

# GREAT LAKES CHAPTER

North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS)  
FALL NEWSLETTER, AUGUST 2019



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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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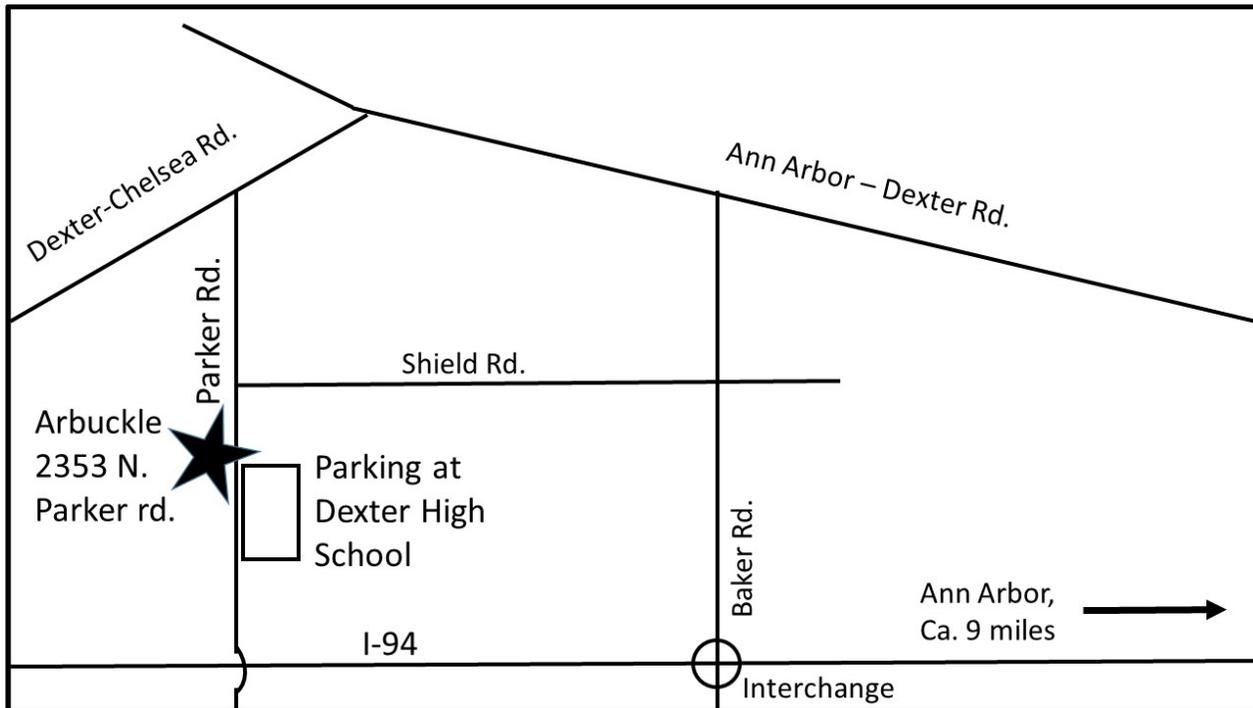
### **\*\*SATURDAY, Sept. 7: Fall Meeting, Plant Sale, & Garden Tour**

**MEETING:** 11:00 AM – ca. 3:00 PM

**PLACE:** Andy Arbuckle's garden, 2353 North Parker, Dexter  
– See the map below and the plant sale insert

**BAG LUNCH:** While touring the gardens

**PLANT SALE:** 1:30 PM – See the Plant Sale insert for details



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### Mark your Calendar:

**\*\*SATURDAY, January 18: Our Annual Winter Potluck at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens!**

More details will be in our usual timely winter postcard or newsletter

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**NARGS ANNUAL MEETING 2020: will be held in Ithaca, New York, on June 18–20, 2020, on the campus of Cornell University**

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## Little ferns for year-round interest Tony Reznicek

Looking at my tufa beds now brings the realization that not much is in bloom – but there is a lot of foliage interest, especially from ferns. Ferns bring to mind not rock gardening, but cool, moist, woody shade. But, in fact, many of the delicate little ferns, even those that do grow in cool moist shade, like rock outcrops, and are natural rock garden plants. Another feature of many species is they are evergreen, so have year round interest. Most are also relatively long-lived. Admittedly, there are not many that will take full sun in a crevice garden, trough, or sand bed, but there are a few.

