



Tristagma 'Rolf Fiedler'

Potomac Valley Chapter

North American Rock
Garden Society

PVC Bulletin

MAY 2013



Corydalis G.P. Baker

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

**You can pay your dues by sending your check for \$15 to Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St., Arlington,
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Calendar 2013

Most meetings are Saturday mornings- 9:30am coffee; 10am presentation, unless otherwise noted.

Coffee/Tea and donuts will be provided at meetings

May 18 Plant Sale, Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA

May 25 Spring Plant Exchange, Lynne Blei's, Potomac, MD

August: Annual picnic at the home of Bobbie Lively-Diebold; more to follow

September 21 Fall Plant Exchange, Kevin & Marla McIntosh's home, Ellicott City, MD

October: October 22, Tuesday evening. NARGS Eastern Speaker, J Ian Young, Scottish plantsman and artist. See his lecture topics here: (bulbs are a specialty). Topic TBD
http://www.nargs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=252:speakers-tour-2013&catid=62:speakers-tours&Itemid=121

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The deadline for the next issue of this bulletin is June 15, 2013

Chairman's Message

The Potomac Valley Chapter (PVC) is in a period of activity that involves individual member participation and volunteerism. Personal benefits from being a PVC member far outweigh simply attending lectures – as rewarding as they might be.

On April 19 Betsy Bradford and the Hammerschlags benefitted from visiting the L J Buck Garden in Northern New Jersey. The county maintained garden is located on a remnant volcanic core that has interacted in the past from glaciation. As a result there is a series of special rock outcrops that harbors rock loving plants, The exposed rock systems overlook a stream valley with ponds and a meandering stream. It was early spring but a great number of the spring ephemerals were in their full glory. Unfortunately, so was *Ranunculus ficaria*, the presence of which epitomized the challenges of maintaining a garden in the face of an aggressively invasive plant.

The following weekend found Kevin McIntosh along with Alice, Sue Hodapp and Jane Collins personning a rock garden information table at the FONA (Friends of the National Arboretum) plant sale at the Arboretum. This was the first time the sale set up a special section just for rock garden plants. Thus the PVC members were there to help plant buyers understand rock garden plants and also to expose a number of people to the Potomac Valley Chapter. Keep in mind that a vital function of the Chapter is to encourage/entice new membership (the life blood of the chapter). BIG thanks to the above four PVC members who volunteered for this activity. Beyond those basic activities, Kevin, with approval of the PVC Board, procured the unsold rock garden plants, essentially all of good quality, at a bargain price so that **WE** can sell them for profit at the Green Spring sale (this sale is often a solid money maker for the Chapter). This year we have been emphasizing that we sell quality plants as a way of showing off the professionalism of our Chapter. Having these quality plants will contribute to that goal. The week of early May saw a strong contingent of PVC members make their way to the NARGS Annual Meeting in Asheville. Present were Bobbie Lively Diebold (and husband Bob), Betty and Ed Spar, Sarah Strickler, Margot Ellis, Judy Zatsick, Jane Collins and the 'Schlags. Alice's

ears should be ringing as so many folks there remembered her. Importantly Audrey and Bob Faden were awarded the Linc and Timmy Foster Millstream award for their ever demanding and expanding rockery adjacent to their own garden. Congratulations to them ! Betty Spar was prominently the right hand of President Peter George, and she made all the award announcements. The meeting featured a series of field trips and lectures. The weather could have been better, but all enjoyed the experience. It is such a good way to interact with a large cadre of plant experts and 'nuts' (enthusiasts). Coming up on Saturday May 18 is the Green Spring plant sale. Set up is Friday. PLEASE respond to Terry Partridge's call for volunteers (tpartridge@cnmcresearch.org). It takes many people to set up the tent and price the plants, take down and sell. It is also vital for EACH member to provide quality plants to sell. The plants should be well established, in a full sized pot with proper soil, and correctly labeled. Please bring the plants to Green Spring on Friday or early (8:00 a.m.) on Saturday, or find someone else to bring them. Information is being provided by Terry who is shouldering the responsibility of coordinating this activity. PLEASE help him out. By the way, as with the FONA sale, there will be lots of great plants available from a wide assortment of vendors. Don't miss out.

The following Saturday, May 27, is the plant exchange at Lynne Blei's home. As with the Green Spring sale please bring quality plants for exchange. The exchange provides the opportunity for interacting with fellow members while picking up an assortment of free plants for your garden.

