



*Viola grypoceras* (but see article below)  
Editor

Potomac Valley Chapter

North American Rock  
Garden Society

PVC Bulletin

November 2011



*Colchicum x agrippinum* "old Portland  
form" Editor

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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,  
VA 22207**

## **NOVEMBER 19, 2011 McLain Community Center, OUR ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERSHIP**

### **Calendar**

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

*Coffee/Tea and donuts to be provided at meetings but it is  
proposed to provide lemonade only at workshops and plant  
exchanges, unless we have a volunteer to do coffee there.*

**October 29**, Brookside Gardens, Edith Eddleman: Gardening  
in Elizabeth Lawrence's Footsteps. See details below.

**November 19, Rehearsal Hall, McLean Community  
Center** , - our Annual Meeting, Election of Officers, and  
Members' Slide Show

Community Center; directions: :  
<http://www.mcleancenter.org/contact/maps.asp>

**2012** (tentative)

**January** TBD

**February Charles Kidder** "Dry, on the Rocks; the Xeric  
Gardens at JCRaulston Arboretum"

**March Steve Whitesell** "Small Rock Garden Design; in  
Celebration of Artifice"

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**Deadline for next edition December 15, 2011**

## Message from the Chairperson

October 1: Through Betty's Window

First and foremost, it's been an honor to work with all of you. Your dedication to our chapter is why we are one of the top ten chapters in NARGS. I've said this before and I'll say it again: very few people refuse to help me when I call them. But you do have to reach out for help. We are all very busy.

But the effort pays off. We are so lucky to have a great program chair in Sarah and our Grimshaw lecture was fantastic. If you missed it, eat your heart out! We had a good turnout for a weekday evening. He is an amazing speaker and the plants of Ethiopia plus the slides themselves were wonderful. As events evolve daily in Africa, we are lucky that the plant explorers still have evidence of a different time when plants were king.

We do have a list of nominees for ratification by the members due on November 19 at McLean Community Center. And we are extremely happy that our treasurer and secretary have agreed to stay on for another two years. It does go very fast.

As most of you know, my goal was to increase membership. We have done that, and now we need to keep all of our members enthusiastic about staying with the Chapter. We offer a lot for \$15.00. And will continue to do so. Some requests from at-large are: propagation workshops; another trough workshop; more trips (local). Perhaps the new VP will take this on as one of their duties. We'll see, but it's up to the new Chair and I am always available to pitch in further.

Please send a photo and a small paragraph on "My Current Favorite Plant" to [pmclain@starpower.net](mailto:pmclain@starpower.net) so we can get started with this new topic for the bulletin.

I urge all of you to join NARGS for \$20.00 with a \$10.00 offset for the first year compliments of our Chapter. This entitles you to a window on the continent in terms of specialized plants of all kinds. You'll love getting the Quarterly.

The next NARGS annual meeting is in Everett, Washington with promising side trips. It will also be held early.....March 9, 10 and 11. And you do need to be a NARGS member to attend.

So come to learn. There is also a new board with big ideas such as more tours and an improved web site.

Thanks for the memories.  
Betty Spar

## Edith Eddleman on October 29

Gardening in Elizabeth Lawrence's Footsteps with Edith Eddleman

Edith Eddleman's talk follows the writings of Elizabeth Lawrence on gardening, design, some of her favorite plants and inspired garden combinations. Edith will show us Miss Lawrence's last garden in Charlotte, NC and will offer some thoughts about the first rock garden Elizabeth Lawrence designed for her Raleigh, NC home.

About the Speaker: Edith Eddleman is best known as the designer/re-designer, with co-curator Douglas Ruhren, of the Perennial Borders at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, NC. She has worked with the border for more than 20 years; it is known internationally as a benchmark for perennial design. (She also designed a border at Brookside Gardens.)

In 1991 she was invited to write a new introduction to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition of Elizabeth Lawrence's classic book, *A Southern Garden*. Edith is a long-time admirer of Miss Lawrence and considers her books the maps which inform and inspire her work as a designer and gardener. Edith frequently lectures about perennials, bulbs, winter gardens and Elizabeth Lawrence.

