

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society

SPRING NEWSLETTER, March 2002

CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS

** meeting details below**

We have a great spring program this year. For the April 13 and May 11 meetings, we'll have some open gardens for people to visit on their way home. Maps and directions will be at the meetings.

****SATURDAY, April 13. Spring meeting**

MEETING: 1:00 pm - ca. 2:30 pm

PLACE: St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center,
Ypsilanti (see map)

PROGRAM: 1:00 - Panayoti Kelaidis:

'Hardy in Denver'

We'll have cookies and beverages outside the auditorium

****SATURDAY, May 11. Annual spring meeting and plant sale**

MEETING: 11:30 am - ca. 4:00 pm

PLACE: Matthaei Botanical Gardens, Ann Arbor [see map]

PROGRAM: 11:30 - Business meeting

12:00 - Pot Luck lunch

1:00 - Robert & Rannveig Wallis:

'Bulbs and Bulb Habitats: the Wild and the Willing'

PLANT SALE: 2:30 - Plant Sale

****SUNDAY, May 26. Meeting and garden tours [see map]**

MEETING: 10:00 am - ca. 4:00 pm

PLACE: Fraternal Order of Eagles Lodge, Saginaw

PROGRAM: 10:00 - Garden tour, Fred Case's plus bag lunch

1:00 - Tim Roberts:

'Alpines of Central Nepal's Marsyandi Valley'

3:00 - Garden tour, Phil & Ginger Lisik's

Put these on your Calendar for the Fall -- details will be in the Fall newsletter:

Sept. 21. Fall garden tour and plant sale.

Oct. 19. Phyllis Gustafson: *'Gardens of the Pacific Northwest with an Emphasis on Crevice Gardening'*
(This is a rescheduling of our 2001 Fall program.)

UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETINGS:

The next Annual Meeting will be in Anchorage, Alaska, June 11-14, 2002. See your Rock Garden Quarterly for details.

Our Spring Speakers

Panayoti Kelaidis, April 13: Panayoti is the Denver Botanic Garden's Curator of Plants, and is known to all rock gardeners in North America -- and wider -- for his numerous new introductions of outstanding, hardy plants from expeditions throughout the world. Few people have made such outstanding national and international contributions to gardening. He is an acknowledged authority on the cultivation of alpines, with a similarly wide knowledge of native herbaceous and woody plants, as well as those from temperate climates from eastern and southern regions of the world. Panayoti is an avid reader and scholar, researching the latest floras and systematic treatments to discover new species of possible interest to rock gardeners. He has made numerous seed collecting trips throughout the west and northern Mexico, as well as a number of trips to South Africa, and recent trips to China, Spain, Argentina, Chile, and most recently Pakistan. His enthusiasm for the unattempted, the unknown, and the exotic never flags or wanes. The Denver Botanic Gardens are outstanding worldwide for the collections of dryland and alpine plants, from throughout the world. Panayoti has collected, planted, observed, and continuously learned about how plants grow and can be grown in many different microclimates. He estimates that he has grown as many as 10,000 kinds of plants in this garden, often growing a dozen or two individuals of a new accession at a time, testing them in the many ecological and edaphic situations of the Rock Alpine Garden. Few individuals have ever grown so many diverse plants so well. The knowledge and experience Panayoti has acquired in all his plant adventures has been shared with a wide national audience, through his writings directed at both specialists and general audiences. Some of the intriguing titles included in his list of publications are: "The Chihuahuan Phloxes", "The Tethyan Garden",

"Prickly Charmers", and "Spontaneity on the Rocks." Few people have ever brought such excitement, high expectations, and new plants to our gardens. Panayoti has received three major awards from the North American Rock Garden Society, the Award of Merit, the Edgar T. Wherry Award, and the Marcel Le Piniec Award. Linc Foster is the only other person to have received all of these awards. He has lectured locally, nationally and worldwide, always to delighted and enthralled audiences. I hope you are as excited as I am in looking forward to what will certainly be an interesting and entertaining talk. Let's have a great turnout and show Panayoti that the Great Lakes Chapter is also interested in hearing what he has to say.

(Much of the information in this notice above is adapted with permission from the Marcel Le Piniec Award article in the 1994 Rock Garden Quarterly (Volume 52, Number 3) by Sandy Snyder)

Robert & Rannveig Wallis, May 11 write: Rannveig trained as a botanist and then taught biology and science to secondary pupils. Bob is a biochemist and works in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology business in research and development. The two of us became interested in bulbs more than 30 years ago and now cultivate a huge collection of hardy bulbs, largely under glass. Many get exhibited at Alpine Garden Society Shows. We have visited many alpine and bulb areas in the world and take a lot of photographs. When we moved to Wales in 1994, Rannveig gave up teaching and started Buried Treasure, a mail order bulb nursery.

