



*Junonia coenia*

Jim McKenney

Potomac Valley  
Chapter

North American  
Rock Garden  
Society

*PVC Bulletin*

September 2012



*Tigridia pavonia*

Jim McKenney

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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**

**Calendar 2012**

*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<sup>nd</sup>, Rob Gimpel, “Gardening at Stonecrop,” a public garden in Cold Spring, NY.** Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, MD Rob is a PVC member and former intern/gardener at Stonecrop, which features a rock garden among others. Stonecrop was formerly the home and garden of Garden Conservancy founder Frank Cabot. For more about Stonecrop: <http://www.stonecrop.org>

**September 29<sup>th</sup>, Plant Exchange,** Dan & Sigi Turner’s home, 6905 Mink Hollow Rd, Highland MD

**October 12-14, NARGS Fall Study Weekend in Pittsburgh (Allegheny Chapter) “Autumn in the Garden -- A Time for Troughs”**  
For more information see link below.

<http://home.comcast.net/~sylvialynch/Study%20Weekend%20Information.htm>

**October 20<sup>th</sup> Kirk Brown as John Bartram:** US National Arboretum, Washington, DC A dramatic presentation of the life and times of America’s first botanist, inveterate traveler, collector and father of the nursery industry in the original thirteen colonies.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>, Members Annual Meeting:** US National Arboretum, Washington, DC. Bring digital plant images of your garden or travels near and far to share with members. 10 to 15 minutes per person

**2013**

(Tentative schedule with dates and locations TBD)

**January Al Martin, “Flowers of the Alpine Zone in the Presidential Range (NH), Mt Washington and Neighboring Peaks.”** Al is a Watnong Chapter member (NJ).

**February Don Hyatt, “Chasing the Bloom in the Southern Appalachians”**  
Don is a PVC member and rhododendron expert.

## Table of Contents

Chair's message D. Hammerschlag	p. 2	<i>Oxalis depressa</i> J. McKenney	p. 6
A Microcosm in a Pot B. Faden	p. 2	Two winter savorys J. McKenney	p. 6
NARGS Seed Exchange J. Fingerut	p. 3	On the masthead J. McKenney	p. 7
<i>The Avant Gardener</i> B. Spar	p. 4	NARGS News B. Spar	p. 7
<i>Helonias</i> et al. J. McKenney	p. 5	Other events: don't miss this	p. 8
		Officers, directors, chairs	p. 9

**Deadline for next edition October 15, 2012**

### Message from the Chairman

The summer may be a 'slow' period but has been one of moving ahead with PVC plans for this next season. I am eagerly looking forward to the new year and all the prime lectures/activities Sarah has cooked up!

As has been noted elsewhere, but bears repeating, we have been successful in locating a host site for the Seedexchange - it will be Behnke Nursery on Route 1 in Beltsville. Not only is Behnke providing us adequate space from late December into early February along with heat, power, bathrooms, etc. but they will also provide us with tables so we won't need to rent them. I say, let's give Behnke whatever business we can! (Actually, if possible keep a 'loose' track of purchases there so that we might feed back to Behnke on their 'investment'.) At our first meeting on Sept. 22 I intend to have some volunteer sign-up sheets for tasks and workers and dates to help out with the seedex. We likely will start with Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 9:00 A.M. to noon or so (need only sign up for one day - or more if you can). The work schedule is dictated by the number/pace of seed orders we receive. Maybe 6-8 folks/date would be ideal. More to come with 'full disclosure' at the Sept. 22 meeting - so please attend.

Also, again Terry Partridge has agreed to head up the plant sales program with extra focus on our producing quality (rock gardenesque) plants for sale AND exchange. With that in mind we have scheduled a Plant Propagation Workshop led by Dr. Matt Taylor of Longwood Gardens to be held at Behnke (also provides a site intro for members in advance of seedex) on Sat. Dec. 8 from (9:00 until early aft.). So please save that date and plan to participate.

