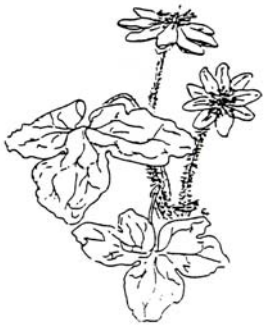


Newsletter

North American Rock Garden Society
Berkshire Chapter November 2006

Next Meeting

Saturday, November 18, at 11:30 AM
Berkshire South Regional Community Center, located at the end of Crissey Road, off Route 7 (Stockbridge Road) in Great Barrington.
Directions can be found at:
http://www.berkshiresouth.org/directions.html

Chapter Business: This meeting is our **Annual Luncheon Meeting**, and we will focus on the interpersonal and the culinary during the run-up to the program itself. This meal is a POTLUCK, so please contact Dean Evans about your food contributions.

Program

C. Colston Burrell
Hellebores – An American Passion

Cole Burrell is a garden designer, photographer, naturalist and award-winning author. He gardens on 10 wild acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Charlottesville, VA, where he grows natives and the best plants of the global garden. He is principal of Native Landscape Design and Restoration, which specializes in blending nature and culture through artistic design. His latest book, Hellebores: A Comprehensive Guide, coauthored with Judith Knott Tyler, was released in April 2006.

Cole is a contributing editor for Horticulture, and he writes regularly for Fine Gardening, Landscape Architecture, American Gardener and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. He lectures internationally on topics of design, plants and ecology, and is also a lecturer in the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Virginia.

Chairman's Message – 6/15/06

By Peter F. George

The Hellebore (pictured above) has a particular significance for me. When I joined BNARGS in 1996 I was not really a gardener at all. I maintained a small vegetable garden, and every year I tried, with modest success, to prune some fruit trees that came with my house. So for me, rock gardening was my first serious venture into gardening of any kind, and my focus remained entirely on the plants we generally categorize as 'rock garden plants.' A few years ago, 3 years after our 2 horses passed on of old age, my wife decided that we had better clear our increasingly overgrown pastures of the crabapples and bittersweet that were rather quickly swallowing them up. And as we started that project, I began to consider what I would do with the new bounty of woodland and pasture that I would have once we had done the hard work. My wife loves grass, and I knew that she would try to return the 2 ½ acres to pasture, but I was committed to getting at least some of it converted to a woodland garden. But I really knew nothing about woodlands and the plants that find their home there, so the programs we've had on ferns, *Epimedium*, *Trillium* and the numerous other plants which grow best in a woodland setting have been a huge resource for me. The Hellebore, a plant I barely even knew

existed a few years ago, now has a powerful attraction for me, so I'm particularly excited about our program in November. I anticipate filling a large part of my woodland with these oddly beautiful plants. My first love is still the rock garden, and I always seem to migrate to one of mine when I'm relaxing in the afternoon, but I am giving a good deal of attention to these new interests, and anxious to learn much more.

In some ways my horticultural duality is *the* conundrum for NARGS and it's North American chapters. These local chapters are increasingly populated by a sizable number of gardeners whose main interest in not 'rock gardening' and increasingly these people are choosing NOT to belong to the national organization. If the trend continues, we will not only be faced with diminishing membership at the chapter level, but dramatically reduced membership in the national organization. I have no answers, but it is certainly an issue we all ought to mull over if we want the benefits like the seed exchange to continue and expand.

This is the final newsletter of 2006. Our final meeting of the year, the November 18 Hellebore program, should be a tremendous culmination to a very successful year for us. Membership is up, the challenges of finding members to fill the 'Positions of Responsibility' have been met with surprising ease, and I'm finally figuring out what the job of Chairman actually entails. I expect next year to be a more interesting year for us, one filled with varied and interesting programs, designed to give all of our members something special. Contributions to the newsletter continue to come in almost automatically, and if that trend continues, my job as editor will diminish to simply laying out the newsletter, writing a few words now and then, and emailing the copy to the printer. That WOULD be nice!

Finally, I must thank Dean Evans for continuing to be the 'The Indispensable Man.' I simply cannot describe the nightmares I have once or twice a month where Dean simply disappears and I actually have to run the projector, open the building, and do all of the other essential but 'behind the scenes' kind of things Dean excels at. So Thank You Dean, once again.

