

# GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS)  
**WINTER NEWSLETTER, JANUARY 2025**



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

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

### **\*\*SATURDAY, Feb. 8: Annual Winter Potluck**

#### **PLACE: Matthaei Botanical Gardens Auditorium**

Our traditional Winter Potluck! Please do come. It's a great way to make the winter shorter!

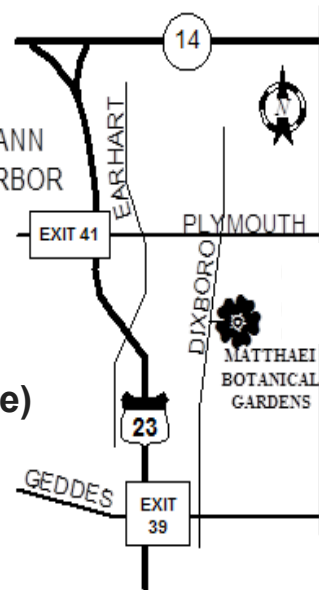
**11:30 setup – Noon: Potluck Lunch**

**Please bring a favorite dish to pass, and your cutlery and plates. We'll take care of drinks.**

**1:00:** Brief membership business meeting

**1:30: Program:**

**Tony Reznicek – Turkish Spring Plants and (maybe) Aliens**



Late last winter, I had the good fortune, along with one other of our Chapter Members, to be on a trip to see the early spring Flora of Turkey: Crocus galore, many other early spring bulbs, like snowdrops, squills, Winter aconites, plus mountain forests with oaks, and finally, high mountain forests dominated by Cedar of Lebanon. It was amazing to see so many of our familiar spring bulbs in nature. Then we had several days in Istanbul – one of the richest cities for history in Europe, maybe including aliens....

We should have the **spring meetings** all set in stone by the time of the potluck – but I wanted to get this newsletter out in advance. In early May, we'll have Paul Spriggs coming to give us two talks, bracketed by a lunch – we are still finalizing the schedule. Our usual day for the plant sale will be a bit later – probably May 17. We'll have all this set soon!

**All the details will be in our spring newsletter!**

### **NARGS 2025 Annual Meeting – Peaks and Prairies: Cheyenne Wyoming, June 12-16.**

**Check the Quarterly or the material on the NARGS website:**

**(<https://www.nargs.org/system/files/2024-12/Cheyenne rev.pdf>) for details.**

**A bit of history** – in the Great Lakes Chapter Newsletter for Feb. 1993, Betty Blake wrote a brief history of the Chapter up to 1992. It is reproduced below (thanks to Libby Greanya sending the article). Through the magic of optical character recognition, it is reproduced below. It's done with Betty's subtle sense of humor – and you'll see some familiar names. Anybody willing to continue this, taking our chapter history to the present?

### **A Short History of the Great Lakes Chapter By Betty Blake**

The first meetings of the GLC were organized by Harry Butler at Kingwood in Columbus, Ohio in the late 60's. Harry was listed as our first chairman in the ARGS Bulletin in 1969. Some will be surprised to learn that we still follow the general format of our first Michigan meeting in May 1970 at Lee Armiger's garden in Southfield, i.e., garden tours followed by a plant sale.

Although Vic Ries hosted the 1971 get together in Columbus, Bill Thomas became chairman in 1972 when we met at Fernwood. Dues were a dollar a year then, payable to treasurer Sandy MacPherson. Bill invited all ARGS members living in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan to join the group and it increased from 27 to 67 in two years. Of 67 members, thirteen were from Michigan, nine were from Indiana, one was from Wisconsin and the remainder (45) were from Ohio.

May 1973 saw us again at Kingwood, but in September we toured two nurseries in Mentor, Ohio. That was the first year we had more than one meeting per year and it was not until 1978 that had another two meeting year. In 1974 we met at Cox Arboretum, followed by a visit to Harry Butler's garden. The year 1974 also saw the beginning of a newsletter, edited by Mina Colvin and the transfer of the chairmanship from Bill Thomas to Earl Roberts of Indianapolis.

In 1976 we met in Royal Oak, Michigan and in 1977 in Nashville, Indiana where Ginny

LeGrand from Cincinnati took over leadership. In 1978 we met at Ginny's in April and at Kingwood in October – our second two meeting year. In 1978 Harry Butler agreed to resume leadership.

The May 1979 meeting in Athens, Ohio was a great success, but the distance involved for the Michigan members got them thinking seriously about separating from the Ohio and Indiana people. Finally, in 1981 at a meeting held in Royal Oak, the group was split into two chapters with the Michigan group retaining the name of Great Lakes Chapter and the Ohio and Indiana people becoming the Ohio Valley Chapter.

