



Lilium grayi

Chris Herbstritt

Potomac Valley Chapter
North American Rock
Garden Society
PVC Bulletin
September 2013



Lilium canadense

Sarah Strickler

Jim McKenney, Editor jimmckenney@jimmckenney.com
<http://www.pvcnargs.org/>

**You can pay your dues by sending your check for \$15 (payable to PVC Rock Garden Society)
to Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22207 4pvctreas@gmail.com**

**Calendar
2013**

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

Coffee/Tea and donuts will be provided at meetings

September 7, Saturday, 10 A.M. Tour of Green Spring Gardens led by intern Heather Hare and horticulturist Judy Zatsick. We'll hear about what Heather has been up to in the rock garden, what the plans are for the future, a bit about propagation, and we'll get an overall tour of Green Spring Gardens. PVC helped fund Heather's internship. While traditional rock garden plants may not be active in September, we can see what else does well under rock garden conditions. We have a tentative date for Judy to give us a presentation on the Green Spring rock garden next spring after she has seen the garden through a full year.

September 21 Fall Plant Exchange, at the home of Kevin & Marla McIntosh, 4225 Blue Barrow Rd, Ellicott City, MD

September 28, Saturday, Parkfairfax Native Plant Sale 9 A.M. -2 P.M. See www.ParkfairfaxNativePlantSale.org

October 22, Tuesday evening, 7 P.M. NARGS Eastern Speaker, J Ian Young, Scottish plantsman and artist. "Inspired to rock", McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean, VA 22101 703-790-0123. Ian will share the gardens and places which inspired him to grow rock garden plants and show us how he has interpreted them in his garden.

November 2, Saturday, Members' Meeting and Election of Officers; US National Arboretum classroom, off the main lobby in the newly renovated Administration Building, 3501 New York Ave NE, Washington, D.C. Members are welcome to bring images to share.

November 17, Sunday, Trough Workshop, 12:30 P.M. -2:30 P.M. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd, Alexandria, VA 703-642-5173. Create and take home a 14" trough; info about soil mixes and planting included. We need a minimum of 8 participants, maximum of 18. RSVP to Margot Ellis, 4pvctreas@gmail.com Cost: \$55 payable

to PVC Rock Garden Society (\$35 for program, \$20 for materials). Mail to Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St, Arlington, VA 22207. GS contact: Susan Eggerton, Susan.Eggerton@fairfaxcounty.gov

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

Chairman's Message

Since the summer season is 'quiet' so far as PVC activities are concerned this message will be brief.

In keeping with the noted schedule for election of officers, I 'selected' three members to serve as the Nominating Committee. They accepted and the Board approved. So, the Nominating Committee consists of Thornton Burnet, Jr. (Chair) and members Sharon Washburn plus Jane Collins.

Two of our PVC members and family attended the Mason-Dixon picnic and thoroughly enjoyed themselves in Churchill, Maryland.

Please pay careful attention to Sarah Strickler's notices concerning events since the next two activities, the trip to the rock garden at Greenspring and the Fall plant exchange at the McIntosh home, occur BEFORE the next meeting. So, make SURE they are on your calendars.

Have a good rest of the summer - it has been a pretty good one plant wise.

Dick Hammerschlag
President/Chairman, PVC

NARGS Seed Exchange

I hope your gardens are doing well this year and they are generating lots of seeds that you can share with your fellow NARGS members through the seed exchange. Donating seeds from just 5 different kinds of plants will give you DONOR status, which allows you to request an additional 10 packets of seeds during the first round. Donor status also allows your order to be

filled before non-donors, which will give you a better chance at your first choice (and rarer items). You'll find instructions for collecting, saving, and sending seeds on the NARGS website: <https://www.nargs.org/seed-donation-instructions>.

We're also looking for U.S. chapters or individuals to repack seeds into glassine envelopes. This is an important part of the seed exchange. You'll receive seeds around Thanksgiving and must return them by December 31st.

If you need a printed version of the seed list or want to volunteer for seed repacking, please contact me at: <mmm10@cornell.edu>.

Happy gardening,
BZ Marranta
Seed Exchange Director
9056 County Road 142
Interlaken, NY 14847
USA
Email: mmm10@cornell.edu

Alpine Elf sighting!



Harry Dewey by Susan Rountree

A rare public appearance by the original Alpine-Elf and one of our former editors: Harry Dewey at Behnkes in June, 2013 - with thanks to Susan Rountree for taking and sharing this picture.

