



Polygala paucifolia

J. McKenney

POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK
GARDEN SOCIETY

PVC BULLETIN
May 2010



Iris 'Albicans'

J. McKenney

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

**You can pay your dues for 2010 by sending your check for \$15 to Margot Ellis, 2417
N Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22207**

Calendar

May 12, 2010 Cliff Booker speaking on plants of the Dolomites; Green Spring Gardens Park 6:30P.M.

May 15th, 2010 Plant sale at Green Spring Gardens Park

May 22, 2010, our spring plant exchange, hosted by Tricia Goins
11648 Leehigh Dr
Fairfax VA 22030
See directions on p. 6

Trip to Carl Gehenio's garden north of Pittsburg; date TBD, your input welcome

More local events on page 4.

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NARGS EVENTS (NOT LOCAL)

NARGS Annual Meeting Denver, Salida, CO July 11-14 "Romancing the Rockies"
Check the NARGS website for info and registration forms.

Deadline for next edition June 15, 2010

Madame President's Message

Is there anything that is not happening in this Chapter? I have never been affiliated with a group that is SO involved with just about everything garden related. Besides trips, plant sales, speakers, swaps, we are very active gardeners. I hope our newest members are enjoying some of the benefits, and many of them will happen in May. Again, a very special thank you for all your support. It makes for more fun and involvement.

Please get back to me on the visit to Carl Gehenio's garden June 5 and 6. It's worth the

trip, but we still need a number so carpools and motels can be arranged well in advance.

We need a report from the Eastern Study Weekend. And we will need a report from the National Meeting in Salida, CO taking place in July.

More importantly I am sorting the surplus seeds and preparing to turn this job over to Jim McKenney. There will be three lists sorted by NARGS numbers. These will be posted soon on the chapter web site. The seeds will be brought to the next meeting so allow yourself time to make your selections. Miss Betty

The Expanding Garden

Weeds, Invasives and Self-seeding Annuals and Biennials

When I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan in the early 1960's I attended a conference on weeds at the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis. At one particularly heated session several eminent botanists vociferously debated the definition of a "weed". I can't recall whether a consensus was ever reached, but I always like to think of a weed as a self-sown plant growing in a place that you don't want it.

'Weed' is a term that is geographically neutral. By that I mean we don't really care whether the unwanted plant is a native or of foreign extraction. But some people do care about the origins of weeds, and ecologists call non-native plants that are weedy "invasives".

From the gardener's point of view there are several dichotomies, not just what to call the volunteer plants. Are the plants of any horticultural interest or perhaps culinary or other use? Is the level of seed production and therefore number of plants produced tolerable or intolerable? How easily removed are the excess seedlings and plants? Does the horticultural merit of the plant outweigh its enthusiastic reproduction and the extra work that that requires?

This spring we are once again overwhelmed by bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), mouse-ear chickweed (*Cerastium* species), and dead nettles (*Lamium* species), among others, all of which are weeds and invasives. However, lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album*), which could also qualify as both, makes a good spinach, so depending upon where it comes up, we may keep it growing as a vegetable. In contrast, common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) is an unquestionable weed and a nasty one for hay fever sufferers, but it's a native, so technically it is not an invasive regardless of how many plants it produces. Carolina crane's-bill (*Geranium carolinianum*), currently one of the worst weeds in the YMCA gardens, is also native, but native or not, we don't hesitate to yank the plants.

A number of other annuals and biennials that certainly have horticultural merit also self-seed.

My wife and I tend to disagree about some of them, including: how many plants are enough; where we should let them grow and from where they should be removed; and when plants should be cut or pulled in order to control plant numbers for the following year. Long-cultivated larkspur (*Consolida ambigua*) and love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*), and a yellow-flowered corydalis (*Corydalis hondoensis*) that we once obtained from a plant exchange, all produce very attractive flowers. The fruits of nigella are also ornamental. All three plants are similar in having fine foliage, so they may be grown (or allowed to grow) among other plants. Indeed the main problem is their propensity to produce a lot of seed, so one has to consider the possibility that a few plants, or sometimes only one, can give rise to a swarm next year. Both larkspur and love-in-a-mist are winter annuals, germinating in the fall, overwintering and flowering the following year in late spring. *Corydalis hondoensis* is a biennial from Japan that germinates in the spring and eventually develops into a rosette that can reach 16 inches (40 cm) across. The foliage takes on an attractive bronzy hue in cool fall weather. The following spring, the overwintering rosettes produce masses of bright yellow flowers and die. Each black seed of the corydalis has a small white body attached -- like seeds of many native spring flowers -- which almost certainly attracts ants for seed dispersal.

The tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is a perennial in its native tropical American haunts, but here it behaves as a reseeding annual. Some plants have golden yellow flowers and others orange-and-red ones. The number of plants in our garden varies greatly from year to year. Some always come up in places we'd rather they didn't, but because they are the main food plant in the garden for monarch butterfly caterpillars, we usually let even the awkwardly situated ones grow up.

