



Artemisia schmidtiana 'Nana'

Potomac Valley Chapter

North American Rock
Garden Society

PVC Bulletin

July-September 2011



Cyclamen graecum, a white-flowered
form

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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, date and time TBA
OUR ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERSHIP**

Calendar

2012 (tentative)

*Most meetings 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.*

September 22 (Thursday, 6.30 pm) - John Grimshaw,
**“An Ethiopian Adventure: A Journey to the Bale
Mountains with the Alpine Garden Society”** McLean
Community Center; directions: :
<http://www.mcleancenter.org/contact/maps.asp>

Visit John's website at:
<http://johngrimshawsgardendiary.blogspot.com/>

**September 24, Saturday, Members' Plant
Exchange** hosted by Lynn Blei, Potomac, MD, see
details and directions at end of bulletin.

October 29, Brookside Gardens, Edith Eddleman on
Elizabeth Lawrence and *A Southern Garden*.

November, date and place TBD - our Annual Meeting,
Election of Officers, and Members' Slide Show

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”

Note: Green Spring Park will hold its September plant sale
on Saturday, September 17. Our chapter will not participate
this time.

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Deadline for next edition October 15, 2011

Message from the Chairperson

August 15

Through Betty's Window,
It's a scorched look, not particularly flattering at any time of year. It doesn't matter how often you water, or sprinkle, soak or douse, the ambient temperature is such that the plants just become limp and this is at 10 o'clock at night.

However what is exciting is that we are about a month away from seeing each other for another season. I look forward to it. Our program agenda is full and our November membership free for all is going to be a block buster with all the slides people wish to show. Perhaps we need a whole day for this.

The Chapter still has some housekeeping I would like to put in place and then a comment on our parent organization, NARGS.

We still need a volunteer to help with greeting our guests and members at the door. It would be enormously helpful and make a new member feel welcome. We also need at least one more member willing to host a speaker and assist with keeping them busy. You do not have to accompany them but you do need to show them the way to get to Independence Avenue, etc. And our newsletter editor is weary and needs a well-deserved break. Jim McK has done an exceptional job. Would someone offer to work with Alice Nicolson and use her approach of getting our timely newsletter out so we can plan? We would all be grateful and get our notes in on time.

I did attend NARGS national in New Hampshire and Alice's text and photos say it all. But the turnout of 116 was a

poor showing from 35 chapters. I urge all of you to join NARGS; the dues are \$30 per year but for a limited time the chapter will subsidize \$10 for each new member – so your cost will be \$20.00 for the first year. This entitles you to a window on the continent in terms of specialized plants of all kinds. The next meeting is in Everett Washington with promising side trips. It will also be held early, March 9, 10 and 11, 2012. And the Berkshire Chapter will host for 2013 on October 12 and 13. 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 website.

The comments above about dues deal with NARGS dues. Potomac Valley Chapter dues are \$15 per annum. We charge non-members \$10 to attend our programs, and urge them to ramp up to \$15 for a year's membership and free entry to all of our programs. Remember, members can bring one guest for free to a program, but not the same guest over and over.

See you in September.

Lycoris—the Gardener's Friends

I have been experimenting with three types of amaryllids outside over winter for the past ten-odd years, *Crinum* (and amarcrinums), *Lycoris*, called either Resurrection-lilies or Naked Ladies around here, and *Zephyranthes*, the Rain Lilies. Most of these do need well drained soil—they won't put up with wet any more than a daffodil will. Feed them as you would daffodils, with any

bulb or vegetable food, and life will be good. I'm up in the hills near Harpers Ferry, West Virginia; so if *I* can grow them, *you* can grow them. This article will be on *Lycoris*. This is not a complete catalogue, but rather a recap of my experiences.

