



POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK
GARDEN SOCIETY

PVC BULLETIN
July & September 2010



Tinantia leiocalyx J. McKenney

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Jim McKenney, Editor jimmckenney@jimmckenney.com
<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

Calendar

September 5 8:30 A.M. Board Meeting 6510 Bells Mill Rd. Bethesda, MD 20817

September 10 10:00 to 1:00PM at Brookside Gardens - Trough workshop. Full.

September 25 - Members' plant exchange-- Carol and Mike Bordelon's, Greenbelt, MD

October 23 - Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, MD -- Anne Raver, garden writer, former NYT columnist, "Gardens I Remember"

mid-November -Invitation from Four Seasons Garden Club to hear Don LaFond, Arrowhead Alpines plant specialist, time and place TBD

November 20 - McLean Community Center, McLean, VA, Annual Members Slide Show and Annual Election

December 5 (Sunday Afternoon) 3 - 6, Betty Spar's house, 206 Wolfe Street, Alexandria. Christmas Cheer, wine and cheese.

2011

January 15 US Botanic Gardens, Washington, DC - Martha Oliver, owner of Primrose Path Nursery, "Flora of the Shale Barrens of the Mid-Atlantic"

February (Date TBD) Brookside Gardens - Janet Novak, Delaware Valley member and science editor, "Native Orchids of North America"

March 19, USBG -- Bobby Ward, NARGS past president and author of JC Raulston biography, *Chlorophyll in His Veins*, "JC Raulston Horticultural Ambassador". Books available for purchase.

March TBD (Paul Botting's home) planting of troughs for May plant sale.

April 2, Hillwood Museum and Gardens, Washington, DC -- Jody Fetzer, PVC member and Hillwood Horticulture Supervisor, and Bill Johnson, Hillwood Horticulturist, "Restoration of Hillwood's Rock Garden"

April 30 - Trip to Mt. Cuba in Delaware; carpool. More information to follow.

May14 - plant sale at Green Spring Gardens; same format as last year

May 21?(TBD) Members' plant exchange hosted by Patricia Goins

June (TBD) members picnic OR a series of members' garden visits.

Additional Ideas:

Propagation Workshop. Any interest?

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Deadline for next edition October 15, 2010

Message from the Chairperson

It's been a long time since we have had news, but we have all been busy. As a result of our questionnaire to the membership last year, we have put a great deal of time and emphasis to trips, speakers and workshops. The calendar, although incomplete, gives you the gist of what your membership buys, besides interacting with yours truly.

We hope you will be able to enjoy some of the events if not all. Any suggestions for the following year would be appreciated and sent directly to me.

I cherish each of you and the tremendous support I have received these past few months as I try to keep us productive and organized. As you have recently read, several of our members have passed since May, but their gardens live on and hopefully some of you have a few treasures from their gardens. That is one of the many memories we obtain at the swaps. Our next swap is September 25, be there.

New members

Abdu, Abrehet, Mont. Village, MD
Beaudry, Jean & Norman, Bethesda, MD
Bell, Wendy, Takoma Park, MD
Bendet, Stanley, Washington, D.C.
Bergmann, Carole, Clarksburg, MD
Boasberg, Sally, Washington, D.C.
Bordelon, Mike & Carole, Greenbelt, MD
Callender, Maxine, Derwood, MD
Canale, Peggy, Alexandria, VA
Christmus, Nancy, Vienna, VA
Christmus, Sandy, Vienna, VA
Curtis, Sharon, Rockville, MD
Durst, Marye Gay Laytonville, MD
Ellis, Mark, Arlington, VA
Feely, Joan, US Nat Arboretum
Fetzer, Jody, Bethesda, MD
Galloway, Richard, Silver Spring, MD
Gimpel, Rob, Annapolis, MD
Holmes, Tim & Pam, Bowie, MD
Houston, Ross, Frederick, MD
Jentz, Kathy, Silver Spring, MD
Kessel, Candace, Washington, D.C.