Fadens receive Millstream Award



Photo Sarah Strickler

They received the Millstream - Unique Garden Award from NARGS for 2013. The title of the award tells it all: "The Expanding Garden", was nominated by James A. McKenney and Seconded by 6 members of PVC (Lively-Diebold, Hammerschlag, Nicolson, Mazaitis, Strickler,vEllis); Spar (special mention).

Red bell season

Clematis texensis, *C. glaucophylla*, *Lilium grayi*, *Lilium canadense*.

Because of their height, the four plants mentioned here have only dubious claims to being rock garden plants. But of all gardeners, it's likely to be someone from the rock garden world who takes an interest in these plants. Gardens are full of hybrid clematis and lilies, but you're not likely to mistake these plants for hybrids. You might not even recognize the two clematis as members of that group. These four plants are wild plants, and they share that economy of structure which so often distinguishes wild plants from garden hybrids. They have the delicacy, grace and drawn out poise which are rarely captured in hybrids.

The two clematis are much alike, so much so that I'm not really sure how to tell them apart. Here's what my plants look like: the upper image shows *Clematis glaucophylla*, the lower picture shows, left to right, *Clematis texensis*, *Clematis* 'Betty Corning', and another flower of the *Clematis glaucophylla* shown above.





In books, *Clematis texensis* is usually distinguished by its red flowers, but in wild populations the blooms vary in color. *C. glaucophylla*, in the form I grow, is almost the same color as my plant of *C. texensis*. My *C. glaucophylla* is from a Tennessee population; wild *C. texensis* is confined to Texas. The natural distribution of the two species is separated by hundreds of miles.

If you Google *Clematis texensis*, right away you will encounter one of those annoying ambiguities which flourishes in the nomenclature of cultivated plants. For instance, the hybrid clematis ‘Duchess of Albany’ is often cited as *Clematis texensis* ‘Duchess of Albany’. This is, to put it bluntly, wrong. ‘Duchess of Albany’ is a hybrid; only one of its parents was *Clematis texensis*.

If you grow *Clematis glaucophylla* and the true *Clematis texensis*, don’t be surprised if your gardening friends are puzzled by what they are. Although they are vines, they are vines which die back each winter; their sparse, angular growth and rounded, leaden and glaucous foliage hardly suggests that of the typical clematis hybrid.

The two lilies are among my favorites, and kudos to both Chris and Sarah for growing these often difficult plants. *Lilium canadense* still persists in the far outer suburbs; *Lilium grayi* is confined to far southern Virginia, adjacent North Carolina and Tennessee. Neither has ever been a common plant in local gardens, and a well grown *Lilium grayi* is widely regarded among lily enthusiasts as a bit of a trophy plant: Chris is off to a good start with this one. The red form of *Lilium canadense* grown by Sarah is probably originally from eastern West Virginia or nearby southern Virginia: in that area *Lilium canadense* and *L. grayi* seem to be in a species-like relationship. Hikers along the Appalachian Trail

south of Blacksburg sometimes find plants with characteristics which make their specific identity ambiguous. Asa Gray himself, for whom *Lilium grayi* is named, expressed doubts about keeping them as separate species.

People who grow hybrid garden lilies rarely attempt to grow the native lilies, and when they do, they typically encounter quick failure. The sort of conditions which will give hybrid garden lilies the sharp elbows they need to succeed on the show bench will have an opposite effect on these native lilies. If you want to give them a try, start them off in a mixture of pine bark chips and grit – don’t even think of planting them in dirt.

The interconnectedness of things

This piece is largely off-topic, at least in the sense that little of it deals directly with rock gardening as most of us practice it. But those of you who lead a rich gardening life, a life which includes books, especially old books, might find it familiar. For decades I’ve been fascinated by the life and work of Karl Foerster (1874-1970), the twentieth century German horticulturist who, along with Camillo Schneider, founded the magazine *Gartenschönheit* in 1919. Before the Second World War, Foerster’s work was well known in the United States and his magazine was evidently well subscribed here (well for a foreign language publication). Back issues sometimes turn up on the lists of antiquarian book sellers, even here in the United States. The publication remained healthy through the 1930s, but by the early 1940s it was reduced to a few sheets per issue before folding for good. Foerster himself survived the war years, but the postwar division of Germany found him on the wrong side of the wall: this man, now regarded as one of the greatest horticulturists of the twentieth century, lived the last twenty-five years of his life in relative obscurity virtually unknown to the younger generation of gardeners in the west.

