

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

FALL NEWSLETTER, SEPTEMBER 2003

CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS

** meeting details below**

****SATURDAY, September 20: Fall Meeting and Plant Sale**

MEETING: 10:00 am - ca. 4:00 pm
PLACE: Macomb County Gardens [see map insert]
PROGRAM: 10:00 - Garden Tours
12:00 - Bag Lunch -- on your own
1:30 - Plant Sale

****SATURDAY, October 25: Fall Meeting**

MEETING: 10:00 am - ca. NOON
PLACE: Livingston County Conservation Club, 6060 East M-36,
Hamburg [see map insert]
PROGRAM: 10:00 - Business meeting
10:30 - **Jim Jermyn**
'The Challenge of Growing Himalayan Plants'

Mark your calendar:

****SATURDAY, January 17: Winter Potluck**

reserve the spot on your Calendar. We'll send out details with a timely postcard in the New Year.

New Meeting Schedule:

We are trying to regularize both our meetings and meeting places, so that they are easier to plan for. So from now on, we will try to schedule our meetings consistently: **The Fall plant sale will always be on the 3rd Saturday of September. The Spring Plant sale will always be on the 2nd Saturday of May, and our winter potluck will always be on the 3rd Saturday in January. We will also try to have our speakers fall on the 2nd Saturday in March and/or April and the 2nd Saturday in October and/or November. This may be more variable because scheduling is not entirely under our control. Also, we will try to have the speakers at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. See our President's notes for more commentary.**

UPCOMING NARGS NATIONAL MEETINGS

see the the NARGS *Quarterly* for details or visit the NARGS web-site: <http://www.nargs.org/sitemap.html>

2004 Eastern WSW: Jan. 30 – Feb. 1: Philadelphia, PA

Western WSW: Mar. 4 – 6: Eugene, OR

Annual National Meeting: May 5 – 8: Raleigh-Durham, NC

2005 Eastern WSW: Jan. 28 – 30: Toronto, Ontario

Notes from the President

Don LaFond

As some of us know, even while our membership is growing, the attendance at meetings has been dropping of late. The group has had several discussions on how to increase our attendance. What we have come up with is to return to having our meetings on the same days each year and to have the meetings always at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens, with exceptions when we have garden tours.

So here is a list of the days we will have our meetings. The spring plant sale will be on the 2nd Saturday in May. The fall plant sale will be on the 3rd Saturday in September. We have also decided not to schedule a speaker for the same day as the plant sale. We will have a potluck on the 3rd Saturday in January. We will schedule speakers, as available, on the 2nd Saturday in March and/or April and 2nd Saturday in October and/or November, with a goal of 2-3 speakers a year. This keeps us within our budget. This being said, it will take some time to get back into the rotation at Matthaei as they require considerable advance notice for meeting scheduling. The only way we will deviate from this schedule will be if a very interesting speaker is only available at a different time. Also I hope to initiate for next summer, more summertime outings, using various members for leaders. We have some very interesting places we can go for day trips. We have over the past few years been experimenting with different ways to get people to come to the meetings so I hope these changes will bring back our previous successful record of attendance.

On a different subject, the get together with the Ontario chapter was a big success. From both chapters 45 to 50 people showed up to my little weed patch and I thank you. Also the picnic at Arrowhead the next day was great with lots of food and plants. The Stewarts send their thanks. I hope to see you all on September 20th.

Spring Program –2003

Laura Serowicz

The April 12, 2003 meeting featured alpines of the Andes presented by David Hale from Portland Oregon. David and his wife, Donna, have traveled extensively throughout South America (SA). In this talk they took us from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia south through to Chile and Argentina, following the Andes Mountains. For the countries closer to the equator (Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia) the best time to visit is from January to August, when the weather is cool and dry. Because there is not a great change in climate, just wet and dry seasons, the plants tend to bloom whenever, thus you are sure to see many interesting plants in flower and find seed no matter when you visit. In many areas of the mountains the snow cover tends not to stay for more than a day, so in winter it may get cold, but there is no moisture with it. Therefore matching growing conditions for many of the SA beauties can be difficult, even though the climate in the Andes can vary from desert-like to maritime. For Chile and Argentina, early January is the best time to go for bloom; late January for seed collecting.