Lander, Lynette, Takoma Park, MD
Leininger, Richard
McClain, Phillip, Washington, D.C.
Novak, Anne, Washington, D.C.
Omand, Joan & Eric, Annandale, VA
Peters, Vreni, Ft. Washington, MD
Roth, Susan, Washington, D.C.
Russell, Shannon, Bethesda, MD
Sackett, Brandon, Washington, D.C.
Smith, Alison, Herndon, VA
Washburn, Gay, Bethesda, MD
Washburn, Sharon, Bethesda, MD
Wolf, Lea, Haymarket, VA
Yang, Eugenia & Andrew, Arlington, VA

Trough Workshop

The trough workshop is filled!

Winter Snows and Summer Storms

I have never written about the major damage that the huge snowfalls inflicted on our gardens last winter. I don't know why, but when everyone had suffered it didn't seem to be especially engaging to read about a single person's misfortunes. And every day, when I arrived at work at the National Museum of Natural History on the Mall, there were all of the old southern magnolias (*M. grandiflora*) on the west side of the National Archives building and south side of the Justice Department headquarters broken and battered and looking like hell. So what did it matter that some of our hollies had lost major parts or that a number of other trees and shrubs had fallen over? And why would it be interesting now to learn that not all of the winter damage to our woody plants has been addressed and corrected?

Summer storms somehow are different. Rarely do they affect everyone, even in a local area. I always find it absorbing to watch the late news after a summer storm has passed through the region. Some on-the-scene reporter stands in front of a house with a large oak tree that has landed on it or beside a crushed car that may or may not have had occupants. The numbers of people who are without power is always of

interest, and I like to guess how long it might take for everyone to be back on the grid.

When your area is the one that is the center of the storm, your perspective is very different. Yesterday afternoon (August 5th), not long after a thunderstorm had passed through downtown District of Columbia, I received a phone call from my wife that the Del Ray neighborhood, where we live in Alexandria, Virginia, had borne the brunt of the storm and that damage was severe. Our across-the-street neighbor's large black walnut tree had fallen onto the YMCA parking lot and onto the two vehicles that we park there (with permission). Another neighbor's large silver maple had more or less exploded, launching large spears in several directions and penetrating two roofs. Several trees around our garden, including both species of goldenraintree (*Koelreuteria*), had lost major limbs. And in the YMCA and Simpson Park gardens the volunteer Japanese Pagodatree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*, formerly *Sophora japonica*), next to the small tufa garden, had been sheared off near the base, the pink-flowered yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea* 'Perkin's Pink') had blown over, and the main trunk of the Hercules-club (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*) was snapped off at its base.

On top of all that, our electricity was out and our phone was not working (my wife was using a borrowed cell phone). A power line was straddling our street, blocking our one remaining vehicle from moving. And my wife had come across two baby squirrels whooshed out of their nest by the 70 mph winds. The one still alive was reposing in our kitchen waiting to be nourished. The other one had been put in our freezer. "You opened the freezer when our electricity was out just to put in a dead squirrel," I asked incredulously. "I forgot," she said, "it was just a reflex; it's where I always place potentially smelly things for next week's garbage collection."

I worked late last night and when I returned by Metro I found that there were no lights at all, including street lights and traffic signals, in the whole area between the Braddock Road Metro station and our home, about half a mile away. There was no moon to speak of either. Passing cars would periodically light up the way for a few seconds. Otherwise I wondered whether I might actually collide with someone walking in the opposite direction. But I figured that after 11

pm foot traffic would be sparse, which indeed it was.

I couldn't follow my typical route all the way. Vehicular as well as pedestrian traffic were blocked on a section of Monroe Ave. due to an apparent downed power line. A detour put me on a street with lots of downed silver maples before I was able to pass through the YMCA property and reach our house.