Tim Roberts, May 26 writes for his Bio: As a teenager I was introduced to alpine plants by my father who at the time owned Holden Clough Nurseries in the northwest of England. I spent most weekends working on the nursery for almost ten years. My father was also a Landscape Gardener specializing

in Rock and Water Gardens. After leaving school I attended the local Horticultural College gaining qualifications in horticulture. After the death of my father, aged 51, from meningitis, my brother and I took over the family landscaping business, which we have run for over 20 years, specializing in custom designed and built gardens for private clients. We use a lot of different styles ranging from 'Traditional English Style Rock Gardens' to 'Japanese Style Gardens.' I rediscovered alpine plants in 1990 by attending a local Alpine Garden Society group meeting. Since then I have grown many alpine plants in my small garden, alpine house, and on my tufa cliff (built using almost 10 tons of tufa). In 1991, I discovered alpine plants in the wild, since which time I have visited the Italian Alps three times, the Pyrenees nine times, and Nepal three times. I enjoy the excitement of finding and photographing alpine plants in the wild, along with the challenge of then trying to grow the plants back at home. My favorite plants are *Saxifraga* and *Androsace*.

Fall Meeting, September 15, 2001

By Don Lafond

The Events of September 11, 2001 touched even our society. Our planned speaker, Phyllis Gustafson, was unable to attend because of the closing of the airports nationwide. Luckily one of our own members, Fred Case, graciously filled in at the last minute and did an excellent slide presentation on Native Wildflowers. We sometimes don't appreciate what a wealth and glory of wildflowers we have in Michigan and the Great Lakes region, and Fred's wonderful talk, as always very informative and highly entertaining, made it clear how lucky we are. Our beautiful trilliums, bellworts, and other showy plants are envied and desired worldwide. Thank you very much Fred for helping out with a superb program!

During the business meeting a number of topics were discussed. We voted to raise the dues for our club to a staggering \$10 per year, raised from \$3. This will allow our club to fully pay for the rising cost of printing the Newsletter and postage. According to Michael Kaericher, "this will not raise a tremendous amount of revenue but will cover what we need."

Another topic raised was pricing for our plant sale. As you know, our minimum price is now \$1 up from 25 cents. I strongly urged people to raise their pricing to help pay for the cost of speakers. Partly because people did raise the prices of their plants and the tremendous amount of support from people bringing auctionable plants, we put \$2,300 in the kitty. Thank you very much! I want to thank Bob and Brigitta Stewart for donating three flats of rock plants and numerous trees and shrubs. Also, we would like to thank Bev and Bob Walters for allowing our band of plantaholics to invade their home and garden. Thanks folks!

Winter Meeting, February 24, 2002

By Laura Serowicz

Our annual winter meeting was held at Arrowhead Alpines. The weather was beautiful and so were the sights and smells of all the wonderful plants in their greenhouses. A large group of winter-weary rock gardeners attended the meeting. Thanks again to Bob and Brigitta Stewart for allowing us to have our meeting at their nursery.

During the brief business meeting Susan Reznicek brought us up to date on the plans for the 2003 Eastern Winter Study Weekend that our chapter will be hosting January 24-26, 2003. We've got a terrific line-up of speakers who will present various aspects of woodland plants for the rock garden. And

we've planned some great interactive workshops that will give the participants a chance to be involved and to take something home with them. Several vendors have signed on for the weekend. The chapter is also planning on having plants available from our members, so start working on what you think you can contribute. We are especially interested in getting good quality woodland and shade plants since our theme is "Lost in the Woods." Betty Blake has agreed to coordinate the list of plants donated, so contact her with what you think you will be able to supply. Since most plants will still be dormant at that time of year, it is suggested that you should put the roots or tubers into a plastic bag with dryish peat, so that the buyer can see that there is an actual plant in there. Few people are willing to buy a pot of dirt without some proof that there is a plant. The brochures are now ready and the committee did a terrific job on them. If you belong to any other organization that has members that may be interested in the EWSW you can get brochures to hand out to them from Susan Reznicek. Participants do not need to belong to NARGS or the GLC to attend the EWSW. We can expect between 200-300 people, and were fortunate to lock in very good rates at the Sheraton Inn in Ann Arbor (due to September 11th drop in travel).