So here are a few notes, written in the doldrums of August, on some choice, small rock garden ferns, categorized roughly by appropriate setting; all pictures are from my yard. These are from every habitat from cool moist shady tufa walls, to full, hot sun. One very nice thing about growing ferns, especially on tufa, is that some species will spread by spores to colonize suitable micro-sites, and this makes for a very natural looking placement. The most vigorous colonizers for me have been *Asplenium trichomanes*, *Woodsia obtusa*, *Cystopteris* spp., and *Asplenium scolopendrium*.

### More or less sunny tufa:

*Asplenium ceterarch* – the evergreen rustyback fern from Europe; I've not had this long enough to be sure of its tolerance limits, but so far, it tolerates brightly lit tufa and partial sun very well. It is hard to find in the trade.



Young plant of *Asplenium ceterarch* on tufa

*Asplenium platyneuron*, the Michigan native ebony spleenwort, is tolerant of both limestone and acidic rocks, but is at its best on tufa – where the vegetative fronds lie flat and look great, especially when small. Fertile fronds are upright, and a little tall – to ca. 12 inches. This is not vigorous for me, and often is found in nature in sandy, partly open areas, so rock is also not mandatory.



Young *Asplenium platyneuron* on tufa

*Asplenium trichomanes*, the maidenhair spleenwort, is the finest and easiest native Michigan rock fern for tufa, tolerating quite dry settings. I would have said only shade, but it vigorously spores over the tufa, sometimes into quite sunny settings. A well-established stand of this, with its black rachis and delicate green pinnae, is lovely throughout the year. There are two subspecies in Michigan, this, and a very similar, but rarer, one that is confined to acidic rocks in the western Upper Peninsula



*Asplenium trichomanes* and self-sown stand on dryish tufa.

**Shady rock wall or tufa:**

*Asplenium platyneuron* and *A. trichomanes* are both splendid in shade also, but in full shade there are more options.

*Asplenium rhizophyllum*, the rare native Michigan walking fern, though it does not do well for me, perhaps mostly because it is slug bait, loves mossy walls and is worthwhile for its unique evergreen fronds that taper to a tip which roots to establish new plants (hence “walking” over rocks). Large colonies of this covering mossy limestone or dolomite rocks are an amazing site – though I have yet to see such shows in cultivation.



Slug eaten *Asplenium rhizophyllum* on a mossy concrete wall – the best I can do

*Asplenium viride*, the rare native Michigan green spleenwort is a very delicate species suitable only for cool, moist sites. It resembles a delicate *Asplenium trichomanes*, but with a green rachis. It is circumpolar and always confined to northern latitudes and higher elevations; thus more common north

of Michigan. I first noted it was growable seeing it in Fred Case’s garden years ago, but it needs care in siting. It requires complete shade, a moist setting, and a cool, north facing exposure – a fussy fern.



*Asplenium viride* on tufa

*Woodsia obtusa*, the rare Michigan native bluntlobe cliff fern, is another rock fern that self-spores on tufa, and also sometimes into walls. It is a very common plant south of Michigan, and can tolerate some sun. It is also very easy to establish.



*Woodsia obtusa* among limestone rocks

*Woodsia polystichoides*, the holly-fern woodsia, from China, Japan, Korea, and Russia is another delightful – but hard to get rock fern. The frond shape is especially interesting. I’ve killed this, so can’t claim any deep knowledge – but I will try it again.