Later on in the summer - sometime in August - will be our annual picnic at the Diebold residence near Front Royal. Then in September, Sat. the 21st, will be the fall plant exchange at the McIntosh residence of southern living. Also, there will be an opportunity to visit the garden of Marika Sniscak of the Mason Dixon Chapter who lives in the same area as the McIntoshes. So, there's lots going on for you all to enjoy. See you there.

Dick Hammerschlag

NARGS NEWS

The highlight this month was the Annual General Meeting held in Asheville NC. For those of you who have never visited the southern Appalachians, it is truly one of the most beautiful spots in the U. S.

It's changed somewhat since I last visited 6 years ago. However, the scenery and terrain have not. Both the Piedmont and Southern Appalachian Chapters hosted and provided excellent lectures and photos, photos, photos. Down side was the extraordinary rain, wind, fog and forty degree weather, unusual for this time of year. SO, the rhodies were not out in the mountain hells, but *Trillium*, *Epimedium*, *Houstonia*, *Viburnum*, *Amelanchier*, and *Halesia* were in abundance. More on this from Dick.

The Administrative Committee met and made a few changes and I'll list them below.

30 out of 39 current chapters responded with their reports for the year. Those chapters not responding will not be given the privilege of a speaker.

Harold Peachey will take over the Speakers Bureau. Barbara Wetzel has resigned. Harold would love feedback on potential speakers for 2014 and 2015. North Americans are encouraged to speak to save expenses on air fares. Dates for speakers will depend on travel arrangements possible not for the convenience of the chapter.

There are currently 2,520 members of NARGS International. Over 25 former members (from 5 to 15 years ago) have come back to the fold. The Web site is moving along and all historical issues of the Quarterly will be available to members and non-members late June. However, only NARGS members will be able to view the last three years of RGQ. It is encouraged that all chapters use the NARGS website porthole for maintaining their chapter's site. There is no need to have a stand-alone site. There is no pervasive need for a webmaster as NARGS webmaster's instructions will make it very easy to update the chapters' sites. If a chapter chooses to stand alone, there will still be possible a link from NARGS website to stand alone chapters.*

\$8,000 more has been added to the Web update to accommodate numerous platform changes for the SEEDEX. The SEEDEX although a powerful selling tool for NARGS continues to operate in the red by a few thousand dollars. The Ad Com approved a pricing change for overseas orders to accommodate mail rates and help with the costs of the SEEDEX. The PVC has agreed

to do the same stage next year as they performed so well in 2013. Great job.

An investment committee chaired by Michael Riley of Manhattan Chapter was charged to look into possible categories of safe investment for future.

Quorum was established at 10 for purposes of the Board meeting and SKYPE and EMAIL count as being present. More on this under By-Law changes.

Vice President duties will include setting up Annual General Meeting sites in advance. Under consideration is Southwest for September 2014, and Ann Arbor for 2015. More to come later.

Election Changes* A new election schedule was decided and voted upon based on four timetables depending upon when a AGM occurs for the unanimous vote. All voting must take place before the May Quarterly. So based on the timelines for voting, nominations, etc., it is very clear how dates must be adhered to in order to comply. Great work by Lola Horowitz of Manhattan Chapter and Nominating Committee Chair aided by Malcolm McGregor of RGQ. Nomination Process*: Stage 1 – 4-6 weeks between publication of timetable and Call for Noms in RGQ and the close of nominations. All names submitted to the Nominating Committee must have the consent of the nominee to run and must be members of NARGS. Stage 2 – Within two months the Committee chooses a slate which is published with a bio and picture for each candidate on the NARGS website. Stage 3 – One month is given for “from the floor” or additional nominations to the Nominating Committee. All names will be sent to the RGQ and Webmaster for publication. (Note: There are no nominations allowed after this point.) Stage 4 – Public on line and in the RGQ of the combined slate (Nominating Committee candidates and “from the floor” additional candidates) nominees. Stage 5 – Election on line within 2 to 4 weeks from the publication of the combined slate in the RGQ. The election will last two weeks. Members vote on line using their assigned membership number. Tallies by private company. Stage 6 – Announcement and accreditation of the election at the Annual General Meeting.

The Executive Secretary will assume archivist duties and store important papers/books, etc.