The meeting was then turned over to our three speakers. First up was Jacques Thompson, who talked about the pitfalls and pleasures of the pit house (or 'My Pit House and what I'd do different'). Jacques described his pit house as just a 'really deep cold frame', that he originally intended to use for forcing bulbs. He started construction on it by digging a big hole. He recommends renting some small earth-moving equipment instead of doing it by hand. He then poured the foundation and laid cement block with rebar through them for the walls; 8 blocks deep. He used UV resistant poly for the roof, which

made it fairly airtight. It also holds the heat in, which may be one of the reasons it has not been good for forcing bulbs; it gets too hot for cold germinators or any plant that needs to go through a cold period. His pit house is better for overwintering tender and semi-tender plants, as well as for doing cuttings, grafts and for plants that need to be dry over winter plus holding early nursery orders. Bob Stewart recommended that changing the roof to white poly would help cut down on the heating effect of the sun. Bob uses the white poly in his greenhouses for germinating seeds, because it helps keep them from drying out too quickly. Jacques also talked about the pit house he helped Tony Reznicek build. Some of the things done differently with Tony's were a deeper hole, with less surface area above ground, and a lean-to, "low E" glass roof. These keep the pit cooler. In conclusion, Jacques felt his pit house was over-engineered and retains too much heat. For it to be more successful it would need to have better ventilation, perhaps an air conditioner running all year round. His talk gave us much to consider of what to avoid when planning a pit house, as well as what worked.

Next to speak was Tony Reznicek, with another great talk, this time on the fascinating family of Aroids. Aroids are monocots, but have atypical leaves that are broad and often have branching veins. The inflorescences, which are best described as bizarre rather than beautiful, are comprised of the leaf-like spathe and the club-like spadix, with the actual tiny flowers at the base of the spadix. The earliest one to come up in Michigan is the native Eastern Skunk Cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*. With its drab purplish-brown spathe, it cannot compare to its cousins *Lysichiton americanus* (yellow spathe) and *L. camtschatcensis* (white spathe). Another native aroid is the showy Golden Club *Orontium aquaticum*, with a

yellow spadix and insignificant spathe. Next up were North American native Jack-In-The-Pulpits, *Arisaema triphyllum* and the less common *A. dracontium*. Many *Arisaemas* have very attractive foliage to go along with the variety of their spathes and spadixes. Some of the ones Tony has been successful with include: *A. tortuosum*, which is quite hardy here but planting it 1' deep may bring success; *A. fargesii*, comes up late with leaves that can grow 3' long; *A. candidissimum*, another latecomer with a beautiful pink and white striped spathe; *A. ciliatum*, with long narrow leaflets like the ribs of an umbrella and which appears to run underground; *A. flavum*, which is self-pollinating so it always sets seed, has a yellow spathe and is one of the smallest of the *Arisaemas*. Another aroid whose inflorescence resembles a miniature *Arisaema* is *Pinellia ternata*, which is often described as a 'good spreader' (i.e., it's a weed) by selfing. *Pinellia cordata* is considered the nicest of the *Pinellias*. *Sauromatum venosum* (Voodoo Lily) seems to be hardy in Ann Arbor. It has a large corm (which sets offsets) from which comes a malodorous inflorescence in May, with the leaves rising from snake-patterned stems in July. The last group of aroids Tony discussed were in the genus *Arum*, with those from Asia preferring full sun, semi-desert conditions and those from Southern Europe woodland conditions. The hardiest ones include *Arum orientale*, *A. alpinum*, *A. maculatum*, and *A. italicum*. One of the more striking inflorescences belongs to *Arum euxinum*, which has chartreuse spathes with a dark maroon margin and blooms above the leaves in May. He also showed slides of *Arum elongatum*, with dark purple inflorescences among the leaves. *Arum rupicola* (*A. conophalloides*) is perhaps the tallest hardy species and *A. creticum* the most attractive (but of uncertain hardiness). For all their bizarre appearance and interesting smells, the

Aroid family has many members that are worth trying in our gardens.

