GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

SPRING NEWSLETTER, APRIL 2007

CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS ** meeting details below**

****SATURDAY, May 12: Spring Meeting and Plant Sale**

MEETING: 11:00 AM – ca. 3:30 PM

12:00 noon – **Hot lunch courtesy of Esther Benedict**

PLACE: Benedict's Nursery

5623 W 1300N Nappanee Indiana 46550 (see map enclosed**)**

PLANT SALE: 1:30 PM

Mark Your Calendars:

******Our **Fall Meeting and Plant Sale** will be **Saturday, September 15th** in keeping with our policy of having it always on the third Saturday.

******On **Saturday, October 20th** we will have a meeting with the eminent Latvian bulb grower and nurseryman **Jānis Rukšāns** as a speaker, location will be the **Matthaei Botanical Gardens auditorium.**

******Our annual **Winter Meeting and Potluck** will be on **Saturday, February 9, 2008.** Our speaker will be **Maria Galletti,** owner of **Alpines Mont** Echo and introducer of many new plants from Newfoundland and eastern North America, location will be the **Matthaei Botanical Gardens auditorium.**

Details for all the meetings above will be in the Fall Newsletter.

UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETINGS – see below and your Quarterly for details.

NARGS Annual Meeting June 14 – 17, 2007. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN REFUGE At the Canaan Valley Resort, Davis, West Virginia.

Our Spring Meeting and Plant Sale

We are the Great Lakes Chapter, and we have indeed met in the past in Ohio and in SW Ontario at Harvey Wrightman's, as well as sharing meetings with the Wisconsin-Illinois and Ohio Valley Chapter.

This spring, we will be meeting for the very first time in northeastern Indiana. Our hosts will be Robert & Esther Benedict, who run Benedict's Nursery. Because they run a business, they have not been able to come to many of our Saturday plant sales, but if you were at one of the sales where they did come and bring plants, you will know what a fabulous selection of alpines and rock plants they grow. We will have a chance to see some eye-popping rarities. At the nursery, they have been developing display gardens, including rock gardens, for a number of years. Last fall they rebuilt a section of their north-facing rock garden and put in a tufa/sand crevice garden, with plenty of vertical tufa surface for rarities, and have recently completed a rather large fieldstone sand bed and expanded their bog garden. The last several years, they have also been expanding the nursery to include trees and shrubs and are always looking for something a little bit different. They also carry many ordinary perennials for the beginning gardener. In addition to the Nursery, they live on a 60 acre farm, 10 of it being wooded, and maintain a large vegetable garden, fruit trees, raspberries, blueberries, and have livestock, plus acreage in corn.

They are located just south of the Michigan/Indiana State line (see map) only about 2 ½-3 hours from the Ann Arbor area and less from Grand Rapids, so it is not exceptionally far, despite being in another state. In addition, on the way there or back, you can visit Fernwood Botanical Garden (see the map). Fernwood was begun as the private garden of long time NARGS member, Kay Boydston, who did pioneering work hybridizing ferns, building tufa gardens (from native tufa outcrops along the St. Joseph River, and naturalizing plants. The gardens and natural areas at Fernwood should be near peak this time of the year and are well worth a stop. At the Benedict's, we will also have a sheet with other nurseries in the area that will be of interest – though they do not focus on rock garden plants. If some people want to stay overnight, there are a lot of options nearby, and then you would have Sunday to visit other places and spend more time at Fernwood – or you might stop in to see Bear Cave, not far away near Buchanan (see: http://www.michigan.org/travel/detail.asp?m=&p=G5341) The significance of Bear Cave is that it is a tufa cave, one of the few in the United States, and thus obviously of interest to Rock Gardeners! Leila Bradfield's nursery and garden will be available for visiting on the Sunday (Saturday, she will be with us).

Finally, as an additional bonus, Esther will fix a hot lunch for everyone. So please make every effort to spend a good day on this special outing, come to visit their nursery, and stop in to see some other places.