*Woodsia polystichoides* on limestone

*Cystopteris* sp., the fragile ferns, also self-spore in the garden. Two native species are quite nice small rock garden ferns, *C. fragilis*, mostly confined to rock, and *C. tenuis* – more in woodland settings, but will also grow on rock. While nice, they are deciduous – in fact, die down early, and now are looking quite ratty in the garden. Not quite as desirable as the more evergreen species, but on the other hand, they leaf out early in spring, and are a lovely and delicate foil for spring blooming rock garden plants.

There are many larger species that also love shady rock gardens. *Asplenium scolopendrium*, the European hart's-tongue fern, does very well on tufa, but with fronds up to as foot long, it's pushing the size limits for rock gardens (though there are some dwarf forms). Also a good doer, but even larger and more rapacious is *Cystopteris bulbifera*. It's lovely but you may regret having it!

#### Sunny rock gardens or troughs:

*Myriopteris lanosa* (formerly *Cheilanthes l.*), the hairy lip fern is an eastern US native, (S of Michigan) and is the most drought tolerant small fern I grow – able to survive in a dry trough with cacti! The fronds are somewhat greyish, from fine hairs, and evergreen. It forms dense clumps that can be divided. You can't have too many of this species.



*Pellaea atropurpurea*, the purple cliff-brake, is rare and at the northern limit of its range in Michigan but much commoner southward and easy to grow. It is quite tolerant of drier soils, and will spread by spores a little in suitable settings. It may require a bit of supplemental watering in a dry, sandy crevice garden, unlike the xeric *Myriopteris*, but otherwise is a good species for a more exposed setting. It prefers calcareous settings.



*Pellaea atropurpurea* in the crevice garden

*Woodsia ilvensis*, the deciduous rusty cliff fern, is unique among the ferns noted here in that it is a plant of acidic rocks, never growing on limestone or dolomite. In Michigan, it is relatively frequent on sunny, dry cliffs and outcrops, but confined to the Precambrian shield rocks of the western Upper Peninsula. In the garden, it needs to be grown in a non-calcareous rock, like sandstone.



Unfurling *Woodsia ilvensis* in a slot cut in a sandstone block

When well established, these small ferns are often rooted right into the tufa – so dividing them is problematical. Reproducing them is thus basically by sowing spores – and that's another topic, though there are many sources that tell how to do it. If they are in soil, as in a trough or in the crevice garden, then it is usually easy to divide those species that quickly form multiple crowns.

**Spring Meeting with Ger van den  
Beuken, April 6, 2019  
Bonnie Ion**

Two programs were presented by Ger van den Beuken, one of Europe's most eminent experts on the cultivation of choice alpine plants.

The Cultivation and Propagation of the Genus *Saxifraga* (includes *Porphyron*, *Saxifraga* and *Ligulatae Saxifragas*) and Cushion and Mat-forming species.

A communal lunch was enjoyed by all participants between the two excellent talks which showed an enormous variety of beautiful plants in cultivation and in the wild. Ger has seen and grown dozens of different species of the more than 440 known in *Saxifraga*; the list of those he discussed was a large extension of those listed on Wikipedia. Unfortunately, the wilds are places most of us will never reach (such as high Patagonia or the far Caucasus), and those plants that are in cultivation somewhere often cannot take Michigan conditions (such as our summer heat or highly variable winter cold). However, Ger did provide practical tips on doing the best one can, drawn from observation in the wild and 35 years as a grower, and gave much encouragement to those willing to try.

Member Joan Bolt, whose jewel of a garden GLC visited in May last year, brought a trove of valuable gardening books. She had decided these were surplus to her present requirements, and to give them away free to 'good homes', as she put it. Many members left very happy with their new treasures.

In addition, a Business Meeting of GLC adopted the motion that the Chapter incorporate. The Chapter Chair, Holly Pilon, will submit Articles of Incorporation to the State of Michigan. Incorporation differs from the legal status following from the previous Articles of Association, dating from 25 October 2010, to be seen from the GLC Governance page. Incorporation protects individual members from personal liability and will simplify obtaining liability insurance for events that GLC runs, like the upcoming Gala, on May 17-19, and garden visits. It

does not affect GLC's charitable or tax situations.

