



PVC Bulletin
August 2022

Potomac Valley Chapter
North American
ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Judy Zatsik, Zephyranthes 'Labuffarosea'

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Calendar of Events 2022-2023

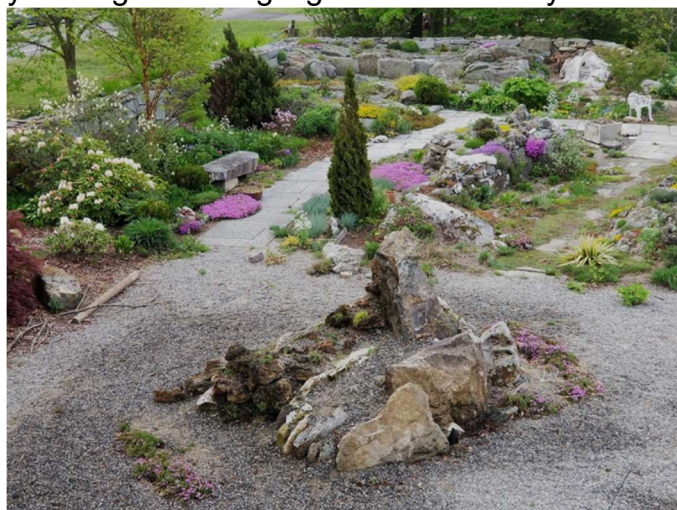
www.pvc-nargs.org

All meetings are Saturdays unless noted

September 24 @10am via ZOOM: Elisabeth Zander

"The Evolution of My Rock Garden"

Elisabeth presents a brief history of her garden in Goshen, Connecticut, begun over 20 years ago. She highlights the last few years of building tufa walls, a tufa tower, troughs, and crevice and sand gardens. An avid seed sower since running the NARGS Seed Exchange back in the mid-nineties, Elisabeth relishes germinating new-to-her-plants each year and the chance to integrate them into the garden. "As aging takes its toll on the gardener's body," she says, "we make more rock gardens as they are so much less maintenance than perennial beds."



Elisabeth's garden

Elisabeth is former President of NARGS, the force behind the amazing NARGS webinars, and the current web manager. It is possible she has held every (almost) position within the organization!

October 1st Fall Plant Exchange, Location TBD

October 8th Tour of Klein Garden, Antietam, MD. Tour this 2-to-3-acre garden with emphasis on sedums and conifers. We met the Kleins during our August tour of Birchwood garden in Loudoun County, VA. Details to come.

October 22-23 Trough Workshop with Rob Gimpel Create two troughs – one for yourself and one for the club to sell – at Susannah Farm Nursery in Boyds, MD. Priority will go to those who signed up for the last workshop, which had to be cancelled.
Barbara Rose will be in touch with you.

Wednesday, November 2, 7:30pm, Linda Cochran, NARGS Traveling Speaker
“Native Plants of the Northwest” IN-PERSON LECTURE, Location TBD (probably Green Spring Gardens)

November 12, Members’ Meeting: Bring images to share of your garden or botanical travels Location TBD, but likely McLean Community Center IN-PERSON MEETING

November 19, NARGS Webinar: Geophytes (Bulbs, species peonies and more.)
More details to come: www.nargs.org

2023

January 14 NARGS Webinar: Small Woodies (Ericaceous plants, Conifers and more)
More details to come: www.nargs.org

February 25, NARGS Webinar: What’s New in Rock Gardening Build a crevice garden in a container; propagation techniques. More details to come www.nargs.org

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear PVC-NARGS Members,

Thank you to all who renewed your annual memberships. Thank you for being members, attending our programs, and hopefully pitching in in some way. The annual membership fee of 15 dollars is certainly a small price to pay for access to programs about rock gardening, tours, a trough workshop and two annual plant exchanges. All of this is only made possible by you contributing your time and efforts in some way, whether it be helping at the Spring plant sale, sorting seeds for the NARGS seed exchange, writing an article and posting photos for the newsletter, opening your garden for a tour, or making a trough for the club to sell. Shouldn’t some volunteer act, big or

small, be expected of all of us PVC-NARGS members? So please consider what your contribution to this rock garden society might be in the near future.

The book order arrived and I will be contacting each of you that ordered one so that you may pay and receive the book.

