



The Dodecatheon

Volume 42, Number 5
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Newsletter of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society

Inside this issue:

Earliest Bulbs of Spring.....	33 & 36
The Chair's Corner.....	34
Fall Chapter Plant Sale.....	35
In Memoriam Bob Stamper.....	37
Pick Out Some Plants to Buy.....	38
Upcoming Meetings	39
Looking Ahead.....	40

The Earliest Bulbs of Spring Betty Mackey

Have you ever seen a lawn in March that is completely purple with countless crocuses? Or a hillside twinkling with a million white and green snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) or yellow winter aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*)? These horticultural achievements are easier than it looks because Mother Nature is doing most of the work. It just takes time, the right bulb choices for your location, and a light hand with the lawn mower. The smallest flowering bulbs tend to make the best early spring flowering carpets by seeding around and multiplying naturally year after year.

If such a sight is your goal, fall is the time to take action by planting the first group of bulbs. Think about where you will see them so early in the year, when most of us stay indoors. The spot should be sunny in late winter and spring.

Plant the smaller spring bulbs in October or November. Daffodils prefer September planting, and tulips are forgiving and can be planted as late as the end of November. Water well and fertilize as you plant. Mulch them; this helps keep the soil from overheating and also prevents mud splashes on the flowers.

Bulbs are sold in stores and by online dealers. Knowledgeable vendors handle them carefully and do not let them overheat or freeze.

A bulb (or a corm or tuber) is more than a seed. Though small, it is nature's storage unit -- a living plant surviving harsh conditions by going into this dormant phase. Conveniently enough its food is in the bulb. Many such plants originate in parts of the world where the ground is rocky, summers are hot, and winters are cold. They are primed to grow when conditions are favorable and ready to survive everything else, underground, waiting for the right time. Most of them need good drainage to avoid rotting but their other wants are few. Sloping ground and sandy soil help with drainage.

I asked bulb specialist Becky Heath (www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com) about good choices for a naturalized blanket of the smaller flowering bulbs. "Don't call them minor bulbs," she said. "Call them special."

Recommended Reading:

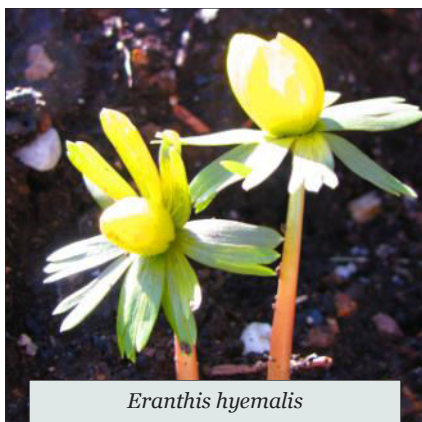
The Plant Finder's Guide to Early Bulbs by Rod Leeds. Great information leading to success with early spring bulbs. 192 pages and over 100 color pictures.

Brent and Becky's Bulbs

7900 Daffodil Lane, Gloucester, VA 23061

Web Site:

www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com



Eranthis hyemalis



The Dodecatheon

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For membership info, the latest program changes and bad weather cancellations check out our web site: www.dvcnargs.org

We do send out email notices from time to time between issues of The Dodecatheon to those who have given us email addresses.

Please check your email address in the membership list and if it is wrong, send us the right one! If you don't have email and want a phone call on these notices, give us a call and we'll put you on a phone list.

Chuck Ulmann, Membership Secretary
ulmann@msn.com, 610-431-2511

The Chair's Corner

Last month I went to Newfoundland for the annual NARGS meeting and for a post-conference tour of northwestern Newfoundland. These events were inspiring. We heard excellent talks. We saw an outstanding garden: the Botanical Garden of Memorial University of Newfoundland. It has extensive rock gardens, an alpine house, and some nice wild areas. In northwestern Newfoundland we saw wonderful wildflowers, such as hundreds of showy lady's slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*) and thousands of yellow lady's slippers (*Cypripedium parviflorum*). We saw—growing wild—classic rock garden plants that unfortunately are ungrowable here in the mid-Atlantic: *Kalmia* (syn. *Loiseleuria*) *procumbens*, *Diapensia lapponica*, *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, cute arctic willows, and more. We saw caribou, whales, and icebergs.

At these NARGS events I met a lot of interesting people. As you've no doubt noticed from our chapter, NARGS attracts people with a wide range of expertise. The same thing is true of the NARGS members I've met at annual meetings and study weekends. Talking with NARGS members in Newfoundland yielded some great conversations and some useful information (such as learning of an organization that runs a lot of plant trips in western US). I also gained a fresh set of ideas for my garden.

