



Iris tuberosa

J. McKenney

Potomac Valley Chapter
North American Rock
Garden Society

PVC Bulletin

March 2014



Hamamelis 'Jelena'

J. McKenney

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<http://www.pvcnargs.org/>

You can pay your dues by sending your check for \$15 (payable to PVC Rock Garden Society) to Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22207 4pvcneas@gmail.com

Calendar 2014

Most meetings are Saturday mornings- 9:30am coffee; 10am presentation, unless otherwise noted. Coffee/Tea and donuts will be provided at meetings.

March 29th, McLean Community Center, McLean, VA

Marta McDowell (Watnong Chapter member, NJ), "Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life"

Marta is a popular lecturer on topics ranging from design history to plant combinations; she found inspiration from women authors in the past who also loved plants and the pen. She lives, writes and gardens in Chatham, New Jersey. Marta McDowell's books include: *Emily Dickinson's Gardens* (2007); *A Garden Alphabetized (for your viewing pleasure)* (2008) (with artist Yolanda Fundora); and *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life* (2013); and she narrated an audio tour for the grounds of the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst, Massachusetts Her current projects include a book about the history of American gardening as seen through the gardens and grounds of the White House due out from Timber Press in 2015.

April 26 Field Trip combined with Mason-Dixon chapter to **Colston Burrell's garden** in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Charlottesville, Virginia. Cole's property sustained significant damage in the severe storms of 2012 so we will be touring a "revised-due-to-more-sun" garden. Cole is a passionate plant collector whose designs are inspired by the beauty of regional habitats. Meet in Free Union, VA at 10 am for tour. After the tour, lunch is on your own. Meet again at 2 pm at **the garden of Courtney Daniels** in Greenwood, VA.

May 17th Green Spring Plant Sale, Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA

May 24th Plant Exchange, Alice Nicolson's, in Mitchellville, MD 20721

June ? Potomac chapter picnic will be at a TBD Montgomery Park; date TBD.

July 5-12 Sierra Nevada Wildflower trip starts in Reno, Nevada ([check NARGS website for details](#))

July 19 Picnic at Jim Dronenburg's with Mason-Dixon chapter

August (last week) NARGS Annual Meeting, Santa Fe, NM
Go to NARGS website for upcoming details, www.nargs.org

September 27 Plant Exchange, Sarah Strickler's, Arlington, VA

October 14th or 15th Panayoti Kelaidis, National Arboretum Auditorium. Panayoti is the senior curator and director of outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens. He designed the plantings for the world-renowned Rock Alpine Garden and helped implement Wildflower Treasures, South African Plaza and the Romantic Gardens among many other gardens at Denver Botanic Gardens.

October 25th NARGS Eastern Speaker, Mike Kintgen Mike Kintgen is a Senior Horticulturist at the Denver Botanic Gardens where he oversees the Alpine Collection and nine gardens, including the Rock Alpine Garden, and South African Plaza.

Index

President's Message	p. 2	NARGS News Betty Spar	p. 7
Primula 'Blue Zebra'	p. 3	NARGS Seed Exchange	p. 7
The Expanding Garden Bob Faden	p. 3	<i>Cyclamen coum</i>	p. 8
Asian Podophyllums Kevin McIntosh	p. 5	Members in the news	p. 9
Witch Hazels Chris Herbstritt	p. 6	Minutes of Dec. 14 Board Meeting Anne Mazaitis	p. 9

The deadline for the next issue of this bulletin is April 15, 2014

President's Message

Winter Is Breaking. Waiting for the train at Brunswick station, I heard the spring peepers today. Not the full chorus, true, but not just one lonely individual, either. And it doesn't matter that there is a cold front coming in tonight and they are going to freeze their figurative tail feathers off. The Spring is coming. I got my first plant order of the year two weeks ago and all the plants got safely planted (during a thaw).