Jim Langhammer gave us quick tour of how *Colchicums* can help you extend your blooming in the garden from earliest spring through late fall. He started with *Colchicum luteum*, which at only 5" tall and the only yellow *Colchicum*, blooms by April 1st at the same time as *Scilla*. Then in late summer *Colchicum byzantinum* blooms (around September 1st) with 3-6 flowers per bulb, a very prolific grower. Jim warned that there seems to be a dilution of the gene pool and it is questionable what you get from many sources. *C. byzantinum album*, has broader petals of pure white, and he feels that the white *Colchicums* are generally better. Some of the other ones he grows that bloom late summer/early fall include: *Colchicum bowlesianum x bornmuellerii*, with checker pigmentation or tessellation; *C. agrippinum*, tiny, pink, tessellated; *C. macrophyllum*, with large leaves 8" wide x 12-15" long and 5" chalice-like, tessellated flowers; *C. giganteum*, (not to be confused with *C. 'The Giant'*) has pink twisted tepals. *Colchicum speciosum* blooms mid-fall (October) with large pure deep pink flowers, and with *C. speciosum album* being a stunning white flower. *Colchicum autumnale*, with its large flowers, clumps up quickly and there is also a double white form, with which the white *C. speciosum album* was crossed, resulting in the pink flowered *C. 'Waterlily'* (from a recessive gene from their pink parents). Jim's *Colchicums* grow well in his wet, clay soil, but they like it dry in the summer so he does not give them any supplemental water. They make their new bulbs laterally to the old bloomed bulb. Jim also had some slides of *Hamamelis xintermedia*, including one where he laid the flowering branches of several varieties next to each other to compare the size and color of their blooms. He stated that his *Hamamelis xintermedia 'Arnold Promise'*

does not conform to the description in that his has pale yellow leaves with red margins, and he put the question out to the members as to whether he might have a grex or ????. All in all, Jim gave us all some great plants to try in our gardens to extend our growing season.

[Many thanks to Laura, who agreed to be our secretary at this meeting. We all appreciate it.]

In Remembrance

This winter, we are sad to report that we have lost two of our long standing and devoted members.

Mary Beckerman passed away January 14th. Mary was a good friend to many of us and a great supporter of our society. She regularly attended meetings whenever she could and also regularly attended NARGS Winter Study Weekends and National Meetings. For many years, Mary took care of hospitality at our chapter meetings and brought all our coffee, tea and beverage fixings and supplies, for which we were very grateful. We will all miss her.

Phyllis Gallup passed away January 23. Phyllis was a great gardener who loved her gardens and enjoyed very much sharing her treasured plants and sharing her enjoyment of them with her many friends. She had our society over to her house several times to see her delightful woodland garden, her front rock garden, and most recently, a beautiful Japanese garden that she had built in front of the house. Our last garden tour was May of 2000 – not so very long ago. There were so many plants that Phyllis grew well that it is hard to single out specialties. She had a long-time love of ferns. She enjoyed early bulbs very much, and she was always on the lookout for rarities, and always growing large batches of plants from seed. There will be a memorial for her May 19 at 2:00 pm, in her

garden at 1437 Catalina Dr., Ann Arbor. Her gardening friends are especially welcome.

Chapter Officers 2001-2002

Please feel free to contact your officers if you have any questions or comments

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My First Garden Tour

by Don LaFond

It was fall (2000) and Jacques Thompson had talked me into having my garden open for the plant sale. My mind was in a hundred places at once. Why would anyone want to see my garden? It's not very big and I don't have many rare or unusual plants but Jacques assured me that it would be fine. Also, I was thinking about all the weeds and undone parts of the garden, not to mention the chaos that a

four year old little boy can do to a yard in 30 seconds. Well, little by little I got the place into the best shape I could, about five minutes before people starting showing up.

I do have a couple of places in the garden I thought looked pretty good and a few plants I was proud of. Then Betty Blake showed up, a woman who I'm sure has forgotten more about plants than I know. After about ten minutes she called me over and asked about a plant I had thought very little about and stuck behind our pool. Standing next to her was Dick Punnett and Jacques Thompson; all asking the same question "what plant is that"?

About two or three years before I had the plant sale at my house my wife Mary and I went to California. I was fairly new to rock gardening but the sickness had definitely caught up with me. So, of course my wife and I went looking for areas with cool plants, instead of going to places that regular tourists go to. In our short week out there we found two; Point Lobos, which is a beautiful natural rock garden on the Pacific and, at the last minute, we got a chance to go to Yosemite. I haven't been to the Siskiyou Mountains or the Bear Tooths but I have been to Montana, New Mexico and Banff, and Yosemite is in my opinion the nicest rock garden I have seen.

While in Yosemite, I had Mary stop numerous times to look at plants that I saw off the side of the road, once I slid down a bank and went out of sight of my wife. She thought I fell and scolded me soundly. Another time I stopped and walked about 50 yards to a crack in an enormous rock to view a reddish orange flower (later identified as a *Mimulus*). When I turned around to go back I saw at least a dozen cars that had stopped to see what I was doing. They all asked what animal I saw.