Next spring, NARGS will be coming to us when our chapter hosts the 2019 study weekend (May 3-5). We can look forward to meeting an interesting and informed group of people.

The study weekend is our chance to show the NARGS community our region's best in terms of speakers, gardens, and natural areas. I'm looking forward to showing NARGS what we can do. We're reviving a feature that hasn't been seen at national meeting in a while: a plant show. For members of our chapter, this means a chance to display a different set of plants than at our regular chapter plant show (the study weekend show will be almost a month later in the year). Start thinking about which plants that will be in their prime in early May so that you can enter them in the show.

The study weekend is coming about because of the hard work of the organizers, Chuck Ulmann and Jerry Rifkin. The event is going to need your help. Read the call for volunteers on page 39 of this issue—and then let the volunteer coordinator, Jill Evans, know that you're available.

Janet Novak



Left: *Meconopsis* (Himalayan blue poppy) at the botanical garden in St. John's, Newfoundland

Right: *Kalmia procumbens* (alpine azalea) at Burnt Cape in northwestern Newfoundland

See page 37 for an additional special photo of *Cypripedium reginae*

Fall Plant Sale at Robbins Park

Saturday, September 8, 2018, 10:00 AM

DONORS Check In 8:30-9:30 AM

Our Fall Plant Sale is coming up; with all the rain, our plants have grown well and there should be plenty to share. Plan to bring your potted and labeled plant donations (they do not have to be large) and also buy some new plants for your garden.

Our plant sales are special benefits of belonging to our chapter. Members may bring guests. As fundraisers, the sales are important, providing funds for our speakers and for renting our meeting rooms. The plants are very reasonably priced, starting at just a dollar, and are suited to our climate. Our silent auction plants are legendary. The more participation there is, the better for us all.

Alert! If attendance seems very low, I have made up a large sign to post by the road in order to invite passersby to shop at our sale. I don't want to resort to that, though! I had the sign with me last year but our results were good without it, so it stayed hidden in my car.

This plant sale is one of our main fundraisers, so please be generous and donate plants or troughs for the regular tables and our silent auction. Of course we need plant shoppers too. It is possible to go home with miniature hostas, rare primulas, dianthus, sedums of many sorts, native plants, and much more. In this Dode, several members have submitted a listing of the plants they will be bringing. See you in September!

-- Betty Mackey, Chair

We need helpers and refreshments. To volunteer (table setup, pricing, plant check in, plant carriers, checkout, etc.), contact Betty Mackey: (610) 971-9409; bettymackey440@gmail.com. Please help!

Directions to Robbins Park, 1419 Butler Pike, Ambler PA 19002

From PA Turnpike exit #26 (Ft. Washington), take Route 309 N toward Ambler. Exit at Susquehanna Ave. From ramp turn LEFT and go to light at Butler Pike. Turn RIGHT onto Butler Pike and proceed for 2 or 3 minutes to Robbins Park on the left - across from Temple U. Ambler Campus.

Coming from the north on Route 309, you must use a different exit: Exit at Ambler/Butler Pike. From ramp turn LEFT onto Butler Pike and Robbins will be only about 600' on the left.

Chapter Plant Sale Rules

Only members and their guests can purchase plants. You may join DVC-NARGS the day of the sale.

Come early to donate plants. Plants will be accepted for donor credit between 8:30 and 9:30 AM.

Plants must have a white label with the botanical name of the plant on one side and donor's name or initials on the other side.

Donors are entitled to select up to five first choice plants, one for every ten plants donated, and are allowed several minutes to do this before non-donors are allowed to start shopping. Members pay for their first choice plants.

One new plant label will be given for each plant. Replacement pots will be given if possible. You may purchase additional white plant labels for 5 cents each from Sharee Solow or her assistant at the Pot Shop.

Plants of exceptional rarity, quality, or size are welcomed for the silent auction; extra donor credits will be given.

No diseased, insect infested or invasive spreaders will be accepted. See the DVC website for a list of invasive plants for the Delaware Valley area.

After pricing, plants must be left where they were placed. Members who move plants to a different table will be asked to leave the sale. Picking up a plant to read the label and putting it back in approximately the same position on the table is allowed.

The sale will start at 10:00 AM sharp. At this time donors will be given 5 minutes to select their first choice plant or plants. The sale area will then be opened to all paid-up members of the DVC-NARGS and guests.

After all plants are paid for from the donor and general rounds, the Sale Chairperson may discount any remaining plants at his or her discretion.