We should be able to vote at the Sept. meeting on the by-law changes carefully produced thru the efforts of Sharon Washburn .

Thus, bottom line, this should be a dynamic productive year for PVC that will provide quite a bit of great incoming activities for member benefit, but will also entail significant member contributions/participation - a great take and give program.

See you soon.

Dick Hammerschlag  
PVC Chairperson

### A Microcosm in a Pot

Last year we bought a plant of *Sedum ternatum* 'Larinem Park' from Green Spring Gardens Park. Like many such plants it was left in its pot until late fall, when what we thought would be winter approached. At that time I discovered that the plant had been nearly annihilated by ravaging slugs. All that remained was one tiny shoot with four small leaves.

Perhaps as much out of guilt as anything I decided to try to resuscitate the plant, so I took the pot indoors. Thus began a saga that I will relate below, but first some information about the plant.

*Sedum ternatum*, or Whorled Stonecrop, is native in the eastern United States. It grows on rocks, cliffs and in woods from New Jersey south to Georgia and west to Iowa and Arkansas. Its leaves are arranged mostly in 3's, and flowering shoots are about 20 cm (8 in.) in height. The white flowers appear in the spring. In the garden the plant may be used as an evergreen groundcover in woodland conditions, being one

of the few sedums that does well in shade, but it also will grow in hot dry sites in poor soil.

*Sedum ternatum* 'Larinem Park' was found by Charles Oliver in Larinem Park, Mineral County, West Virginia, and was named and introduced into horticulture by Primrose Path Nursery. It is lower growing (up to 15 cm [6 in.]) and more compact than the usual wild forms. The label from Green Spring indicated 'shale barrens' as the habitat.

The fragment of *S. ternatum* 'Larinem Park' that I took indoors grew well and ramified, but after a while I noticed that the plant was infested with aphids. Not willing to admit defeat, I went after them with a fine, moistened sable-hair brush, supplied by my artistic wife, and more or less kept them in check. In early spring, the first winged individuals started appearing, at which point I decided to put the plant outdoors, but I still periodically tackled the aphids. Occasionally, when I poked around among the densely packed, shingle-like leaves at the ends of the shoots, a tiny yellowish thrips would run out but quickly disappear unless I was ready for it. Yet another pest!

And then ants began to visit, no doubt 'milking' the aphids. That was too much! I chased out the last few and placed the pot on a plastic lid with a raised rim that I thickly coated with Vaseline. It worked. No more ants.

Finally, the whole process of removing aphids from the plant was taking too much time, so I decided that the best way to control them was with a ladybird beetle larva. One of our most reliable plants on which to find aphids this early was the evergreen *Clematis armandii*, which had already finished flowering. Sure enough, there were aphids, but the beetle larvae were scarce. I finally located a lively one and carried it back to the sedum, where it took a while to settle down. Over the next week it came close to wiping out the aphids before it too disappeared without a trace.

When I collected the beetle from the clematis I also observed and removed some small mummified aphids from the undersides of the leaves. These had been produced when tiny (perhaps 2mm long) wasps laid an egg inside an aphid which then became a food source for the larval wasp. My hope was that when the new wasps emerged they would in turn parasitize

other aphids on the sedum plant. Indeed I was later to see the odd wasp, but I was never able to determine whether it had come from one of the cocoon/aphid mummy cases that I had transferred or it had independently found the sedum plant.

When last examined closely, the sedum plant was infested with what appeared to be a different aphid species and the beneficial insects were gone. I decided to trust to luck that a natural predator/parasite would keep the aphids in check. Something must have worked, because after we planted the sedum out in the garden it continued to grow and still looks good.

In addition to the above-mentioned microcosm of insects on the sedum, there were also frequent fungus gnats that probably developed from larvae in the moist soil of the pot. On one or two days some very tiny black mites were observed on the leaves. They did not seem to be causing any problems and were never seen again.