The following morning everything looked different, but not better. A neighbor holding a cup of coffee spoke of the hike she had had to make in order to get to an open Starbucks. Another neighbor, whose house had about a third of a mature sugar maple resting against it, had been advised not to try to remove it because it was an Alexandria city tree. A third neighbor recounted how a tree limb had gone through her roof and into her daughter's bedroom, terrifying the teenage girl.

I took the opportunity to walk around and look at the damage that I knew of only from my wife's descriptions. Perhaps the saddest to me was the loss of the top three-quarters of our only female Kentucky coffeetree, a plant that we had grown from seed more than a dozen years ago. One unexplained curiosity was that none of the trees that had been broken or were left leaning by the winter snows was further affected by yesterday's storm. Instead it damaged or destroyed mainly trees that were healthy and previously untouched.

Today's most educational experience arose from the fallen walnut tree that was still resting on two of our vehicles when this was written. The tree was rooted on a neighbor's property, but fell entirely onto the YMCA land and onto our car and pickup truck. Who is financially responsible for removing the tree and damage to the vehicles, I wondered. Our insurance company said that they would cover the damage to the truck, less the deductible, but the old clunker of a station wagon, which serves mainly as a tool shed, was not covered. A colleague of mine, who is quite knowledgeable about such matters, told me that it is actually the YMCA's responsibility to pay for the removal of the tree. Who will actually wind up paying for it is another matter. And how long our power will be out is more than just an intellectual guessing game this time. We may be drinking ice cream tonight!

Postscript. The above column was written on August 6, 2010, the day after the storm. These are some follow-ups to what happened. The large, old, native black cherry tree (*Prunus serotina*), which grew near Duncan Ave., at the back of the YMCA land and just off the property line, was cut down by a contractor the following week. I had mixed feelings about its demise. Although we had long hoped that the cherry would be pruned because its large limbs were menacingly stretched out over some of our young trees, and we were never very happy having to remove countless seedlings from our gardens every year, this species was singled out by Douglas Tallamy in his book *Bringing Nature Home* as the tree that supported more species of native insects than any other. So there was much to recommend it, especially since it grew so close to our native meadow garden.

In the course of removing the cherry, the workers at some point dropped a large branch into the top of our seed-grown persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), doing serious damage to it, and dumped all of the wood chips from the ground stump onto the Y property into one of our planting areas. The ultimate insult/injury occurred when some idle worker, carrying a saw and evidently having nothing better to do, spotted the heavily damaged female Kentucky coffeetree, cut off the two remaining living branches, and made clean, diagonal cuts on the main stem and side shoots. While the tree indeed looked butchered, in mid August, following a heavy rain, new shoots started to sprout from all the cut ends, and we are hopeful that the tree will survive. Perhaps the man with the saw knew what he was doing after all!

The black walnut, which was resting on two of our vehicles, was very carefully trimmed by the neighbor on whose land the tree had stood. Working with another neighbor, they carefully cut back and pulled away the branches, such that our car and truck were released without being damaged. After one final cut the weight of the root ball caused the remaining 10 to 15 feet of trunk to lift up into a nearly vertical position. Since then, the neighbor, with some additional help, has managed to remove the rest of the tree, including the major roots, without injuring any of our plantings, although we had to temporarily move a shrub and some other plants for their own protection. Our major concern now is what to do about the lack of shade. However, the absence of the walnut and the inhibiting

chemical juglone that it produces will considerably increase our options about plants that can be grown. Every loss is also a gain!
Robert Faden

NARGS 2010 Annual Meeting Report

Blue skies and sunshine completed the frame of a fantastic week in the Colorado Rockies for our annual convention this year. Thanks go to my Potomac Valley chapter for nominating me to receive a stipend to attend the convention and to the Society for awarding the stipend to me. My husband and I had been looking forward to this trip for over a year and we were not disappointed. We had met each other while in school in Colorado and spent many years hiking and backpacking the Rockies. It was the big stuff of Colorado that we knew, vistas, mountain ranges and wildlife, but it was the smaller treasures that loomed large on this trip.