An annual poppy of dubious garden value is the well-named *Papaver dubium*. With orange-red flowers about an inch across, this small plant comes up here and there, making minimal visual impact but numerous seeds. Were it to disappear completely, we would hardly notice.

Finally, two native or near native annuals or biennials that we very much enjoy are standing cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*, formerly known as *Gilia rubra*), which is native to the southeastern

U.S., and forest- or fernleaf-phacelia (*Phacelia bipinnatifida*), which naturally occurs in southwestern Virginia and mainly west and south. The ipomopsis, which we originally bought as a seedling from Green Spring under the cultivar name 'Hummingbird Mix,' forms unbranched plants to about three feet tall that have dense, tubular red (also salmon-colored in the cultivar) flowers in the summer that should attract hummingbirds. It used to grow profusely in a sand bed with large yuccas on the YMCA, but it has struggled in recent years. In contrast, the up to one foot tall phacelia, which arrived in our garden in some unknown fashion, thrives in a shaded scree bed and adjacent habitats. Its half-inch bluish pink blossoms are very welcome additions to the spring garden.

Self-seeding annuals and biennials can be very important garden plants. We particularly like them because we don't have to remember to collect or sow the seeds. Often all we need do is to wait for the plants to come up and enjoy them. True, sometimes they need thinning, transplanting or even removal here and there, and collecting seeds to hedge one's bets is not a bad idea. But you still get rewarded with minimal effort. If only everything in life were like that!

Robert Faden

Cliff Booker speaks on May 12

http://www.nargs.org/images/stories/4/articles/booker_profile.pdf

This program is said to include 600 slides, so be ready to sit back and be entertained.

After reading the profile at the link given above, I learned something about Cliff Booker which might have great interest to our members. Since so few of us have genuine rock gardens, and since a lot of us grow plants in troughs, this bit of information about Booker becomes particularly interesting: his garden is tiny and he grows most of his plants in pots. This is the direction I'm going (I've already got the tiny garden), and I think it's a good move for someone with an interest in rock plants in our climate.

Join Booker for a vacation in the Dolomites on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at Green Spring Gardens Park at 6:30 P.M.

Remember: if you have plants for the sale/exchange events, you can drop them off at the meeting.

Our Plant Sale and our Plant Exchange

Saturday May 15 our annual plant sale takes place at Green Spring Gardens Park. The following Saturday, our spring plant exchange takes place at the home of Patricia Goins. Anyone can *buy* plants at the plant sale; members get *free* plants at the plant exchange.

The Plant Sale

Merry Bruns is the contact person for the plant sale. She needs volunteers for set up on Friday May 14 and to work our booth on Saturday May 15. To volunteer email her at mbruns@nasw.org.

Here is the schedule she would like to fill:

Please let her know specific times (in the 2-hr time slots below) when you'll be available to volunteer .

We especially need our new members to be available on Sat. morning, when it's especially busy and we're setting up.

€ FRIDAY- 9:00 AM-12:30 PM
PLANT DROP-OFF and TENT-SET-UP, at Green Springs Garden.

€ Tent Set-Up:
-4-5 people needed (several tall folks, and some strong fingers for the bungee cords!)

€ Plant drop-off organizing:
- Categorize plants, arrange by type, as much as possible.
- Price plants.
- Hang signs and photos (weather permitting)

€ SATURDAY SALE DAY

****NEW MEMBERS:** Please be available for morning slots.

****PLEASE** do not bring your plants on Saturday morning unless you can have them here by 8:00 AM (cleaned, labeled and ready to go).

1. SALE SET-UP - 7:30 AM-9:00 AM
4-5 people needed.

2. SATURDAY MORNING - 9:00-1:00 PM
(this is the busiest time) 5-6 people (plus two checkout-money folks).

3. SATURDAY AFTERNOON - 1:00-3:00 PM
3-4 people (plus two checkout-money folks).

4. TENT BREAK-DOWN - 3:00 PM - to finish, 4-5 non-frazzled volunteers needed to break down tent, general clean-up, etc.

Plants for the sale should be in proper pots rather than your accumulated yoghurt containers. They should have a label which gives the plant name, common and botanical if you know both, briefest cultural notes (shade, sun, dry, wet) and the initials of the donor.

Help will be on hand at the sale to vet names and help with labels and pricing.

What sort of plants to bring: any small, tidy non-invasive garden plants are welcome. There is no requirement that the plants be proper rock garden plants. Woodland plants are particularly desirable. Seedlings of choice woody plants including trees are always welcome.

If you are distributing plants raised from seed from the NARGS seed exchange, please include the number from the NARGS listing – this will aid future identification in the event of mislabeled seeds.

Please be responsible about the distribution of potentially invasive plants; ask if you are not sure.

If you are coming to Cliff Brooker's presentation on May 12 at Green Spring, and you have plants for the sale, you can drop them off at the talk.