I expect to see most of you on November 18, and please bring something to eat or drink. Email either Dean or me to tell what you're bringing and *if* you're coming.

See You Next Month In Great Barrington.

Winter Plant Protection

I've tried a number of methods to store plants for the winter. I need to do this because I grow so many seedlings in pots, and have to carry them over till Spring. Most rock gardeners only need one or two seedlings of a given plant species. Their rock gardening is akin to collecting stamps. I prefer to plant more than one seedling so that I can select out the best specimen, due to the variability in seed. I also eliminate less desirable members of a given plant family.

I have used an unheated crawl space and cellar in the house I own across the road from where I live, with varying degrees of success. One problem I had was with mice. I had to make frequent inspections of spring-type mousetraps in order to keep them baited,

otherwise the mice would climb onto the top of the pots and dig down to devour the plant's roots. Another problem concerned temperature. I covered the pots with hemlock boughs to keep them frozen and unaffected by occasional warmer temperatures.

This method required carrying heavy pots in and out of the cellar. I used a 10' length of skatewheel conveyor to get the pots into and out of the crawl space. These conveyors were discarded by grocery stores when their orders began to come on pallets

instead of in individual cardboard boxes. I set the pot on a small piece of plywood and rolled it along the conveyor but it still was a big job. For the last three years I have used trenches, plunging the pots. This alternative method offers a number of benefits: less handling, no watering, and the trench can be filled with compost in the spring to create an improved, enriched vegetable garden row for the growing season. I used my Troy-Bilt rototiller to loosen the soil. I then shovel the soil out, placing it on each side of the trench. This soil is then used to back fill around the lined-up pots. This year I plan to wait until November to back fill, and use horse manure instead of soil. I then will cover the top of the pots with hemlock boughs before December. Presumably the mice will have found a home for the winter and leave the pots alone. By placing a car hood from my supply on some low cement blocks, covering a group of mice traps, I have been able to catch the strays. I use cheddar cheese and crocus bulbs as bait. Crocus bulbs are marked down significantly at the end of the planting period. They don't have to be high-quality bulbs, and can be kept fresh and appetizing by storing in damp sand or peat moss. Voles, deer mice, and moles love their taste, obviously. If you tip over a piece of tin roof that has been left on the ground, there will be mole runs underneath and possibly any one of the three creatures will run out. They are eating the grass roots. This indicated to me their vulnerability and gave me the idea of making them feel safe by using the car hood-covered traps. Plants are very vulnerable in their dormant winter state. They offer the only reliable winter food source, other than seed from bird feeders, for the rodents.

Snow cover is a rock garden's blanket, so don't pack the snow down by walking through your garden. Have a good winter.

Dutch Uncle Dean

October 14, 2006
Meeting Notes

Chairman Peter George welcomed about 35 members to the penultimate meeting of our Chapter for 2006. There was a good deal of positive feedback regarding the color newsletter. Peter announced that the transition to color was made possible through a generous donation by Geoffrey Charlesworth. Whether by pen or pocketbook, Geoffrey has continuously contributed a great deal to making the newsletter an informative, entertaining, valuable, and now, colorful resource.

Elisabeth Zander requested volunteers for help in fulfilling our Chapters pledge to help with packaging seed for the seed exchange. Interested members have several options to do their part – host a seed-packing party, attend one of these working parties or packaging seed solo at home. Many hands make light work so please contact Elisabeth.

Show & Tell

More often than not Nick Nickou arrives at our meetings with a branch or stem of some exotic plant gets everyone all atwitter and this past meeting was no exception. The treasure in this case was an elegant arching stem of a Japanese plant, *Rabdosia japonica*. This herbaceous member of the mint family sports slender, rather tubular, lavender purple flowers in October. There is a complete botanical description of the plant at the Flora of Japan web site, (www.foj.info) where it is listed as *Isodon japonica*. Asiatica nursery offers a few equally desirable selections of another species, *Rabdosia logituba*. Mark McDonough showed three different fall-blooming Allium, all with affinity to *A. thunbergii*. Amongst them was the fairly well known compact selection 'Ozawa' which is almost invariably offered as a cultivar of *A. thunbergii*. As Mark pointed it out due to its more open inflorescence it is perhaps more appropriately relegated to being a form of *A. chinense*. The other two were *A. tacquetii* and *A. scauliferum*. All three were donated for auction – thanks Mark.