Thaw...This winter was the nastiest I can recall in twenty years. Rock gardeners are a bit insulated from this, of course, since rock gardens tend to have excellent drainage and a lot of the time what kills a plant is not winter cold, but winter wet; and through a lot of the worst of it we had good snow cover—itself a rarity here. Few if any of us have ONLY rock gardens, though, and the mortality (both known and yet-to-be-discovered) is shaping up to be appalling. Oh, well, someone was saying last week, it will open up places to put other things. No use crying when you can turn to the nurseries and the catalogues instead.

Catalogues...As a matter of sheer gossip, almost everyone knows Forestfarm, in Oregon. Most people know Far Reaches, now; my order, above, was from them and included a seedling of a pure pink *Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanense* which should bloom pure pink, too—"should"

being the operating word. But on the Far Reaches site I saw a reference to Dancing Oaks. So I googled them. Do google them yourselves. I have ordered from them this year....THE ORDER HAS NOT YET COME so I can't speak to what they send, but their website is a treasure trove.

Now that I've probably disposed of your disposable income with the last paragraph, I'll dispose of your time. I proposed in the last Board meeting that we close the summer hiatus—and we can do it cheaply, meeting in members' houses, terrorizing their gardens, and having speakers that won't break the budget. I also ran the idea of participating in the FALL Green Spring Days past the Board and got tentative approval. The idea there is not to make a ton of money; the Fall sale won't do that; but it is a way to get exposure. For every hundred people that walk by, one person may be interested enough to join us. At any rate, we live in hope.

Last Monday was the first weeknight of Daylight Savings Time, so I actually had an hour do Do Things Outside after coming home on the train. I took a page from Nancy Goodwin's book and lifted several clumps of blooming snowdrops (perhaps sixty bulbs total?), teased them apart and planted them in onesies and twosies along the stone border to our lawn. They will take no harm being thus moved, and will settle in well.

This will be the second time I've done this, and in about five years they should have clumped up enough for me to do it again—if I've got the oomph, because by that time there should be thousands. Nancy Goodwin, of course, has been doing this for yeeears, and has drifts of thousands and thousands and thousands..... She says she has moved several thousand this year alone. I should only have that much room, and that much energy.

Lastly, a bit of a nudge: While you are cleaning away the winter mess and burying your dead, and moving things to clear the gaps, do think about separating, dividing, potting up (now or closer to the date) things both for the spring Green Spring Days sale, and for the Exchange. I am attempting, this year, to set out some "nursery" area for plants to be set out, and actually *potted* maybe a month before the sale. Bobbie Diebold, incidentally, has a mort of seedlings and divisions each year, and has proposed a Potting Party, date TBD—I don't THINK we settled on an actual day, someone correct me if we did—and not only would this give us a whole raft of plants, it should be a lot of fun.

Misery loves company—does anyone want to send in a rosters of their de--- er, Metabolically Challenged plants after this winter? As if Jim M. didn't have anything else to do.....
In service, Jim.

Did you bite, too?

Did we snatch them all up? Is the grocery store becoming the garden center of the future? Who among us wouldn't stand in line for this one?



Primula 'Blue Zebra' J. McKenney

The Expanding Garden

Robert Faden

Single-digit Temperatures, the Garden and a Bright Surprise

On the 6th and 7th of January, 2014, overnight temperatures in single digits with subzero wind chills were forecast for our area. Although Alexandria, VA, where we live, is supposed to be one of the warmest spots in the Washington, DC area, we were definitely concerned. We knew that some of the plants we grow needed extra protection, but the task seemed a bit daunting. We had already "winterized" our potted plants by putting them in protected places (thanks in part to some friends letting us use their vegetable gardens or cold frames). We had also placed fleece bags over some of the more recently planted broad-leaved evergreens (see Kinsman Company website for details about the bags: <http://www.kinsmangarden.com/index.htm>). Would that be enough, we wondered (and hoped).

