

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

FALL NEWSLETTER, September 2001

CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS

** meeting details below**

****SATURDAY, September 15, 2001 Fall meeting and plant sale**

MEETING: 11:00 am– 4:30 pm

PLACE: The New Center, Ann Arbor, North and South Conference Rooms, (see map)

**TIME: 11:30 Business meeting
12:00 Pot Luck lunch
1:00 lecture: Phyllis Gustafson:**

'Gardens of the Pacific Northwest with an Emphasis on Crevice Gardening.'

PLANT SALE:

PLACE: Bev Walters, 3437 Charing Cross, Ann Arbor (see map)

TIME: 3:00

We will let you know about the winter meeting with our usual timely postcard.

UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETINGS:

The next Annual Meeting will be in Anchorage, Alaska, June 11-14, 2002.

Eastern Winter Study Weekend: "Noah's Ark: Conserving Plant Diversity"
January 25-27, 2002 Potomac Valley Chapter Fairview Park Marriott Hotel, Falls Church, Virginia.

See your Rock Garden Quarterly for details.

Meeting notes for the Spring Meetings, April & May, 2001

By Tony Reznicek

April 14th meeting: To those of us suffering through this summer's heat and drought, gardening in a cold climate is becoming more and more attractive. This was never better demonstrated than by **Sharon Illingworth's** talk to us last April. She and her husband Rob garden near Thunder Bay, Ontario – just north of the Minnesota border. And while I grow a lot of the same plants, pictures of her plants seemed always to show them better looking and healthier than mine. And I suspect that even after this summer, plants will be still alive and healthy in her garden – unlike a lot of mine!

But more than the just climate, the scale shown by the garden, the spectacular views, and the beautiful natural rockwork made it a treat to see her program. All the things that we work so hard to generate in our gardens seemed to occur naturally in theirs.

So what are some of the plants that grow so spectacularly up north? Well, she has grown and flowered *Saxifraga oppositifolia*. Her *Lewisia*s are large and lush. *Telesonix jamesii* was bursting with blooms. *Convolvulus compactus* looked positively happy – and so did *Eriogonum umbellatum*, penstemons of various kinds, dwarf *Salix*, little Primulas, and alpine Gentians. Even our own native woodland Anemonellas, in various double forms, looked lusher and happier than they do in their native territory. Fortunately, she did not show too many pictures of *Meconopsis* behaving as weeds!

Though the severe winter cold certainly limited the diversity of trees and larger shrubs, the fairly reliable snow cover allowed a lot of herbaceous plants and dwarf shrubs to survive just fine, including such things as *Paeonia cambessedesii*, *Incarvillea* species, and even species of *Helichrysum* and *Delosperma*.

One of the things that I enjoyed the most was the use of our lovely native boreal plants in the garden. She showed great mats of our Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*) and Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*). Even more spectacular were plantings of our native Orchids. Lovely clumps of *Cypripedium* (*C. acaule*, *C. calceolus*, and *C. reginae*), plus an established and spreading colony of *Calyso bulbosa*, and even colonies of the spotted coralroot, *Corallorhiza maculata*, in the garden! I'm all set to move up north.

May 5-6 meeting: This meeting was a festival of garden tours, as well as a Saturday night dinner and program – plus a Sunday plant sale. We had members of the Wisconsin- Illinois chapter as our guests. Thanks to all of them who made the long trip to visit with us.

Thanks very much to **Betty Blake, Guerin Wilkinson, Borek Janik, Don & Mary LaFond, Tony & Susan Reznicek, Hiedi Jacobus, Jacques & Andrea Thompson, Dick Punnett, Ken & Ann Nitscke**, and **Fred Case** for opening their gardens to us. Thanks also to Fred Case for hosting our plant sale on Sunday. I wish I could comment on how gorgeous all the gardens were – but as a garden host, I had to stay put on Saturday. But both Ken and Ann Nitscke's and Fred Case's gardens were wonderful on Sunday.

Our Saturday evening speaker was **Ernie O'Byrne**, who gardens with his wife Marietta in Eugene, Oregon. Ernie walked us through the four seasons in their very large and very diverse garden, starting with winter views (their winters are mild enough that they can often garden in winter), and proceeding full blast onto the cool, Pacific Northwest spring. The small spring-flowering plants they favored were many of the same things that are popular with us: Hellebores in great variety, Epimediums, Trilliums, Hepaticas, Corydalis, and bulbous Iris, especially the beautiful hybrid Katherine Hodgkin. But there were also some things we don't grow so well such as stunning displays of Shortias, Soldanellas, *Dactylorhiza* hybrids, Pacific coast *Iris* hybrids, and *Calceolaria uniflora*.

Later in spring and summer finds their garden rich with later primulas, *Geranium* species, *Arisaema* species, the lovely *Thalictrum delavayi*, *Cimicifuga simplex* 'Brunette,' Alstroemerias, and extensive and diverse perennial and shrub borders. Later in the summer, and in fall, Hydrangeas were prominent, and *Saxifraga fortunei* 'Mt. Nashi' was striking. Fall color was provided by woody plants, and definitely conifers of different color and form, as well as herbaceous plants, like *Bergenia*, with colored leaves. Especially spectacular for fall and winter were the colored berries of the evergreen *Pernettya mucronata* and its cultivar 'White Pearl.' The entire garden was lovely at all seasons. An inspiration as well as a daunting challenge to us all. Than you Ernie.