The Earliest Bulbs of Spring, continued from page 33

She says that the original species are the most likely to spread in a natural way, and that many areas near the paths through gardens at Winterthur are examples of how to allow this to happen effectively. Snowdrops are deer proof, in the same family as daffodils, which also help repel pests. Both can be interplanted with other kinds of bulbs.

Bright blue *Scilla siberica* and yellow *Crocus chrysanthus* are also good species to try. Start with a lot of bulbs to get things going and make a splash. Plant them in the right spot and then leave them alone. She thinks that some gardeners are just too neat.

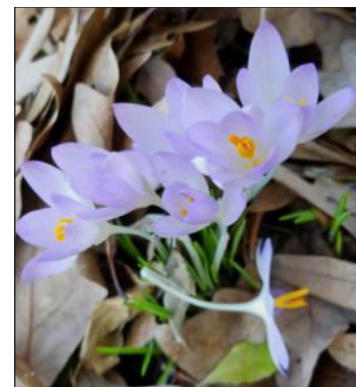
Not me. I have a well-drained, sloping front yard and for about twenty years I've let the area below the dogwood fill in with yellow winter aconite, stems of starlike blue *Chionodoxa luciliae* (glory of the snow) and blue and white *Anemone blanda*. The fresh seeds drop and roll farther and farther down the hill. I bought the starter bulbs and corms years ago and rarely add more. I look forward to the thick bash of small blooms every March. Then I let the flowers go to seed and the foliage (fortunately it is very short) turn yellow before mowing the area. I do the same with snowdrops. My sister, who is not a gardener, calls them dewdrops.

These small plants are rooted about four inches deep so they are not hard to dig up and move around with a small, slim spade. But it is easiest to pick the seeds when they are ripe (some of the pods start popping open) and just throw them around in nearby areas. The winter aconites come up the next year looking like tiny little green fans but the others look more like short blades of onion grass. Freshly picked bulb seed has better and faster germination than what you can get from a packet from a seed exchange or supplier.

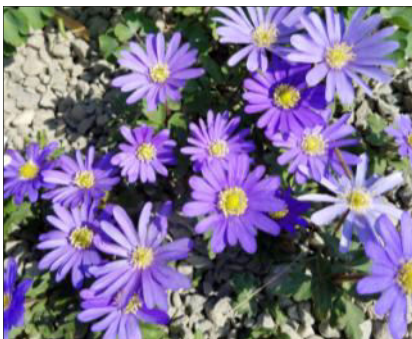
Things are a little different with larger daffodils and tulips. They take a lot longer to grow from seed and I hardly ever try this although I am nuts about seeds. Instead, I deadhead the plants to keep the seeds from developing. That sends the energy into developing bigger or more bulbs for next year. If your bulbs grow all foliage and few flowers, carefully divide them in spring (a spading fork is best) when foliage fades and replant immediately in richer soil and at improved spacing.

Tall, yellowing bulb foliage is a problem, so interplant tulips and daffodils with hostas or perennial flowers. Don't braid or cut the ripening foliage if you want flowers the following year. For truly perfect tulips plant new ones each fall. However, small species tulips such as *Tulipa saxatilis* 'Lilac Wonder' tend to multiply and return.

The earliest daffodil I know is 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation'. It has a two-toned yellow flower and grows about a foot high. A friend brought it to a rock garden society meeting in January. It blooms even in the snow. It is a rare treat to see its flowers in the garden several weeks before snowdrops and crocuses show their foliage.



Clockwise from upper right: two pictures of species crocus; Grape Hyacinth and *Narcissus*; *Galanthus nivalis* mix; *Anemone blanda*.



Right:
Hundreds
of plants of
Cypripedium
reginae
(showy
lady's slip-
per) grow
along the
main high-
way north
of Deer
Lake, New-
foundland.



In Memoriam

Dr. W. Robert Stamper

On July 27, 2018, our Chapter lost a long-standing and very valued member. Bob Stamper passed rather suddenly having been in good health until June of this year, according to his wife of 55 years, Christiane. Besides his wife, he is survived by two sons, Christopher (Lorrie) their daughters Allie and Grace; Richard (Lisa Marie) their children Jacob, Emma and Zachary, and a sister, Barbara Brown and husband Edgar.

At his memorial service on August 11th, many friends and family members remembered him primarily as a teacher. They stood and paid tribute to his never-ending quest for education and knowledge, but at the same time his compassion and humanity. He started by teaching biology, science and chemistry for over 40 years at local high schools, retiring after 20 years as an Adjunct Professor at Muhlenberg College.

Bob enjoyed world travel and had literally traveled over the entire planet. When he gave a lecture to our group, and there were many of them, it was always a learning experience based on one of these travel destinations. I always looked forward to them.