Something that we had not yet done was to collect discarded Christmas trees, in order to use the branches to cover certain plants. It seemed that folks had been rather tardy this year in putting out their trees, and because we no longer had our pickup truck, it was not going to be easy to quickly grab a discarded tree from in front of someone's house and make off with it. Until that weather forecast we had adlibbed a bit, using some extra-long branches from one of our yews and others from the top of *Juniperus virginiana* 'Woodlander's Weeping' which had been broken off by the wind about two weeks before. (I used to like that tree very much until the heavy snows four years ago knocked it over and we were never able to fully right it. Now, without its top, it is really sad-looking!). In any event, the yew branches were too few, and the branches of the juniper were too floppy to really form good tepees around our recently planted small *Osmanthus* shrubs.

Then I thought of one resource that we had never utilized: the Leyland cypresses that form a visual barrier between our dead end street and the YMCA parking lot. They had needed pruning for a long time. There was also a large Leyland cypress on the YMCA

property that had been planted by the previous neighbors across the street from us, but entirely on the YMCA property, instead of their land, so it was fair game too. I got my light weight pruning pole and started chopping, and soon we had enough branches for our needs. We placed them around the *Osmanthus* bushes on the YMCA and tried to protect the bases of *Sabal minor* and *Mahonia fremontii* in the sand bed.

We also started thinking about other plants that needed protection. We always cover the winter leaves of *Arum creticum* with a large flower pot when the night temperatures go below freezing, despite its being situated in one of the warmest spots in our planting area: next to a west-facing brick wall behind which is the YMCA swimming pool. We made sure it was covered and did the same for several other small shrubs, including our seed-grown monkey-puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*). We also found a few additional shrubs that we could protect with fleece bags.

We usually give our cold frame extra protection on the coldest nights. Our normal cover is a one centimeter thick sheet of black foam, but this time we added a mattress cover and a large sheet. We also placed some burlap and sheets on top and around the sides of a framed compost "bin" in our back yard that has become a holding area for potted plants during the winter.

Finally there were our gravel-filled window wells, usually the first places in which we bury potted plants for the winter. We were most concerned about the plants in them that were small and evergreen, such as seedling camellias. For the two window wells with the most vulnerable plants we created lean-tos, using window screens which we covered with burlap and other materials to break the wind, making sure that the northern exposure was protected.

After doing this for hours we went inside and started to warm up. Then I remembered that we had planned to throw a sheet over one of the *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Variegatus' bushes at the end of our front walk. It would have been very easy: the sheet was in the trunk of our car, less than 3 m (10 feet) from the shrubs. It also would

have been an interesting experiment, had we covered one shrub but left the other to face the elements. But we were tired and it seemed like one thing too many to do, so we decided to let the bushes take their chances.

So what happened? The temperature was reported to have dropped down to 7 and 8 degrees Fahrenheit on successive nights. Initially there were only two obvious signs of damage in the garden: our runaway dwarf bamboo (*Sasa pygmaea*, or something like that) had its foliage badly damaged. Unfortunately its underground rhizomes were probably just fine (but one can always hope). As for the variegated *Osmanthus*, every leaf on both shrubs is now outlined in brown. There is no way of knowing whether they will all die and fall off but, we hope, the plants will survive and new growth next spring will make the winter damage less obvious.

One final note about winter protection: bulbs that have their leaves above ground in the winter, such as colchicums and *Scilla peruviana* can be protected by covering them with pine needles.

A Pleasant Surprise

We walked around our gardens on 15th January, looking for plants that might have come into flower since January 1st when we made our first survey. We were not expecting anything new because it has generally been cold and most of the usually reliable very early bloomers, such as *Mahonia bealei* and *Lonicera fragrantissima*, did not have any open flowers. However, when we checked the large tufa garden in Simpson Park we were very surprised to find *Erica x darleyensis* 'Furzey' covered with pink flowers and looking very happy. The shrub is about 25 cm (10") high and 35 cm (14") wide and has been in the ground about two years. *Erica x darleyensis* is supposed to be the best heath for the South. So now we have another plant to look forward to seeing in bloom in the depths of the winter! Hickory Hill Heath & Heather (www.hickoryhillheather.com) usually has this cultivar for sale at River Farm and Green Spring plant sales. Their website lists several other cultivars of *Erica x*

darleyensis but most are recorded as out of stock.

