

GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS)
FALL NEWSLETTER, SEPTEMBER 2023



CALENDAR OF CHAPTER MEETINGS **meeting details below**

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

***SATURDAY, SEPT. 16: Fall Meeting, Plant Sale, & Garden Tour**

MEETING: 11:30 AM – ca. 3:00 PM
PLACE: Ed and Colleen Weiss's garden (1005 Fairmount Drive, Ann Arbor MI 48105) See the plant sale insert for traffic notes!
11:30 – ca. 1:30 tour the garden
BAG LUNCH: At your convenience while touring the garden
PLANT SALE: 1:30 PM

***SATURDAY, OCT. 7: Fall Meeting with Barbara Cooper and Bella Seiden**

MEETING: 9:30 AM – ca. 12:00 PM
PLACE: Matthaei Botanical Gardens Auditorium
(1800 N Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105)
PROGRAM: 10:00 AM – "Flora of the Turkish Silk Road"
We'll have coffee and breakfast snacks.

Turkey is a country of rich physical and ancient cultural diversity straddling Europe and Asia. Bella and Barbara's trip to Turkey in the spring of 2019 was an adventure with many surprises and much beauty. As they travelled along parts of the ancient Silk Road they saw mountains, volcanoes, steppe, beautiful rich valleys, rivers and lakes. Each of these areas is home to incredible flora, much of it endemic and fascinating cultural sites. Their presentation will offer some of the highlights of this trip.

Barbara Cooper and Bella Seiden have been gardening together in Toronto for more than 25 years. They have a plant collector's garden in an urban setting, where they have constructed a tufa garden, crevice and rock garden as well as perennial beds. Over the years they have developed an interest in seeing plants in their natural habitat and have traveled several times to South America, South Africa, and Turkey. They are members of the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society where they are responsible for the Speaker's Programme.

We'll be making plans soon for the winter potluck, and will send out a notice shortly.

President's Notes
Julie Caroff

Hello GLC Members,

This year we have been making up for the past three years of mostly zoom events. So far, we've had the Winter Potluck, the Bainbridges' talk, the Spring Meeting and Sale at Esther and Robert Benedicts' nursery, and the bus trip to Walters Gardens. We have our Treasurer Colleen Mitchell to thank for the bus trips, which were especially enjoyable with time for conversations and sharing tasty snacks.

Next up is our Fall Meeting and Sale at Colleen and Ed Weiss's garden on the east side of Ann Arbor. Please don't let concerns about game day traffic keep you from seeing Colleen and Ed's beautiful garden - September 16 is a night game! There are sure to be many desirable, uncommon plants for sale, too. New members get a red tag to pick a plant during the first sale round, so bring a friend. On October 7, two of NARGS longtime, well-travelled members, Barb and Bella, will be giving their "Turkey Talk" at the Matthaei Botanical Garden auditorium, with photos of the beautiful flowers they have seen on their trips to Turkey.

If you haven't had a chance to see the renovated Azary Rock Garden at the Matthaei Botanical Garden, do stop by, or, better yet, join fellow members for a work day. Using tufa laid out by Don LaFond with editorial direction from Tony Reznicek and Jacques Thompson, the garden has been expanded by the efforts of Chapter volunteers, organized by Holly Pilon, over the past year. And, we've created space for miniature conifers, which fit so nicely in rock gardens. While you're are visiting the Azary Rock garden, spend some time in the adjacent Great Lakes garden, which is in gorgeous fall bloom right now.

Fall is such a beautiful time of year in Michigan, with some of the loveliest flowers - enjoy!

Julie

Waiting for fall...or adventures in crazy gardening
Tony Reznicek

Heat! Humidity! Drought! Though this year, the dry times were early, with August being rainy, at least around Ann Arbor. Still, I'm beginning to think that Rock Gardening is all about bringing plants through our summers alive. But I have to admit, I was inspired by the fabulous bus tour we had to Walters Gardens, and the other special gardens we visited, and I think we do have a lot of opportunities beyond annuals. Maybe more succulents, more somewhat larger plants as a "surround" or foil for the rock gardens, and a bit more focus on dryland plants and fen and bog plants.

Right now, I'm enjoying *Lobelia siphilitica* immensely. Besides the dwarf form ('Mistassinica' from Wrightman Alpines), I have the wild type, and also a rare white. I'm hoping to eventually get a pink seedling.... What I like about these is that they bloom a bit later than cardinal flowers and tolerate drought well.



Blue and white *Lobelia siphilitica*

This is also the time of year for some oddball items of tropical ancestry. Most notable, I had great flowering this year on a forest understory gesneriad, *Hemiboea subcapitata*, from China.



Hemiboea subcapitata

The flowers are somewhat weird and fleshy – but fascinating up close. It clearly looks like it should not be hardy. But in fact, it is capable of swallowing quite a bit of real estate over time.