Some of the surprising facts (maybe not so surprising) I learned about Bob: He had a Masters in Biology and a Doctorate in Zoology from Penn State; he was a finalist for NASA's Teacher in Space program; he won the National Biology Teacher of the Year award in 1974; he was a musician (choir director, played piano and violin); he dabbled in pottery and mystery writing; he was an avid photographer and birder. Many of us remember his workshop on those fantastic mosaic-covered recycled bowling ball garden ornaments.

We were fortunate to have him as a member of our Chapter for a number of years, but he was also a long-time member of the Rhododendron Society and of many local garden clubs. Gardening was a labor of love in addition to a passion, as evidenced by his most beautiful garden in Old Zionsville, which he and Christiane lovingly tended until their move to Tel Hai in Honeybrook where they started a scaled-down version..

We will all miss him.

Joan Haas

PICK OUT SOME PLANTS TO BUY!!

The Plants listed on this page will be for sale at the Fall Plant Sale on September 8th at Robbins Park, along with many others. These are the only two members who were able to get a list together in time for the publication of this newsletter. So look them over, look them up if necessary, and be prepared to fall in love with some new plants!

Janet Novak:

Adlumia fungosa

Aethionema saxatilis

Agapanthus 'Midnight Blue'

Arabis procurrens

Campanula hoffmanii

Carex 'Beatlemania'

Corydalis sempervirens

Draba ramosissima

Epimedium x omeiense

Festuca abbreviata

Globularia repens 'Zander'

Hakonechloa macra 'All Gold'

Limonium minutum

Penstemon 'Elfin Pink'

Penstemon hirsutus 'Pygmaeus'

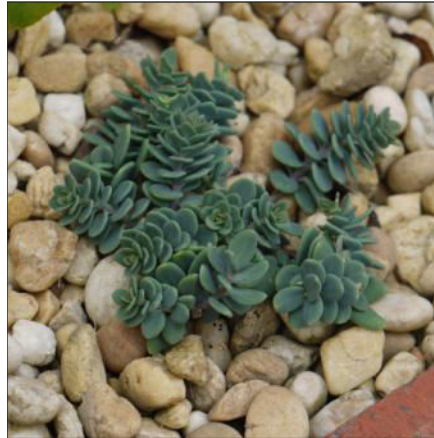
Sedum album 'Coral Carpet'

Sedum dasyphyllum 'Love & Tangles'

Sempervivum cvs.

Speirantha convallarioides

Spiranthes odorata



Janet's plants: Top: *Aethionema saxatilis*;
Middle: *Spiranthes odorata*



Joan's plant: *Tricyrtis hirta* (white)

Joan Haas:

Aethionema Warley Rose

Alyssum oxycarpum

Amelanchier canadensis

Aquilegia alpina

Aquilegia flabellata v. *pumila*

Calycanthus floridus Athens

Campanula poscharskyana

Campylotropis macrocarpa

Ceratostigma plumbaginoides

Cercis canadensis

Chimonanthus praecox Luteus

Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus

Clematis heracleifolia China Purple

Clematis integrifolia

Delosperma cooperi

Dianthus gratianopolitanus

Dianthus Karlik

Dracocephalum ruyschianum

Fibigia clypeata

Hovenia dulcis

Indigofera amblyantha

Indigofera pseudotinctoria Rose Carpet

Iris ensata

Iris setosa dwarf

Iris sibirica dwarf

Iris sp. (seed from dwarf bearded *Iris*)

Kirengeshoma palmata

Leptodermis oblonga

Oenothera macrocarpa ssp. *incana*

Pardancanda norrisii

Penstemon pinifolius

Phuopsis stylosa

Primula Candelabra Series

Primula veris

Pulsatilla vulgaris

Saponaria ocyroides

Silene flos-cuculi (dwf. Congested form)

Tricyrtis hirta (white)

Ungnadia speciosa

Veronica austriaca ssp. *teucrium*

Veronica gentianoides

Veronica prostrata Nestor

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Chapter Meeting with NARGS Traveling Speaker

Vojtech Holubec “Tian Shan” and “China”

October 6 at 10 AM—Plymouth Community Center

Vojtech Holubec at Plymouth Community Center on October 6, 2018 at 10:00 AM. A native of Prague, Czech Republic, Vojtech is an agricultural botanist and plant geneticist by education. He is the head of the Czech Gene Bank where he is engaged in projects on wild relatives of crop research and conservation. He has been interested in alpinism and botany since he was 11. When he was 16, Vojtech joined a group of gardeners starting the Rock Garden Club of Prague. Next, Norman Singer (then NARGS President) and he started corresponding.