From August through September, when you need the color, the *Lycoris* bloom. There are, for growing purposes, two subtribes of *Lycoris*, those which put up leaves in spring like daffodils (their leaves are a little larger and a more bluish green than daffs) and those which put up their leaves in late fall and hold them through the winter. These leaves are entirely cold hardy in our region, but they have to be protected from the whipping winter wind. If they are whipped into rags they cannot provide nourishment to the bulb. The leaves persist as long as daffodil leaves, all dying down at, as I recall, the same time. All *Lycoris* bloom on leafless stalks, which emerge from the ground long after the leaves have vanished. Some kinds are supposedly tender, but many are rock hardy for us. When you get any *Lycoris*, for the love of Heaven *mark where you plant them*. They have the less than endearing trick, when they are shipped and planted as dry bulbs, of sometimes waiting a year—or two!-- to break dormancy. This does not seem to harm the plant any in the long term, but it's hard on you, the gardener. Incidentally, this can be avoided when you are actually dividing your own *Lycoris* by digging them—carefully!—and moving them while the leaves are green. If you use plant starter, they settle right in and do not do the extended-dormancy bit. Failing that, dig the dormant bulbs and replant immediately. The roots coming off of the base plate of the bulb should

not dry out, or double dormancy may follow. For any *Lycoris*, the best time to dig and replant the bulbs is June, (although any time will do in a pinch).

The old-fashioned Resurrection Lilies, *L. squamigera*, are a classic pass-along plant. These have been in cultivation in the West for a good hundred years—and have the same staying power as daffodils; if you see a *Lycoris* in the “wild”, just as you see a daffodil, it usually means there was a house there once, and the bulbs are bravely carrying on. For me, the naked stems come up in the first week of August, and flower for about two weeks, maybe eighteen inches high, and a pink—not a clear pink, words fail me—with a hint of lavender in it. I've grown mine in full sun to half shade and they all thrive. They spread less quickly than daffodils, but spread they do. They are a triploid hybrid between *L. sprengeri* and something else. The leaves can be larger than daffodils, and the bulbs are the largest of any *Lycoris* I've grown to date, being large-daffodil size. Plant them deeper than the others, as deep as a large daffodil...all the others should only be about three or four inches.

The new, and justified, hoopla is that China is finally coming wide open to Western gardeners, and dozens of new-to-us species and hybrids of *Lycoris* are starting to come in—albeit with some confusion in the labeling. **IT DOES NOT MATTER, GET ALL YOU CAN LAY YOUR HANDS ON!** They are still relatively expensive, depending on where you get them, compared to the *L. squamigera*, but worth every penny. All that I have tried so far are smaller than *Lycoris squamigera* in all parts. And please note, *Lycoris* species will set seed

– and hybridize—quite happily. If you get seed, sow it, and if you have different species blooming at the same time, you may get some surprises.

Lycoris sprengeri is my favorite as of this writing. It is pink and BLUE, with (I am told) some forms bluer than others. The blue is not a wistful hint, the way it is in *L. squamigera*; it's really there.

This is a spring-leafer, like *L. squamigera*. They bloom, on average, with *Lycoris squamigera* or a week or so after, and are slightly smaller. This may change in time as the bulbs age; my *Lycoris squamigera* are old and huge.

Lycoris longituba comes in white and occasionally lemon yellow (probably a hybrid; some of what is sold for *longituba* has varying amounts of pink in it and are definitely hybrids; I got some from Brent and Becky's and they have been coming up with mixed results, pure white and white-and-pink; I'm quite happy with the variations). As I recall, *Lycoris longituba* is a spring leafer, as are all the hybrids I've noticed. These tend to bloom with *Lycoris sprengeri*.

L. sanguinea var. *kiushiana* is small and orange; by small, I mean perhaps eight inches from the ground, with straplike petals, and the flowers are wider open, not funneled like *LL. longituba* or *squamigera*. This is a winter leafer. I have two clumps, and both bloomed with the *Lycoris squamigera* this year. For certain, put this right beside the path; it is comparatively small and has to be where the flowers can be seen. There is a larger, wider petaled form of this in Korea, which I saw in bloom on Yongsan-South post in Seoul in the 1970's. I do not have it here.

L. chinensis is yellow, with spidery, ruffled petals, and is a winter-leafer.

Mine came from Chen Yi, as did others labeled *L. aurea*, and be switched if I can tell them apart—but labeling is iffy with that nursery. Chen Yi lists a pink flowered version of *L. aurea*, and I've bought it, but it has not flowered for me so I'm not able to vouch for the truth of that.