A Financial Review of NARGS Treasurer's Report will be done by Randy Tatroe of Rocky Mt. Chapter.

New Membership Category will be that of Household (for \$40). A household membership

entitles two members to each have a vote in the election, can acquire SEEDDEX for each, but only one copy of Quarterly.*

The Quarterly is doing very well; eventually it will be fully digitalized and a digital only subscription will develop (cheaper). Alpine Garden Society is doing this. However, that said, the paper copy will always be available. 4 Scholarships were awarded under the Norman Singer Endowment Fund. One woman is writing a monograph on *Pulsatilla*

Awards: Award of Merit to Randy Tatroe, Dick Bartlett, Grazyna Grauer and Laura Serowicz; Marcel le Piniec Award to John Spain; Millstream Awards to THE FADENS; Ev Whittemore; Joe and Beverly French Mike Bone received the Geoffrey Charlesworth Award for Best Article in Quarterly "Rock Gardening From Scratch."

Chapter Awards went to PAUL BOTTING, DICK HAMMERSCHLAG, BOBBIE LIVELY-DEBOLD; Elizabeth Zander, Donna Noctor, Hedwig Eulau, Hilary Clayton and Albert Martin, Don Ohl, Carol Earle, Mary Jensen, Ann Munson, Gene Spurgeon and Joan Schmitt.

Important By-Law Changes*

1. Remote participation counts as being present for a quorum.
2. Binding decisions by Board only takes place at AGM. Meetings at Study weekends are advisory only. All decisions require at least **50%** participation of the board. In NARGS case, that's 26 people.
3. Officers shall be elected by a majority vote at AGM. **Plurality was struck DOWN.** *Plurality elections will result in election of a candidate with the MOST votes during the first vote and will eliminate the need for run-off elections.*
Editors note: this item seems to need clarification; if so, a clarification will appear in the next bulletin.
4. Nominating Committee's first Slate shall contain only one candidate selected per available position. Additional nominations may be made by the membership within 30 days ("from the floor"). Selection of nominees for the slate will be by majority vote of those responding (Membership). Only those nominees will appear in the RGQ and website 30 days before the election.

5. 2/3 majority of votes is necessary to amend the By-Laws. Votes are by internet vote or paper vote (if requested) provided that written notice has been mailed/mailed to the Board 30 days prior to the vote. *This allows the By-Laws to be amended by the Board either at an annual meeting or by internet vote. Note: Paper ballots are also tallied by the private company.*

***Since most chapters follow changes made by NARGS, this could be open to discussion by our PVC Board.**

Betty Spar
Director at Large,
Administrative Committee

The Expanding Garden

A Garden in Trouble and a Great Spring

Last year my wife had serious problems with her legs which kept her from doing much gardening. This culminated in hip-replacement surgery for her in early March this year from which she is still recovering. Our reduced gardening activities last year, coupled with a summer drought, had a serious effect on many parts of our gardening area. This is an account of some of the problems.

"It's looking good," the man who had trash pick-up duty in Simpson Park last Sunday said to me. "Thanks," I replied, but I knew it wasn't true. At the time I was knee deep in the middle of a bed on the YMCA that had become overrun with an invasive bedstraw (*Galium aparine*). I was yanking it out by the handful and then crisscrossing the bed to collect the bits that I had missed. After about an hour of this I said to myself, facetiously, "All gone", knowing that it was anything but. And what was under the bedstraw: a continuous carpet of chickweed, Indian strawberry (*Duchesnea indica*), dead nettle and, to my horror, large plants of bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), all gone to seed, of course. Coming up amid this mess were a few attractive plants: 2.5 ft. tall, onion-relatives *Nectaroscordum* (or *Allium*) *bulgaricum*, with pendent green-and-purple flowers, and the similar but much more attractive *N.* (or *A.*) *tripedale*, with pink flowers. There were also lots of self-sown *Penstemon tenuis* and one plant of *P. smallii*, both good garden plants in light shade in our area. But growing among the

desirable plants were lots of tree seedlings: redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*), Chinese fringetrees (*Chionanthus retusus*), chastetrees (*Vitex agnus-castus* and *V. negundo*) and even seedlings of the nearby Chinese pistachio (*Pistacia chinensis*—how she had been pollinated we do not know!). In short, as the *Colchicum* leaves and dying back tulip foliage also attested: this was a bed that had interesting plants in it, but it needed a lot of attention.

