

# GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS)

FALL NEWSLETTER, SEPTEMBER 2022



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CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS \*\*meeting details below\*\*

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You can always check our website for information: <http://glcnargs.com/>

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## **\*SATURDAY, SEPT. 17: Fall Meeting, Plant Sale, & Garden Tour**

**MEETING:** 12:30 PM – ca. 3:00 PM [note the slightly later start time]  
**PLACE:** Jacques and Andrea Urda-Thompson's garden (7760 Crane Road Ypsilanti, MI 48197)  
12:30 – ca. 1:30 tour the garden  
**BAG LUNCH:** At your convenience while touring the gardens  
**PLANT SALE:** 1:30 PM

## **\*SUNDAY, OCT. 2: Fall Meeting – *Epimedium* Extravaganza by Karen Perkins**

**MEETING:** 11:00 AM – ca. 3:00 PM  
**PLACE:** Matthaei Botanical Gardens Auditorium (1800 N Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105)  
**PROGRAMS:** 11:00 AM – "Epimediums – Jewels of the Shade" part 1: characteristics, culture, pests and diseases, and examples of species native to Japan and Korea  
**CATERED LUNCH:** 12:30 PM (Please let Julie Caroff ([julia.caroff@me.com](mailto:julia.caroff@me.com)) know you are coming before Sept. 17 to help set up the catering)  
1:30 PM – "Epimediums – Jewels of the Shade" part 2: Darrell Probst's collecting trips to China, examples of Chinese species, plus how to use Epimediums in the garden, sources of plants, and general information

Karen owns **Garden Vision Epimediums** in Templeton, MA, a wonderful nursery offering Epimediums and a selection of other choice shade plants. See <https://www.epimediums.com/>

## **\*SATURDAY, OCT. 29: Fall Meeting with Harry Jans**

**MEETING:** 10:00 AM – 2:30 PM [note the earlier start]  
**PLACE:** Matthaei Botanical Gardens Auditorium (see address above)  
**PROGRAMS:** 10:00 AM – "Gardening in the Hills of Holland"  
**CATERED LUNCH:** 12:00 Noon (Please let Julie Caroff ([julia.caroff@me.com](mailto:julia.caroff@me.com)) know you are coming before Oct. 20 to help set up the catering)  
1:00 PM – "Mega Alpines"

Harry is a world famous plant explorer and lecturer and we are lucky to have him come to us, courtesy of the National NARGS speaker's tour. He has been everywhere! See: <https://www.jansalpines.com/>

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**President's Notes**  
**Julie Caroff**

I first heard about the Great Lakes Chapter over 15 years ago while visiting Arrowhead Alpines to load up my car with...shrubs. The person who helped me select those shrubs and pack what looked like half a semi-load of them into my car was Don LaFond. While advising me on what to get, Don told me about the GLC and NARGS, encouraging me to join. Me, "I'm not a rock gardener!" Don: "Doesn't matter. You love plants and that's enough." I demurred. On subsequent visits to Arrowhead, either Bob or Brigitta Stewart encouraged me to join, telling me that the GLC was the organization in Southeastern Michigan for the committed plant-lover and that I would learn much from the members. (They knew from my questions and plant replacement purchases that I could use some advice.). It took me a few years, but eventually I joined, finding a community of generous, knowledgeable gardeners who made me a much better gardener while becoming my friends. While my love of shrubs remains, I've also become a devoted rock gardener.

Perhaps you know of a person who loves plants and wants to learn more about gardening - someone who would enjoy the many activities our chapter offers and would grow in their love of gardening through the shared knowledge of our members. Consider bringing them to our Fall Meeting and Plant Sale on Saturday, September 17 at Andrea and Jacques Thompson's extraordinary garden. Their garden has something for every kind of gardening interests: conifers, a water garden, troughs, rock garden plants and shrubs. Then, there's the Epimedium workshop on Saturday, October 2 at Matthaei Botanical Garden's auditorium. For someone wanting hands on experience, there are volunteer opportunities to build and plant a tufa garden as part of our Chapter's renovation of the Azary Rock Garden at Matthaei.

Our membership has grown over the past year to over 140 members, mostly from Southeastern Michigan, but some for Western and Northern

Michigan and even the UP! But, there's room for more members! So, bring a fellow plant-lover to our next event. After getting to know us, I expect that they will join our chapter, like I did all those years ago with a garden full of shrubs.

See you at the Fall Sale,

Julie

**The Summer Doldrums**  
**Tony Reznicek**

Summer – Ugh. Heat, humidity, drought. If you think life as a gardener is tough in Michigan during the peak of summer, just imagine what it is like for an alpine! If plants could pant...I'm so glad fall is approaching.