L. radiata is a red flower, red to the point that one common name is British soldiers. It is perhaps a foot tall when it blooms, with straplike, reflexed petals, and is a winter-leafer; this has been commercially and relatively cheaply available for years, by the way, and has a reputation for being tender, but I've seen what appears to be *L. radiata* at Oatlands, just S of Leesburg. I got three several years ago from Bobbie Diebold, who seems to have no trouble with them out in Front Royal, VA, and planted them in the courtyard, but not close to the building at all—and they have made it through my winters just fine, bloomed, and multiplied. Most excitingly, I've been in a garden swap deal with a lady from Alabama; she has sent me, literally, hundreds of *L. radiata* bulbs, and in her last shipment she mentioned color variations in the clumps she dug. Those are certainly hybrids, then. Her first shipment came through one winter quite well for me, out in the open, even with the Southern provenance of the bulbs. None have yet bloomed; I live in hope. Supposedly there is a triploid and a diploid form of these too, and I have just this spring gotten a (supposedly) dwarf form of this from Arrowhead Alpines in Michigan. They have not bloomed for me, nor do I expect them to this year. I have all of these very carefully separated from each other, so will be able to tell if there are differences when (if) they bloom.

I got *L. straminea*, a sort of yellow-white colored little thing with a yellow stripe down the center of each ruffled petal, in 2003 from Plant Delights, and *L. incarnata*, a pink-and-white striped with ruffled petals. Both are shy of bloom, for me, both are winter leafers and have stayed small in all parts.

There are also Chinese hybrid *Lycoris* out there, that are just starting to be known and propagated here. (Two examples, which I do not have, are ‘Sky over Sky’, with unruffled straw yellow petals, or ‘Viewing Fish’, a light pinkish. It is worth going to Plant Delights’ picture gallery and looking at the *Lycoris* pictures there. It will be another ten years before you can get a dozen kinds without really having to search and/or pay the earth for them—but it will happen.) The whole tribe, being amaryllids, are rodent-proof and deer-proof. All, by the way, will benefit from being planted between low-growing things that come up late; their leaves can then come up like daffodils, and die down likewise, giving strength to the bulb, while the other things around them are just coming up. Trust me, when they bloom, you WILL notice them.

Jim Dronenburg

Click this link to view a gallery of Jim’s lycorises photographed by Dan Weil in their garden:

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

Cyclamen graecum

Cyclamen graecum from last fall’s distribution of plants donated by John Lonsdale has been blooming here since mid-August. These spent the summer in a cold frame (i.e. protected from rain)

and came through beautifully. I’m not sure I can tell the difference in the flowers alone between those of this species and those of *C. hederifolium*, and at least some of them have the same scent as *C. hederifolium*. But in any case I’m growing them primarily for the foliage, not the flowers.

You might not have realized it last fall when we had our *Cyclamen graecum* distribution, but many of you took home a potentially valuable two-for. By then almost all of the plants were well past blooming, but tucked down at the bases of the leaf petioles were the tightly coiled stems of the seed capsules. Some of you should have been able to harvest dozens if not hundreds of seeds. Those seeds should be showing signs of germination now – at least if they have been exposed to a bit of moisture all along. If you examine your plants carefully, you might find seeds ready to germinate still on top of the parent plant – or by the time you read this, maybe one-leafed little seedlings. Tweeze these out carefully and pot them up individually – and then bring some to the plant exchange.

Jim McKenney

Hesperaloë parviflora

Although its qualifications as a rock garden plant are dubious, this plant is no more out of place there than anywhere else in the garden. For much of the year it appears as a mound of tough, narrow, pointed, succulent leaves. It looks like what it is, a plant from the rocky, dry xeric landscapes of the American southwest. And when it blooms, it’s like nothing else in our garden flora. The scape eventually reaches six or more feet high. It’s plum purple with a bluish

bloom, as if made of lead. The flower buds are glowing coral color, and the fully developed flower is yellow on the inside. It's gorgeous, exotic, a sort of floral flamingo. And the flowers continue to appear for months during the hottest part of our year.