He has published several books: *The Caucasus and Its Flowers* (2006); *Tian Shan* (2018); and *Rock Gardens and Their Construction* (1992). He was awarded the 2010 Lyttel Trophy by the Alpine Garden Society.

Holubec will present two lectures: 1) Tian Shan; 2) China (Yunnan, Sechuan, Quinhai). This may cause the meeting to run longer than usual. If you feel it is necessary, you should bring along a little snack to hold you over.

NARGS STUDY WEEKEND MAY 3-5, 2019

Next May we play host to a wonderful NARGS Spring Study Weekend, **Rooted in Diversity**. We will need some volunteers. Yes, the committee has been working on this for a while. Speakers are signed up and tours are arranged. The cost for the conference is \$425 per person.

The main event is taking place on May 3rd, 4th, and 5th. There is a two-day pre-trip that will take place May 2nd and 3rd. Pre-trip participants will go to Shenk's Ferry and environs on Thursday and to the Pine Barrens of New Jersey on Friday. The cost for the pre-trip is \$190 per person. This does not include overnight stays, breakfast, or dinner.

Our meeting location is the Sheraton Great Valley Hotel in Frazer, PA at 707 East Lancaster Avenue (Route 30). Participants can get the conference rate of \$119 per night plus tax.

Our official events begin on Friday with registration, plant show check in and judging, the plant sale with many great vendors and our own booth, the book sale, dinner, and lectures. On Saturday there is breakfast and a bus trip to private gardens plus Mt. Cuba Center, with lunch at Mt. Cuba. Later in the day we have the plant show, plant sale, happy hour, dinner, and lectures. Then on Sunday we begin with a breakfast buffet and have the final plant sale, lectures, and announcements. There will also be local private gardens open on Friday morning and early afternoon as well as on Sunday afternoon after the meeting closes.

We are expecting 100 to 125 people, and we need people to register attendees when they arrive, help them find their way around, help with the plant sale and the plant show, and be guides on the buses.

The two day pre meeting trip will also need help including van drivers for the two days, a chase car etc.

We expect volunteers to be registered participants at this wonderful event so you can participate in all the exciting activities.

Jill Evans will be our coordinator for volunteers. If you are interested in helping us please email her at jwevans2@hotmail.com (Please put NARGS Study Weekend in your subject line so your email will not go into Jill's junk mail) or call her at 610.279.9762 between 9 AM and 10 PM.

Jerry Rifkin & Chuck Ulmann – Spring Meeting Co-Chairs

Looking Ahead

Delaware Valley Chapter NARGS

Meetings and Activities

September 8: Chapter Fall Plant Sale (Robbins Park)

October 6 : Lectures (2) by Vojtech Holubec. Topic #1
Tian Shan, Topic #2 China (Plymouth Community
Center)

November 10: Speaker & Topic TBA (Plymouth Com-
munity Center)

December 8: Holiday Luncheon, Speaker & Topic to be
announced at Overbrook Golf Club, Radnor.

January 12: Show & Tell 10 AM (Plymouth Community
Center)

*Check The Dodecatheon and the DVC/NARGS website
(www.dvcnargs.org) for details before each meeting. Pro-
gram Chair: Lyudmyla Berestetska,
l16vostok@yahoo.com*

**NO NEW MEMBERS TO ANNOUNCE
FOR THIS TIME PERIOD.**

URGENT REQUEST FOR PHOTOS

Margaret Bowditch has made a request that members who have taken pictures of past Chapter Flower Shows send copies to her to be included in the NARGS article she is writing prior to our Study Weekend Plant Show in May 2019. Please e-mail pictures to Margaret, mpbowditch@aol.com ASAP.

Plymouth Township Community Center

(October 6 meeting) 2910 Jolly Road, Plymouth Meeting, PA
19462 www.plymouthcommunitycenter.org

From Pennsylvania Turnpike I-276

Take Exit 333 (Norristown, old exit 25). At the end of the ramp, turn left onto Plymouth Road. At the light, turn right onto Germantown Pike West. Continue approximately 1 mile, through 4 traffic lights (not counting the left turn light at Sandy Hill Road). At the fifth light, turn right onto Jolly Road. The Community Center is on the right.

From the Blue Route (I-476)

Take exit for Germantown Pike West (Exit 20). Continue on Germantown Pike west for 1.3 miles, through 5 traffic lights (not counting the left turn light at Sandy Hill Road). At the fifth light, turn right onto Jolly Road. The Community Center is on the right.