January 13th Meeting Report
by
Laura Serowicz

Our annual winter meeting and potluck featured a talk by John Lonsdale titled "**Woodland Treasures.**" John Lonsdale is originally from Great Britain but has lived in Pennsylvania for the last 11 years. He has a fantastic website at www.edgewoodgardens.net that is full of pictures of his garden and the plants he grows. His talk about woodland and edge of woodland plants was grouped according to family, and included a lot of bulbs, tubers and rhizomes which are of special interest to him.

John gardens in southeastern Pennsylvania, about 40 miles west of Philadelphia, nominally zone 6b, but the lowest temperature he experienced since moving there 11 years ago is -4°F. Some of the plants he showed may be borderline or marginally hardy in parts of Michigan. He has a couple acres with about an acre of deciduous woodland hillside which is planted up but he doesn't do much more than dig holes and put the plants in it. He also has a lot of natural rock outcroppings. A nice feature of the garden is the edge of the woodland, which is a south-facing slope about 70-100 feet high and runs about 400 feet. He also has a sunny area that is fantastic for growing a lot of Central Asian bulbs, Oncocyclus irises and other sun-loving things. John's property falls away about 300 feet to the valley bottom and he is just below the top of the ridge so the south-facing garden is protected from the worst of the weather which generally comes from the northeast, getting really good air flow without frost. He has a range of microclimates, which is great when he raises a bunch of plants from seed since he can try them in various spots to hopefully get some of them to succeed.

When people say woodland plants you tend to think of things inside the woods, e.g., *Sanguinaria*, *Hepatica,* and *Trillium*, which grow in deep shade, but you can also take a lot of these plants and move them closer to the edge of woodland where they get a lot more light and stay tighter and flower better. But, you must give them the moisture they need. Many woodland plants are spring ephemerals that have to jump up and do their business before the leaves come out on the trees and the soil starts drying out. John gets an enormous amount of leaves falling in the fall so he blows them down the hill out of the woods, shreds them and then hauls them back up to use as mulch or uses them when preparing new woodland beds. The soil is a nice humus loam and relatively sandy with lots of rocks and very free draining so when you combine the condition of the soil with the slope it makes the growing of these plants easier. The key to growing them is drainage. Somebody once asked what makes a good gardener – John thinks that the answer is that if you can water plants to their liking you're a good gardener.

John is a big *Cyclamen* fan and grows a lot of them since they are a fantastic plant for a woodland setting. *C. hederifolium* is bone hardy and will take full sun to deep