**When:** Saturday, October 29th. 9:30 coffee; 10am lecture

**Where:** Brookside Gardens, 1800 Glenallan Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902,

<http://www.montgomeryparks.org/brookside>  
Sarah Strickler

### What is NARGS?

[Editor's note: current NARGS President Peter George recently sent this to local chapters of NARGS]

Ever since I joined NARGS in 1996, I have observed that many members (and even more non-members) have an extremely narrow, and

therefore fundamentally mistaken, concept of what the organization represents. A lot of people think of NARGS as an “alpine plant” society. Others believe that if something grows more than a foot tall, it’s “not a NARGS plant.” I have heard that Chapters in the South and the Midwest are convinced that their members cannot grow “rock garden” plants, so they increasingly view themselves as garden clubs focused on “perennials.” Of course, this leads to fewer and fewer Chapter members joining NARGS or, having joined in the past, keeping their membership active.

So, what’s the truth about NARGS and rock gardening?

Our website describes NARGS as an organization “for gardening enthusiasts interested in alpine, saxatile, and low-growing perennials. It encourages the study and cultivation of wildflowers that grow well among rocks, whether such plants originate above tree line or at lower elevations.” I looked up “saxatile” and found that it means “growing on or living among rocks.” We all know what alpine means, and no one can misunderstand “low-growing.” Thus, we are an organization of people interested in perennial plants which grow well among rocks and that are relatively short. That sounds pretty inclusive to me, and it certainly doesn’t in any way imply that the plants must be alpine, or tiny, or even particularly rare. It certainly *does* include plants that are native to every region of the world. For example, I grow *Townsendias* native to Kansas, *Campanulas* native to Turkey, *Epimediums* native to China, a *Calceolaria* native to South America, and alpine plants from the Alps, the Rockies, the Caucasus, and the Adirondacks among others. I have lime lovers, ericaceous plants, and plants that ask only for some sun, some water and a bit of soil. I also grow all over my property tall plants, such as *Echinacea* and *Asters* and bushy plants like *Buddleia*. So what am I? Well, my major interest is growing plants that like to live among rocks, which makes me a rock gardener as far as I’m concerned.

Why are so many people convinced that *Drabas* are *real* rock garden plants and that *Epimediums* are not? Or that *Salvias* and *Hellebores* are forbidden because they are not included in some mythical list of approved “rock garden plants”? Far too many of us seem to think that, because the British named *their* organization The Alpine Garden Society, that limitation somehow applies to us. It does not. We are The North American

Rock Garden Society, and our approach to what we love and what we grow is inclusive, not exclusive. We understand with absolute clarity that many gardeners cannot grow *Astragalus utahensis*, but that almost all of us can grow *Gentiana acaulis*, or *Penstemon ovatus*, or *Sedum kamtschaticum*. And those, among literally thousands of rock garden plants, can be grown in all climates, at almost all altitudes, and on virtually every continent.

Furthermore, for most of its history, NARGS has published a Journal that has focuses on plants that far too many of us consider inappropriate for rock gardens. Before sitting down to write this, I pulled out two old issues of the NARGS Journal at random, just to see what they contained. The Spring 1991 issue was dedicated to *Primulas*, and the lead article is entitled “*Primulas for the Southeast*,” by Nancy Goodwin. Nancy is from Hillsborough, North Carolina, a part of the United States not commonly associated with rock gardening. The second issue I selected was the Fall 1985 issue, which featured an article called “*Native Plants of Vermont*.” Anyone who is not familiar with the botanical wealth of New England, and who subscribes to the a narrow view of what a “rock garden plant” is, will be surprised to learn that the article focused on what we call “woodland” plants, including *Claytonia caroliniana*, *Erythronium americanum*, *Trillium erectum*, *Asarum canadense*, and *Asplenium ruta-muraria*. Are these rock garden plants? Some would say they are not, but I vigorously disagree, and – more to the point – so does the NARGS Journal.

So please, let’s keep NARGS as inclusive as possible. To be sure, we are not simply a garden club (we are not interested in growing vegetables, annuals, roses, etc.); but neither are we an elite group of the wealthy and powerful who want to keep their organization small and exclusive. We are a large, geographically diverse body of people who simply love gardening with rocks. Let’s focus on that, and work a bit harder to find commonality in purpose; by doing so, we will strengthen our organization and enhance its ability to provide valuable services to rock gardeners.