Postscript (29 January 2014). Since the above was written we have had five inches of snow and further and more prolonged subfreezing temperatures. We re-covered and have left in place the protection for the window wells, cold frame and compost bin, and we covered for the first time the variegated *Osmanthus* in front of our house. We were concerned because we noted that additional evergreen shrubs, such as *Laurus nobilis* and *Loropetalum chinense*, had suffered from the wind and cold.

My Experience with Asian Podophyllums in the Garden

Kevin McIntosh

Photos by Kevin McIntosh

One of my favorite plants in the Spring garden is *Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty'. This plant's ancestor, *P. delavayii* (also known as *Dysosma delavayii*), hails from the wooded and mountainous areas of China's northwestern Yunnan Province and is thus imbued with a fair degree of hardiness (Zone 6, at least). 'Spotty Dotty' is a complex hybrid that was patented by Janet Egger and assigned to Terra Nova Nurseries in 2007. According to the patent (<http://www.freepatentsonline.com/PP17361.html>), the seed parent of this hybrid was "an outstanding selection out of a hybrid swarm from a Japanese nursery, which is believed to come from *P. difforme*, *P. delavayi* and *P. versipelle*." The pollen parent was *P. delavayi* '64'. Dotty was chosen among the seedlings for its outstanding foliage (deeply lobed umbrella shaped leaves with attractive brown spotting) and propagated by tissue culture. It is magnificent in May when the mottled leaves erupt from the ground and in June when the red flowers hang below the leaves. The flowers are red-maroon, about 2 inches in length and hang from the leaves. The plant is about 1-1.5 feet tall and doesn't appear to be susceptible to disease. Best of all, deer leave it alone (at least in my garden)! The plant requires no special care except for some shade in summer. My plant

is located on the east side of my house near a large magnolia tree and only receives a few hours of sun each morning and average moisture. 'Spotty Dotty' does not go dormant like our native may apple (*P. peltatum*) and leaves are retained on the plant until the first



frost.

I've had 'Spotty Dotty' in my garden for about 15 years, and during that time it produced only 3 crowns, each crown producing 2 or 3 leaves. It has never produced any seedlings. Maybe this why so few nurseries carry it; and when they do, it costs an arm and a leg. The only nursery that I could find that carried it in 2012 (Frasier's Thimble Farms, Salt Spring Island, Canada) was selling it for \$60. Two years ago, I decided to try splitting off one of the crowns, and I planted the division elsewhere in the garden. The division took right away, so now I had insurance in case the original plant died. Interestingly, the following year (last spring), both the original plant and the division sent out runners (one runner from each plant) from which little plants sprouted. Perhaps the injury sustained from dividing the plant caused this to happen. I pulled up the runner from the original plant and sectioned off the little Dotties, potting each one. All 6 plantlets survived. I kept a couple for myself, gave away a few to friends and donated the rest for fundraising.



Another Asian *Podophyllum* that I grow is *P. pleianthum*. This is a large plant – the leaves can be nearly 2 feet wide on 2-3 foot stems! The deeply lobed leaves are glossy and dark green when they emerge in April. The flowers are mahogany colored and hang below the leaves. This plant, which grows under an oak tree, was well behaved for about 5 years in my garden but in the past 2 years it has spread by underground rhizomes. At this point, I would not consider this plant invasive or aggressive as the plants are easy to remove and once pulled out, there is no ‘Medusa effect’ where 5 new plants pop up. I have not noticed any seedlings as well. Deer leave this plant alone and the leaves persist until frost. Unlike ‘Spotty Dotty’, this plant appears to be fairly common in the trade.



I anticipate that I will have both *P. delavayii* ‘Spotty Dotty’ and *P. pleianthum* plants to give away at future plant exchanges and to sell at PVC-NARGS plant sales, so for those of you interested in growing these spectacular plants in your home gardens, keep an eye out!