There is a scarcity of good Floras for this region, so there is much debate concerning correct identification of genus and species for many of the Andean natives. Although they are in Spanish, David Hale does recommend the guides to the Flora of the Andes by Adriana Hoffmann. In English, the best source is 'AGS Encyclopaedia of Alpines' – many of the entries for SA natives were done by John Watson (along with his wife Anita Flores), whom many regard as the best (and often only) source of seed of SA plants. Just remember that the cultural information in the Encyclopaedia is geared for the British Isles – and some of what is difficult for them may not be for us, and vice versa. Keys have been done for *Nototriche* and *Gentianella* – hopefully many other genera that

are native to SA will be done in the near future.

David Hale interspersed his talk on the Andean alpenines with slides of the various sights and towns of each area. Rather than make you get out your atlas in order to follow along, I will skip over the descriptions of the fascinating and varied scenery and concentrate on some of the more interesting alpenines he showed us. (You may also check out the two articles David Hale wrote on Chile and Argentina for the Spring and Summer 2003 'Rock Garden Quarterly' for more on traveling to that area.)

Often found near melting snow or damp seeps in the northern part of Andes, *Ourisia chamaedrifolia* has red tubular flowers. The Hales found and collected seed of an almost white-flowered *O. microphylla* on a bank along the roadside, 50 % of the seed produced pure white, large flowers. When they went back to the site few years later, the bank had caved away and been bulldozed. The normal pink-flowered *O. microphylla*, difficult to grow as an outdoor plant, roots about in their plunge bed. Although there are many gentian relatives in SA, *Gentiana sedifolia* is the only true gentian native to the continent. The largest genus in terms of species numbers within the SA gentian family is *Gentianella*, which also has a wide range of flower colors. Included in this genus are: *G. hirculus* – yellow with red vertical stripes and puffed-out closed flowers which look like miniature hot air balloons, *G. weberbaueri* – long tubular red flowers, monocarpic, takes a couple years to bloom, *G. alborosea* – funnel-shaped with a white tube and pink lobes, *G. incurva* – flowers comparatively large 1 ½" balloons, closed, yellow, tipped with red, that turn apricot before fading, *G. vaginalis* – closed flowers, red lobes and a yellow tube, with what David considers the best foliage, *G. scarlatinostriata* – nodding tubular flowers, red on the outside, yellow inside with red vertical stripes, and *G. primuloides* – yellow with dark red candy stripes. *Halenia weddelliana* (*H. pulchella*), or Spurred Gentian, is a short-lived perennial with yellow flowers and short spurs which give it the look of an *Aquilegia* although it is, as its common name implies, another member of the gentian family. South American *Viola* are very extraordinary and look more like a saxifaga or sempervivum until you see the unmistakable violet-shaped flowers peering out from the rosulate leaves. *Viola nivalis* – white flowers