The organizational meeting of the "new" Michigan chapter took place on June 24, 1981 at Fernwood. Present were: Betty Blake, Kay Boydston, Leila Bradfield, Pat Carson, Rudy Fedus, Fern Hill, Vivian Kalmbach, Letha Keusel, Alice Maynard, Judy Pearson, Mary Lou Reece and Lucille and John Venema. Those officers elected were: Chairwoman, Judy Pearson; Program, Jim Briggs; Newsletter Editor (still the most prestigious position), Pat Carson; Plant Sales, Mary Lou Molitor; Treasurer, Betty Blake.

On August 18, 1981 we met at the Briggs's and at Oakland University in February 1982 when we saw slide shows on wild flowers by Gladis Kaufman and Fred Case. That was the first winter meeting. In May we toured Harry Elkins' garden, then had a plant sale at Bill and Vi Thomas's. In August, Letha Kuesel and Vivian Kalmbach hosted tours of their gardens, making a record three meetings in one year!

Iza Goroff spoke at our February 1983 meeting at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens in Ann Arbor and in May we toured Ken and Ann Nitchke's gardens and also Fred and Roberta (Boots) Case's garden.. In June we were at Matthaei for a talk and slide show by Alf Evans of the Edinburgh Botanical Garden. In November, we listened to a talk by J.C. Colley of Siskiyou Rare Plant

Nursery. Rosalie Meiland was offered, and accepted, the crown of newsletter editor.

In May 1984, Panayoti Kelaidis told us how to pronounce his name, then showed us many equally interesting slides of plants from the Western United States. Later that same month, we saw the gardens of H. Helfrich (remember all those double anemonellas?) and Judy Pearson.

Baldassare Mineo, the other partner of the Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery, spoke to us in January 1985. This is the year the (Marie) Azary Rock Garden was established at Matthaei and, as Marie was one of our members, we contributed toward the bronze plaque which identifies it

Chris Chadwell, who collects seeds in the Himalayas, was our speaker in February 1986. In May we went to see the amazing peony acreage of Chris Lanning and the beautiful new home and rock and shade gardens of Lelia Bradfield. On June 14, Harold Epstein spoke to us about Japanese plants. Steve Doonan and Phil Pearson, owners of Grand Ridge Nursery near Seattle, Washington, showed slides of alpiners in the wild in November--and slides of them growing at least as well in their nursery!

At the February meeting in 1987 we presented Awards of Merit to several of our hard working members: to Boots Case for outstanding leadership, to Rudy Fedus for his willingness to help one and all with garden construction and to Vi and Bill Thomas for their untiring efforts on behalf of the Chapter. Also in 1987, Jim Briggs succeeded Boots Case, who had been chairwoman for two years. Jenny and Jim Archibald were invited to speak on plant hunting in Turkey. A plant sale followed lunch.

February 1988 brought us talks on rhododendrons by Dr. Hinerman and, after another famous potluck, Jack Wikle spoke about the very large collection of dwarf conifers at Hidden Lake Gardens. As usual, member slides were also shown, both for

bragging and education.

In May the Ohio Valley Chapter joined us at Fernwood for a look at the ferns and other plantings and for an exceptional talk on native orchids by Fred Case.

At the February meeting Lorraine Yeats showed some of her remarkable slides of western plants.

April 8, 1989 interested members met at Matthaei to plan the chapter's entry in the coming flower show. The chapter committee consists of Phyllis McLean, chair, Jim Briggs, Phyllis Gallup, Rosalie Meiland, Mary Lou Molitor and Judy Pearson.

On May 6, 1989 we met at Nitschke's and Case's gardens with a plant sale at Nitschke's and sack lunch at Case's. Early that evening Catherine Hull showed slides taken in various places where not only the plants were interesting, but the scenery, too.

In July we met at Dick Punnett's garden. He led us through then told us how he had done it. His Nearing frames pay their way in this regard, as he has a large very diverse collection of trees and shrubs as well as alpiners.

In September. Vivian Kalmbach showed off her impressive collection of ferns and demonstrated how to grow them from spores. October 14 Norm Deno told us how we can at least get a start on making our gardens look like his – all self-sown – and beautiful!

Lorna Amsbaugh agreed to take on the secretary's duties because Mary Lou Molitor was recuperating from surgery.

Barrie Porteous was the speaker at the February 1990 meeting and new officers were: Chair, Ken Nitschke, V. Chair, Tony Reznicek, Secretary, Rosalie Meiland, Treasurer, Betty Blake, Plant Sale, Leila Bradfield.

The chapter's display at the Ann Arbor Flower Show was a rock gardener's dream – a glass house filled with blooming alpiners in early April. We got a third place ribbon (out of 14 entries).