Witch Hazels Chris Herbstritt

Witch hazels are small deciduous (or sometimes tardily deciduous) trees that bloom in late fall, or mid-winter/early spring. Their spidery, delicate blooms look a bit like clusters of strands of lemon zest. I find them invaluable for extending the gardening season. Most of mine bloom when the snowdrops are blooming and are usually unphased by cold weather. This year is the exception as many of mine are freeze-dried.

‘Primavera’, ‘Angelly’, ‘Jelena’ and ‘Aurora’ are a few of my favorites. ‘Arnold Promise’ has a nice fragrance, but the foliage is very ugly during the summer. I would not recommend it unless you enjoy spraying fungicide continuously. Witch hazel flowers come in a variety of colors: yellow, orange, red, pink, purplish and intermediate shades between these, but it seems that the yellow cultivars really stand out best in the landscape.

Another trait to consider when selecting *Hamamelis* cultivars is winter leaf retention. Some hold the old brown leaves until new leaves are produced the next year. The dead brown leaves can detract from the beauty of the plant while it is blooming. Some people believe that plants can outgrow this trait, but I have seen some old specimens at the USNA that still do this after being planted for many decades. Some cultivars are known for shedding their leaves consistently.

I know of one nursery that sells witch hazels on their own roots: Klehm’s Song Sparrow Farm and Nursery. This eliminates the worry that the root stock will sucker and outgrow the scion. It is best to be vigilant for the first ten years and rub out the buds on the root stock as they begin to grow. Eventually the plant will stop doing this. Avoid cutting the suckers as this stimulates more suckers. It’s

better to pull off the suckers with a pair of pliers.

Witch hazels come in a variety of growth forms. There are a couple of dwarf cultivars that would be suited for the small garden. 'Little Suzie' (aka 'Little Susie') is a nice yellow and grows at about a third the rate of the regular cultivars. 'Quasimodo' grows very slowly (a ten year specimen is five feet high) and has insignificant, tiny, reddish-brown blooms. Some witch hazels will have a nice upright, vase shape while others are widely spreading. Still other varieties weep or crawl along the ground.

There are fall blooming varieties (*Hamamelis virginiana*), mid-winter bloomers (*H. ovalis*) and spring blooming varieties (*H. vernalis*, Asian species and hybrids). Some witch hazels have a sweet fragrance ('Arnold Promise' and 'Aurora'). Others have a musky or spicy fragrance. Some even have what I have heard described as a wet dog scent.

Chris Lane's book is a good resource to help select the best species or cultivar for you.

NARGS and the Potomac Valley Chapter Betty Anne Spar

For those of you who don't know, we are a chapter of a national organization, the North American Rock Garden Society. It is an informal affiliation. There are approximately 36 chapters across Canada and the US participating in NARGS. Some of you belong to PVC or NARGS, or both. Needless to say members' gardens are not inspected for rock garden purity.... just a love of diverse and unusual plants and an eagerness to learn more. Why join NARGS when you are a member of PVC?

For a 30\$ subscription fee, one receives a subscription to the *Rock Garden Quarterly* which you receive as a hard copy or on line as you prefer. They are collector's items. The whole history of the Quarterly is available for members to read going back to 1950. The travel articles and exploration of true alpine collections is breathtaking trip from your couch. I call this natural and remote rock climbing. All floras are

represented and it is edited by a British enthusiast in the UK.

The Annual General Meeting held once a year throughout US or Canada is not to be compared with anything else. You do have to be a member to attend. For three days, you visit private gardens and attend pre and post meeting field trips. Renowned local speakers and experts on regional flora provide lectures and first rate chats. The field trips are amazing. This year's meeting will be in Santa Fe NM on August 28-30. There are occasional winter study weekends as well. Our chapter has hosted at least two and they were very successful.

Then, there is the renowned SEEDEX in which members swap seeds of many rare and unusual plants. Several thousand taxa are typically available through the exchange. The PVC has participated in the third stage mailing of the SEEDEX for the past two winters.

