in North America from two of the famous plant explorers in China, Reginald Farrer and George Forrest. We saw plants collected by both, along with specimens from China gathered by Joseph Rock and Augustine Henry. Plus, we looked at some early American collections, including Dr. Kelsey's original collection of *Kelseya uniflora*, and some very early Great Lakes area collections (1820's and 1830's).

At noon, we re-assembled at the Botanical Gardens for an excellent catered lunch, and after lunch we were honored to have NARGS president Peter George present a talk on *Evolution of My Garden or Why my Garden Proves that There is No Such Thing as Intelligent Design*. As with all of us, Peter's garden evolved in sophistication and concept as he became more knowledgeable of rock garden plants, amid much deep excavating, soil creation, and lawn conversion. We were treated to pictures of many rock garden plants, how he worked out how to grow them, and the results of his work creating dramatic gardens. Peter gardens in Massachusetts, and all of us were inspired by his results in a climate similar to ours. Peter also urged us all to join NARGS, our parent organization, to support it and gain its benefits, especially the Quarterly, the new website, and the seed exchange.

Please send address changes to our Treasurer; also include your up-to-date email address. Thank You!

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Great Lakes Chapter:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email/FAX: _____

Send \$10.00 per year (check payable to Chapter)
to:
Susan Reznicek
Treasurer, Great Lakes Chapter, NARGS
890 Wickfield Court
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105-1227
OR pay in person at the next GLC meeting

National Organization:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email/FAX: _____

Send \$30.00 dues (check payable to NARGS)
to:
Bobby Ward
Executive Secretary
North American Rock Garden Society
P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619

We strongly encourage people to join both the Great Lakes Chapter, and the National Organization.

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FIRST CLASS