shade, flowering in September and October, and growing quickly into large, long-lived plants. In his conditions they always flower ahead of the leaves, plants may flower for four to six weeks but then you'll have the leaves for another nine months, so they give so much back to the garden. There is also such a variety of leaf forms, in various colors, patterns and shapes, and many are named forms. But once you get a few established in the garden, if you let them seed, you'll probably end up with all the forms in your garden. *C. mirabile* is a hardy fall-flowering one for John but it's probably not hardy for us [Tony Reznicek has been able to grow it in his garden with a mulch of pine needles]. It's one of three southwestern Turkish species and flowers in October. A feature of a lot of fall-flowering cyclamen and crocus is they have an amazing scent, to be able to attract pollinators at that late time of year. On the selection *C. mirabile* 'Tilebarn Anne' as the new leaves emerge they have a covering of pink hairs which protect them from the sun, and as they expand it is a gorgeous pink leaf plant and then as the leaves age the hairs rub off and they fade to a pewter color until June when they go dormant. *C. mirabile* 'Tilebarn Nicholas' has a slight red-tinged pewter color to the Christmas tree-patterned leaves. These are somewhat reliable seed strains – you'll get 80-85% of them come true. There are also some white-flowered forms of *C. mirabile* as well. Two other fall-flowering species, *C. cilicium* and *C. intaminatum* should be hardy for us here, and they also have a strong scent and flower from October through November. *C. intaminatum* is a really tiny plant about 2" tall so it makes a good trough plant. Another very hardy species is *C. coum,* very reliable, with a lot of variation in the leaves – the leaves come out in October and it flowers in January to February, depending how cold the winter is. It has chubby flowers, and makes a nice specimen for in the garden or in a pot in a cold greenhouse. There are various selections of *C. coum* – one new from Ellen Hornig (Seneca Hill Nursery) is *C. coum* 'Lake Effect', with slightly serrated petals and an all white flower which ages to a blush pink. It is always worth sowing seed because you never know what you may get. The nice thing about *C. hederifolium* and *C. coum* is some will flower in only a year or two from seed. *C. coum* wants more shade and a little more moisture in the summer than *C. hederifolium,* so put *C. coum* under a shrub or on the edge of the woodland. The Turkish C. *trochopteranthum* [Grey-Wilson is trying to change its name to *C. alpinum*] is named from the Greek word meaning propeller-shaped, because the flowers looks like little propellers. It is hardy for John and should be hardy for us here, the leaves aren't particularly special, but the flowers have a really strong spicy scent. *C. pseudibericum* is not a rare plant at all but there is never a mention of putting it in the garden – nobody in England grows it outside so he assumed it was not hardy. He got about 50 seedlings and put them outside and they've done just fine, with lovely magenta flowers in April and he's found a whole bunch of self-sown seedlings this year. You can get seed from the Cyclamen Society based in the UK, which has a wonderful seed exchange, as well as from the NARGS Seed Exchange. Most cyclamen are on a standard Mediterranean cycle so when it cools down and starts to rain in the fall they'll make the leaves, some of them will flower and will stay green through the winter and then as the temperatures warm up in the spring they'll start to yellow and wilt a little bit and once you get into May the foliage will die off and it is at that time you want to start drying them out. The very hardy *C. purpurascens*, on the other hand, grows in Austria, Switzerland, and Northern Italy in deep, deep shade and is actually evergreen. John made the mistake when first growing it here of putting it in standard cyclamen conditions and the leaves burned off quickly. It flowers in July and August, and has the most amazing scent – if you get a group of a half dozen of them you can smell them from miles away and the leaves come in a wide variety.

Interestingly, even though the various species of cyclamen can flower six months apart, the seeds are always ripe at the same time on all of them. Look for the seeds in June and July. The seeds look like little pinky-brown marbles clustered around the top of the tuber, by this time the leaves will have gone and you must gather the seedpods up just before they burst when they start to soften or else the ants will get them and disperse them for you. If you collect the seed when it's ripe, let it dry out a little bit so that it loses a bit of its stickiness and then sow it immediately. John uses BioComp BC5, but is not sure if it's available here, it's made in North Carolina out of 80% composted peanut hulls and 20% composted bark, and he mixes it 50/50 with perlite. He uses it for every single seed he sows and every pot in the greenhouse. It seems to have some magical quality that holds enough moisture that it's never too wet and there's lots of air spaces in it so it's great for the roots, so he would recommend trying to get it. For seed sowing he uses a 2 ½" or 3 ½" square pot filled to about ¾" from the top, surface sowing the seed and then covering it with about a ½" of medium grade granite grit, watering them in and puts them in a dark, damp, cool place in his small greenhouse, and leave them there until they germinate. The temperatures in the greenhouse get down to just below freezing so there is enough temperature variation for things that need stratification. You read in a lot of books that every plant needs a different compost and every seed needs a different way of germination, but he grows a tremendous range of things and he treats them all the same and it seems to work just fine. He tends to leave the cyclamen seedlings in their seed pots for 2-3 years depending on how many there are. The best time to either plant them out or pot them is August to September when they are starting to come into growth, and putting down some roots.

A couple other Primulaceae he showed include a form of *Dodecatheon amethystinum* which he found in western Illinois a few years ago. It's a great smaller Dodecatheon and easy from seed as well. *Primula sieboldii* seems to thrive in his conditions, whereas other primulas that he used to grow in the UK cannot take the heat and humidity over here. If it gets too hot and dry in the summer it just goes dormant and but it comes back

every spring. There are a dozens of varieties of *P. sieboldii* out there now and it makes a carefree, edge of woodland plant.