Membership in our local chapter is certainly important but also becoming a member of NARGS will broaden your horticultural horizons, both to plants as well as to the people who grown them. You can join online at www.nargs.org. I always have brochures at the meetings.

Successful Phase III Seed X for 2013-2014 !!!

Dick Hammerschlag
Phase III Seed X Coordinator

The Potomac Valley Chapter with support from the Mason-Dixon Chapter successfully completed the six week challenge of filling and mailing all the seed orders for Phase III of the NARGS Seed Exchange for the 2013-2014 season. Really it was an efficient, great effort that involved volunteer participation of forty (40 !!) different PVC and two Mason-Dixon members. We filled out about 600 orders that went to 20 foreign countries, Canada and myriad States ! There were something like 3,000 different seed types from around the world (collected mostly by NARGS members) all in numbered glassine envelopes that were sent to us by Phase II. So our main task to fill each order was collecting the appropriate seed packets by matching the request

numbers on the seed orders sent in by NARGS members with the numbered packets located in sequential number in trays on the greenhouse benches (in effect it was a bit more complicated than that due to depletion of available seed and selection of alternate seed packets). The completed seed orders (usually 35 packets for seed donors and volunteers; 25 seed packets for all other persons) were then placed in addressed mailing envelopes and sorted by U.S. and foreign for the Post Office. As an adjunct effort Betty Anne Spar formatted ALL the mailed in seed orders so that they could be added in digital format to the e-mailed orders (easier for NARGS to track the entire process) and together (with a BIG assist by Laura Serowicz of NARGS) made available to us (Phase III) for filling. We were fortunate once again to be able to use the greenhouse bench space provided to us by Behnke Nursery !!. Another plus was locating a Post Office that was willing to handle the hundreds of mailing envelopes going around the world filled with the seed for each order !!

At the end of Phase III we had to inventory the remaining seed and send it to the Siskiyou Chapter for Phase IV surplus seed distribution. The number of incoming seed orders was down this year from last due to reduced foreign orders in response the the newly levied charge of \$15.00 on foreign orders. The bottom line seemed to be that most of the participants actually enjoyed themselves, working and chatting together, in the relatively warm, bright greenhouse space during the dead of winter. This then completed our (Potomac Valley Chapter) two year commitment to NARGS.

And speaking of the NARGS Seed Exchange

Gone to seed, but in style...

Our chapter's participation in the seed exchange was a big success. Here's a view of some of the participants as they worked in the warm, humid comfort of one of Behnke's greenhouses. BIG THANKS TO BEHNKE'S!



And here are two of the main forces behind that success, Dick Hammerschlag and Betty Spar. Dick and Freddy Hammerschlag hovered over the seed exchange like new parents; Betty worked from home processing orders. Here you see Dick and Betty (Freddie was nursing an injury) with the gifts from the chapter presented to them at our last meeting.



And speaking of that last meeting:



Ed Bowen, proprietor of the “deliberately small nano-nursery” (his description) **Opus Plants**, was our speaker at our last meeting. He really got the group warmed up.

How's this for a breath of spring?

Cyclamen coum in the garden of sometime-member Dixie Hougen, photographed last week. The flowers of this one are so vivid that they were easily seen from across the garden. Nice job, Dixie.



Members in the news

An article in the *Gazette* touched on **Jody Fetzer's** participation in the Green Matters Symposium: Gardening in a Shifting Climate held at Brookside Gardens February 28th. She spoke on the topic "Gardening Delight or Dismay: how horticulture can adapt, adjust and accommodate climate change" She has also changed jobs, ending as Garden Supervisor/ Plant health manager with Hillwood Estate & Garden and has accepted a position as Green Management Coordinator with M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks. This new position is part of the MS4 NPDES Permit; her goal is to develop and manage a cohesive program to reduce pesticides and implement alternative strategies for managing weeds and plant health.