While summer blooms are receding at this time of year, there is still so much going on in my own garden. Not counting volunteer natives like *Rhexia virginica*, or the native asters, *Symphyotrichum ericoides*, in our wooded area. on a recent survey of blooming plants, I counted no less than 15 different cultivars in full bloom. Blooming in my garden now are: Alliums, bolting Basil, Canna 'Australia', Canna 'Durban', Canna 'Pretoria', Cosmos, *Echinacea purpurea*, *Helianthus* (for Ukraine), *Hydrangea macrophylla*, Hostas (dwarf), *Lagerstroemia* (5), *Lantana camara*, *Lycoris squamigera*, Petunias, *Pelargonium*, *Persicaria virginiana*, and Salvias. and two more about to bloom - *Chelone obliqua* "Tiny Tortuga" and lots of Chrysanthemums.

On a sadder note, two of our huge *Quercus albas* are fighting for their lives, having been infested with ambrosia beetles (*Xylosandrus germanus*). We lost four oaks to this a couple of years ago and treated the remaining oaks but the combined stresses of high heat and heavy rains are making them vulnerable. We are hopeful that with diligent treatment they will survive. To cheer myself up, I did purchase and plant a small *Sciadopitys verticillata* 'Typ Bohlje' and I expect it to grow very slowly.

Looking ahead at our fall schedule we have a variety of offerings booked, and please notice the in-person gatherings: a garden tour, the trough workshop, the NARGS traveling speaker talk, the annual general membership meeting, and the Fall plant exchange, are all in person. Hope to see each and every one of you soon!

Barbara

In case you missed it, Crevice Gardening made the *New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/03/realestate/crevice-rock-gardening.html?fbclid=IwAR1qFkL1hIxROffRKduDrIcFpDH1saiTQqa5yEYs4C4t849fpcAaoVr29Sc>

The Crevice Garden by Kenton Seth and Paul Spriggs
Filbert Press, 2022

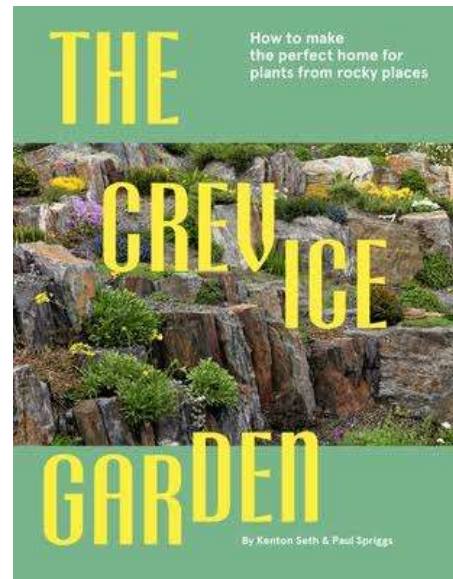
Review by Joseph Tychonievich, editor of *The Rock Garden Quarterly*

I'll be honest. Despite being an avid gardener, a lover of books, and writing about gardening for a living, I have a pretty small library of gardening books. Lately, that collection has been shrinking, not growing. There are lots and lots of beautiful books about plants and gardening out there, many that I have read once with pleasure, but there are less than a dozen gardening books on my shelf I actually refer to time and time again.

The Crevice Garden has joined those ranks.

I would recommend this book to a novice who has never made – or even seen – a rock or crevice garden before. I also whole-heartedly recommend it to the many members of this society who have been making these types of gardens for years. The clear prose – wonderfully assisted by beautiful and informative photos and illustrations – takes the reader right from the very basics into advanced details of constructing gardens, placing stones, and cultivating plants. It is no small feat to write a book that won't lose beginners or bore experts, but Seth and Spriggs have managed it.

I particularly appreciate that there is equal emphasis placed on making a crevice garden that is a good home for plants to thrive and creating one that is aesthetically pleasing and beautiful. Much of the advice I've heard or read on placing rocks amounts to "make them look natural," without very many specifics on how to actually do that. This book, however, gives specific advice and guides the reader through thinking through every detail of the material, size, shape, and placement of each stone, and how those factors impact the look of the garden and how plants will grow in it.



The book is arranged into ten chapters, starting with three chapters on the basics of what a crevice garden is, the natural inspiration for this style of gardening, and its history. Chapter four, "How a Crevice Garden Works," is one of my favorites, giving a clear conceptual grounding to all the practical information that follows in chapters five through eight as they detail every step of planning, creating, and maintaining the crevice garden.