Our Plant Exchange

Our plant exchange will take place at the home of Patricia Goins this year. For most of us, this will be a new venue. Thanks, Trish, for making you garden available for this event! Directions are given below on p. 5.

At the plant sale, *anyone* has the opportunity to buy plants. At this plant exchange *members* can pack a box with free plants. If you are relatively new to the group, here's how it works:

-you have to be a member to participate

-plants donated to the plant sale count as donations to the plant exchange.

-plant donors (six plants minimum donation) get first picks in the exchange.

-when you arrive at the exchange site, please sign in at the hospitality table

-if you are donating plants, please show them to the hosts at the hospitality table

-if your plants need vetting (unsure about the names? spelling?) a committee member will help with that.

- plants will be placed by a committee member on the ground grouped by the first letter of the genus name. I.e. Acer, Arisaema, Aethionema, Adiantum, Arum, Asclepias and so on all go in one group.

-give yourself time to get a good overview of what is being offered. Make a list of the items which interest you the most – and make a beeline for those when your number is called.

- numbers will be drawn to determine the order of selection. Numbers will be drawn in two groups: first plant donors, then all other members.

-just before the exchange begins, some donors might want to describe the plants they have brought. Listen carefully here!

-generally, the first two or three rounds of the exchange are limited to donors only – so be sure to bring plants! During these rounds, you are free to take one plant each time your number is called.

-in subsequent rounds the number of plants to be selected may be raised to two or three.

Our library

Betty Spar wants us to know that we have a lending library. Who knew? Now we need a librarian, someone willing to take on the record keeping necessary for such an effort. Please contact Betty Spar if you would like to do this. bettyannespar@aol.com

Surplus Seed Distribution

Once again this year we have surplus seed from the annual NARGS seed distribution. Jim McKenney will run the exchange this time, but he would like to recruit someone to take this job for the future. If you are a new member and are looking for a way to get involved in the group, here's an opportunity.

Here's what you'll have to do:

- store the seed, preferably under refrigeration
- bring unclaimed seed to each meeting so members can select seeds
- take requests for seed and arrange for delivery or pick up of the seed (at, for instance, the next meeting)

The seed list will be posted on the chapter web site soon. If you need a hard copy, contact Jim at 301-770-1867.

Image Page

Once again this issue of the PVC Bulletin has an image page posted on the chapter web site. Take a look here:

http://www.pvcnargs.org/image_page_for_may_2010_pvc_bull.htm

More local events (not chapter sponsored)

Saturday May 8 **GardenMart Plant**

Sale 9:00am-1:00pm Brookside Gardens
Wheaton MD

The Silver

Spring Garden Club's 60th annual GardenMart Plant Sale features **heirloom tomato seedlings, native plants, herbs, houseplants, and much, much more**. Come early in the sale for best selection. Free event, open to the general public. Directions at

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

Monday May 17 **Building A Butterfly Garden**

7:30-9:30pm Brookside Gardens Wheaton MD

The Silver Spring Garden Club invites you to this talk by Carol Allen on attracting "winged flowers" aka butterflies to your garden. *Doors open at 7:30pm*, speaker starts at **8pm**. Free and open to the public. Directions at

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

Sunday, May 23 from 10:30pm **The Future of Local Gardening Panel Discussion led by Kathy Jentz, Washington Gardener Magazine editor/publisher and Washington Gardener Magazine 5th Anniversary Celebration** Part of the DC Urban Gardening Talk series

Presented by *Washington Gardener Magazine* and the Historic Society of Washington DC

Come join us for a slice of cake and cup of bubble to mark Washington Gardener Magazine's 5th Anniversary in print. We will host a panel discussion on local garden trends and the future of urban gardening in the 21st. Local experts will share their views and we anticipate a lively discussion of where we've been and where we are headed next.

Washington Gardener magazine, **the** gardening publication published specifically for the local metro area — zones 6-7 — Washington DC and its suburbs. We sent out our premiere issue in March/April 2005 and we are now celebrating our fifth anniversary! The talk is free and open to the public. It is at the HSW-DC, directions at:

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

Congratulations, Kathy!

Directions to our Plant Exchange hosted by Tricia Goins on May 22:

1. From the Beltway, merge onto I-66 W toward MANASSAS/FRONT ROYAL. Go 7.3 miles.
2. Merge onto US-50 E/LEE JACKSON MEMORIAL HWY via EXIT 57A toward FAIRFAX.. Go 0.7 miles
3. Turn RIGHT onto WAPLES MILL RD/VA-665 S. Go 0.5 miles.
4. Turn RIGHT onto LEE HWY/US-29 S. Go 0.6 miles.
5. Turn SHARP LEFT onto VILLAGE DR. Go 0.3 miles.
6. Turn RIGHT onto LEEHIGH DR. Go 0.2 miles.
7. 11648 LEEHIGH DR is on the RIGHT.

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