In the Ranunculaceae, *Adonis amurensis*, is a Japanese woodlander that likes the edge of woodland conditions. In England it flowers in January, but over here it flowers late February or March, totally unfazed by ice and snow. A typical spring ephemeral, it has golden flowers for a couple weeks then the ferny foliage comes up and lasts 6-8 weeks, and as the weather gets warmer, the ground dries out a bit, and the plant goes dormant. In late spring or fall you can dig them up, divide them, and move them around, they are really robust plants. There are some new [expensive] forms just introduced from Japan, including 'Chichibubeni', which has bright burnt orange flowers. It's not easy from seed but like most Ranunculaceae you need to collect the seed when they are green and sow them right away. The European *A. vernalis*, which grows in Croatia, Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, may go by a variety of species names but are all similar. It flowers like crazy in February but John has not had any luck germinating the seeds, although every once in a while a seedling will pop up in the garden on its own.

The form of Winter Aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis*, John showed was one a friend found in a local park that has very pale yellow flowers with yellow veins instead of the normal darker yellow color, it seeds around and comes true from seed. This form has not been named yet but once he has enough he will start offering it. From Japan comes *Eranthis pinnatifida* with white flowers and purple/mauve staminodia, the leaves are blue-gray green and finely divided. It flowers very early, often pushing up through the snow, and sets lots of seed.

One of the earliest flowering Hellebores is *Helleborus niger* from the Balkans. The 'Blackthorne strain' from Blackthorne Nursery in the UK has white flowers with a pink back and as they age they turn rose-pink. Normally they tidy up the Hellebores in late January to early February, cutting off the old leaves while the buds are still dormant, but this past year many were halfway to flowering in January.

Delphinium tricorne is a woodland delphinium from the South, he grows it on the edge of woodland along a power line they have running through the property, which lets some light into the woodland. It is seeding around nicely with a deep blue-purple flower, and it is ephemeral so it is above ground for only 6-8 weeks and then disappears back to its finger-like tuber.

There are several forms of *Anemonella thalictroides* including an unnamed double white, 'Shoaff's Double' (pink), and 'Jade Feather' (green petal-like stamens) which is the same as the form known as 'Green Dragon'.

In the U.S. there are two native *Hepatica* species, *H. acutiloba* and *H. americana*. *Hepatica acutiloba* has nice single flowers mainly white but also pale blue or pink and prefers limestone. *Hepatica americana* has blue or white flowers and tends to prefer a more acidic habitat. *Hepatica acutiloba* 'Louise Kohler' is the only double American native Hepatica that he knows of, which has nice double pink flowers. From Eastern Europe, *H. transsilvanica* tends to have bigger, fuller mainly blue flowers with big soft hairy leaves. Probably John's favorite is *H. insularis*, which has not been in cultivation for very long. Native to Korea, it has pink or white flowers with long stamens, and white mottling on its deciduous leaves. It is the only hepatica that is fully deciduous, with the others being evergreen with leaves that will last through the winter albeit a bit tatty by early spring. *Hepatica asiatica* grows in Japan and into China and has tremendous color variation in flower color. The double-flowered forms are very expensive and very prone to *Botrytis* fungi; they need a location with lots of air flow in the spring. Some populations of *H. acutiloba* seem to be susceptible to fungus also but it only gets into the leaves and weakens them, whereas with the double *H. asiatica* it gets into the crown and kills them. Another recently introduced species from China, *H. yamatutai* has pure white flowers with a beautiful reddish-pink back. Some of the hepaticas are worth selecting out for their leaves as well; especially *H. americana* which retains its maroon mottled markings through the season, and *H. asiatica* which can have beautiful green and silver markings. *Hepatica henryi* is another recent introduction from China; it has small white flowers and reddish-green new leaves, which are hairy and prone to *Botrytis*, so site it somewhere that gets lots of air circulation.

One member of the Composite family that John grows on the edge of his woodland is *Syneilesis palmata*. It is another Chinese plant; it has insignificant aster-like flowers and is grown mainly for its early spring leaves. Before they unfurl, the shoots look like a little army of very hairy guys walking up the hill, then they open out to umbrella-like palmate leaves. It does spread some by stolons as well as seeds around, so give it some space and deadhead it or it can be a bit of a thug.