Chapter nine is a tour of over a dozen different crevice gardens, showcasing a huge range of styles, types of stones, climates, and settings for these gardens. If you are a crevice garden novice or skeptic, I'd recommend starting here, as the gorgeous photos clearly communicate the enormous appeal of this style of gardening. I particularly appreciate the diversity of gardens featured. Whatever your gardening situation, you'll find ample inspiration in this chapter.

The final chapter, plant profiles, is a good introduction to rock garden plants for a beginner, but probably has the least interest for more experienced rock gardeners.

Throughout the book, the photography is consistently gorgeous and informative, complementing the points made in the text. Even more useful are the frequent drawings by Kenton Seth, which quickly illustrate everything from how root systems grow through crevices to the aesthetic impacts of different stone-placement choices.

The Crevice Garden is an instant classic and an essential addition to any rock gardener's library.

NOTE: PVC members who ordered the book will be hearing from Barbara Rose soon.



Grassland Prairie in northern New York?

Judy Zatsick

When the last glacier retreated from the northeast 10,000 years ago, melting water created deep fissures in limestone bedrock deposited by shallow seas. This bedrock forms the slab like foundation of the Alvar grasslands of Chaumont Barrens in Jefferson County upstate New York.

I had the opportunity to experience the barrens in June on the NARGS tour before the annual conference in Ithaca. From Ithaca, our group of nearly 20 travelled north to Syracuse, and northwest to the Barrens. Cornell



Fissure with water



Fissure

University botanist Robert Wesley met us at the site. He introduced us to the fascinating environment and charted a path through the various habitats of the barrens.

An alvar is a biological environment based on a limestone plain. Fractures in the bedrock continue to be eroded by rain, which is acidic, deepening crevices and fissures that create niche environments. Soils when present are thin, usually no more than 10 centimeters. In North America, over 120 alvars are scattered through an area surrounding the Great Lakes, predominantly near Lake Ontario, for a total area of 43 square miles. Often flooded in the spring and fall, with dry conditions during the summer, alvars support a distinctive group of plants including those that

survive in prairie grasslands. Lichens, mosses and ferns are common. Trees and other woody plants are absent or stunted.

A narrow but easily navigable footpath maintained by the Nature Conservancy led us through an area of shrubby plants that ended at the open grasslands. *Carex crawei*, Crawe's Sedge were

punctuated with *Rosa blanda* and *Cornus racemosa*, Gray Dogwood. Charming *Potentilla erectum*, *Antennaria*, and *Prunella* all grew along the path's edge. Eastern Towhies and Cedar waxwings called from the woodland areas. Wesley explained that coyote, fox, porcupine and white-tailed deer are all frequent visitors to the barrens.

Once we reached the concentration of pavement barrens, flashes of red drew us along to *Castilleja coccinea*, not commonly found east of the Rockies. Along the edges of the rocky outcroppings, charming *Campanula rotundifolia* clustered.

Lovely *Geum triflorum*, Prairie smoke, was in bloom, mingling with *Packera paupercula*, Balsam Ragwort, *Sporobolus heterolepis*, Prairie Dropseed, and a range of grasses. *Comandra umbellata*, *Lilium philadelphicum*, and *Anticlea elegans* ssp *glaucus*,



Geum triflorum

Mountain Death Camas, punctuated the grasslands in various locations. It was as though we were on a huge tapestry, with a background of grasses and sedges, embellished with dashes of color and the texture of the wildflowers.

It was a perfect place to join friends and plant lovers coming out of covid lockdown, with plenty of room to gather and wander in

the open space. If you haven't visited a barrens and are a plant lover, Chaumont will not disappoint. The Bruce Peninsula in Ontario also offers limestone barrens with a variety of plant specimens set in the stunning backdrops of Lake Huron and the Georgian Bay. Further afield, the Burren in Ireland presents a moon like landscape in another variation of this rare ecosystem.



Castilleja coccinea



Campanula rotundifolia

PVC DUES are \$15 per year. Pay online with PayPal or a credit card here: www.pvc-nargs.org Or, please send a check payable to PVC-NARGS to treasurer Margot Ellis, 2417 N Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22207

Editor's note: All photographs are by the article authors unless otherwise noted.

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