Peter George showed the type of label that he has found to be long lasting, readable and fairly inexpensive. Using a Brother label maker (there are several models with various features) he produces adhesive, laminated labels on which the plant name is printed. These are then stuck on zinc labels purchased from Eon Industries, Inc. (P.O. Box 11, 107 W. Maple Street, Liberty Center, OH 43532 or www.eonindustries.com). After 6-8 years the labels are still readable and intact. As a follow-up to his article, Dean Evans displayed a drip irrigation system that is both fairly easy to assemble and cost effective.

Jane McGary provided us with both morning and afternoon programs speaking on a topic about which she is not only very enthusiastic, but also very knowledgeable and experienced – bulbs. In her Zone 8 Oregon garden at 1,600' she grows an astounding array of bulbs, or perhaps more appropriately, geophytes. This term encompasses all plants that exist for part of each year as dormant, underground fleshy storage organs such as tubers, corms, rhizomes and, of course, true bulbs, among others. To better control different aspects of the growing environment she grows a tremendous number of bulbs in unheated bulb frames. The bulbs are potted in a mix made up of 2 parts sharp sand: 1 part pumice: 1 sieved leaf mold in either unglazed clay pots or plastic mesh pots like the type used for aquatic plants. For bulbs planted in the open garden she suggested planting deeper than generally recommended. Her slide-illustrated talk in the morning and the afternoon show and tell/ question and answer session were filled with images of fantastic plants and a wealth of information and practical tips derived from years of dedication and hands on experience. She recommended a few books:

Bulbs of North America, 2001, Timber Press – a NARGS publication available from the NARGS book service
Bulbs, Random House, Phillips and Rix – a great resource, particularly for Old World Bulbs
Growing Bulbs, Martyn Rix – excellent cultural information
Editor's Note: following is Jane McGary's slide list from her Oct. 14 program. The Chairman forgot to bring it to the meeting. Her email address is: *janemcgary@earthlink.net*
and she welcomes questions.

Exploring Unusual Bulbs

1-5. Bulb frames
6. Colchicum autumnale 'Alboplenum'
7. Colchicum szovitsii
8. Colchicum cupanii
9. Colchicum hungaricum
10. Colchicum minutum
11. Crocus speciosus
12. Crocus banaticus 'Albus'
13. Crocus biflorus ssp. melantherus
14. Crocus moabiticus
15. Crocus hermoneus
16. Crocus pulchellus 'Inspiration'
17. Crocus leichtlinii
18. Crocus gargaricus
19. Crocus biflorus ssp. pseudonubigena
20. Sternbergia sicula
21. Sternbergia graeberana
22. Narcissus cantabricus
23. Narcissus romieuxii
24. Narcissus cantabricus x romieuxii
25. Narcissus bulbocodium ssp. pallidus
26. N. bulbocodium ssp. obesus
27. Narcissus rupicola
28. N. calcicola
29. N. watieri
30. N. jacetanus
31. N. alpestris, N. pseudonarcissus types
32. N. scaberulus
33. Fritillaria affinis green
34. F. affinis 'Wayne Roderick'
35. F. eastwoodiae
36. F. striata
37. F. rixii
38. F. euboica
39. Fritillaria tubiformis
40. F. tubiformis
41. F. rhodocanakis
42. F. obliqua
43. F. montana
44. F. pyrenaica
45. F. messanensis ssp. gracilis
46. F. pinardii
47. F. kittaniae
48. F. bithynica
48a. Fritillaria bithynica