There has been a lot of interest in the Berberidaceae family with the introduction by Darryl Probst of many new *Epimediums* from China. They are often described as growing in deep, dry shade, which they will but if you pull them out to the edge of the woodland where they get half a day sun, and give them some moisture, they will do incredibly well. John showed three examples: *E. brachyrhizum* 'Karen' with pale pink flowers and red leaves in the spring, *E. lishihchenii* has yellow flowers and tangerine color new leaves that slowly turn to bright green, and *E. stellulatum* with a profusion of small white flowers and long spiny leaves. Site them where you can protect them from early morning sun as they flower early and the flower spikes are very soft when they start to extend. There is a one or two day period where they are susceptible to cold and if it gets down to about 25°F they are killed.

Jeffersonia dubia is another far eastern plant in the Berberidaceae, and is a gorgeous thing, normally lilac-flowered, but there is also an exquisite form with pure white flowers. It is very early flowering and sometimes the early leaves can get frosted. It seeds around the garden, but collected seed doesn't seem to germinate well.

Also in the same family are the Asian mayapples, *Dysosma* (or *Podophyllum*). *Dysosma veitchii* (or maybe *D. delavayi),* has mottled red leaves in mid-spring which become mottled green, having red flowers under the large leaf, and sometimes an oval red fruit forms. Another Chinese one, *D. versipelle* is much bigger, but give it some moisture with a bit of shade, and it grows close to 4½ feet tall. The flowers are small and dark red and hang down underneath the leaves; it is great as an architectural plant. The Chinese *Podophyllum hexandrum* is different from these in that the pink or white flower comes up first and is above the parasol-like, nicely marked leaves. Seed of this is regularly available and germinates easily.

In the Fumariaceae family, John showed several *Corydalis solida* varieties which grow from little bulbs and build up nicely every year. If you plant several different varieties close together, let them set seed and sow around, within a few years you will have a wide range of colors. They come up very early so can take a lot of sun and by late April or May they're already done, seeds set and back below ground. *C. turtschaninovii* with gorgeous blue flowers, is a far eastern Siberian plant, which is happy with his winters but needs a cooler, damp area in the summer – if you lose it, it will be from rot in the humid heat of summer. John can keep it for a few years then it fades away, but he always gets seed so can keep it in the garden. In a western Illinois woods he found a form of *Dicentra cucullaria* that has pink flowers, where he found this form there was a wide variation of the foliage from uncut bright green to deeply incised blue-gray leaves and white to pink flowers. It is easy to propagate from its little rice grain-like bulbs.

In the Papaveraceae, are some special *Sanguinaria canadensis*. The double form you'll find most often is *S. canadensis* 'Multiplex'. *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Betty Casto' was found in Virginia, and is a semi-double form with long thin petals. It grew so easily that he got complacent and he almost lost it, so now he keeps dividing it so that he doesn't lose it again. He has gotten seed from it last year but doesn't know yet if it comes true from seed. There are various pink forms, he showed one called 'Blush', the outside of the petals are pink when they first come up but they quickly turn white.