### **NARGS Seed Exchange**

[Editor’s note: Joyce Fingerut, Director NARGS Seed Exchange, sent this reminder to the local chapters]

We hope that all members are busily collecting, cleaning, packing, and mailing seeds to our Seed Exchange Intake Manager:

Laura Serowicz:  
15411 Woodring Street  
Livonia, MI 48154-3029

It takes a mere 5 packets (only five different kinds of seed) to attain Donor status, which nets the Donors **10** additional packets of seed, as well as priority in having their orders filled. It would be so lovely to have as many members donating seeds as requesting them - what a rich array we would have on our Seedlist!!

For all who are interested in ordering seeds this year, we will have a new online ordering system available, in addition to the printed lists.

To use this new, fast, easy system in December, you must first register your preferred email address with our Executive Secretary, Bobby Ward. That way, the system will automatically recognize you as being eligible to order from the seedex. It couldn't be simpler:

**As soon as possible, send an email to: [nargs@nc.rr.com](mailto:nargs@nc.rr.com)**

In the Subject line, write (or copy-and-paste): NARGS seedex email address

In the body of the text, simply write your name and full postal address.

That's all you need to do to register, and you will never need to do it again... unless you change your email address.

The new Seedlist will be posted on December 15. Go to:

[http://www.nargs.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=75&Itemid=123](http://www.nargs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=75&Itemid=123)

...just click on the 2011-2012 list, enter your email address, and begin making your selections.

Once you have begun using the new system, you will find many helpful features. You will be able to:

- Save your choices as you go to see a running list, both numbers *and* seed names;  
(Saving will also allow you to take a break and return later without loss of data)

- Switch taxon numbers easily between first- and second-choice grids;

- Move backward and forward in the list, choosing items as they appeal to you and, just

before submitting, rearrange into correct numerical order with a click of the *Save* button;

- Print a copy of the numbers and names you have ordered for your own records.

This will be especially handy for ordering in the second round, in March.

Best of all, your orders will reach the volunteers who fill the orders in a clear, legible format, with all the seed numbers in perfect numerical order, so that there will be no mistakes because of indecipherable orders and no delays because of out-of-order numbers.

Each plant name will be a live link to a Google page of images and links for further, more detailed information. The NARGS seedlist page will become not only your easy seed-ordering system, but your reference library, as well. Truly one-stop shopping!

Anyone without access to a computer and high-speed internet connections, or not comfortable with online ordering, may request a print copy of the Seedlist by contacting, by **November 15:**

Joyce Fingerut  
537 Taugwonk Road  
Stonington, CT 06378-1805  
[alpinegarden@comcast.net](mailto:alpinegarden@comcast.net)

However, we urge everyone with access to a computer to register their email address so that they will at least be able to browse the list and the links.

Have a great seed season!  
Joyce

**And here's something else from Peter George to be aware of:**

Alan Bradshaw has agreed to sell NARGS a lot of seed for the SeedEx. I've selected very uncommon but growable (and easily germinated!) seed which is all wild collected and which will be of real interest to our members...

The NARGS President's Discretionary Fund is paying for it. That is money that has been contributed recently specifically for the President to use and this is exactly the kind of purchase will be very helpful to the SeedEx and NARGS. Alan is being especially generous with the

quantities, so we're getting about 2-3 times the normal amount for the money we're paying him.

Additionally, John Weiser from Nevada has agreed to send us the seed of about 30 species of *Eriogonum*, in pretty good quantities. Most of the seed has been wild collected as well.

### **We still have a sense of humor (and appetites!):**

Alice: Gardening is cheaper than therapy and you get tomatoes. ~Author Unknown

And Paul added: And zucchini - lots of it!

Your editor missed a substantial part of the last board meeting – he listened in on the phone but missed out on the food. Here are two recipes from that meeting. Thank you Alice Nicolson and Jim Dronenburg.

Recipe for peanut soup served by Alice at the last board meeting:

Sauté until soft/transparent - 5-7 min

1Tb oil

2 cu. Chopped onions

Lower heat and add , stir to combine

½ tsp cayenne pepper

1 tsp grated fresh ginger

Add, sauté for a couple of minutes until they begin to soften

1 cu. chopped carrots

Add, then bring to a boil

2 cu peeled, coarsely chopped sweet potato

4 cu veg. Broth (or water)

Reduce heat to low, simmer covered for 14-20 min, until vegs are tender

Remove from heat and let cool for ca. 15 min.