This scene was repeated in all of the other beds on the YMCA that about Simpson Park. One was invaded by a vetch (*Vicia*), others by various grasses and other weeds. None was under control. Indeed, some of the beds looked as if they had been abandoned altogether. Because of my wife's curtailed gardening last year we agreed that we would not attempt to keep up the meadow garden that we had begun in the ditch north of the YMCA parking lot, but even we were shocked a few days ago when we found it completely covered by vetches and wild blackberries. Only the odd individual that we had planted was recognizable.

In the shady beds on the west side of the Y parking lot the main problem has been the deaths of woody plants that we had not been able to water adequately last summer. Among the casualties were *Magnolia sieboldii* and our seed-grown *Davidia involucrata* (dove-tree). The gardens on the north side of the Y and those on our property had fared best, as did those in Simpson Park, which were maintained by a cadre of Master Gardeners on a weekly basis.

What have we learned from all of this? *You are basically gardening for yourselves, not for posterity.* Even the trees that you are growing may not be to the liking of the next owner of the property. *Avoid growing too many plants that need special care, particularly if you are getting on in years.* We did manage to cover a few of our favorite evergreen shrubs with fleece bags last fall, but that was about it. *Only grow what you can look after yourselves.* In recent years we have had so many plants in pots at the end of the growing season that we had to rely on friends to overwinter lots of them in their cold frames or vegetable gardens. Our gardens on the YMCA property require so much maintenance that every year we schedule semiannual work parties in an effort to enlist members of our local community and our neighbors to help keep parts of these plantings under control, but predictably poor turnouts ensure that we are always way behind. Too much garden!

But I digress. This has been a great spring: four-and-a-half months of daffodils, great blooming by all the early-flowering shrubs, especially the fragrant viburnums and Chinese bladder nut (*Staphylea holocarpa* 'Rosea'), and an azalea season that has begun very promisingly. The low mat-forming *Veronica armena*, grown from seed 20 years ago, is putting on its annual display of blue flowers. *Cercis siliquastrum* (Judas tree), grown from NARGS seed from Greece, has had its first flowers. *Yucca glauca*, which we grew from seed perhaps seven years ago, is about to flower for the first time. Our favorite spiderwort, diminutive *Tradescantia tharpaii*, is in full flower as is our single plant of *Tradescantia ozarkana*, which we collected in Arkansas exactly 30 years ago. So we'll keep getting new plants, try to find homes for them and share them when we can. Who has the time to worry about the future of our gardens at such a busy time of year?

Robert Faden

Views from members' gardens

Editor's note: Back in late April, I took a look at the folder in which potential material for the bulletins is stored. The cupboard was pretty bare. So I sent out a request for photos of members' gardens. Several of you replied, generally with multiple images. In the age of color printing on paper, the cost of printing so many pictures would have been prohibitive. In the digital age, the cost is negligible. Many of these images will be trickled into the bulletin during the next several issues. In fact, "Views from members' gardens" might become a permanent feature of these bulletins.

For this issue, I'm going to confine the images to those from one source, Alice Nicolson. Enjoy this celebration of her one-year-old garden!

A one-year-old garden which has really delivered!

Here is a sampling of the photos Alice provided. Alice intends to put these together as a PowerPoint presentation for use at a future chapter meeting.

All photos in this article are by Alice Nicolson.



Antirrhinum hispanicum



Gypsophila cerastioides



Asphodelus acaulis



Scutellaria laeteviolacea



Lithodora diffusa 'Grace Ward'



Silene caroliniana



Ruellia 'Green Beauty'



Allium thunbergii 'Ozawa'



Phlox subulata 'Betty'

Pleione: some of them are easy, they're available, but not many of us grow them.



Pleione 'Tongario'

Jim McKenney



Phemeranthus calycinus



Pleione limprichtii

Jim McKenney

Although these little orchids are nothing new in American collections – they have been readily

available in the trade for decades – few of us seem to grow them. Part of the reason is that they are not really garden plants in our climate. Those down in the Alexandria palm belt might be able to successfully establish *Pleione limprichtii* (often said to be the hardiest), and given the mild winters we are experiencing now some might survive even out here just south of Rockville now and then. I play it safe and winter them in a cold frame. Long ago someone discovered that they winter nicely in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

So why are they being written up in a rock garden bulletin? The only way I can explain it is to note that they look like rock garden plants: with most *Pleione* the flowers arise above ground before the leaves have grown much or at all: this results in the sort of disproportion between flower size (seemingly big) and foliage (seemingly small) which characterizes so many of the best rock garden plants. Pots thickly covered with massed flowers are a feature of the UK rock garden shows. I don't think they are any more reliable as garden plants in the UK than they are here in the eastern US, but we lack the tradition of growing hardy and borderline hardy plants in pots, a tradition which makes the UK shows a wonder to visiting Americans – or to those of us who see them in the on-line show reports.