In the Lilaceae, one of John's favorite genera of all the woodland plants is *Erythronium.* It grows all the way from western to eastern United States across into Europe and as far as Japan. From the Caucasus comes, *E. caucasicum* which is one of the first plants to appear in his garden every spring. It has beautiful mottled leaves, and fantastic low growing pure white flowers with an orange center, but it doesn't increase as much as some of the other ones. With time they will pull themselves down about 12" into the ground, so if you plant them deep in really well-drained soil they are easy to grow. One of the western ones, *E. hendersonii* shows very early in the spring, with beautiful silver-marked leaves and white flowers with dark purple centers and the tips of the petals are a soft lavender. The western Erythroniums can be divided into two groups. One group is the mountain ones like *E. grandiflorum, E. purpurascens*, and *E. pusateri*, etc. When John gets seeds of this group, they germinate and hang around a couple years and then they just fade away. The other western ones from relatively lowland areas of California and from Oregon, however, do fairly well for him; they even seed around in the garden. The pink-flowered *E. revolutum* wants a little more moisture in the soil; the others want a dry summer. There are three yellow species from the Eastern U.S. *E. americanum* is highly stoloniferous and is often seen on floodplains and riverbanks as millions of little single blade leaves, it seems to be happier running around than it is to flower. However, in his garden where he has the rocks and sandy soil, it tends to be a lot drier and where he plants them they don't run too much and quickly form flowering clumps. John's favorite one of all the American species which he's seen down in Louisiana and far eastern Texas is the stoloniferous *E. rostratum* with beautiful leaves. It's the most amazing plant, the flowers actually holding themselves up and following the sun, and unlike other Erythroniums it has an incredible, sweet scent. He's seen hundred feet across patches of it with bright yellow flowers which you can smell a quarter of a mile away. When it is in seed it has a little beak on the pod (rostratum means beaked in Latin) but it is hard to find in cultivation.

Trillium underwoodii from the Florida Panhandle has a lot of white mottling on the leaves and red upright flower petals. There is also a rare yellow-flowered form from the same population. Down in the Florida Panhandle they are already in flower by mid-February. *Trillium decipiens* is like *T. underwoodii* but on a longer stalk. It grows down in southwestern Georgia so it is another early riser, with beautifully marked leaves. *Trillium cuneatum* is very common and tends to have dirty brown-marked leaves that tend to fade to green within a couple weeks after they unfurl, John also has some silver-leaved forms. In northern Georgia he found a neat form that has deep yellow-green flowers with a red flare at the base of the petals. A naturally yellow species, *T. discolor* grows in the Savannah River drainage in South Carolina (with *Shortia galacifolia*). The normal *T. discolor* is a pale moonlight yellow with a greenish flare at the base. John found a couple of populations of it near Clemson University where a high proportion have a deep red flare at the base. It is the latest trillium to flower, sets lots of seed and has a delicate, but strong, lemon scent. *Trillium decumbens* grows from east central Alabama and across into north-western Georgia, it is completely sessile and has red-purple long-petaled flowers. The leaf spans can be really robust; it likes to grow on slopes, sometimes in big patches. Another Deep South species, *T. foetidissimum,* a really cool elegant plant, grows in Louisiana on the east side of the Mississippi River. It literally grows by the hundreds of thousands in the woods, with nice dark purple flowers (occasionally a really rare greenish-yellow). However, it is very aptly named "*foetidissimum*," if you go into the woods when it's warmed up a bit you really notice they stink, especially when you get within three feet of them. Nice leaves when they come through, but they fade a little bit. The

normal *T. maculatum* has nice leaves with pure maroon flowers, but you can find forms in the wild that are pure lemon. *Trillium maculatum f. simulans* tends to be found in south-eastern South Carolina with a bicolor flower (base red, tips yellow). *Trillium nivale* is the first trillium to show in the garden, in flower normally mid-March for John, the form he showed was from western Illinois, with the pedicellate flowers a little bit bigger and the leaves tending to have a silver-pewter, blue-green cast to them. It sets lots of seed, and the whole thing is probably not more than 3" tall. The last of the trilliums John showed were various forms of the pedicellate *T. sulcatum*, both natural variation and hybrids, ranging from white to dark red and bicolor petals (see John's website for photos).

In the Araceae is a popular cult woodland plant, *Arisaema*, which people either love or hate. *Arisaema sikokianum* is one of the harder ones to grow because it needs perfect drainage, so John grows it in a really dry part of the woodland. Some years it's male, some years it's female, so some years you get seed. But the tubers on this species don't build up. *Arisaema ternatipartitum* is only about 3" tall, so it is a really cute little Arisaema, and it does build up slowly into clumps. Another clump former, *A. kiusianum* comes from Japan. Its inflorescence is about 8" tall and the attractive glossy leaves get a couple feet tall. It quickly builds up and is very easy to grow, he lifted a clump of it in full growth and moved it around in the garden and it carried on as if nothing had changed.