This interesting diversity of tiny critters on one small plant made me wonder how much of nature we are missing in our gardens. Perhaps we need to look more closely at our plants to see what is pollinating, eating or just hanging out on them. Over time we may notice which insects we can predict from year to year and which ones are surprises. Of course, if your garden has as many mosquitoes as ours, you may want to look often but quickly!

P.S. After making most of the above observations I wrote to retired entomologist and chapter member Eric Grissell to learn more about the small wasps that attack aphids because these wasps were the insects that he studied professionally. He wrote that the small "parasites" are called "parasitoids" by entomologists and ecologists because they are generally about the same size as their hosts (when fully grown), which always wind up dead, whereas parasites, such as fleas, ticks and bacteria, are much smaller than their hosts and rarely kill them (except as vectors of diseases). Eric continued that the aphid parasitoid that I observed was probably a species of *Aphidius* of the family Braconidae. That's what I call a well-named genus!

Robert Faden  
The Expanding Garden  
17 August 201

## NARGS Seed Exchange

Joyce Fingerut  
Director, NARGS Seed Exchange

I hope you have all enjoyed a splendid gardening season: triumphs with new plants and the continued growth of old favorites. In order to add new friends to your gardens next year, or renew patches of long-time residents, you will want to take part in the wonderful world of the NARGS Seed Exchange. Here's how:

### Donating seeds

If you haven't already sent in all of your seed donations, there is still a brief window open to U.S. donors for sending them to our Seed Intake Manager by November 1st. Mail the seeds to:

Laura Serowicz  
15411 Woodring Street  
Livonia, MI 48154-3029  
U.S.A.  
[seedintake@mi.rr.com](mailto:seedintake@mi.rr.com)

We certainly hope that you will donate at least the minimum 5 packets of different kinds of seeds, which will enrich both the seedlist and you as well. As a donor you will receive the donor privileges of 10 extra packets of seed and priority in having your order filled. If the seeds of your fall-blooming plants (e.g., gentians and alliums) or late-ripening ones (e.g., arisaemas) are still not quite ripe, you may send a list of these seeds to Laura right now; but you must send the seeds themselves to her no later than December 1st.

### New distribution chapters

We thank the following chapters for stepping up and volunteering to handle the all-important seed distributions for the next two years: Potomac Valley Chapter will fill orders for the main distribution; Siskiyou Chapter will handle the second round orders of surplus seed. We greatly appreciate their willingness to take on these responsibilities and keep our vibrant Seedex humming.

### Ordering seeds

The Seedlist will appear on the NARGS website on December 15th, along with clear instructions about how to place your order. To use the online ordering system, be sure that Bobby Ward ([nargs@nc.rr.com](mailto:nargs@nc.rr.com)) has your most current email address, especially if you've changed email accounts lately or did not use the electronic ordering system last year. Your email address is your entrée to the ordering system. Once you enter your email address on the Seed Ordering webpage, your membership will be automatically verified and you will receive an email. Clicking on the link in the email will take you to the Seedlist and your personal ordering form. Then you just begin typing in seed numbers; it's that easy.

Seed must be ordered electronically from our website unless you request a printed seedlist and order form. Printed seedlists are no longer automatically mailed to members; thus, if you do not wish to order online, you must request a print copy of the Seedlist and order form by contacting me no later than December 1st:

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

In the meantime, get your pots scrubbed and the potting medium mixed, so that you'll be ready for another round - or two - of seed delights.

[This article appears in the fall 2012 issue of the Rock Garden Quarterly's Bulletin Board.]