Allen Hirsh and I have grown this plant for years, and I've seen it in one or two public plantings over the years, but otherwise it seems to be relatively unknown. In the past, there might have been doubts about its winter hardiness: some conservative sources still give it a USDA zone 8 rating. In the dry areas of the western US, it's said to be hardy into USDA zone 5 or even 4.

I raised the topic of this plant on the on-line discussion of the Pacific Bulb Society earlier this year. As that thread developed, I learned something worth keeping in mind: there is at least one nursery which has been breeding with this plant for years and now has plants showing variation in plant size, flower color and leaf color and width. The nursery in question is doing its best to keep all of this under wraps for the time being, but sooner or later a handsome variety of these plants should hit the market.

Why are there two little dots on the e at the end of *Hesperaloe*? No, they are not

an umlaut. They are a dieresis, and the dieresis is one of the very few diacritical marks permitted by the ICBN. Those dots indicate that the o and the e are to be pronounced separately (as also in *Leucothoë*, *Kalenchoë*, *Danaë* among others). Without the dieresis, the plant family name Aloaceae would have been spelled Alaceae because in Latin oe is a diphthong (it indicates the oi sound)

Jim McKenney

Artemisia schmidtiana 'Nana'

I'll bet I'm not the only one of us who has fallen for this plant, only to see it go into a slump in mid-summer and die. It's not really a garden plant for our climate, but who among us can resist that foliage? Years ago Henry Mitchell wrote a piece about it in which he speculated about just what it would take to keep it going through a Washington, D. C. summer. I tried to find that piece – without luck.

When I first read that piece I had already killed this plant myself a few times. But after reading Mitchell's suggestions, I put it on the "try again" list. I bought another one in June 2010. It was never planted in the garden, and it spent the winter under the eaves of the house (dry) in the pot it was bought in above ground. That it survived the winter surprised me. That it survived the summer of 2011 surprised me even more because it was completely neglected. Still in the pot, it got watered now and then, mostly when the foliage began to wilt. Now, with a second local summer behind it, it looks fine. I won't press my luck: it's going to stay in the pot. Jim McKenney

Big news from the world of plant nomenclature

The International Botanical Congress which met in Melbourne, Australia last month has established two provisions of huge significance: beginning next year, new plant diagnoses need no longer be published in Latin. They now may (i.e. are allowed to) be published in English or Latin. And beginning next year they may be published in journals which publish only on-line (i.e. journals which do not have a print version).

Do you have a favorite plant?

Would you be willing to do a short article about it? Let's see if we can get a "My current favorite plant" column going for each future bulletin. Send your ideas to the editor.

Directions to our September 24 plant exchange: Lynne Blei and Al Kehs' home
11031 Dobbins Drive, Potomac, MD 20854

- from Beltway VA--take River Rd towards Potomac, take Right onto Falls Rd. (at Potomac Village), take Left at 1st light onto South Glen Rd. (go 0.6 mi), take Right onto Edison, take Right onto Dobbins, House is on Right at circle.
- from Beltway MD--take Old Georgetown Rd towards Rockville, take Left onto Democracy Blvd. (go 5 mi) (it becomes S Glen at Falls Rd), take Right onto Edison, take Right onto Dobbins, House is on Right at circle.

301-983-0534 captainblei@verizon.net

Annual Elections Coming Up

It's that time again; PVC needs volunteers who are willing to serve on our board! 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 elective positions are four; President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

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!

If you have suggestions or are yourself willing, please contact one of the Nominations Committee members to offer your services; they are Paul Botting pmbotting@comcast.net, Bobbie Lively-Diebold b2diebold@yahoo.com, and Dick Hammerschlag peachnfrog66@comcast.net. Do it sooner rather than later - the elections will be held at our November meeting so the committee needs to name a slate pronto!

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

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Archivist - open

Parliamentarian - open

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Audit – open

Outreach and Education - open

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