49. F. involucrata
50. F. graeca (or F. mutabilis)
51. F. crassifolia ssp. kurdica
52. F. forbesii and F. kotschyana
53. F. stenanthera
54. F. bucharica
55. F. arriana
56. F. persica
57. Iris stolonifera 'Zwanenburg Beauty'
58. Iris 'Vaga Compacta' (Regeliocyclus hybrid)
59. I. bucharica
60. I. 'Sindpers'
61. I. warleyensis
62. I. hoogiana 'White Fall'
63. I. paradoxa 'Choschab'
64. I. reticulata, wild type
65. I. 'Frank Elder'
66. Bellevalia pycnantha
67. Scilla lingulata
68. Scilla ramburei
69. Muscari chalusicum
70. Muscari macrocarpum
71. Chionodoxa tmolii
72. Hyacinthella dalmatica
73. Hyacinthoides reverchonii
74. Erythronium multiscapoideum & Calochortus tolmiei
75. Erythronium helenae
76. Erythronium citrinum
77. E. oreganum x hendersonii
78. Calochortus amabilis
79. C. venustus
80. Lomatium minus
81. Dodecatheon clevelandii
82. Lewisia brachycalyx
83. Ornithogalum sp.
84. Ornithogalum reverchonii
85. Ornithogalum fimbriatum
86. Leucojum trichophyllum
87. L. trichophyllum *pink form*
88. Cyclamen mirabile
89. Cyclamen pseudibericum
90. Asphodelus acaulis
91.Tulipa 'Lilliput'
92. Romulea bulbocodium ssp. clusiana
93. Anemone blanda 'Radar'
94. Anemone palmata
95. Nomocharis aperta
96. Cardiocrinum giganteum
97. Notholirion thomsonianum
98. Babiana disticha
99. Gladiolus tristis
100. Tecophilaea cyanocrocus and Narcissus pachybolbus
101. Alstroemeria pallida
102. Alstroemeria patagonica
103. Alstroemeria kingii
104. Tropaeolum brachyceras
105. Rhodophiala bagnoldii
106. Leucocoryne coquimbensis
107. Leucocoryne ixioides
108. Zephyra elegans
109. Aristolochia chilensis
110. Pabellonia incrassata
111. Leontochir ovallei
112. Cyclamen creticum
113. Crocus sieberi
114. Tulipa bakeri
115. Tulipa saxatilis
116. Tulipa cretica
117. Sternbergia candida

Sources

Janis Ruksans Bulb Nursery, Box 2, P.O. Rozula, LV-4250 Cesis Distr., Latvia; janis.bulb@hawk.lv
Telos Rare Bulbs, PO Box 4147, Arcata, CA 95518; rarebulbs@cox.net
Jim & Jenny Archibald, 'Bryn Collen', Ffostrasol, Llandysul, SA44 5SB, Wales, UK; www.jjaseeds.com
Pacific Rim Native Plants, 44305 Old Orchard Rd., Chilliwack, BC V2R 1A9, Canada; paige@hillkeep.ca (North American agent for Antoine Hoog)

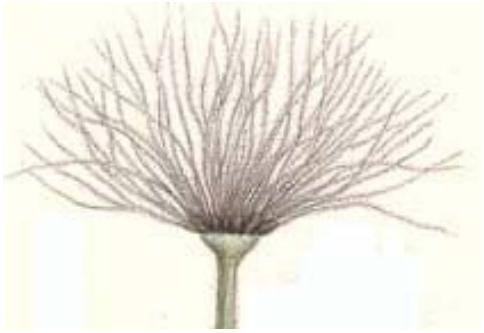
Overwintering Potted Plants

By Erica Schumacher

For overwintering plants in pots, I highly recommend a plunge bed. This consists of a sand bed in which the plants can be placed by sinking the pots into the sand

up to the rim of each pot. I added "play sand" to a cold frame to create my plunge bed. To protect the plants from heavy snow or ice, the plunge bed is covered with a screen during the winter months. Since a picture is worth many words, here's a photograph of my plants nicely tucked away for a long winter's rest.

Seed Exchange Volunteer Time



Growing from seed brings your garden a host of rare and unusual plants from the four corners of the earth. A benefit of NARGS is the fantastic yearly seed exchange (over 4500 entries from many temperate areas) for members only. Each member may donate seed - wild collected or garden-variety rock garden plant. Then for a small nominal fee, donors get 35 packets; non-donors get 25. Volunteers get moved to the head of the line at fulfillment time. This year the BNARGS fulfills its three-year responsibility to national NARGS by packaging seed for SEED EXCHANGE 2006/2007. We are volunteers! We had two years to learn, but never fear. If you do not know how to package, we will demonstrate for you.