Here’s the link to a short biography of Foerster:

<http://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/kfoerst.htm>

Unknown by name, that is: two things kept some aspects of Foerster’s work well before the American public. In 1937 Macmillan published what must have been one of the best coffee table books of garden illustrations of the time. No less a celebrity than Louise Beebe Wilder wrote the essays introducing each of the four traditional

seasons and the captions for the illustrations. This work was published under the name *The Garden in Color*. With the date in mind, it's no surprise that nowhere in the text is the source of the illustrations given: many, perhaps all, were drawn from the pages of Foerster's *Gartenschönheit*.

Louise Beebe Wilder died in 1938 (she was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1878, a few years after Foerster), and some of the captions in *The Garden in Color* have an indecisive quality which suggests that they might have been written by someone else, someone less well informed, or that Wilder experienced a sharp decline as she finished work on the book. But her text is otherwise wonderful, and a copy of the book is never far from my easy grasp. When the gardening world I live in begins to roil again, I reach for *The Garden in Color* in an attempt to reestablish a sense of clarity, calm and order.

Foerster's influence is familiar to most of us in a way of which most of us are not aware: when Wolfgang Oehme arrived here in the Washington, D.C. area, he brought first-hand experience of the Foerster tradition with him.

And his influence is evident in another way: Google Karl Foerster and you will get loads of hits on a grass named for him: *Calamagrostis* × *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'. Take a walk around town and it won't be long before you will encounter the grass itself.

Recently I ran across this image in the July 1931 edition of *Gartenschönheit*:



The plant illustrated is probably *Colchicum variegatum*. That's what caught my eye. But as I examined the surrounding text, I was puzzled. I could make out – or so I thought – a word or two, but I could not help but wonder: is this really meant to be read? I scanned it and sent it off to a German-speaking friend. Her reply opened some new doors for me: the seeming scribbles are an example of a long hand writing system in use in Germany from the time of its development in the very early twentieth century until it was proscribed in the early 1940s. Most Germans who entered the education system since that time cannot read this script. That she was able to read it was due to a serendipitous event in her life. My friend had an uncle whose mother still used this script, and she taught my friend (this was decades ago) how to read it. My friend provided this transliteration into modern German Antiqua:

Herbstzeitlose und Herbstkrokus werden im Juli - August verpflanzt und blühen im September - Oktober.

Or, in English:

Colchicum and autumn crocus are to be planted in July - August, and they bloom in September - October.

Well, there is nothing exciting there, but there is more to the story. If you want to learn more about this particular script, Google "Sütterlin" and also check out the Wikipedia entries for the centuries-long battle between Fraktur and Antiqua fonts. Out of this I learned something else new: long ago I had been taught to type a word such as Sütterlin as Suetterlin if using a typewriter which did not have the ü. The same rule applied to the other vowels when they had the umlaut (¨). But why insert the letter "e"? As it turns out, in the family of longhand scripts of which Sütterlin is a member, the letter e was written as two vertical parallel bars with an oblique line connecting them near the top. If you are following this, look for examples in the second letter of the first and third words in the script surrounding the image. In longhand, a tiny longhand German script e was placed over the vowel in question, but it was typically written as something like "e", and eventually became the two little dots which are now used in German when an Antiqua font is in use. So, that's in part the story of the umlaut.

But there's more, and now things take a horticultural turn. My friend mentioned that she was born in Baden-Baden, and she remembered how many beautiful gardens there were there. I asked her if she had ever heard of Max Leichtlin. Somewhere I read of Leichtlin being the guy to whom other serious horticulturists of the time sent plants which no one else could grow. Leichtlin was based in Baden-Baden, and we still grow plants which passed through his hands. For instance, he named *Lilium hansonii* (and how a lily from far eastern Asia came to be named by a German for someone from Brooklyn, New York will have to be another story) , and another lily, *Lilium leichtlinii*, is named for him. I grow a handsome, tall *Crocasmia* hybrid named 'Castle Ward Late' which was named by Leichtlin in the 1890s, and I once had a colchicum he introduced.

I've wandered a bit, haven't I? But that's the way it is with gardening, isn't it? Plants are only a part of it.

Cyclamen graecum

How many of you still have your *Cyclamen graecum* from John Lonsdale's big distribution in 2010? From the photo I took that day, it seems that at least everyone got at least one plant, and the ambidextrous few were balancing two and maybe three. Here's one of my plants, in bloom now:



Cyclamen graecum

Jim McKenney

I hope the rest of you still have healthy plants.