### *The Avant Gardener*

*The Avant Gardener* is a horticultural newsletter based in Manhattan and edited by Tom and Betty Powell. I've been an Avant reader since 1964. It covers a wide range of the latest discoveries on everything from seeds, to equipment, books and pests. It was \$15.00 and was about 8 pages long, hand typed. Well, Tom retired after Betty's death and Derek Fell, noted plant photographer, Rodale member and all around gardener of interest has become the new editor and he works from home in Bucks Co. PA. The new price is

\$28.00, but it is no longer mailed, but on line in color with fab photos, and is 28 pages long. Go to [www.avantgardener](http://www.avantgardener) and see if you want to join. It does come monthly and really is a treat, whether your interest is pest control, aspirin boosts to plants, newest hybrids, roses and miniature plants. Betty Spar

***Helonias bullata* and its relatives  
*Heloniopsis orientalis* and *Ypsilandra thibetica*.**

The swamp pink, *Helonias bullata*, has long been regarded by gardeners and wild flower enthusiasts as one of the choicest elements in our native flora. That sort of attention soon resulted in the plant becoming very rare in the wild. About thirty years ago I attended a meeting of local wild flower enthusiasts where the topic of the swamp pink came up. Someone mentioned that it was being grown at Mt. Cuba, and someone else jumped up and began a vituperative rant about what (so not good!) should be done to people who collect and grow this plant. That's how strong feelings about this were in some circles back then. Maybe those feelings are still with us today.

If you want to give it a guilt-free try, plants propagated in cultivation are available now. I got my first one maybe ten years ago from Siskiyou; the price has jumped over the years, so much so that had my investments done as well, I'd be very well off. The plant has persisted without special treatment since. They do not bloom every year, but they do bloom occasionally.



*Helonias bullata*

JimMcKenney



*Helonias bullata* Jim McKenney

That it does well in our climate should come as no surprise: it is, or was, a part of the local flora. A relict population near the Baltimore Washington Airport still persists: I learned about this about thirty years ago from the person who rediscovered the plants. That population was known in the early twentieth century but was assumed lost when the airport was built.

My *Helonias* bloomed this year, and as soon as I saw the emerging inflorescence, I got an idea. Why not try to cross pollinate *Helonias*, *Heloniopsis* and *Ypsilandra*. The three are so much alike that I would not be surprised if they are eventually merged into one genus. I had a blooming plant of *Heloniopsis* and a plant of *Ypsilandra* which did not seem about to bloom, so the *Ypsilandra* part of the equation will have to wait. I did cross pollinate both ways *Helonias bullata* and *Heloniopsis orientalis*; I did this many times over a period of about a week. The results: not a seed was formed. But I'll be trying again as blooming material becomes available.

Here's the *Heloniopsis*:



*Heloniopsis orientalis*

Jim McKenney

For an image of *Ypsilandra*, see:  
[http://www.pvcnargs.org/ypsilandra\\_thibetica%20gb.htm](http://www.pvcnargs.org/ypsilandra_thibetica%20gb.htm)  
Jim McKenney

### *Oxalis depressa*



*Oxalis depressa*

Jim McKenney

I've known about this south African species since the early 1960s; back then it was widely known as *Oxalis inops*. It has not been tried in the open garden here; is it hardy enough to winter successfully here? In a cold frame it's no problem, but remember that it's a summer grower and needs plenty of moisture and light during the summer. So get them out of the cold frame and into the open for the summer. The first burst of bloom is heavy, and then individual flowers trickle in all summer. The bulbs are tiny, not much bigger than a kernel of un-popped popcorn, and they move around a bit underground. So planting in a screen container is a good idea if you want to keep track of it.

*Oxalis* is a big genus, and there is a subspecies of bulb collector who focuses on these plants in their considerable variety. The greatest interest and variety are to be found in the southern hemisphere species which are not hardy here as garden plants. But they are easily housed in pots; and since they are small, even a collection of a couple of dozen species does not take much room. The individual flowers are sometimes brilliantly colored and some are fragrant. Many are worth collecting for their foliage: the typical chauthary of species such as the familiar Mexican *O. deppei* undergoes many variations among the other species.

Oxalis are dicots, not monocots, so it might come as a surprise to learn that some of them grow from true bulbs. Almost all of the plants we gardeners think of as "bulbs" are monocots. Cyclamen are also dicots (related to primroses of all things) and although they do not grow from

true bulbs, they too are frequently listed in "bulb" catalogs.