We need your help during December, usually the second half. There are several options- packaging parties to taking home seed to package. Please let me know if you can captain an area (stage a few days of packaging parties), attend one, or take some home. We are signed up for 2,000 entries, about double from last year. We all had a good time at packaging parties last year. Make time for this important task. It is not difficult. All hands are needed.
Give me a call at 860.307.7345, or email at canbya@gmail.com and let me know how you will help.

Elisabeth Zander

Fall Means Time To Start Gardening

By Matt Mattus

I have a friend who moans whenever the first cold front pushes through signaling the end of summer. But for me, the end of summer doesn't represent the end of gardening at all, but instead it signals the start of an entirely new season. Since Peter George asked members to write about how they are closing up their gardens for the winter, I can't help but think of the beginning of this season as opening up an entirely new gardening season.

I grow potted bulbs, alpines and other little collections in a glass greenhouse 24 x 30 feet in Worcester MA, and the first blast of cold arctic air around Labor day triggers many of the bulb plants in my collection to start their growing season. The many pots that have either been dry and dormant for most of the hot summer, or have been repotted, are given a good soak with the hose. The first to start growing are the Oxalis species from South Africa. I have around thirty species, and each year, a few really decide to over perform.

This year, since we have remained somewhat frost-free until the end of October, I moved many of the South African plants outdoors so that they could enjoy as much of the direct fall sunshine as possible. The result have been plants with a denser character, even though I have a single pane glass greenhouse, the direct sun is brighter, and the character of some of the

Oxalis this season is significantly tighter and more in character to what one would find in South Africa. As an experiment, I kept some *Oxalis heptaphylla* in the greenhouse, and outside just to see the difference. The pots that we're outside have nice tight buns of foliage, and are half the size of the indoor plants, but the pink blossoms are more intensely colored.

Nerine sarniensis we're also moved outdoors to begin growing, and the flower stems we're stronger and the jewel like color, for which they are known for, is all the better for it. This nice extended autumn also allowed me to move collections of *Lachanalia, Morea, Lapierousia, Babiana*, and other South African bulbs outside. Keeping a daily eye on the weather channel allowed me to get the maximum direct light before imminent frost warning arrived.

On the glass greenhouse, and the alpine house, the shade cloth is removed around the middle of October. By this time, the *Cyclamen* are up and blooming led by *C. africanum* and *C. graecum*. The *Cyclamen* spend their summer under shade cloth, but are moved to a sand bed at the back of the greenhouse, where they receive better light, yet no direct sun due to an Acacia tree that shades them. Speaking of which, that reminds me of the chores of the season, such as pruning the Acacia growth that extended out of the roof vents this year.

Exhibition *Chrysanthemums* that we're grown outdoors in pots all summer, are staked, disbudded and ready to bloom around this time, but since peak bloom for these giant Japanese spiders, Incurves, recurs, standards, cascades and mini bonsai mums doesn't occur until near the first of November, they must find space in the glass house, always prime property at this time of year. After blooming, I could cut them back, and place them under the benches, but I toss them. Cuttings are inexpensive enough every June via mail order.

Once the shade cloth is removed, one can see all of the glass panes which have slipped and either fallen into the raised sand bulb bed which runs along the long eastern side of the greenhouse, or have fallen and smashed into the raised rock garden, along the western side. Regardless, a full weekend is required to have glass cut and ladders strategically placed inside the greenhouse where we can maneuver up to the ceiling and reposition glass.

The small alpine house, a tiny twinwall annex only 10 feet by 6 feet, is kept open until snowfall. It is unheated, and some side panels I keep removed until snow risks blowing in. Until frost threatens, I keep winter growing narcissus in one bench, where they will remain until frost, and then they are relocated to the glass house where they will begin blooming around November. *Primula allionii* and Show *Auricula* are on the other two benches, where they will stay all winter. The cooler weather triggers the *Primula* to start leaf growth again, and I treat them with a fertilizer boost of 0-0-10 to stimulate bud formation. These raised sand beds also need to be kept moist. Weekly turning of the pots keep the plants uniform and weekly checks for insect damage to the rootstock becomes the only chore here.

Naturally, moving tubs of plants back into the greenhouse is another task that just always seems to always catch me by surprise, even though it is inevitable. My guess is that it is in the nature of the gardener to wait until the last moment, that one evening when we run out with sheets to cover a huge potted gardenia because it is too heavy, or to strain ones back wheeling large clay tubs back into the protection of the greenhouse.