Asarums are another cult plant, there are a lot more of them around, and Barry Yinger of Asiatic Nursery sells a lot of them. Many of them are not hardy for John and he has tried to concentrate on ones that have a pretty good chance of being hardy. Most asarums are clump formers. *Asarum avatieri* 'Ai Taka', has beautiful dark green leaves with white veins. An unnamed form from China, has matte, green leaves that are covered in tiny hairs, which in the right light gives it a metallic sheen. Some Asarums are grown for their flowers, *A. splendens* has large panda-colored flowers, however it runs around – sometimes a little bit too much.

In the Iridaceae, some *Crocus* do well in dappled shade. *Crocus nudiflorus* flowers late in October to early November, it's stoloniferous so you can soon get a big clump, and it has a strong honey scent. It's a great edge of woodland plant, and wants a little bit of moisture in the summer so, unlike most of the crocus, don't put it where it gets bone-dry in the summer. *Crocus banaticus* grows in Romania where it is a little bit cooler so it will probably do well for us. It's in a section of its own because it has these weird reduced inner petals, it flowers in October to November.

Iris winogradowii isn't a woodland plant at all but grows on one mountain in Turkey. It wants a cool and slightly damp summer, if you treat it like other reticulata iris and give it a dry summer it will go away quickly, so pop it somewhere in the woodland where it will get a bit of moisture in the summer and some nice cool shade. *Iris cristata* is one you will find all over the eastern N. America. In the woods it tends to make sparse stands of leaves and rarely flowers, but if you bring it to the edge of the woods it will make some nice tight clumps and flower like crazy. It's a beautiful plant, only 6" tall and there are lots of named forms. *Iris verna* is a little bit harder to grow as it likes acid soil. It is found in South Carolina, around where the *Trillium discolor* and *Shortia galacifolia* grow and it is also into Southern Ohio. There are two forms, the mountain form, *I. verna* subsp. *smalliana* is a clumper and the coastal plain form, *I. verna* subsp. *verna* which loosely runs [*I. verna* subsp. *smalliana* does well for Fred Case in Saginaw, but *I. verna* subsp. *verna* doesn't]. The next four irises John showed are all in the same group, the series *Chinenses*, and Daryl Probst was instrumental in reintroducing these; all are edge of woodland plants with very thin fibrous roots. The yellow-flowered *I. koreana* makes a nice clump. It flowers in mid-spring and is easy to grow. White-flowered *I. odaesanensis* sets seed and germinates easily, but you have to watch the angular seed pods carefully because they may look like they won't be ripe for a while and the next thing you know they have popped and the seeds are gone. The tiniest iris of all is *I. minutoaurea*, the yellow flowers are the size of a quarter, and you need to divide the clumps to keep them flowering well. John's favorite, *I. henryi* has thin, grass-like foliage, divide easily, and have pale lavender flowers, that are 1½-2" across. The Pacific Coast irises, from the Pacific Northwest include about fifteen species in all sorts of colors with fabulously veined flowers, e.g.. *I. innominata*. They seem to want a relatively cooler and low humidity, dry summer. John can grow them for a few years but they rot out in the summer. He may try some up in an area of the garden which is heavily shaded, really stony and where he gives it no supplemental water at all in the summer.

As a "rule of thumb" for most areas of his garden, when the *Asarum canadense* starts to wilt he knows to set a sprinkler going overnight, and that is usually good for about ten days without any rain.