Back in the old days when a standard education included a brush with Latin and maybe even Greek or Hebrew, the well read gardener knew to pronounce the word oxalis with the stress on the first syllable. Many were no doubt not above gently ribbing their less well read gardening friends when they seemed to be talking about their ox named Alice. Jim McKenney

### Two winter savories

I read about herbs widely and use an extensive array in my kitchen. Thanks to ongoing infusions from the various thriving local ethnic communities there is always more to learn and new sorts to try. On the other hand, there is one herb which has a long tradition in European usage but which I have not tried – and for which I can't off the top of my head think of one instance of its use in Anglophone recipes. That herb is savory, or rather the savories: there is a summer savory, botanically *Satureja hortensis*, and the winter savory, *Satureja montana*. Note that what looks like the letter j in these names is not the English letter j, but rather the glide/semivowel form of the Latin letter i (the glide is pronounced like the English ya). The pronunciation sa-tu-RAY-ya is suggested.

It's the winter savory which is the subject of this piece. I'm surprised that more rock gardeners don't grow it: it's a small evergreen shrublet in the style of the more robust thymes. I've got two forms in the garden now, the typical form distributed by herb growers and something much more interesting called *S. montana* "creeping winter". This might be *S. montana illyrica*, also seen listed as *S. montana* 'Illyrica', *S. montana repens*, *S. montana repanda*, *S. montana nana*. At first glance this one looks like *Phlox subulata*. It's tidy and neat and should eventually produce blue labiate flowers.

If it turns out to be a disappointment, I can always eat it. How? The German name gives a clue: they call it *das Bohnenkraut* (from the words for bean and herb). To me, the leaves taste of black pepper, but black pepper without the usual anise overtones. Jim McKenney

Here's what they currently look like in my garden:



*Satureja montana* Jim McKenney



*Satureja montana* “creeping winter” Jim McKenney

### On the masthead

On the masthead for this issue are images of the buckeye butterfly *Junonia coenia* and the Mexican irid *Tigridia pavonia*.

Buckeyes have been particularly abundant for the last few weeks on big bushes of the hybrid, clonal basil called *Ocimum* ‘African Blue’. The other day I counted at least a dozen (they move as you count them) on one plant. This species is easily approached and admired close up.

*Tigridia pavonia* is an old garden plant: it is illustrated in the Elizabethan edition of Gerard’s *Herball* of 1597 as “*flos tigris*”, although it is doubtful that Gerard actually ever saw one. I would like to know when it was introduced to Europe by the Spanish from Mexico. That Spanish connection is probably responsible for a misunderstanding prevalent in the English speaking world: its old botanical Latin name was *flos tigris*, which the English evidently understood as a reference to the tiger. Over the centuries more than one wit has commented that tigers have stripes, not spots. But the seeming discrepancy lies in the meaning of the Spanish *El Tigre*: that is their name for what we call the jaguar, and jaguars are definitely spotted, not striped. Thus I call it the Jaguar Flower, not the Tiger Flower. Jim McKenney

## NARGS NEWS

Book Reviewers Wanted  
for NARGS Book of the Month  
Look on the NARGS website, under wiki, to see examples.  
You do not have to buy the book.  
Please contact: [bettyannespar@aol.com](mailto:bettyannespar@aol.com) for more information

Nominees Wanted  
Potomac Valley Chapter

Did you know that NARGS sponsors a chapter Award for Service? The award is given to a NARGS member "for distinguished service and devotion" to the Chapter.

1. A nomination may be written up by any member of the chapter. The nomination should go to the chapter chair and describe specifically what the nominee has done for the chapter over the years.

2. The chapter chair requests a second of the nomination from the Chapter Board.

3. The chair sends the approved nomination to Bobby Ward, the Executive Secretary [nargs@nc.rr.com](mailto:nargs@nc.rr.com) (with a copy to me: [bettyannespar@aol.com](mailto:bettyannespar@aol.com))

4. Bobby Ward will send a copy of the Award for Service, signed by the NARGS president, to the chapter chair for presentation. Bobby will also pass on the nomination information to the Editor of the NARGS Quarterly, Malcolm McGregor, who will publish it in the Bulletin Board section.