I don't know why, but once everything is jammed back into the greenhouse, it suddenly feels alive again.

The air seems fresher, and full of life, the scents are more noticeable and the entire atmosphere becomes rich with scents and life, similar to walking in the woods immediately after a July thunderstorm. Fall is indeed not the end of a gardening season, but the start of a new one.

Partnering With Plants, *Part 2*

Carol and I joined the CT Chapter of the American Rock Garden Society in 1969 or 1970. At that time the CT Chapter had quite a large membership and being very social, we attended quite a few get-togethers. As you might imagine, many members really liked their liquor. Carol and I got to calling it the 'crocked garden society.' We participated in several Winter Study Weekends and plant shows. We had a lot of fun at these events and really miss many of the members from that period who have since passed on.

1962 was the year I joined Durolite Inc., the family business founded by my father Hans. The 'business' was making coiled heating elements – they look like springs but they're not. The business was located on Allen Street in Hartford. That summer was so hot we decided to look for a place outside the city. The next year we purchased the old schoolhouse from Hitchcock Chair Co. (now defunct). A couple of years later we sold our house in West Granby, and in 1966 we moved to larger acreage in West Hartland, only 2 miles from work! Think of the mileage saved and the aggravation we've avoided in 40 years.

So Carol and I have spent the last 40 years clearing and developing the property. The rhododendrons that I had originally intended as understory plants with our very acid soil became my obsession. My association with folks like Nick Nickou, Gus Mehlquist and Fred Serbin fostered my interest in species rhodies that has persisted through the years.

As many of you know, England and Scotland are the places to go to see plants, especially rhododendrons and rock gardens. I met Howard Pfeiffer in 1970 and in '74 we took our first trip together to England, Scotland and Wales; we were fortunate to have been able to visit the rock gardens at Edinburgh Botanical Gardens before and after the re-do. What a treat! Nick and I visited the much more mature rock gardens in 1996. Fantastic! The rhodies weren't bad either. Howard and I did seal trips together in the next twenty years. We visited Newfoundland, Colorado, New Mexico, Alaska and the Mohave Desert together. One thing I must say about Alaska; the pipeline really did a lot of good. Wherever the soil was disturbed you can see a lot of wildflowers, but most especially lots of dwarf willows. Unfortunately, most of them won't live here. Willows from Newfoundland grow much better in Connecticut.

Cliff Desch and I met in the early '70s. We've done quite a bit of traveling together including Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, Newfoundland, Colorado and most recently, South Carolina. I still have *Juniperus horizontalis* growing along my driveway that we collected as a cutting in Newfoundland in 1990.

Magnolias were always of interest to me and I joined

the Magnolia Society in 1972. One might thin that there are only a few species but in actuality there are over 250 species, with more waiting to be discovered.

The Berkshire Chapter of NARGS has been an inspiration to me. One of the highlights of my association with the Chapter was hosting the National Meeting in 1994. I've been to several annual meetings but that was one good one. The gardens we visited were all very good but the gardens of Norman Singer and Geoffrey Charlesworth were really something special. This Chapter is blessed with so many good gardens and good gardeners; Anne Spiegel, Ruth Sheppard, Dean Evans, John Spain, Robin Magowan, are only a few of the people whose gardens Carol and I have visited. If I left YOU out it must have been a senior moment.

Elliot Jessen

The Many Faces Of Aster Ericoides:
A Tall Weed, A Stunning Perennial, A Rock Garden Gem

The autumn season has me fixating again upon a favorite group of plants, the New England asters. I use the term "New England aster" in a loosely prescribed regional sense because asters present themselves as such a prominent feature of the late summer and autumn New England flora, yet most species have widespread distribution throughout eastern North America, or further afield. One that I admire, even in its weedier state, is the *white heath aster* or ***A. ericoides***. Unfortunately, the restless taxonomic-upheavalists are at it again, splitting the American members of the genus Aster asunder, so we now must now call this simple aster, *Symphyotrichum ericoides*. For this article, I will stick with Aster as the more familiar genus name.

