



*Narcissus cyclamineus* Ch. Herbstritt

Potomac Valley  
Chapter  
North American  
Rock Garden  
Society

*PVC Bulletin*

March 2015



*Fritillaria sewerzowii* J. McKenney

Jim McKenney, Editor [jimmckenney@jimmckenney.com](mailto:jimmckenney@jimmckenney.com)  
<http://www.pvcnargs.org/>

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

**2015 Calendar**

Programs are Saturday mornings and, unless otherwise noted,  
Doors open at 9:30 am for coffee with lecture at 10 am

**April 19 (Sunday) gates open at 9:30 am tour begins at 10 am**

Field trip to Hillwood's Rock Garden and Japanese-style Garden. Led by Bill Johnson. Hillwood Museum & Gardens, 4155 Linnean Ave NW, Washington, D.C. 20008

**April 24-25 FONA Garden Fair and Plant Sale** We need help to staff our table, **please contact Sarah Strickler to schedule a time to volunteer** [sa.strickler@verizon.net](mailto:sa.strickler@verizon.net) (Friends of the National Arboretum). US National Arboretum 3501 New York Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002

**April 26 – Sunday (note this is a new date!)**

**Field trip** to Mill Pond Garden in Lewes, Delaware. The owner of this wonderful private estate will be our guide; he will also share information about the Delaware Botanic Gardens. The Delaware Botanic Gardens is a ten year, multi-phase plan to create a major public garden near Dagsboro in Sussex County that reflects southern Delaware's unique coastal plain. Ground breaking is planned for early spring 2015, with an opening of the first phase of the garden in 2017. **Optional stop** at Peppers nursery a real treasure trove (so bring your \$\$)!

**May 7 – 10 (May 10 is Mother's day!)**

**NARGS Annual Meeting** in Ann Arbor, Michigan [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)  
Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48103

**May 16**

**Green Spring Plant Sale**, Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA

**May 23**

**Plant Exchange**, at Sarah Strickler's , more to follow

### Index

President's Message	p. 2	Tiny trumpets continued	p. 7
Betty Anne Addison on propagation	p. 3	On the masthead	p. 8
Carolyn Beck's azalea method	p. 3	Officers, board	p. 8
Let's get some seed started	p. 4		
Dressing for the occasion	p. 6		

**The deadline for submissions to the next issue of this bulletin is May 1, 2015**

### President's Message

This year looks to be another compressed Spring. The daffodils (Rijnveld's Early Sensation) which, in a good winter, bloom in early January, are just now showing two inches above ground for me. The x hybridus hellebores are just now coming into bud. The vernalis witch hazels and *Prunus mume*, ditto, two months late. Among woody things, I expect massive dieback; my *Arbutus unedo*, which recovered from LAST winter, is once again totally fried, and may not have survived the one-two punch of the two "bad" winters back to back. Alas, poor Yorick—except that Yorick couldn't resprout later in the year and some "dead" plants can.

Other things seem right on schedule—the things, like erythroniums, that come up in late March or early April anyway are starting to show. And seedlings of the things that self sow are coming up nicely. Spring ephemerals should be up any time now—I'll have to look

tonight for the mertensia and Dutchman's-breeches, and the first leaves of *Asarum canadense*.

Some things seem happy as clams, albeit late, and are spreading—I've never had such snowdrops or eranthis as this year. And hallelujah, I have seedlings around my Spring-ephemeral *Helleborus thibetanus* for the first time. ((Incidentally, Thimble Farm nursery says that these are heavy feeders NOW, fertilize NOW, and keep them watered, and they will stay up longer & bulk up more.))

As you have heard before, PVC will have a booth at the FONA sale, April 24-25; there has been a call for volunteers to staff said booth. (Talk to Sarah Strickler). This is a chance to strut our stuff in front of a whole new audience of potential members. We will be having troughs for sale, all small & planted up, mostly hypertufa but two made of stone, from China (should be nice and heavy), which were donated by Meehan's Miniatures. There will be a trough-planting session at Dan's

and my house April 4, with a visit to Meehan's beforehand. Again, talk to Sarah or to Kevin MacIntosh. But where we really need people, of course, is at the booth to charm potential members. Bat the eyelashes and mutter seductive botanical Latin. That sort of thing.