From the moment we landed in Denver until we left we were immersed in the alpine plant world, and I never tired of it. We began at the Denver Botanic Garden, which has grown and been transformed since our last visit to Denver, and was too much to take in for one evening's visit. When I finally found my way to the Rock Garden, everyone else had gone on to dinner. I was virtually alone and lost in the details of this plant and that rock. While I admired and photographed the garden I had no idea that I would be lucky enough to hike with the horticulturist responsible for the garden, Mike Kintgen, two days later. He has created a windswept high alpine topography with a meandering alpine stream—which looked exactly like what we would see Tuesday on Mt. Sherman.

Monday night we gathered for our first dinner “in the field” so to speak, which was served outdoors in Salida along the Arkansas River. Plans for Tuesday's 7 A.M. rendezvous seemed a bit zealous. However, after we heard Kirk Johnson of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science speak, I knew everyone couldn't wait to get up and go the next day. His energetic talk was succinct and informative. Kirk is a paleobotanist whose work exploring and dissecting soil and rock formations all over the world has led him to this short explanation: the

Colorado Rockies we know today are part of the “E” world, the eroding world, which deposit on to the “D” world, the deposited world of forests and marshes. Thus, the Rockies’ exposed limestone that supports alpine flora today, and bears plant fossils galore, are the obvious result of this cycle of overlapping “E” and “D” worlds. If we weren’t there to collect plants, we were now there looking for plant fossils!

The treks began and the photo taking stopped them. Every few feet we stopped to bend down for a better look at Drabas, Erigerons, Silenes and Penstemons and inevitably end up flat out on the ground for a detailed photo. Of all the photos I didn’t take but should have was one of Mike Kintgen and fellow member Karen Vail sprawled out with a loop trying to positively identify a tiny alpine specimen! Their enthusiasm was infectious. It was their objective to find *Saussurea weberi* in bloom while on Mt. Sherman. When we found the plant, sans bloom, the day’s energy was new again and we kept trudging higher, but never found it in full glory. A guide from the Botanic Garden had seen it blooming a week earlier, just to the west and south in the area known as the Horseshoe, a magnificent, barren, scree-strewn crater shaped like a horseshoe. The hike up Mt. Sherman was a lesson in microclimates; there was an unusually full alpine stream on one side of the trail dense with Penstemon and Mertensia. 50 feet away was a slope, dry and exposed full of *Sedum integrifolium*, *Erigeron melanocephalus*, *Smelowskia calycina* and *Castilleja occidentalis*. As we climbed well past 12,000 feet in elevation there were thick blooming tufts of *Phlox condensata*. One large specimen had the color variation of purple fading to pink to white from one side to the other. *Thalictrum alpinum* was thick in scree, but was not blooming. *Phacelia sericea* in large clumps covered a huge area in scree and created a challenging photo opportunity as I tried to keep my balance on the loose rocks. The yellow tipped style shooting out of the purple petals was perfection that day.

Wednesday was Weston Pass, with high meadows full of wildflowers. My favorite has to be the tiny *Eritrichium aretioides*; once I discovered it I found it everywhere. In contrast there were glorious sentinels of *Frasera speciosa* well over 5 feet tall! It was here that Lorraine Yeatts, the alpine wildflower expert and co-author of the *Alpine Flower Finder* guided us. (Each participant received a copy of the *Finder*)

Definitely a veteran alpine plants woman, she had her balaclava tied tightly to her chin and her kneepads on. Part of the fun was the discussion of exactly what name to ascribe to a particular plant. When the fragrant *Ipomopsis globularis* was discovered a polite correction was offered as *Ipomopsis spicata*, but I think *Ipomopsis globularis* is much more fun to say. A large swath of willow was growing in the runoff on the north side of Weston, and while we were traversing the slope we thought we would walk through it rather than around it. Inside was a glorious sight, well worth the wet feet: *Pedicularis groenlandica*, dozens almost in complete bloom, protected from the wind and fed by the runoff. To the south were stands of *Penstemon whippleanus* and *Penstemon hallii*, their intense purple color contrasting with the last of the snow.