Summer Squills

By Tony Reznicek

Everyone is acquainted with the various species of Squill (*Scilla*) that are such a large part of our spring gardens. The Siberian Squill is everywhere – even a pest – though it is too beautiful to really be angry about. And there are many more desirable spring Squills. But fewer people grow the summer Squills.

The most common species is *Scilla autumnalis*, native to grasslands of southern and central Europe. This has a peculiar life cycle. The leaves grow in spring, looking very like those of some grape hyacinths (*Muscari*), but with a reddish cast. However, there are no flowers produced with these leaves. Then, with the other spring bulbs, the foliage dies down in late spring -- still not having produced flowers. Very suddenly, in late July or early August, there shoot up flowering stems to 8 inches or so high, depending on the site, topped with a short raceme of starry, lilac-colored flowers. The plant shoots up so quickly it is always surprising. Though not really stunning, the plant is nevertheless welcome because nothing that looks like this in bloom at this time of year.

Like some other Squills, this species is prone to self-sowing, but it has never been a pest for me – just the odd plant appearing where it was not planted. You can guess from this, quite correctly, that this means the plant is easy to grow from seed. In fact, seed is as easy as planting bulbs, as they seem to grow from seed to flower in just 2-3 years.

There are more than one species of summer flowering Squill. Another species is *Scilla scilloides*, from China, Japan and Korea – also known as *Scilla chinensis*. This is quite similar to *Scilla autumnalis*, but is a bit taller, to 10 inches or more, with more flowers in the racemes, and wider leaves in spring. My

plants have more purplish flowers and bloom later – August and early September.

Both of these are interesting and very worth growing – even if not show stoppers. I'll bring a few plants of *Scilla autumnalis* to the sale.

CHAPTER OFFICERS 2000-2001

Please feel free to contact your officers if you have any questions or comments

NOTE:

Vivienne Armentrout has asked to relinquish her duties as secretary due to numerous other commitments. We want to thank Vivienne very much for all her efforts these past years. We also now need a secretary. Any volunteers?

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or pay in person at the next meeting
of the Great Lakes Chapter

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

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER
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FIRST CLASS

Directions for the September 15 meeting.

The program will be held at the NEW Center in Ann Arbor, a very convenient location right off the freeway with ample, free parking. If you are coming from the west, keep in mind that there is no exit from M-14 eastbound onto Main Street. You must go across the bridge, get off at Barton Drive (be careful of the very sharp curve on this ramp), go under the bridge and back onto M-14 headed the opposite way you came. Stay in the right hand lane to get off at Main. Watch for the left turn into the NEW Center parking lot just before the railway overpass. There will be a sign there indicating no left turn for buses – but you can turn in.

To go from the NEW Center to Bev Walters for the plant sale, the best route is to continue on Main towards the downtown, and then turn left onto Packard (the first light past William). Continue on Packard all the way to Charing Cross. Charing Cross in on your right, just before the second light after Platt Rd. and near the top of a small rise. Packard is now under construction, but will hopefully be open by Sept 15. If not, there is a modest, well-signed detour.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Phyllis Gustafson is well known to NARGS member and to our chapter. She is a well-known speaker and her topic "Gardens of the Pacific Northwest with an Emphasis on Crevice Gardening" should interest all of us. Gardeners can grow marvelous things in the Pacific Northwest, and so we can look forward to a wonderful selection of plants and garden scenes. Phyllis is well acquainted with the gardenworthy native flora of the Pacific Northwest, and has been long active in NARGS in various capacities.

PLANT SALE PREPARATIONS

If you are a newcomer to our group, you will be surprised at the diversity, number of rarities, and size of our two yearly plant sales. They are one of the best things about being a chapter member. And the sale is very important to the chapter, as it raises the funds for our excellent speaker program. But because of the size of the sale, we do need to have people try to follow certain rules to make the sale run smoothly and quickly.

At home:

- 1). Please pot or repot plants at least a week to ten days before the sale. Otherwise, the plants may look tired and ragged.
- 2). Please select appropriate plants for the sale. Interesting and unusual alpines, woodland plants and small woody plants are ideal. No large, common woody plants, annuals, common perennials, and tropicals please.
- 3). Before you bring the plants, label each pot, with the name of the plant [scientific name, if known, and cultivar or variety, if known]. On the back of the label put your name and the year. This allows people both at the sale or later to ask you about the plant. It also helps us when setting up the sale to talk to you if, for example, you have missed putting a price on the plant.
- 4). We ask people to price their own plants, and you can price your plants at home, if you would like, but please use a separate label for the price. The price labels are pulled out of the pots by the cashier to expedite adding up the total.

At the sale:

- 1) If you have not priced your plants at home, please use the chapter price labels provided to price each pot. Prices range from \$1 to \$6.50, but mostly are within the \$1 to \$2 range. Set your plants as close together as possible on the selling tables. You should try to get your plants to the sale a half-hour or so before the sale starts to get them set up and priced, if necessary.
- 2) Ask Don LaFond to look at your plants. For every 10 plants you bring, you are given one Red Label. Each Red Label entitles you to one "First Pick." This means that those who did not bring plants must stand back and wait for those with Red Labels to make their First Picks. The time for First Pickers to make their choices is limited to 3-5 minutes depending upon the number of First Pick labels given out. Keep in mind that you still have to pay for the plants.
- 3) Tell Don if you have brought plants that you think might be of "Auction Quality." These are normally either exceptionally rare and desirable plants not available commercially, plants available only at a very high cost, or large, well-grown specimens of highly desirable plants. He will inform our almighty auctioneers who pass judgement as to which and how many plants to auction. For each of your plants chosen for auction, you will get an additional Red Label.