Hemiboea subcapitata flowers

The weird hairy flowers are so cool.

Now, another tropical element is supplied by the ginger family, Zingiberaceae. This mostly means *Roscoea*, in Michigan, but most of mine

are past blooming now. The last bloom of *Roscoea auriculata* was out. The orchid-like flowers are fantastic admired individually.



The last flower of *Roscoea auriculata*

Speaking of weird flowers, a huge, coarse, horse of a plant in the ginger family is one of the true gingers, *Zingiber mioga* – the Myoga Ginger of oriental cuisine. Yes, it is hardy, and aggressive, with foliage that can be up to 4-5 ft. tall – and flowers borne at ground level in cone like heads. Why would one grow this? Of course, because it is weird. Unlike the regular (non-hardy) ginger, it is the young, fleshy cone-like inflorescences that are eaten, harvested well before flowers open. I missed it this year. I’ve only eaten it once – and I clearly did not prepare it correctly, as it tasted great, but was tough. A good source of fiber?

There is one other ginger that I’m still waiting for. Many years ago, Bob Stewart of Arrowhead Alpines gave me a plant of a fairly hardy *Hedychium*. It languished under my abuse in a sheltered spot by the house until I decided to

fertilize it, and finally, it will bloom this year – next week, probably. Then I can maybe figure out which species it is.



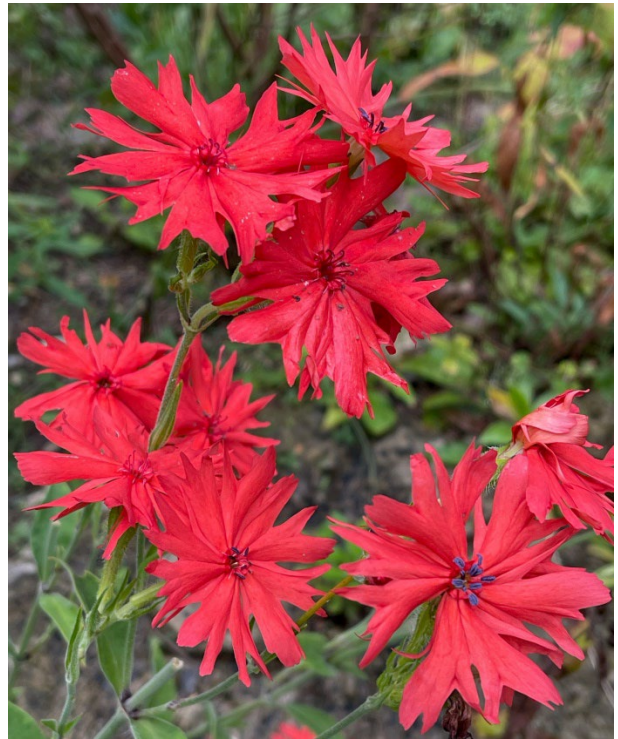
Zingiber mioga – foliage and flower

Not of tropical ancestry – but great plants, are various *Veratrum* species, and one that bloomed for me for the first time this summer has to be the best of them all, *Veratrum fimbriatum*.



Veratrum fimbriatum

Another group of plants that are nice for summer bloom are the orange and red flowered Asian champions (*Lychnis*). The summer blooming orange-toned ones like *L. coronata* and *L. cognata* are well known, but a newer one for me is *Lychnis senno* 'Once in a Vermillion' from Plant Delights Nursery. It is stunning, with huge flowers, and in full bloom now.



Lychnis senno

Now for the weirdest plant of all, and the farthest from rock gardening, *Trichosanthes kirilowii*



Trichosanthes kirilowii plant and flower

The flowers of this crazy cucumber relative can be up to 4-5 inches across, fringes spread out, so are quite the sight. But it is night blooming and I therefore would have to climb up on my garage roof at night to photograph it at its prime. Since this could have the neighbors calling the police, I make do with a morning flower, slowly fading. But you can't beat those fringes...even though the plant is a bit ugly.

There are, of course, a few more traditional rock garden plants that bloom now, though not many. This is the season for *Cyclamen hederifolium*.



Cyclamen hederifolium 'Album'

And it is the time for other fall rock garden bulbs and tubers to start. A colchicum or two are starting to bloom, and so are a few other little items – among them *Barnardia japonica*, a favorite late summer bulb with odd pinkish flowers.

Weird as the flowers are, the bumblebees still like them. Like *Colchicum*, this produces rather *Muscari*-like leaves in the spring, with no flowers to be seen, and then sends up leafless flowering stems in late summer.



Barnardia japonica and bumblebee

Please send address changes to:

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

**Do include any updated email
addresses**

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: _____

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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>