In the common weedy state of this aster, it's a tall, upright growing affair with stiff, sparsely foliaged, wand-like stems to 3' tall. The upper third of the stems are branched, the sprigs nearly at right angles to the stem, producing myriad tiny white daisies. The foliage among the flowering sprigs is very small, narrow, somewhat needle-like, and often reduced to bracts, allowing full focus on the little flowers. In typical forms of heath aster, the general effect is that of a tall plant, open and too sparsely branched, and the small white flowers so inconsequentially produced, to be of much ornamental value. However, like many asters, *Aster ericoides* is extremely diverse genetically, and it's possible among any large population of plants to spot highly desirable individuals.

A superior manifestation of heath aster, not too infrequently found, is one in which the branching inflorescences are densely branched and closely spaced, forming stiff triangular countenances, clothed with pure white flowers so numerous and congested that established plants in flower give the distinct impression of a fine leafless *Astilbe*. Such forms, if they become available, are eminently desirable for the perennial border or wildflower garden. I recently gathered a rooted side-shoot off such a form, the plant growing within a busy highway interchange in Nashua, New Hampshire where it escaped the highway mowing regime.

I saved the best for last. Few realize there is a prostrate form of heath aster, recorded from Missouri, Wisconsin, and several other central plains states. It has been assigned the name of *Aster ericoides var. prostratus* (also listed as *A. ericoides f. prostratus),* although I've yet to research the formal taxonomic disposition of these names. While described as a midwestern variety, such prostrate forms are also known to occur in Massachusetts and elsewhere, thus flat-growing forms are evidently part of the broad genetic diversity of this species.

Over the last few years, I've viewed a prostrate form of heath aster growing at the Garden In The Woods, the well known display gardens in Framingham, Massachusetts, part of the new England Wild Flower Society. Up until this year, I had never seen this plant in flower before; the summer-long concise prostrate foliage fooling some people into thinking they're looking at a dwarf juniper! The first week of October 2006, I visited the gardens with a group of Landscape Architects from my office, and inspected a 6-foot wide patch of this aster. Their specimens only grow 1-2 inches tall, presenting a virtual carpet of white bloom so that no foliage or stems show, luring so many bees that I didn't dare to venture a sniff of the

flowers. There could hardly be a better candidate for the late rock garden, yet no one knows about this spectacular form. We'll have to work on that.

There is a cultivar of the dwarf phase of this species available commercially, known varyingly as *Aster ericoides var. prostratus 'Snow Flurry'* or *forma prostratus 'Snow Flurry'*. Judging from photos on the internet, this selection grows only 4"-6" tall, worthy of any rock garden, but definitely taller than the mat-forming gem at the Garden In The Woods. I recommended to the Garden In The Woods staff that they name and introduce their special carpeting form of heath aster, as they've done with other unique plant selections. Negotiations are underway!

Mark McDonough
http://www.plantbuzz.com

PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES

There are still a lot of you who have not paid either your Chapter dues or your dues to NARGS. I really hate the idea of *not* sending you the newsletter, but at some point I have to stop, so PLEASE send your dues to the appropriate person. For our Chapter, it's Jeff Hurtig, and for NARGS it's Jacques Mommens. *Thanks.*

Coming Attractions

January 19-21 2007, the Genesee Chapter of NARGS will be hosting the **2007 Winter Study Weekend**. The subject is 'Evolution of a Rock Garden,' and the speakers include Gwen Kelaidis, Bill Mathis, Tim Gruner, Nicola Ripley, Carl Heilman ll, Rex Murfitt, Henrik Zetterlund, and Mike Shadrack. In addition to these excellent speakers the weekend will include early arrival tours, workshops, members slide shows, raffles, outstanding vendors, and meals with a local flair! The event will be held at the **Hyatt Regency Hotel, Rochester NY.**
As always, NARGS provides a stipend to members who have never attended either a regional or national event, so please contact the Chairman for more information.
http://www.gvcnargs.org/
The Western Study Weekend is scheduled for March 2-4 in San Mateo, CA. The program is still in a formative stage, but you can go to http://www.nargs.org/meet/meetings.html for updates.