and a tight rosette, found in damp places in Ecuador, *V. portulacacea* – lavender blue flowers with spiraled olive-brown leaves, *V. rosulata* has the flowers ringing the furry bronze colored leaves, and *V. vulcanica* – violet flowers with white tips, found in volcanic sand and pumice. South America also has its share of unusual, densely matted to low cushion-forming *Geranium*, including a species which wind erosion makes ball-shaped, with silver woolly leaves and white flowers, and *G. nivale* a cushion form with leathery leaves, that is difficult in cultivation. The Andes is also home to a Malva relative *Nototriche*, of which many are challenging but growable including *N. jamesonii* – grow in scree sand or turf, *N. obtusa* with blue flowers, *N. artemisioides* with blue flowers tipped white – 1½" wide, *N. coccinea* – red flowers and silver leaves, plant on the north side where it's cooler, with dew or frost overnight, *N. engleriana* – 2" flowers, turf grower, easier to grow, *N. macleanii* – large crocus-sized flowers, easiest in cultivation, sets seed occasionally, growing in turf, a *N. sp.* with dark brown and white flowers, candy stripe on back of buds, silver foliage, tight bun, gravel & scree, *N. flabellata* – magenta flowers, silver leaves. From Peru is *Mnioides pulvinata* (and yes it is spelled correctly) a composite with fuzzy dense cushion rosettes like New Zealand raoulia, and with similar culture except – water less than raoulia. David Hale also showed a couple of *Calceolaria*, including a species with a fuzzy leaf base and yellow flowers, that doesn't like wet or cold—he grows it in a trough and keeps it inside in winter, and *C. darwinii* (*C. uniflora* var. *darwinii*) – large yellow with brown flowers that are white on the lower lips of the pouches. Another genus that may be growable is *Oxalis*, notably *O. compacta* – covered with yellow flowers, a good trough plant that seeds around a little bit, and *O. erythrorhiza* also with yellow flowers, that only grew on a knife edge area of the summit, with howling winds which kept it a flat, hard mat. *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* is another plant to look for with flowers almost hidden within the leaves; if happy it will cover the mountainside – a "good doer." A lewisia relative, *Calandrina sericea* has magenta flowers above a cushion of blue-gray silky leaves – does well in their garden with protection from rain when dormant, and *C. affinis* with pure white flowers which can be difficult to please as it comes from wet

snowmelt areas which bake when the plants are dormant. A spectacular Chilean endemic, *Cruckshanksia hymenodon* with large pale lavender-pink bracts surrounding clusters of small yellow flowers, is not only difficult to grow, but even more of a challenge to get seed to germinate. South America also has its share of bulbous plants, including the Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*) relative, *Rhodophiala rosea* with flowers of magenta, pink, or white, the color varying by the area – for the greenhouse or try deeply planted in a bulb frame.

As more people become interested in the spectacular plants from the Andes, they will become more available for us to try in our gardens. Although there is little information available for many of the SA alpines, and what cultural information there is makes it sound like they are all difficult and challenging to grow, there are some plants that have done well in cultivation and many more that have not been tried yet. Perhaps some of the ones mentioned in David Hale's talk will prove to be 'good doers' here – if you can find them, give them a try.

The April 26, 2003 meeting was to have Harvey Wrightman of Wrightman Alpines Nursery, from Kerwood, Ontario, Canada (<http://www.wrightmanalpines.com>), and a nice group of members sat patiently awaiting his arrival. After waiting a couple hours for his arrival, we were able to get a hold of him via phone at his home and heard this sad story of frustration. He got stopped at the border in Port Huron and was not allowed to bring in some plants he had brought with him because the Ag inspector on duty was not familiar with them and did not know it was alright to bring them into the USA. Harvey made several attempts to get his plants across the border, but the Ag inspector continued to give him a hard time. Rather than have to abandon the plants, Harvey chose to return home. (He did call and leave a message on our phone, which, of course, we didn't get until we were at home later after the garden tour). Unfortunately this type of incident, in which plants are not allowed into the country because the USDA inspectors are not familiar with the plants we rock gardeners grow, or worse, they restrict the plants that are allowed into the US only to those on an approved list, is likely to continue in the future. It was suggested that our members write to

Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow, who is on the Agriculture Committee, to voice our concern. Harvey apologized for not being able to attend our meeting and said that he usually has not had trouble at the border with bringing plants over (his nursery does mail-orders into the US frequently).

Featured plant: *Cyclamen purpurascens*

Tony Reznicek

The tag end of August has got to be the dullest time for the rock garden in the Great Lakes region. The summer heat, humidity, and drought have taken their toll, and just about everything but the weeds looks tired and sad – and out of bloom. So what is there in the rock garden to encourage us for the fall? Of course, there are things in bloom: a few *Allium*, *Scilla autumnalis*, self-sown *Linaria alpina* chugs along, and a few *Scutellaria*, *Stachys*, and composites hang in there. A prostrate *Indigofera* is lovely now – though a bit wide spreading for a small rock garden. More exciting, *Gentiana paradoxa* is coming out, the first (and surely one of the best and easiest) of the fall gentians and *Daphne ×whiteorum* 'Kilmeston' continues to bloom. Around the shaded margins, some *Tricyrtis* are out, and *Begonia grandis* is beginning to show. So, with some planning, August need not be totally dismal.