One of the best features of the convention was the enthusiasm and depth of expertise of our guides and of the volunteers from the Denver Botanic Garden. It really made the program for me, yet I know Mike Kintgen was probably glad to be off the witness stand when I departed. We weren’t ready to leave when it was all over. I know how much more I need to learn, but I have hundreds of photos and there is always email...

Margot Ellis

NARGS Seed Exchange

In order to make the NARGS Seed Exchange as full and exciting an offering as possible, we need the help of all NARGS members.

First, we need your seed donations. As few as five packets of desirable seed will earn you Donor privileges: an extra ten packets of seed with your order, and priority in having your order filled in January.

And what makes seed "desirable?"

Well, although we are a society devoted to rock and alpine plants, that is not all that most of us grow in our gardens. So seed of a wide range of plants would be helpful: interesting perennials (not too terribly large, or rampant), native plants (especially wild-collected seed), smaller shrubs, and even the occasional rare tree. We’re not interested in receiving seed of common trees, fruits/vegetables, or large tender annuals and

bulbs, which will not earn Donor status.

And then we need help in packaging the donated seed - actually, re-packaging, and making lots of small packets out of the larger ones. This phase of the Seedex is done in early December, and can be completed at (or after) a Chapter meeting, in a separate group session, or on your own in the comfort of your home. Volunteer work for the Seedex also earns you Donor Status, so that you can receive the extra ten packets of seed, as well as priority in having your order fulfilled.

So, round up some friends --and, especially, new chapter members, to give them an opportunity to feel a part of the group. Chapters who have done this work for years (like Rocky Mountain and Wisconsin-Illinois) thoroughly enjoy it, and have made it into a day of socializing and fun, prizes and food, readings and chatting - not to mention the production of thousands of seed packets. Contact Joyce Fingerut if you can help.

Don't forget that the Seed List will appear on our website on December 15. Go to:
<http://www.nargs.org> (Click on Seedex)

If you will need a print copy of the Seed List, contact by November 15:

Joyce Fingerut
537 Taugwonk Road
Stonington, CT 06378-1805
<alpinegarden@comcast.net>

Many thanks for your help.

Joyce

Request for speaker

Frank Backer
17300 Quaker Lane, Apt D20
Sandy Spring, MD 20860
7/31/10

Subject: PVCNARGS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

About five years ago the late Dr. Sasha Borkovec, my much esteemed friend, visited us at Friends House to talk about rock gardens. His discourse which stirred considerable interest was very well received.

Please let me know whether it would be possible for one of your members to be with us some time in the Fall to present a program about rock gardens or a related subject?

Please note that Friends House is a retirement community founded by Quakers about forty years ago. Roughly half of our residents are Quakers. Friends House thrives because it provides, among various other benefits, intellectually stimulating programs to its residents. A committee, in which I participate, is charged with coordinating this activity.

Evening programs are held several times a week. We meet from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. The presentation, including questions, is to be kept within this time frame. We have excellent projection facilities including equipment for VHS and DVD videos, CD's and Power Point. Usually we look forward to participation by 40 to 50 residents and are confident that your talk will generate considerable interest.

We are located in Sandy Spring, Maryland, about 20 miles north of Washington, D.D. Later on we would give you directions on how to get here or, alternatively, we would be pleased to meet you at about 5:30 p.m. in Glenmont at the terminus of Metro's Red Line. Dinner to which we would like to invite the speaker and a guest is served at 6:15 p.m.

As a matter of policy, we offer no remuneration for visiting speakers. Literature for use by interested individuals may be left for pickup.