**Our Spring Gala – May 17 – 19!  
Tony Reznicek**

Well, from the viewpoint of some of us, the big plus was – we survived! But it was a great event, with excellent attendance. Starting with a Friday night “meet & greet” and Chapter plant sale, we had 8 great gardens open Saturday and Sunday morning: Julie Caroff, Bonnie & Patrick Ion, Don and Mary LaFond, Holly Pilon, Tony & Susan Reznicek, Jacques and Andrea Urda-Thompson, Bev & Bob Walters, and Ed & Colleen Weiss.

I can't comment on the garden tours because I was home hosting people at my garden, but I was surprised at the number of people that came by, even Sunday morning. It was a delightful weekend. We had people from around the Great Lakes region and even a little beyond – Toronto, Pittsburgh, as far west as Minnesota.

The Saturday evening meeting at Weber's was great! We had about 130 people for dinner and the fine meal was all the better for being free! We were regaled by Dave Pounds who sang a clever ditty about our GLC gardens – in a green jacket and with his handlebar moustache; we wonder if that should be official attire for rock gardeners!

Afterwards, Vojtech Holubec presented a custom talk for us, targeted to plants that are likely to grow in our southern Michigan hot summer climate titled: “Happy in the Wild, Happy in the Garden.” One advantage of regional meetings like this is that everyone faces rather similar conditions, so it very interesting to see what people are growing and how they are doing it. Vojtech gave us a thoughtful look at many lovely plants, from the Caucasus, the Tien Shan, and other parts of Eurasia, that do well in Czech Republic gardens and show heat tolerance that ought to make them work for us. Some of the plants he noted liked a “summer baking.” That we can provide! He showed some lovely snowdrops -- his wife is a snowdrop addict. He also noted that even in their

somewhat milder and cooler climate, things like *Meconopsis* will not grow satisfactorily, just like here.

The plant sale and books income was nearly \$2400 – a nice sum, thanks to all the generous donors. It made the cost of the Gala workable for the Chapter. It was a delight to see so many rock gardening friends from other Chapters. We owe a huge thanks to the organizers, and especially to Don LaFond and Julie Caroff, who shouldered much of the organizational work.

**Marcela Ferreyra – our wonderful  
June 8 meeting  
Tony Reznicek**

Marcela is from Patagonia, and gave us two talks, bracketing an excellent lunch, on her favorite plants from Patagonia. One talk on rosulate violets, and another titled Best Patagonian Flowers. Marcela also gave us an introduction to the climate, geography, and flora of Patagonia, noting that there is a real winter (not as cold as Michigan, usually), that it is very dry, quite mountainous in parts, and that there are about 2500 species of plant, with many endemic species and genera.

Rosulate violets, botanically, *Viola* Section *Andinium*, are alpine and high steppe plants with typical violet flowers, but a highly modified plant body formed into a rosette or column of tightly overlapping leaves, from which the flowers protrude. The leaves are often colored similar to the ground, making for an amazing sight. It's hard to imagine, so here is a photo of *Viola copahuensis*.



There are perhaps 100 species, many are and local. Some are annual, often in drier

habitats and lower elevations; most are perennial, and are in dry, rocky alpine settings, so their succulent-like growth form is partly explained by the extreme environments in which they occur. Needless to say, their cultivation in our part of the world represents the frontiers of rock gardening.