But one of the best things out right now is *Cyclamen purpurascens*. Though having an undeserved reputation for being difficult, it is the easiest and hardiest *Cyclamen* in my garden. It's a favorite because it essentially does not go dormant – the showy leaves are present nearly the whole summer. Depending on the site, the flowers have been out for a couple weeks now and are still going strong, in various shades of deep pink with a darker eye. Plants are long lived – I have one raised from NARGS seed over 15 years ago – and can get quite large. My biggest plant is nearly 18 inches in diameter (I just went out in the rain to measure it) – and the leaves are spectacular. Like the more commonly known *Cyclamen coum* and *C. hederifolium*, spring and fall bloomers respectively, *C. purpurascens* has a wide range of leaf patterns, from completely green to marbled along the veins to "Christmas tree" patterns to evenly silvery ("pewter-leaved"). All are lovely and

seem quite hardy and easy. The solid green plants are from the Fatra region of the western Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia and are sometimes separated as the species *C. fatrense* – and they do look different in the garden.

Though usually classed as shade plants, I find that *Cyclamen purpurascens* does well with some sun, and I even have a couple pretty much in the open rock garden (though in sheltered microsites). All are in sandy soil with a moderate amount of humus. Contrary to the usual instructions, I do not plant my *Cyclamen* with the tops of their flattened tubers at the soil surface – I plant them deeply (to more than a foot if I can, with *C. coum*, *C. hederifolium*, and *C. cilicium*). However, *C. purpurascens* does not seem to thrive being planted so deeply, so I get it down only about 3-4 inches. That gets it out the range of some rodents at least. The very first plant of this species I grew was for years never protected and it always came through even the hardest winter, though sometimes the leaves looked tattered in the spring. Now – if I don't forget – I dump a wad of pine needles over the plants in late December. This takes very little time, and definitely makes for plants with fresher looking leaves in the spring in case the winter lacks snow cover.

Try this *Cyclamen*. It should be a part of every plan to have more color in the August rock garden.

Good sources of hardy *Cyclamen* in the eastern US:

Arrowhead Alpines

PO Box 857 1
Fowlerville, MI 48836
<http://www.arrowheadalpines.com>

David Fischer *Cyclamen*

P.O. Box 96
Wiscasset, Maine 04578
(Catalog \$1)

Seneca Hill Perennials

3712 Co. Rte. 57
Oswego, NY 13126
<http://www.senecahill.com>

Chapter Officers 2001-2002

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

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Please send address changes to our
Treasurer, Meroë Kaericher

NOTICE – Our Membership List

For a number of years now, we have printed a copy of our membership list with every fall newsletter. Our membership has grown, and to make the list easily readable and useful, now takes several pages. To try to save costs, we will start printing the list for mailing only every two years. This issue contains a membership list – so save it, because we will not put out one next year. We will have updated lists available at meetings for people who need one.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Great Lakes Chapter:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email/FAX: _____

Send \$10.00 per year (check payable to Chapter)
to:
Meroë Kaericher
Treasurer, Great Lakes Chapter, NARGS
8171 Brookville Road
Plymouth, MI 48170-5005

or pay in person at the next GLC meeting

National Organization:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email/FAX: _____

Send \$25.00 dues (check payable to NARGS)
to:
Jacques Mommens
Executive Secretary
North American Rock Garden Society
P.O. Box 67
Millwood, NY 10546

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

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FIRST CLASS

PLANT SALE PREPARATIONS for September 20:

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 offer the opportunity to get wonderful and unusual plants at very reasonable prices. Also, 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 ten days before the sale. Otherwise, the plants may look ragged.
- 2) Please select appropriate plants for the sale. Interesting and unusual alpiners, 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. You can price your plants at home, if you like, but please use a separate price label. 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 \$2 to \$6.50, but mostly are within the \$2 to \$4 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 Rosalie Meiland 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 Rosalie 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. She 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.