Stir in

2 cu tomato-vegetable juice (like V-8)

In batches, puree the vegs and liquid until smooth (or use immersion blender)

Return to pot over low heat, stir in

1 cu smooth peanut butter

taste and add if needed to enhance flavors

1TB sugar

Serve immediately, top with

1 cu thinly sliced scallions, white and

green

Serves 6

There must be lots of memories in this group from Moosewood, Laurel's Kitchen and Broccoli Forest.

Jim Dronenburg provided this recipe:

Alice asked for this and there isn't a recipe, I just had at it. All quantities are guesses.

Take 5 medium sweet potatoes, peel, chop small and boil in water. Add one quart frozen peaches. Canned won't do, the mixer won't chop them up easily later... Could use canned, I suppose, if you put them in a bowl and freeze them first so they will mush up later\*... Add honey, brown sugar, large pinch of salt, 2 tbsp butter, cinnamon 2 tsp, ginger at least 1 tsp, cloves ½ tsp, a dash of cardamom and a dash of mace. Boil until potatoes are falling apart and there isn't much liquid. Sort of a slurry.

Combine 8 eggs, probably a scant cup of sugar, a couple of pinches of salt, a pint of heavy whipping cream, three or four glugs of vanilla and two glugs of orange extract.

Start adding flour until you have a very thin batter, probably a scant cup. Go light here, you can always add more but you can't take it out. Beat into a stupor and then add the potato mix. It should be thicker than pumpkin pie batter. You can add a bit more flour here if the batter looks too thin.

Pour into greased baking pan, and top with crumbs.

For crumbs, combine a very scant cup of flour, a half cup of sugar, cinnamon, ½ stick butter. Whiz in food processor until you have crumbs. (Oats would be good here too.) Then add nuts—I used walnuts because they are what I had; pecans would be better—and whiz again.

Remove from food processor, add at least half a cup of raisins, and top potatoes with this.

Bake at 350 until nothing happens when you shake the pan and the crumbs are lightly browned.

\*If you use canned peaches and are thrifty, use the drained syrup as part of the boiling liquid for

the potatoes and cut down the white sugar in the egg/cream mix a bit....

### An interesting violet

The violet shown on the masthead appeared at our last plant exchange. Here's a violet worth growing as a foliage plant. It has a reputation for being unpredictable and sometimes short-lived as a garden plant, but it's so attractive that you'll want to try it anyway.

If there is any truth to the old saying according to which a well-loved child has many names, then this little violet must be very well-loved indeed! A quick Google search turned up these: Korean violet, cyclamen-leaved violet, *Viola koreana*, *V. grypoceras*, *Viola* 'Syletta', *V.* 'Styletta' and *V.* 'Sylettas'.  
J. McKenney

### Hardy-ish gesneriads

Hardy-ish gesneriads and begonias: I recently attended a talk given by John Boggan on the topic of hardy-ish (his term, and I like it) gesneriads and begonias. John is the wellspring behind the DC Tropics group, a group focused on plants (many of them in fact tropical) which give the garden a tropical look. I think this talk would have been of general interest to our members, at least those looking for ways to expand their gardening horizons. The gesneriads John showed us are plausible candidates for sunny, very sunny, rock gardens, and the begonias have qualities which will be appreciated in shady areas.

John's garden is near the zoo – the epicenter of the local heat island. He is able to grow many borderline plants outside as perennials in the ground. He showed us a photo of his steeply terraced front garden in its late summer glory – and glorious it was. It certainly didn't look like Washington, D.C. He also bravely showed a photo of the same garden after heavy frost – this photo might very well have been captioned "The expulsion from the Garden of Paradise".

It's the hardy-ish gesneriads which interest me. I wrote about these briefly in a past bulletin. There have been rumors circulating for years that certain *Achimenes*, *Seemania*, *Sinningia* and members of other genera are possible as perennial garden plants in our climate. John has

been toying with these for years and has plenty of experience to draw on.

Thanks to Tony Avent and others the plants are now becoming readily available (it was John who provided Tony with starts of the handsome fragrant *Sinningia* 'Carolyn'). I ordered most of what Plant Delights offered last year; I wintered most of these successfully in my most protected cold frame. I'm not ready to try them in the open garden yet, but with John's experiences and insights in mind it won't be long before I do.

The various sinningias are the ones which strike me as having the greatest potential as garden plants. Many of the hardy-ish ones superficially look like penstemons; one I grow, 'Towering Inferno' produces a three foot inflorescence spangled with bright red tubular flowers which the hummers quickly notice. Two other tall spiky ones, *S. tubiflora* and *S.* 'Carolyn' are also fragrant.