Audrey Faden and sometimes-member **Bill McLaughlin** were two of the local gardeners consulted by Adrian Higgins for his article “Bitter winter dampens flora forecast” of Wednesday, March 19, 2014 on the front page of the Metro section of the *Washington Post*.

Minutes of meetings

PVC board meeting December 4, 2013 8 PM in Collington's Boardroom

Present; Jim Dronenburg, Kevin McIntosh, Margot Ellis, Jody Fetzer, Sarah Strickler, Dick Hammerschlag, Alice Nicolson, Gay Washburn, Anne Mazaitis

Referring to a letter from Green Spring's Mary Olien about a possible continuation of a rock garden intern sponsorship this year we discussed our financial situation first:

PVC income from dues and GS plant sale ran to about \$2200 last year. Spending per meeting (speaker fee, room rental, coffee and donuts) could be as much as \$400. We have 4 or 5 meetings a year. We do not want to increase dues, we do not want to fundraise specifically for a GS intern. So increasing our income from the plant sale is the only option, The usual and long discussion about plant sale tactics

follows.....

Last year's GS intern cost \$1700 and this amount is not sustainable long term. The internship turned out well: the intern, Heather Hare, fell in love with the rock garden, and she and Judy Zatsick did a great job of rehabilitation as we noticed in a visit last September by PVC.

What was exactly the purpose of the internship? GS's rock garden had been neglected of late even though it is right smack in a rather visible location. Should we have to donate to GS to keep up its rock garden? GS liked HH so much that they hired her as staff. The result is that GS has now two people that have an interest in its rock garden, that is two more than formerly. So the chance that it will be kept up is larger than before. Still, Heather and Judy have not yet had a full cycle/year of the rock garden and perhaps to keep interest going we could sponsor again a partial rock garden intern for one more year. We voted that we could offer GS an amount of \$700 as a contribution toward an intern.

Sarah explained to Jody and us her programs for the coming year. Speakers for the months of Jan, Feb, March 2014 are booked, The speaker at the Feb meeting will need a place to stay. GS plant sale is always the Sunday in May after Mother's day and one week later our plant exchange at Alice's in Collington. (Perhaps they will have the intercom to ask for access in a better and more visible place). PVC picnic in July and Jim Dronenburg offers an extra picnic at his place for PVC together with the Mason Dixon Chapter of NARGS.

Sarah also has done publicity of our calendar to other groups as the professional landscapers, Four Seasons, Capitol Hill Garden Club and public gardens and parks.

With Brookside closed for renovations we wonder if there are commercial nurseries which would give us meeting space. It is a good idea, but none seems obvious.

Gay and Sharon have come up with ideas to help us recruit and keep members:
- visibility i.e. publicity by posting activities at

garden centers and libraries, ads in City Paper, Washington Gardener

- welcome new members by introducing them at meetings, so we can go and talk to them or invite them to our gardens
- focus on rock garden matters as trough work shops,
- show and tell
- rock garden plant before lecture
- potting up or seed starting demo

Dick shows the schedule for the NARGS Seed Exchange. Setting up late December, early January and then mostly on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until done early February.

Meeting adjourned at 9PM

The wearin' o' the green

The little green iris seen on the masthead of this issue of the bulletin is *Iris tuberosa*, aka *Hermodactylus tuberosus*. It missed being in full bloom on St. Patrick's Day this year by only a few days. It's an odd little plant, with foliage like a reticulate iris but – as the specific epithet hints – it grows from a stubby rhizome unlike the true bulb of the reticulate irises. It has grown here for years in a cold frame. The cold frame might not be necessary: I've heard of at least one established group in a zone 5 garden. It's an old plant in gardens: the English herbalist gardeners of four hundred years ago knew it well. Editor

FOR THE MAY 2014 EDITION OF THIS BULLETIN –

Please keep notes on winter damage and survival for publication in the next bulletin. Jim D. mentions this in his message above, and I want to repeat it here. Everyone should have something to contribute to this topic this year! Send your comments to jamesamckenney@verizon.net

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