In the Orchidaceae, of those that like woodlands, the yellow-flowered *Cypripedium parviflorum* subsp. *pubescens* does really well. His favorite is *C. kentuckiense* which does magnificently for him; he had probably two hundred flowers in the spring on a variety of clumps. He has found that it builds up to about four noses to a clump and then it doesn't increase anymore, so what he does about every three years is lift them in September, divide them down to one or two noses, put them back, and then they quickly build up to four or five noses again and you can keep increasing them this way. John showed a beautiful form with an ivory slipper (rather than the usual yellow) and maroon sepals/petals. [Fred Case says it is the one that you can't kill no matter where you put it]. John has tried the Chinese cypripediums in his garden and they all hate our summers, you can plant them, they'll grow, they'll flower, and then they either rot out in the summer or come back next year with just a shoot and then they rot out. This is also true with *C. californicum*, *C. candidum*, and *C. montanum*, they all rot out in the summer. He has some seedlings of *C. pubescens* × *C. montanum* and *C.*

pubescens × *C. candidum* which he is hoping will do better for him since they should have the robustness of *C. pubescens*. The May-flowering Japanese orchid *Bletilla striata* is very inexpensive and often said to grow in dry shade, but if you put it out into a sunny, moist spot they do much better and make huge clumps.

The American native *Spigelia marilandica,* has exotic red flowers with yellow tips and does not look like it should be a native plant at all. It comes up late in May, clumps up, and is pest free.

In the Diapensiaceae, *Galax aphylla* 'Watnong' has polished dark burgundy winter foliage, which in the summer turns green. In the wild it grows in the deepest shade, hanging down cliffs, but in the garden it will take quite a bit of sun on the edge of the woodland. *Shortia galacifolia* in the wild grows in gullies under Rhododendrons in deep shade and in really dry soil in the summer. It does really well in the garden in shady acidic soil and once it is established it is actually quite drought tolerant. He has it on his slope where it flowers, sets seed and slowly creeps around, in the winter it has beautiful reddish-brown foliage. John has not been able to grow the Asian Shortias here, again because of summer heat and humidity. In the UK, he could grow the Asian ones but not *S. galacifolia*.

John finished up with several shrubs starting with the Chinese *Daphne genkwa* which needs a good warm autumn to ripen the wood and make it more cold hardy. He couldn't grow it in England where it would tend to wake up in the winter and then get hit and die out. Here he has a bunch of them established on the edge of the slope in a range of colors from pale to dark lavender. *Calycanthus* 'Venus' is a new hybrid between the three species of Calycanthus, with large white magnolia-like flowers and a spicy fruity scent. His favorite Redbud so far is *Cercis canadensis* 'Pauline Lily' which opens almost white and fades to blush pink. He has planted thirty or forty deciduous Azaleas since moving to the U.S. The variously yellow-flowering *Rhododendron austrinum* start flowering in early spring right through to September and a lot of them are beautifully fragrant too. The species may not be hardy for us here, the wood is hardy for him but if he has a really cold winter the flower buds get burnt off. Many other Azalea species are bud hardy and wood hardy. The final shrub he showed is *Aesculus* × *neglecta* 'Erythroblastos' with the most amazing red-orange spring foliage to tantalize us for the spring soon to come.

Seed Exchange

A big thank you to the following list of volunteers who helped with this year's Second Round Seed Exchange. The (*) denotes those volunteers who helped out all three years. We want to remind all volunteers who are members of NARGS that if they note on next years First Round Order that they volunteered they are allowed 10 extra seeds and their order gets picked before even donors orders (if they get their order in right away). And another big thank you goes to Jen and Gary Boes for allowing us to hold the Second Round in their garage again. This was the third year that the Great Lakes Chapter did the Second Round Seed Exchange and another chapter will probably have the honor of doing it for the next three years. All the volunteers from the three years did an excellent job – Thank You!

***Vivienne Armentrout; Bob Berarducci, Jen & Gary, Kelsey & Taylor Boes; *Joan Bolt; Charles Cares; Carol & Andy Duvall; Libby & Michael Greanya; *Don & David Lafond; Dwight Lewis; Rosalie Meiland; Jackie Miller; *Jan & Cliff Moore; Ken Nitschke; Dick Punnett; *Susan & Tony Reznicek; *Laura & John Serowicz; *Andrea & Jacques Thompson; Rimmer de Vries**

Remember to start collecting seed for next years Seed Exchange!

Chapter Officers 2007

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

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or pay in person at the next GLC meeting

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Send $30.00 dues (check payable to NARGS) to:
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We strongly encourage people to join both the Great Lakes Chapter and the National Organization.

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