*Sinningia* 'Towering Inferno' J. McKenney

There is another big group of gesneriads which intrigues me and which seems to have potential for use in our rock gardens: the tiny, gem-like dwarf sinningias which produce two to three inch rosettes of tidy leaves topped by charming flowers which are sometimes disproportionately large for the size of the plant. These really do look like traditional rock garden plants. Even if it turns out that the plants will not take the winters outside dependably, the bulby rootstocks are easily dug and stored for the winter. I kept some going for years by planting them outside for the summer and then bringing them in before frost, drying them off and storing them in zip lock bags for the winter.

Gesneriads have held onto the gardening public's imagination through several up and down iterations, beginning perhaps as long ago as the early seventeenth century when what we now

know as *Ramonda* was grown in gardens, on to the nineteenth century *Achimenes* craze (hundreds of cultivars now lost) and then the African violet craze after the Second World War. The introduction of fluorescent lights and plastics made the indoor cultivation of a wide array of gesneriad genera possible, and that's probably where the strength of the hobby is now most evident, among indoor growers who use light tables and terrariums.

But I think we're now opening a new door with gesneriads: gesneriads as outdoor garden plants. There are already plants of sufficient hardiness and garden reliability to ensure an enduring nucleus of material in favored sites, and it's only a matter of time before more people begin to notice these plants and experiment with them in borderline areas. Are hardy and near hardy gesneriads the next big wave to come from this group of plants? I think the potential is there. There are gardeners living who are old enough to remember when impatiens and coleus were regarded as house plants, plants which if they went outside during the summer, it was in pots and in the shade. Their potential as garden plants was not realized until later.

I think the time has come to rethink the garden potential of the gesneriads. J. McKenney

## Annual Elections Coming Up

According to our bylaws,

“The Nomination Committee will seek candidates for officer positions from the voting membership; will report the list of candidates to the Board of Directors at least 60 days before the date set for the Annual Meeting; will ensure that the list of candidates is published in the Society's periodical newsletter or bulletin at least 30 days before the Annual Meeting; and will conduct the election procedure at the Annual Meeting.”

The Nominating Committee has submitted the following slate:

President: Dick Hammerschlag

Vice-President: Tricia Goins

Secretary: Anne Mazaitis

Treasurer: Margot Ellis

PVC also has a number of other positions which are appointive; do consider offering your services in one form or another, even if you don't feel equipped to be an officer. Remember, we're a volunteer organization; lectures, slide shows and plant sales don't just happen! Participation has many rewards; you get out a lot more than you put in, in knowledge, plants and friendships!

### Members' slide show

The election won't be the only thing happening at the November meeting. This is our annual get together to share slides. Just show up with your slides on a disk or a thumb drive. Count on having 10 minutes or less to show your selections. Plan to arrive by 9:30 to give us time to get things set up.

### A request to those of you receiving the paper version of the *PVC Bulletin*

If you wish to continue to receive the PVC Bulletin in this paper format, please contact the editor, Jim McKenney, 301-770-1867, to indicate your intentions. Or tell me at the November Members' meeting. If I don't hear from you, I'm going to assume you do not need a paper copy. It costs about \$1 to produce and mail one six-page copy of this bulletin. This is an expense the Board of Directors would like to reduce.

## Officers, Committee Chairs and Board of Directors 2011

**President Betty Spar** - 206 Wolfe St., Alexandria, VA 22314 -703-549-0214 [bettyannespar@aol.com](mailto:bettyannespar@aol.com)

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

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

**Treasurer Margot Ellis** - [margotellis1@yahoo.com](mailto:margotellis1@yahoo.com)

**Immediate Past President Paul Botting** [pmbotting@comcast.net](mailto:pmbotting@comcast.net)

**Membership Chair Paul Botting** [pmbotting@comcast.net](mailto:pmbotting@comcast.net)

**Program Chair Sarah Strickler** - [sa.strickler@verizon.net](mailto:sa.strickler@verizon.net)

**Communications Chair Alice Nicolson** [taxonomy@verizon.net](mailto:taxonomy@verizon.net)

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

**Archivist** - open

**Parliamentarian** - open

**Hospitality** – Dick Hammerschlag

**Audit** – open

**Outreach and Education** - open

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