An Easy Plant

Some rock garden plants are actually quite easy to grow, and won't take over the garden. One of the more interesting ones, one that blooms in the fall when there isn't that much blooming, *is Orostachys aggregeatum*. The picture below was taken about 2 weeks ago in my Dad's (Peter George) garden by a friend, and it's still blooming today, Oct. 21. When I looked it up, I discovered that it is certainly an *Orostachys*, but the rest of the name is quite confused and confusing. I found several different spellings of the name of this plant, and it has even been confused with another *Orostachys*, *O. iwarenge*. *Orostachys* seems to be a genus that needs some attention, but the bottom line is that this plant has rather simple needs.

This plant is native to Japan, but it is quite hardy, and is doing well in an open area in North Central MA, a solid zone 5. So give it sun, good soil which drains well, and leave it alone. It goes dormant in the winter, but in the spring the tiny rosettes fill out, and soon send out runners in all directions which root and form new rosettes. In the late summer, the flower stalks starts to grow, and they eventually get about 3 inches long. Bees and butterflies love the stalks, since they are covered with tiny individual flowers, sometimes numbering 100 or more, and on warm fall days are covered by bees moving slowly from flower to flower. The flowering rosettes die, but the offsets keep the plant alive and growing for the next season. Since I'm

a beginner at rock gardening, it's nice to start out with something that I know will be here in the spring, ready to grow and bloom.

Rachel Flowers

ODYSSEY BULBS

Odyssey Bulbs began as quite a few small businesses do – because of a lack felt by its founder (whose identity you may have guessed by now). U.S. sources of geophytic delights such as spring-blooming *Colchicums* and fall-blooming *Crocuses* and *Lachenalias* and *Veltheimias* were few or none, which definitely raised the question: why should Great Britain have Paul Christian and Potterton & Martin and Monocot Nursery et. al., while this entire continent had little or nothing of the kind? So Odyssey Bulbs was born, its first catalog (fall 2000) featuring colchicums grown in Oregon and a farrago of other uncommon and choice bulbs, rhizomes, tubers, and corms from the Dutch broker and grower Hoog & Dix. Today it offers an even wider variety of geophytes from its own nursery and from a far-flung network of growers (most of them a significant improvement on the Dutch bulb machine). *Colchicums* (30 or more species and hybrids), "species" *Crocuses* (both spring- and fall-blooming), *Corydali*, *Alliums*, species *Tulips*, *Juno* irises, the egregiously slandered genus *Ornithogalum*, *Cyclamens*, *Lachenalias*, *Narcissi*, and many other rare treasures figure prominently in its catalog. You can find the catalog online (the fall 2007 edition will post in the next two or three months) at www.odysseybulbs.com, or you may call Russell (508-335-8106), who will be happy to see that you receive a free printed 2007 catalog, should one appear (this year it was web-only). In fact, he will hand-deliver it to you. Berkshire Chapter membership has its rewards.

Russell Stafford

Page 1, *Helleborus x hybridus*, from Hellebores, A Comprehensive Guide
Page 2, Meadow Vole
Page 3, Deer Mouse; *Rabdosia japonica*, http://www.shanhua.org/plant/chunxing/images/picjj5lru4u.jpg
Page 5, *Scilla linulata*, Jane McGary; *Crocus mathewii*, Jane McGary; *Calochortus tolmei*, Mark Mazur
Page 6, Plunge Bed, Erica Schumacher; *Pulsatilla vulgaris* seedhead, http://www.alchemy-works.com/pulsatilla_vulgaris.html
Page 7, *Oxalis luteola*, Matt Mattus; Primula auricula, http://www.em.ca/garden/per_primula_auricula1.html
Page 8, *Magnolia x soulangeana Rustica Rubra* in Royal Botanic Gardens Kew London England
Page 9, *Aster ericoides f. prostratus,* Garden in The Woods, MA; *Aster ericoides f. prostratus 'Snow Flurry,'* Missouri Botanical Garden
Page 11, *Orostachys aggregeatum*, Susan Ott; *Iris zenaidae*, Russell Stafford

Question: What Do You Do To Prepare Your Garden For Winter?

Peter:
Even I can answer that one. We bust our butts working on the things we didn't get around to all spring and summer, clear up the leaves faithfully, which will smother alpines (no deciduous trees in the mountains, they have not evolved to cope with them) and hope for the best. By the way, the get rid of leaves religion was one we picked up at a lecture and it was probably the best single piece of advice we've ever picked up. If you wait until spring you've lost plants.

Lynn Kenner

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