Do remember—the NARGS meeting is in Ann Arbor, MI, from Thursday May 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday AM May 10<sup>th</sup>. The date for getting early registration in has, of course, passed by the time you will read this, but registration is still open. There will be garden tours—I have been to one of the tour gardens before, and it is spectacular—and of course, vendors onsite AND Arrowhead Nursery (about 30 miles N of Ann Arbor in Fowlerville, MI – they plan to be open during the meeting dates) and Gee Gardens a few miles NW of Ann Arbor, in Stockbridge, MI. Their address is 14928 Bunkerhill Rd, Stockbridge, MI, but their site says to use MUNITH for the city on your GPS. Arrowhead is a treasure trove of RG things, and I've only been to Gee in the dead of winter, but they had an AMAZING variety of wonderful dwarf evergreens.

Then, of course, the Green Spring sale in May is Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup>. Get'cher plants potted up as early as you can—the longer they are potted, the better they look. This is a major fundraiser for PVC. And that reminds me, the Fall sale at Green Spring was a qualified success for PVC—we were NOT going to sell plants originally, and had plants donated nevertheless, and made a tidy little bit, plus got more exposure. Hopefully I can

convince you all that we should do it again this year.

Just remember, don't overdo it. All the things you were prevented from doing in Jan and Feb and early March are now to be done all at the same time. Pace yourselves. And don't forget to have fun. Jim

### **Propagating advice from Betty Anne Addison**

With her permission, I've scanned her article "Propagation of alpinas by cuttings" which appeared in the newsletter – *Minnesota Rock Plant Notes* – of the Minnesota Chapter North American Rock Garden Society in March 2015. Thanks, Betty!

You can view it here:

[http://www.pvcnargs.org/Addison\\_propagagtion.PDF](http://www.pvcnargs.org/Addison_propagagtion.PDF)

### **Carolyn Beck's azalea factory method**

And this: last September when I picked up the plants donated by Carolyn Beck she gave me a tour of her little azalea propagation factory. She sent me home with some freshly prepared rooting solution. I used this on cuttings of an old azalea from the garden which I want to renew for sentimental reasons: 'Alba Indica', once one of the commoner azaleas in commerce but now hard to locate because of the confusing way the name 'Indica Alba' is used. Also, I tried the rooting solution on some cuttings I took of the box huckleberry, *Gaylussacia brachycera*. The cuttings were stuck on September 13, 2014, and they spent the winter outside near a house wall.

Here's what they look like today,  
April 13, 2015:



Some of the old leaves browned off during the winter, but otherwise these look fine to me. Thanks, Carolyn.

## **LET'S GET SOME SEED STARTED!**

Reading to get you in the mood

In the early twentieth century, keen alpinists in the US sent to England for plants. And some of those plants survived the trip! More usual was to start plants from seed. When I'm in the mood to daydream about seed starting, I pull out two of my favorite accounts of seed starting projects in the past: Mrs. Wilder's description of the nursery area in her garden at Balderbrae, and Doretta Klaber's account of the propagation area which supported her cottage industry rock plant nursery. These were serious amateur gardeners, and both had more room to play with than most of us. Wilder gardened in the days before fluorescent lights and plastics; Klaber seems to have preferred the low tech approach (her one concession to modernity seems to have been the use of vermiculite), and what she did is easily reproduced in the small home garden. See the chapter in her book on gentians. It was this book which introduced me to the idea of "leaky cold frames": if you are trying to start hardy plants from seed in a cold frame, there is no need to keep the frame air tight. In fact, that's an invitation to fungal diseases. Allow for plenty of ventilation. In Klaber's case, that ventilation came from the sometimes dilapidated condition of the materials she used to cover her frames. Her methods allowed her to successfully raise a range of gentians, primulas and other rock plants which few other growers of her time could boast (and she gardened in eastern Pennsylvania).