Lycoris "aurea" of commerce

When I was growing up, I had a keen interest in the genus *Lycoris*. But the pickings were very

slim back then. "Everyone" had the old hybrid known as *squamigera*, many had *Lycoris radiata* (still being sold as *Nerine sarniensis*!), and a few sharp-eyed types had noticed that some of the plants making the rounds as *squamigera* had flowers with a startlingly beautiful blue stain on the tepals. These of course were *L. sprengeri*, one of the purported parents of *squamigera*. Specialist lists of the time offered a few others, typically named as species but actually in most cases hybrids.

Thanks to the efforts of, primarily, Jim Waddick the *Lycoris* floodgates began to open about fifteen or so years ago. *Lycoris chinensis* and *L. longituba*, formerly all but unknown in amateur circles, suddenly became easily available.

A half century ago Sam Caldwell was hybridizing lycorises with success. One does not hear much about these hybrid lycorises raised in our country, but there are lots of them. Take a look at the Plants Delight site to see the amazing selection assembled by Tony Avent. He has more than 400 named selections.

But even now, for most persons taking an interest in these plants, the dreary selections offered in mass distribution catalogs are all most of us ever encounter. And one of these, the plant or plants offered as *Lycoris aurea*, is very tempting. Keep in mind that it is not likely to be hardy here.

Until very recently, yellow flowered winter hardy *Lycoris* were all but unknown. Although as far as I know there is no local tradition associated with the plant I'm about to mention, a hardy yellow flowered *Lycoris* grew in one Washington D.C. area garden about a half century ago. It had been introduced from China by a missionary sometime in the 1930s; a piece of this plant eventually came to be grown in the home garden of a prominent Department of Agriculture employee. As far as I know, the plant was still there when he died and his property was sold. For me, the trail goes dead there: I've asked around, but I have yet to meet anyone who can add more to the story. The point is, those in the know were aware of hardy yellow-flowered *Lycoris* over a half century ago. Whatever that plant was, it was not one of the plants called *Lycoris aurea*.

In commerce, the name *Lycoris aurea* has been used for at least two different plants. One has

very broad (for a *Lycoris*) dark green foliage with a glaucous finish. By dark green, I mean dark like mature liriopse foliage. The other has lighter green foliage. The flowers of both, at least as I've known them, are cadmium yellow. One of these might be the plant known as *Lycoris traubii*, the other the true *Lycoris aurea*.

If you are looking for a garden hardy yellow *Lycoris* look elsewhere. The foliage of these mass market yellow *Lycoris* winter kills in our climate. The bulbs might survive for a few more years, getting weaker yearly, but you are unlikely to see flowers. Here I grow it in a cold frame, and it does well.



Lycoris as "aurea"

Jim McKenney

Heads-up, rare bulb enthusiasts

Those of you who purchased bulbs from Jane McGary in the past will be glad to know that to some extent that tradition is being continued. Mark Akimoff has established a small nursery liberally seeded with material from Jane. Jane recently moved from the country (plenty of space) to the city (much less space) and as far as I know has discontinued her excess bulb distributions.

Let's hope Mark can grow his nursery over the years and continue to offer plants vetted by Jane.

Mark announced his fall 2013 offerings on September 1, 2013. You can see his current list here:

www.illaherarebulbs.blogspot.com

Don't delay ordering – competition is keen for some items, and he sells out quickly.

NARGS We are off and running on a new year ahead with a new website (not quite ready for primetime, but being tweaked daily). Any problems encountered should be sent by e:mail from the site. Response is fairly rapid. The most fun is rereading some of the old Bulletins. The last 3 issues are available to members only. Earlier issues are free to nonmembers. The Western Study Weekend is due to be held on Vancouver Island in February or March 2104. That chapter hosted one two years ago, and it was wonderfully received. Our general annual meeting WILL BE held in Sante Fe NM in September. (no specific weekend yet). Three day pre and three day post trip will be offered. No, you can't do both trips. We are expecting a record turnout. This is a new gung ho chapter and they are very excited.

More importantly Adventure Travel has agreed to work with NARGS to put on at least one or two trips per year, reasonably priced and reasonably walked, in various areas of the USA. A trip is being put together for early June in the Sierra Nevada. Stay tuned for more information. Yes, you DO have to be a NARGS member to go on a trip. Another great benefit of belonging. www.nargs.org for a household membership at \$30.00.

Betty Spar

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