

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS)

FALL NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 2020



CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS **meeting details below**

You can always check our website for information: <http://glcnargs.com/>

****SATURDAY, Oct. 17: Fall Meeting, Plant Sale, & Garden Tour**

- MEETING:** NOON – ca. 3:00 PM
PLACE: Andy Duvall's Nursery 9950 Dixboro Rd., South Lyon
– See the map in the plant sale insert
BAG LUNCH: If desired, and while touring the Nursery
PLANT SALE: 1:30 PM – See the Plant Sale insert for details

Some important items about this special meeting:

- 1. Esther & Robert Benedict, of Benedict's Nursery, will be coming and selling plants. So don't miss this special opportunity to get their plants close to home.**
- 2. We'll have several choice books for the auction, donated by members.**

For this meeting, during this extraordinary time, we'll have special precautions to do it safely, and stay within the limits imposed by the state. We'll do this by dividing our membership between the two properties Andy has, and making sure everyone is spaced out and masked.

See the Plant sale insert for more information

We're still hoping to have a talk by Paul Spriggs – via ZOOM – later this fall. More details will be sent out by email or postcard.

We'll also keep you posted on NARGS plans for this year

February 22, 2020

**Mike Palmer – History of the Marie Azary Rock garden with up-dates on the current renovation
Libby Greanya & Patrick Ion**

Due to bad weather, the winter potluck traditionally scheduled in mid-January was rescheduled to February 22, 2020. After an always wonderful potluck lunch, Mike Palmer spoke to us about the history of the Marie Azary Rock Garden at Matthaei Botanical Gardens.

33 people attended. There was a traditionally lively auction involving Andy Duvall, Don LaFond, and Tony Reznicek netting \$182.

At 1 PM, President Holly Pilon called the meeting to order. On March 7, there will be a meeting with a Katherine's Catering lunch and speaker Mike Bone from Denver Botanic Gardens.

There was discussion about the Great Lakes Chapter's future involvement with the Marie Azary Garden rock garden at Matthaei to include duties, responsibilities, input on plant selection, etc. and it was proposed to have a committee to formalize the relationship. We are fortunate to have Jacques Thompson, Tony Reznicek, and Mike Palmer as "institutional memory"- this will be the third installment of the Marie Azary Garden.

There was also discussion about the Great Lakes Chapter intern at Matthaei. The intern relationship has not worked out well for the rock garden. There has never been a written agreement between the Great Lakes Chapter and Matthaei and supervision of the intern has been spotty – one year the intern worked in the wrong garden!

The Ann Arbor Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society has undergone upheaval and NARGS members Bonnie and Patrick Ion recently have resuscitated it. There was agreement to give the Society a gift of \$1000 from the Great Lakes Chapter of NARGS as seed money for their spring plant sale.

The Great Lakes Chapter has again agreed to help with the popular NARGS seed exchange. This is a lot of work but we have a many diligent and meticulous workers. The main seed sale is in January and involves approximately 550 to 600 orders. The March surplus sale is usually around 250 orders.

Treasurer Bonnie Ion presented the annual financial report from 2019.

There was a plea from President Pilon and Tony Reznicek for members to step forward to serve as officers. It has been my honor to be the GLC secretary for 8 years – it was an easy job and a delight to work with the board. I am "passing the pen" to the eloquent Patrick Ion.

The position of the "coffee person" for the meetings has been eliminated. Now BYO drink/snack. (Snacks to share always welcome, especially if chocolate is involved!)

There are other volunteer openings, including the speaker's coordinator, which would be ideal for an organized person who can drive and doesn't live too far from Detroit Metro Airport (which is where most of the speakers would arrive/depart). What an opportunity to personally meet these giants of rock gardening! Contact President Pilon if you are

interested. The meeting adjourned at 1:35 PM

Speaker Mike Palmer, who is the Greenhouse Research Coordinator and Collections Horticulturist and has been at Matthaei since 1990, spoke on the history of the Marie Azary Garden.