Betty Anne Spar  
Chair, NARGS Awards Committee  
[bettyannespar@aol.com](mailto:bettyannespar@aol.com)

**Other events, these sponsored by the Four Seasons Garden Club. These should be of keen interest to our members.**

These three will be at the auditorium at **Brookside Gardens**:

(1) **Pamela Harper** will be speaking to us on **Monday evening, November 5**, at seven thirty PM (come at seven and schmooze) in the auditorium of the Visitor Center. Pamela is a magnificent speaker, and her garden in Seaford, Virginia, has been a place of pilgrimage for gardeners all up and down the East Coast for thirty plus years.

(Incidentally, the Four Seasons will be journeying down to the **Pinkham garden in Carrollton, VA on Saturday November 3<sup>rd</sup>**; that tour starts at one PM; we are also invited to see Pamela's garden, which is only about five miles off the direct route to the Pinkham garden, in the morning.)

Pamela will be speaking on the Harland Hand garden, in El Cerrito, CA. Imagine half an acre on a steep slope, essentially a rock garden - except that the stones are concrete - with a magnificent collection of specimens.

(2) In **February, Wednesday February Greg Tepper**, Director of Horticulture at Mt. Cuba, will speak to us, on 'Rare and Unique Plants of the Piedmont', with an emphasis on the how-tos of siting and growing them. Again, this will be schmooze at seven, speaker at seven thirty, at Brookside. Greg has lectured around the US and in Britain, and comes highly recommended.

(3) In **March Panayoti Kelaidis** will speak to us on Thursday March 14 at 7 P.M. The topic has yet to be chosen.

Due to the nature of the Brookside venue we may not charge admission for the lectures, but we may collect membership dues. So we are limiting these lectures (as opposed to our normal meetings) to paid up members of the Four Seasons. Dues are \$15 a year for a single person, \$25 for a couple. We suggest a "package deal" membership of \$22, which will run the last half of 2012 (including the Plant Exchange on Oct 27) and all of 2013. If a person can't make the

Harper lecture, they may simply join the Four Seasons at the normal rate in January. The fees are well worth it; we have a meeting one week night a month (except December, too much going on with the holidays), and we try to have one weekend day Outing a month. For what it's worth, the projected February Outing will be spectacular—an overnight trip to Montrose and at least one or two other hort destinations in the Triangle area of North Carolina.

This announcement is necessarily brief; announcements providing full details and directions to all events will be on the Four Seasons list serve well in advance. If one can find one's way to Brookside Gardens, membership may also be paid at the door; but we suggest that you are missing out on a lot in this last half of 2012 by waiting.

Contact [jdronenburg@ssa-i.org](mailto:jdronenburg@ssa-i.org) and I will zap you the membership form.

The September meeting, 9/27, is Dr. Gary Carver from the American Chestnut Foundation, on the American Chestnut.

Second September meeting tentatively scheduled for 9/12, Al Hirsh lecturing on cold hardiness.

The September Outing is restricted to 25 people. It is an all day four garden tour in NW and Glen Echo on 9/16. The September garden tour is restricted to members, it starts at 12:30 at Phil Mc Clain's, then to one of his clients' gardens, then the Shimizu garden in Glen Echo, then Barbara Katz' garden (and her neighbors') and there will be food and drink at Barbara's for which interested participants can kick in \$5... advance notice required.

Second September Outing, participation @ Green Spring sale, 9/22 NOTE there will be camellias...also things from the Garden Rescue.

October meeting TBD

October Outing is a plant exchange 10/27 sat Knoxville MD

Dec Outing—Holiday Party, date TBD, Mike Cassidy's, Alexandria.

## **Officers, Committee Chairs and Board of Directors 2011**

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**Vice President Tricia Goins** – [purplefan24@cox.net](mailto:purplefan24@cox.net)

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

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