Long ago, in the days before CITES clamped down on orchid importations, I imported a small collection, about a dozen, of *Pleione* hybrids from the UK. Until then, I had only grown *Pleione formosana*.. This collection really opened my eyes to the advances hybridists have made with these plants. But for one thing these turned out to be easily grown: when frost threatened, they had to come in under cover. That means dropping whatever else you might be doing to get this done. Even light frosts will produce necrotic spots on the corms (the orchid people call these pseudobulbs; whatever you call them, they are much compressed perennial stems). The other side of this was that in the late winter, as the plants begin to grow again, they have to come out of the refrigerator for repotting. That's where wintering them – pot and all - in a cold frame can make a big difference. If you can get them to bloom while the temperatures are still cold but above freezing, the flowers will last much longer than they will under warm conditions.

About the name: *Pleione* is a Classical Greek word which exists in old Greek with two spellings, one of which indicates a four syllable word and the other a three syllable word. When the Greek is Romanized (i.e. spelled in Roman characters rather than in Greek characters) the two distinct spellings of the Greek are obscured (Greek uses different letters for long *e* and short *e*; Latin uses the same letter, *e*, for both). For those of you who want to use a text-book Latin pronunciation, note that the letter *o* in *Pleione* is short – thus the stress (accent) goes on the letter *i* as in the name *Hermione*.

Jim McKenney

Prostrate winter savory update

A brief piece in one of last year's bulletins sang the praises of a plant bought as prostrate winter savory. Winter savory itself is a sturdy evergreen subshrub. Your editor assumed that prostrate winter savory would be a sturdy, prostrate evergreen subshrub. That's not the way it turned out. With the arrival of freezing weather, the prostrate savory promptly lost all of its leaves. When the leafless branches were tweaked in midwinter, they seemed dead. But at the end of winter, a surprising thing happened: new growth, lots of it, emerged from below ground. To be continued...

Jim McKenney

Hemerocallis minor



Hemerocallis minor

Jim McKenney

I'll bet that most of you don't think of daylilies as rock garden plants. But little *Hemerocallis minor*, which is blooming now, fits the bill. The fragrant flowers are about the size of a hen's egg, and the leaning, two or three flowered scapes are about a foot long and the diameter of a piece of spaghetti. The grassy foliage at the most might be eighteen inches long.

This little plant has been in cultivation in the west since the middle of the eighteenth century; It was named by Philip Miller in the eighth edition of his *Gardener's Dictionary*, although it had been known for decades before that (*fide* Hu, 1969). Yet to this day it remains an uncommon garden plant. Jim McKenney

More NARGS seeds

If you can possibly find the time to do it at this busiest time of the gardener's year, those of you who enjoy playing with seeds have another opportunity ahead. The seeds our chapter received at the close of the 2013 NARGS seed exchange will be available to members at the plant exchange later this month. Thanks to Mary Sterrett for sorting these. Jim McKenney

A new grant for bulb research

The Pacific Bulb Society (PBS) Board of Directors is pleased to announce the inception of

an annual grant supporting bulb research. We named it after Mary Sue Ittner for her many years of tireless work to build and support the society.

This grant is set up to support anyone interested in learning more about bulbs. It may be used to support any type of research, including field-work. It is available to paid PBS members world-wide, and you may apply for membership when you submit your application.

The award amount is \$500 USD.
The deadline for this year is June 15, 2013.

The complete announcement, conditions, and additional information can be downloaded here: http://pacificbulbsociety.org/pbswiki/files/00_oters/MSI_Grant_Announcement_2013.pdf

Nhu Nguyen
PBS President

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Parliamentarian - open

Hospitality –Audit – open

Outreach and Education - open

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



Iris pallida



Chionodoxa gigantea



Fritillaria acmopetala