But of course, we can do things about this. I don't mean enclosing and air conditioning the yard. That's a bit expensive. But there are two thrusts that can help. One is using tufa, especially oriented north or east and ideally dug into a sloping soil bank. The tufa wicks up moisture and except during prolonged dry periods, stays cooler and moist, especially lower on the slope. This works well for some things at least, and many alpines do well in such settings. One trick is making sure there is enough light. A simple sandstone wall can have a similar effect, but the advantage of tufa is that plants can grow on it.

But this is only part of the solution. True alpines generally bloom in the spring. After all, summer is short in the alpine zone, so they have to get on with the business of reproduction. So you can end up with lovely cushions and clumps of flowerless alpine plants all summer long. Well, actually, that's not so bad. I like ferns, and they are not noted for flowering at all! Texture and leaf and rosette patterns are subtle, but nice.

But there are a few plants that look and behave somewhat like alpines, but come from low elevation habitats, and some of these bloom in summer or fall. Examples include small plants from open or barrens habitats. This might include, for example, plants from low elevation cliffs (like some species from coastal Japan) and

other open lowland settings. Also, smaller plants from various sorts of temperate barrens, including our own jack pine barrens, and some open areas of the east and south (the New Jersey pine barrens also come to mind, as well as similar habitats farther south. And even some plants of fens bloom late and are useful.

So here are some pictures that illustrate my points, taken today (Sept.7) unless noted:

**Top – Porophyllum saxifrage looking good going into fall; bottom, Ramondas and ferns keeping cool**



These are spring blooming alpine plants that are great on tufa, and never suffer too badly.

**Top – *Bigelovia nuttallii* – from the southeast sand barrens and only a foot high; bottom, *Heterotheca* ‘Gold Hill,’ a hybrid of two western species that tolerates our summers.**



Species of lower elevation rock outcrops include things like the lovely, late blooming onions from Asia, especially Japan, the photos following taken in fall years past. Though these do not need tufa, they are small enough to fit into sunnier parts of a tufa wall. Also in this category is *Begonia sinensis*. I never knew this liked tufa until it began seeding into my tufa wall – the plants then shrinking down to a few

***Allium kiiense* (taken Nov 3, 2020!)**



***Allium thunbergii* ‘Ozawa’ taken Oct. 16, 2020**



inches only and looking very nice. In fact, I actually have to weed it out a bit to stop it from crowding out my ferns! Who knew?

Finally, there are a few native plants of meadows and fens that are nice enough to get space. These are generally not for tufa, unless it is rather moist, but will do in a range of moist settings. One of my favorites is *Parnassia glauca*, the so-called grass-of-parnassus (though it has nothing to do with either grasses or Mt. Parnassus!) It is tallish (to about a foot), but the leaves are compact and basal. The best things about it are the white flowers with green striping. In this fen/meadow category also is the lovely dwarf form of *Lobelia siphilitica* introduced by Wrightman alpinists that forms a blue dome right now.

**Right, small *Begonia sinensis* near the top if a tufa wall**



Top – *Lobelia siphilitica* 'Mistassinica,' bottom, flower of *Parnassia glauca*



*Astilbe simplicifolia* in a sandstone wall, taken July 19, 2021



*Tanakea radicans* – top, in flower June 1, 2021, bottom, evergreen leaves in late winter



Finally, I'll mention a couple things for earlier bloom that are also suited for sandstone as well as tufa walls. Both are species from Japan and lovely little (and not commonly seen) plants that should be grown more. One is a unique *Astilbe*, different from all others in having simple, rather maple-like leaves. This is *Astilbe simplicifolia*. Don't be fooled by plants being sold as that with cultivar names like 'Sprite.' These are hybrids, with divided leaves, not the true species, which is much more delicate. The other is also *Astilbe*-like, but with evergreen, entire leaves, and clammers over tufa on long, threadlike stolons. This is *Tanakea radicans*. It blooms in early to mid-June, still actually in spring, but gets honorary mention here for its evergreen leaves.

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**Please send address changes to:**

**Colleen Mitchell,  
3995 Monks Road,  
Pinckney, MI 48169, USA**

**Thank You!  
[Do include your up-to-date email address.]**

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:**

**Great Lakes Chapter:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email/FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Send \$20.00 per year (check payable to Chapter) to:  
**Colleen Mitchell**  
Treasurer, Great Lakes Chapter, NARGS  
3995 Monks Road  
Pinckney, MI 48169, USA

OR pay in person at the next GLC meeting

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

**National Organization:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email/FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Send \$40.00 dues (check payable to NARGS) to:  
**Bobby Ward**  
Executive Secretary  
North American Rock Garden Society  
P.O. Box 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619

OR pay through the NARGS website:

<https://www.nargs.org/join>

**GREAT LAKES CHAPTER FIRST CLASS**  
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