### **A "fool-proof" method for starting seeds**

Long ago a friend who had previously shown not the least bit of interest in gardening asked for help in starting some tomato seeds he had bought. The seeds were of the better varieties which came ten or fifteen to the packet. I offered to start the seeds for him. At the time I was up to my neck in seed starting projects, so many that a few more would not hurt. A month or so later I gave him the plants I had started, pointing out to him at the same time that every seed had

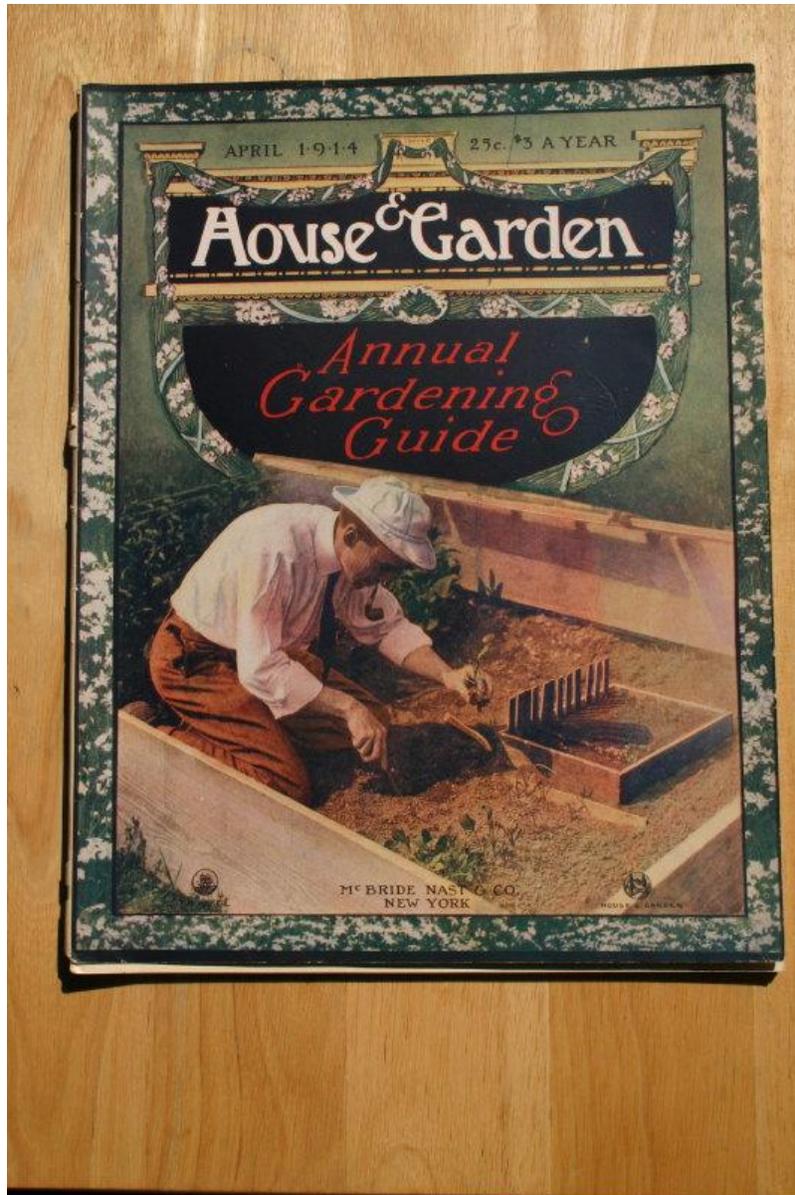
grown and produced a plant, a small plant. He seemed somehow disappointed: evidently he thought the plants should have been bigger. So, that was the thanks I got for that effort. But I did take satisfaction in the fact the every seed produced a plant.

I still use this method for very tiny seeds and very rare or costly seeds. It's simple and it has never let me down. You'll need a pressure cooker, an old pot which in which you can pressure-cook soil, some zip lock bags, and whatever you use for labels.

Simply pressure cook the soil, allow it to cool, fill whatever you are using for pots (Styrofoam drink cups serve well) with the cooled soil taking care not to contaminate it. If it seems dry, moisten it with freshly boiled water. Sow the seeds on the surface and put the pot in a zip lock bag. Keep the bags under fluorescent lights or in a N window but whatever you do, do not expose the bags to sunlight – it will quickly cook the seedlings.

Check out this site for more methods using microwave ovens, conventional ovens and other methods:

<http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/4DMG/Soil/sterile.htm>



Spiffy dresser, too!