This garden originated from Marie Azary, a long time GLC-NARGS member and Friend of the Botanical Gardens, who lived on Pontiac Trail in Ann Arbor. She had a lovely small tufa rock garden in her back yard, and hoped to have it be the nucleus of a Rock Garden at Matthaei. The transfer took place, and was dedicated while Marie was still living. Mike had lists of original plants - a handful of the more aggressive ones are still around! The garden has been a feature of the grounds since then, undergoing renovations, with new tufa added and new plants. This meeting in fact was partly to provide background to the chapter about the latest ongoing renovation in which we are participating, and explore the role of the Chapter in this latest renovation, which was ongoing when the COVID lockdown hit – and hopefully will resume next year.

There was a great deal of discussion about the form a partnering of our Chapter with would take, from fund raising to help with interns to more direct help weeding, selecting plants, and working with fine-tuning the design to make it viewer friendly (labels) and child proof, including barrier walls and use of troughs. There was a great deal of discussion about the vision the Chapter had for the garden and its role. Stay tuned when we resume this after we are able to access the garden again!

March 7: Mike Bone – Steppe Plants for Rock Gardens and Middle Asian Steppe and its Mountainous Regions Tony Reznicek and Patrick Ion

Mike Bone bears the unique title of Curator of Steppe Collections at the Denver Botanical Gardens, one of the finest gardens for Botanical Diversity in North America. Mike has worked at the Gardens since 2002 and has traveled widely studying the flora of North America and Central Asia.

This meeting was one of our traditional meetings, with two programs separated by a catered lunch. The first program was **Steppe Plants for Rock Gardens**. Steppes are treeless areas – temperate grasslands – that may have some woody plants, but can be montane or alpine all the way down to near deserts. Characterized by scanty rainfall and vast vistas, steppes are especially prominent in Asia, North America (though we don't commonly use the words) and South America. From a rock gardening perspective, the Asian steppes especially have a marvelous bulbous plant flora – we saw a number of *Tulipa* sp., some great *Fritillaria* – *F. sewerzowii*, *F. raddeana*, *F. eduardii*, along with Juno *Iris*, and great Alliums, Herbaceous plants included *Dracocephalum* species, *Acantholinum*, of which we saw several, and other delights like *Michauxia campanuloides*.

South American steppes are also rich, with bulbs like *Rhodophiala*, and remarkable plants like *Calceolaria* sp., *Junellia* sp., and many others -- remember Marcela Ferreyra's program from the year before.



Fritillaria raddeana

South African steppes are the land of *Gladiolus*, *Delosperma*, *Pelargonium*, *Aloe*, *Cotyledon*, and many other plants unique to that biome not all of which are hardy, even in Denver.

North American steppes are more familiar. Many of us grow *Camassia leichtlinii*, *Oenothera macrocarpa*, *Eriogonum* sp., *Penstemon* sp., *Phlox*, *Eriogonum* – this list is huge. As with other areas, there are also plants very hard for us to manage; *Calochortus* comes to mind.

Mikes' second talk, on **Middle Asian Steppe and its Mountainous Regions**, focused in more detail on his trips to central Asia, noting also some of the culture and some of the areas of high biodiversity.

This area is of special interest to the Denver Botanical Gardens due to both the climatic and the floristic similarities. So Mike was collecting seed for the Botanical Gardens for evaluation.

There were so many lovely things in the program, but among the plants that really mark the Asian steppes are *Eremurus* – Mike showed *E. tianshanicus*. There were also more *Dracocephalum*, these almost being the *Penstemon*s of Asia. As expected, there were a number of bulbous plants. Some succulents, like *Rosularia platyphylla*, and some more familiar plants: *Acantholimon*s again, *Paeonia anomala*, and *Papaver* sp., including *P. croceum* and *P. tianshanicum*, and *Atragene (Clematis) sibirica*. There were so many great plants, and it was so interesting (and helpful) to see them all in their natural setting.