At Point Lobos and Yosemite I collected seeds. Among them were Iris seeds and others, so when it was time to go home I packed up my seeds and rocks and we flew home. Upon getting home I planted all my seeds. The following spring many of the seeds came up, among them was my Iris, but it didn't look like an Iris to me. I thought my four-year-old had been playing switch the name tags, but I am also a hopeless amateur, so I was a little stumped – and this was the plant everyone was asking about.

So, I said to Betty Blake, well I grew this from seed that I thought was an Iris. Well, Betty looked at me hopelessly and said "that was no Iris but it was a gorgeous plant" and she wanted one. I said sure I'll dig one of these and give it to you but Dick said, "he thought it looked like a Lupine and they don't transplant well." So, now what do I do? I have two plants of something that the knowledgeable gardeners of our group all say is really nice and they have not seen it before, and they want one.

I didn't dig the plant and decided I better find the real name of it. Luckily I do keep lists of seeds I buy or collect and I am pretty sure I deduced it correctly to be *Lupinus breweri*. The seed actually came from the English Rock Garden Society. This year I tried to cut it but failed miserably – none of the cuttings lived past a week. The only good thing to say is both plants are still alive and for two years have bloomed and produced seeds, which I have planted but they haven't germinated. I promise you Betty; the first one that does is yours. By the way has anyone compared a Lupine seed to an Iris seed? To an amateur they do look a lot alike.

[Editors Note: – As hinted at by this article, we are always looking for new gardens to visit. Please consider letting us see yours. I'm sure we'll enjoy it.]

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Great Lakes Chapter:

National Organization:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Phone: _____

email/FAX: _____

email/FAX: _____

Send \$10.00 per year (check payable to Chapter) to:
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Plymouth, MI 48170-5005

Send \$25.00 dues (check payable to NARGS) to:
Jacques Mommens
Executive Secretary
North American Rock Garden Society
P.O. Box 67
Millwood, NY 10546

or pay in person at the next meeting
of the Great Lakes Chapter

We strongly encourage people to join both the Great Lakes Chapter and the National Organization.

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FIRST CLASS

Maps and Directions to all the spring meetings are on the back of this sheet. Our Plant Sale will be at the May 11th meeting

PLANT SALE PREPARATIONS for May 11:

If you are a newcomer to our group, you will be surprised at the diversity, number of rarities, and size of our two yearly plant sales. They are one of the best things about being a chapter member. And the sale is very important to the chapter, as it raises the funds for our excellent speaker program. But because of the size of the sale, we do need to have people try to follow certain rules to make the sale run smoothly and quickly.

At home:

- 1). Please pot or repot plants at least a week to ten days before the sale. Otherwise, the plants may look tired and ragged.
- 2). Please select appropriate plants for the sale. Interesting and unusual alpines, woodland plants and small woody plants are ideal. No large, common woody plants, annuals, common perennials, and tropicals, please.
- 3). Before you bring the plants, label each pot, with the name of the plant [scientific name, if known, and cultivar or variety, if known]. On the back of the label put your name and the year. This allows people both at the sale or later to ask you about the plant. It also helps us when setting up the sale to talk to you if, for example, you have missed putting a price on the plant.
- 4). We ask people to price their own plants, and you can price your plants at home, if you would like, but please use a separate label for the price. The price labels are pulled out of the pots by the cashier to expedite adding up the total.

At the sale:

- 1) If you have not priced your plants at home, please use the chapter price labels provided to price each pot. Prices range from \$1 to \$6.50, but mostly are within the \$2 to \$3 range. Set your plants as close together as possible on the selling tables. You should try to get your plants to the sale a half-hour or so before the sale starts to get them set up and priced, if necessary.
- 2) Ask Don LaFond to look at your plants. For every 10 plants you bring, you are given one Red Label. Each Red Label entitles you to one "First Pick." This means that those who did not bring plants must stand back and wait for those with Red Labels to make their First Picks. The time for First Pickers to make their choices is limited to 3-5 minutes depending upon the number of First Pick labels given out. Keep in mind that you still have to pay for the plants.
- 3) Tell Don if you have brought plants that you think might be of "Auction Quality." These are normally either exceptionally rare and desirable plants not available commercially, plants available only at a very high cost, or large, well-grown specimens of highly desirable plants. He will inform our almighty auctioneers who pass judgement as to which and how many plants to auction. For each of your plants chosen for auction, you will get an additional Red Label.