Marcela's other talk, on the best Patagonian flowers, was a lovely overview of some of the distinctive and spectacular plants of Patagonia, of which there are many. Think *Alstroemeria*, lovely bulbs, especially *Amaryllidaceae* and *Iridaceae*. Many daisy family (*Asteraceae*) plants, often lovely cushions and mats. Some of the greatest highlights for me anyway, were the famous "scarlet gorse," *Anarthrophyllum desideratum*, the huge mounding cushion *Apiaceae* – South America's equivalent of "vegetable sheep," the alpine cactus *Maihuenia poeppigii*, and the fantastic *Calceolaria uniflora*. Did I note *Fuchsia magellanica*? The phenomenal orange-flowered *Calandrinias*? And I can't forget the "bulbous" *Oxalis*, some growable for us. And, of course, the king of South American alpiners, *Ranunculus semiverticillatus*. There are so many!

**Carol Duvall**

On April 25, Carol Duvall passed away. Many of us who visited Duvall Nursery for their open houses to buy the fabulous selections of special plants they always had – and also for Chapter events – will remember Carol and how gracious and helpful she always was. Our condolences to Andy.

**Jim Wilkins**

On June 2 Dr. Jim Wilkins of Jackson, MI, passed away. Jim had a phenomenal garden, for those of us lucky enough to have seen it, and was especially interested in *Hosta* and woodland plants. He was a *Hosta* hybridizer, having developed and registered 41 *Hosta*, and he also served as President of the American *Hosta* Society.

Our Chapter was especially grateful to him for organizing the import of Japanese plants for sale at our 2015 Annual meeting.

**From the NARGS President,  
Elisabeth Zander:  
National NARGS looking for Regional  
Captains for the NARGS Speakers Tour,  
including our (Central) region – any vol-  
unteers?**

The NARGS Board has just passed a motion to set up a distinct account for Speakers Tour Endowment Fund.

We have an anonymous donor funding 5 years at \$7000 per year strictly for speaker travel expenses.

Monies, based on last year, will be sent December and January. NARGS chapters would be divided into 6 regions, each which would have \$1100 per year available. The remaining \$400 would be available at the discretion of the Overall Chair. Whatever monies a region does not use in one year would be available to them in the following. Your region is called Central (Great Lake, Gateway, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin).

**Overall Chair: Rosemary Monahan**

- Oversee regional captain's plans. Suggest national and international speakers.
- Perform speaker bookings online for those captains who cannot. Use the NARGS CC# for those booking
- Publish speaker tour information to our Secretary (Bobby Ward) for posting online and in the Quarterly

**Regional Captains:**

1. **Northeast: Elisabeth Zander**
2. **MidAtlantic/Southeast: Cyndy Cromwell**
3. **Central: ?**
4. **Northwest: Claire Cockcroft**
5. **Eastern Canada: Barbara & Bella**
6. **Southwest: Panayoti Kelaidis**

- Perform speaker arrangements and bookings. Book the most economical flight and any other transportation needed. MatrixIGA and other free online services might be used. (Any accompanying person's booking might be handled at the same time and the fare repaid to this NARGS fund immediately) If needed, the Overall Chair would book actual flights.
- Deal directly with the NARGS treasurer and Overall Chair for reimbursement.
- Submit the receipt (email, hard copy etc.) to the treasurer or chair.
- Alternate a selection of national and international speakers.
- Publish the itinerary to the speaker and chapters involved.
- Provide the chapters with lists of talks, photo and bio.
- Regional captains might band with each other for extended tours.
- Should some chapters not have a speaker in one year, they should in the following.
- Track amount spent and leftovers for the following year

**Chapters: Local arrangements responsibility of chapters**

- Pick up and deliver the speaker (and accompanying person)
- Host (including time between talks)
- Pay honorarium directly to the speaker \$250 for one talk, \$400 for two
- Advertise the NARGS talk as such

**Please send address changes to Bonnie Ion, 1456 Kensington Drive Ann Arbor, MI 48104 – bion@umich.edu  
Do include your up-to-date email address.  
Thank You.**

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:**

**Great Lakes Chapter:**

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Send \$10.00 per year (check payable to Chapter) to:  
**Bonnie Ion**  
Treasurer, Great Lakes Chapter, NARGS  
1456 Kensington Drive  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

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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