Fall color from herbaceous species: Tony Reznicek

Many of us plant at least some woody plants with an eye to great fall color. But herbaceous plants not so much. In fact, when there is talk of yellowing herbaceous plants, it is mostly about how to hide them, or how soon you can cut them off. It is certainly true that many herbaceous species are quite ugly dying down. But some herbaceous species do have decent fall color. So with our fall meeting late this year due to COVID, I was able to think about this some.

The only herbaceous plants that come to mind that are sometimes explicitly mentioned for fall color are *Epimedium* species and *Amsonia hubrichtii*. *Epimedium*s especially have some fine plants for fall interest. They are unusual in that their fall color can be in red tones. Here is one that turns a lovely red for me



Epimedium sp., nice red

– now if only I can find the tag so I can let you know what it is....

But in fact, there are lots of other plants that have relatively bright colors, mostly in yellow tones. Surprisingly, many are woodland species we typically associate with the woodland spring ephemeral flora, but whose leaves last until fall. This includes *Aralia racemosa*, *Arisaema* sp., *Jeffersonia diphylla*, *Maianthemum* sp., *Polygonatum* sp., *Sanguinaria canadensis*, *Thalictrum dioicum*, and *Uvularia* sp. These are all various shades of yellow, from very light colored, as in *Arisaema sikokianum*, (and *A. candidissimum* can be brighter),



Arisaema sikokianum fall color

to dark yellow, edging to brown, in *Sanguinaria*.



Sanguinaria canadensis

Jeffersonia diphylla can be especially bright.



Jeffersonia diphylla

Though not a spring ephemeral, the odd, unassuming summer woodland species lopseed (*Phryma leptostachya*) has almost white leaves right now, quite unusual.



Phryma leptostachya

Even a few ferns color a nice yellow – *Osmundastrum cinnamomeum* does, plus *Osmunda claytoniana*, and also the more eastern hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*). Of course, keeping good

leaves until this late in the season is contingent on a healthy, well grown plant and also enough water to keep it from going prematurely dormant. But here are a few more examples.



Osmunda claytoniana



Polygonatum macranthum



Uvularia grandiflora



Aralia racemosa

Few rock garden species show this sort of fall coloring. That is not too surprising, as fall color appears to be most prominent in eastern deciduous forest species. And so many rock garden plants are evergreen in any event. Some dwarf willows will color up – though they are of course, woody plants. But a nice little plant for shady wall, *Astilbe simplicifolia* will develop nice red tints before leaf fall.



Astilbe simplicifolia

And there are a few other odd plants that can have a second season in the fall. One, *Passiflora lutea*, native a little south of Michigan, has very unusual leaves for a temperate plant – wider than long, and with three rounded lobes. It colors a nice yellow – perhaps its best season, as the flowers are tiny and greenish-yellow.



Passiflora lutea

Our New Chapter Secretary

Let's welcome our new Secretary, Patrick Ion, who has graciously agreed to take over from Libby Greanya. Libby has our thanks for her many years of service to the Chapter.



Symphyotrichum xamethystinum (? Maybe a backcross)

Please send address changes to **Bonnie Ion, 1456 Kensington Drive Ann Arbor, MI 48104 – bion@umich.edu**

**Do include your up-to-date email address.
Thank You.**

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Great Lakes Chapter:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email: _____

Send \$10.00 per year (check payable to Chapter) to:
Bonnie Ion
Treasurer, Great Lakes Chapter, NARGS
1456 Kensington Drive
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

OR pay in person at the next GLC meeting

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

National Organization:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email: _____

Send \$40.00 dues (check payable to NARGS) to:
Bobby Ward
Executive Secretary
North American Rock Garden Society
P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619

OR pay through the NARGS website:
<https://www.nargs.org/join>

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER
North American Rock Garden Society
Newsletter Editor, Tony Reznicek
890 Wickfield Court
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105-1227

FIRST CLASS