## Tiny trumpets continued



In the November 2014 edition of the *PVC Bulletin* there is an article, “Tiny Trumpets”, about some very little daffodils which would be ideal for troughs. They are in bloom now, so it seems appropriate to pick up that thread again.

To begin, I’ve since discovered that *Narcissus cyclamineus* grows and blooms in the gardens of two of our members: the Fadens have a plant grown from seed and now blooming, and Chris Herbstritt has two which are now blooming. Feeling a bit left out, I dug through my slides and found one from 1966 of *Narcissus cyclamineus* from my garden. At least I can say “been there, done that”. But that doesn’t do much to assuage the disappointment of having lost my plants.

How tiny is tiny? The coins in the images will help you get a sense of just how small these flowers are. They would be lost in the garden,

even the rock garden, but in troughs or pots they would be ideal. In the image above, they are, left to right, ‘Midget’, ‘Small Talk’, ‘Gipsy Queen’, ‘Elka’, ‘Snipe’ and ‘Mite’ lined up under a quarter, nickel, dime and penny. All of these came from Brent & Becky’s Bulbs: check out the “miniatures” section of their catalog.

The word “trumpet” is not being used here in the same strict sense it is used in daffodil circles, but ‘Midget’, ‘Small Talk’, ‘Gipsy Queen’, ‘Little Gem’ and ‘Elka’, tiny as they are, were all still trumpets of Division 1 of the show schedules the last time I checked. ‘Snipe’ and ‘Mite’ are division 6 hybrids of *Narcissus cyclamineus*.

If these tiny daffodils intrigue you, why not check out the exhibits at a daffodil show? See here for information about this year’s show of The Washington Daffodil Society:

<http://thewashingtondaffodilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/wds-2015schedule.pdf>

Weather and refrigerator capacity have a lot to do with what you will or will not see at the shows, but in a good year there can be dozens of entries of tiny daffodils. Before you

fall in love, it's a good idea to ask about availability.

Too bad Paul Botting is no longer active with us: he would have been able to fatten this little article very nicely.

## On the masthead

On the left are Chris Herbstritt's *Narcissus cyclamineus*.

On the right, *Fritillaria sewerzowii*, named for the Russian botanist Nikolai Severtsoff (Николай Алексеевич Северцов), thus Severtsoff's fritillary; the spelling used in the botanical name is the transliteration of the Cyrillic name into the sounds of the German alphabet. Many botanical names based on Cyrillic names are Germanized this way. In English texts, you will often see the name spelled Severtsov, but Russian devoices final voiced consonants, so the ending –off better represents the actual sound of the name.

## Officers, Committee Chairs and Board of Directors 2015

**President** Jim Dronenburg [jdronenburg@ssa-i.org](mailto:jdronenburg@ssa-i.org)

**Vice President** Kevin McIntosh [kmac53@verizon.net](mailto:kmac53@verizon.net)

**Secretary** Anne Mazaitis - [jmazaitis@verizon.net](mailto:jmazaitis@verizon.net)

**Treasurer** Margot Ellis - [4pvctreas@gmail.com](mailto:4pvctreas@gmail.com)

**Immediate Past President** Dick Hammerschlag [peachnfrog66@comcast.net](mailto:peachnfrog66@comcast.net)

**Membership Chair** Gay and Sharon Washburn – [gnwashbu@gmail.com](mailto:gnwashbu@gmail.com), [sharonwashburn@verizon.net](mailto:sharonwashburn@verizon.net)

**Program Chair** Jody Fetzer [jodyfetz@gmail.com](mailto:jodyfetz@gmail.com)

**Communications Chair** Alice Nicolson [a.taxonomy@gmail.com](mailto:a.taxonomy@gmail.com)

**Newsletter Editor & Webmaster** Jim McKenney - [jamesamckenney@verizon.net](mailto:jamesamckenney@verizon.net)

**Archivist** Bobbie Lively-Diebold [b2diebold@yahoo.com](mailto:b2diebold@yahoo.com)

**Parliamentarian** - open

**Hospitality –Audit** – open

**Outreach and Education** - open

**Board of Directors:** all current officers, the immediate past president and committee chairs