Please give my regards to any of your members whom I have met or may have met at Sasha's memorial.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Frank Backer

A garden worth visiting

Wetlands guru John Hummer plans to open his garden sometime in October this year. Watch the chapter web site for an announcement of the date. John's place is in Caroline County, Virginia, south and east of Fredericksburg (the Ladysmith exit from 95 south). It's probably an hour and a half from northern Virginia and at least two hours from areas north of the beltway. It's worth the trip: you will see hundreds, maybe thousands, of *Sarracenia* in a bewildering range of species and hybrids. There will be fall gentians, *Gentiana catesbaei* and *G. autumnalis*. There might be a late blooming *Lilium catesbaei* or two. Even if you know the wetlands flora, you'll notice more *Sabatia* than you can probably identify.

Expect to get your feet wet!

Jim McKenney

Recent deaths among our membership

We lost four members of long standing this summer: Diana Nichols, Russell Kirk, Felicity Blandford and Sasha Borkovec. Diana and Sasha were both active members well known and well regarded by all of us.

Back in the days of the *Patowmack Papers*, Russ was a regular contributor. He did "Russ Kirk's Russtles and Kwirks". Here's an example from the January-February 1998 edition:

"When I was a child in Lakewood, Ohio, I often walked along the shore of Lake Erie tapping the back ends of all the metal rowboats pulled up on shore and listening to the sound, thereby leaving no stern untuned. Then on the way back I threw rocks at all the shore birds, leaving no tern unstoned."

You can view a memorial page for Sasha Borkovec here:

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

The editor will be glad to prepare similar pages for the other recently deceased members if

someone will provide suitable material.

Editor

Visiting the Allegheny Chapter

Betty Spar, Sarah Strickler and Paul Botting have provided dozens of photographs of the trip to visit gardens of the members of the Allegheny Chapter of NARGS. These will appear on the chapter web site soon.

Editor

Our September plant exchange

This time the Bordelons are hosting and this Greenbelt garden will be a new venue for some of our members. Directions will be posted on the chapter web site soon. Directions are below.

Editor

Our May plant exchange

Our May plant exchange was well attended. Harry Dewey was there: he brought plants and participated in the exchange. Mary Espy was there, too: one of these days they might let us in on their secret fountains of youth. I hope the front lawn in the garden of Patricia Goins didn't suffer too much. As usual, the plants on offer ran the gamut from the very common to the nearly unknown. The Fadens, always a source of interesting new plants, brought plants of *Tinantia leiocalyx*, another Mexican commelinid with potential for our gardens. I say "another" because it was Bob Faden who introduced us to another good Mexican commelinid, *Tinantia pringlei*. If you saw it in Lynn Blei's old garden, you got a very good idea of what a valuable plant this can be in the summer garden.

See the masthead of this edition of the *PVC Bulletin* for two images of *T. leiocalyx*.

Editor

Our June Picnic

Once again Bobbie Lively Diebold made her home in the country available for our annual picnic. With plenty of room, plenty to see in the garden and plenty of food, there was something for everyone. There was also something unique: did you know that the State of Virginia has an epiphytic aroid? There is a big tulip poplar in Bobbie's garden, and about twenty or so feet up there is a cavity which supports at least two

plants. One I could not identify – all I could make out were grassy leaves. But the other looked suspiciously familiar. A pair of binoculars answered the question about its identity: *Pinellia pedatisecta*. I already knew that this plant had the potential to take over the garden: I didn't know that it had arboreal aspirations, too!

Bobbie's garden was not the only source of floral interest; her foyer boasted an eye-catching orchid which she said came from Trader Joes. It wasn't simply beautiful; it had a great fragrance, too. Here it is:



Directions to the Bordelon home

Take the Capitol Beltway to Kenilworth Ave.
MD 201 N/ Exit 23.

Turn right onto Crescent Rd.

Turn left onto Greenhill Rd.

Turn left onto Greentree Pl.

3 Greentree Pl. is on the left. .

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