May sixth was given to garden tours - those of Lorna Amsbaugh in Hillsdale and Betty Blake near Onsted.

September 15th we viewed Tecla Loup's garden and that of Charlene Harris both of Ann Arbor.

Anita Kistler spoke on "Gardens that have Influenced Me" at the February 1991 meeting.

In May we saw magnolias as grown by Phil Savage in Birmingham. It was an interesting and educational trip. Afterwards we ate sack lunches at Thomas' garden and bought out the plant sale.

The next weekend Cases and Nitschkes had open gardens.

Officers in 1991 were Chair, Ken Nitschke, V. Chair, Tony Reznicek, Secretary, Lorna Amsbaugh, Treasurer, Betty Blake, Plant Sale, John Smith & Dick Punnett, Newsletter Editors, Ken & Ann Nitschke.

September 14 Betty Blake's garden was open. On the 15th Susan & Tony Reznicek's garden in Ann Arbor was seen. Later that day, Dr. T. Larry Mellichamp from University of North Carolina spoke on some southeastern native plants.

### **News from NARGS February Carol Eichler, NARGS Board**

As a gardener I'm trying not to get the winter doldrums. The longer days, at least psychologically, make me feel better – we're on the upswing. If only I could keep gardening!

The frequent advice given is that now is the time to plan this year's garden. Unfortunately this doesn't work for me. A garden planner I'm not except unless it involves traveling to visit gardens. So I'm very excited to incorporate the 2025 AGM in Cheyenne Wyoming "Peaks and Prairies" on June 12-16, 2025 into my plant budget. I really enjoy visiting places that are very different from mine and the xeric landscape of the west certainly qualifies. I learn so much and salivate

over the plants that may be common there but can seem so unusual and probably challenging for me to grow. Like penstemons for example. Both the Winter Quarterly and the NARGS website has detailed information about the Cheyenne meeting and I am counting the days until Feb. 3 when registration opens. As an incentive, if you have never attended a NARGS AGM, you can apply for a stipend from National (via your local Chapter Chair) that covers your registration fee.

Back to the subject of garden planning. I'm more of an impulse gardener than a planner which just makes me feel like a "not very good gardener." So at least I've vowed this year to organize my garden records (dare I call it a New Year's resolution?). First on the list is to update the spreadsheet of the plants in my garden – very out-of-date. That includes consolidating my seedling list, also in a spreadsheet, often created in haste, as I try to track germination and transplant dates. Frankly, it's become quite a hodge-podge. I know some of those plants have "graduated" from pots and nursery bed to the real world while others have perished. I try to do a fall inventory but that doesn't always make the spreadsheet.

Second, I need to organize my seed records, also in a spreadsheet. Fortunately, I can review my past NARGS seed orders (since 2022-23 at least) from the "My Account" page, both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, though the records don't show which species I received. It's a start anyway and could actually help me build a wish list. That brings me to a third step, which is to create a wish list. A note to me: this should be on-going year-round.

Fourth, label, label, label. I now possess a label maker and weather-proof stick markers. I got a good start on this last fall so the spring will be a test to see how well my technique is working. Look for an article on labeling ideas next month. I'm not an expert so I welcome others' ideas too. Lastly, I want to use Steps 1

4 to refresh my Latin, which seems to fade with my age.

I think that's quite enough for resolutions and a winter project! Will it come to fruition? Let's hope so. Stating and sharing these goals in writing may be the boost I need to follow through. Otherwise, guess what my 2026 resolutions will be?

### **My (only) gardening milestone for January Tony Reznicek**

Well, it's tough when you are on the outer fringe of possibilities for having something in bloom all every month of the year – especially if we have an extended cold snap! So this year was lucky because January 1, New Year's Day, we were still experiencing balmy conditions in southern Michigan – quickly to change! So here is my late fall/winter blooming clone of *Helleborus niger* (originally from Ellen Hornig, Seneca Hill Perennials on January 1.



*Helleborus niger* January 1, 2025

It's only a small victory, as immediately afterwards, we slid into a stiff freeze, to culminate in the severe cold we're seeing right now. But by February 8, the time of our winter potluck, we should start having the early witch hazels opening. So this year will surely be mission accomplished – at least one

plant in bloom out of doors every month of the year.

Oh yes – what does this plant look like today? Here it is:



Thoroughly frozen *Helleborus* Jan. 22, 2025

**Please send address changes to:**

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

**Do include your up-to-date email address.**

**Thank You.**

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:**

**Great Lakes Chapter:**

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

**email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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  
or pay by Zelle

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

**National Organization:**

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

**email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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>

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**FIRST CLASS**