



A Rock Garden Newsletter

December 2013

We met November 16<sup>th</sup> for a potluck lunch and social time before watching slides on plants and scenery from Steve Lesch's latest family vacation, out west this time. Several members asked how they could become members of his extended family!

Our annual meeting followed with the election of officers. Debbie Wopat is our new chairperson and the rest of the officers agreed to remain in their respective offices. Debbie was our vice-chairperson, and that office is still vacant. Filling this position isn't a commitment to becoming the next chairperson. Please consider whether you could fill this office.

The Wisconsin-Illinois Chapter is proud to present John Mather with the 2013 NARGS Chapter Service Award. John has been an enthusiastic member of the Chapter for over 15 years and he has contributed greatly to the success of the Chapter over that time. For the last 8 years, he has held the important position of Newsletter Editor. During that time he kept us all well informed of Chapter activities and supplied us with informative articles on rock gardening. It was through John's efforts that the Chapter moved into the electronic world. He spent a considerable amount of time setting up a website for the Chapter and our Newsletter is now made available for members to download there instead of using the postal service and paper copies, resulting in a substantial savings of both dollars and energy use. John worked with another member, Jennifer Sharp, to produce a new logo for the Chapter and then set up an

online store where members could purchase clothing and other items with the Chapter logo on them. Another important job he took on as Editor was to send out timely email notices to the membership of upcoming Chapter activities.

John has also been co-chair of our Garden Expo booth for a number of years; storing materials, producing posters and helping to set up and take down the booth. Throughout his years as a Chapter member, he has hosted garden tours, trough workshops and been the host for several NARGS Speakers Tour visitors.

John's clear thinking and common sense advice has been appreciated by all Chapter Chairs he has worked with. John's service to the Chapter and his cheerful attitude has enriched us all.



The program schedule for the upcoming year is at the end of this newsletter. Note that there are many empty spots in it yet. There are tentative plans for some of the spots but all suggestions are welcome, both for 2014 and 2015.

I'm looking for input for future newsletters. Are you planning a new project, trying a new plant, found a book or visited a garden or nursery that would be of interest to the rest of the chapter? An article, as long or short as you want, would be appreciated by all of us. Pictures of plants or your rock garden would also be great although this doesn't have to be just about rock gardening since most of us have a wide interest in plants and landscaping.

Which mail order seed or plant sources are you happy with? I'd like to include a list in the next newsletter, as we start planning for spring and a new growing season.

John blessed me with a variety of digital and printed information he received when he became editor and accumulated during his term. There is a box of old newsletters and I plan to go through them, picking highlights of our chapter's history. The earliest newsletter is from May, 1970, and Don Havens was chairman. Does anyone have earlier newsletters? Would some of our longtime members be willing to provide details about the beginnings of our chapter?

A 1982 newsletter contains the following paragraph: "The first priorities of this year's officers include increased communication and deeper friendships as well as good programs. To promote these at meetings, we are determined to always wear name tags, and to promote them via our newsletters we are going to include a few member profiles each month, just to get us better acquainted. Everyone must be included and they will be randomly selected."

Dorothy Custer provided one of the first profiles and mentioned that she met Claude Barr who advised her to join the American Rock Garden Society. She said "in November 1968 my name appears in the local list, one month after the "Wisconsin-Illinois Regional Rock Garden Society" was organized. So I am not a charter member."

Member profiles would be interesting. I think name tags are a very good idea, especially to help new members associate names and faces. And it would also be helpful to some of us older members, older both in age and time in the chapter. The local garden club to which I belong has name tags in a pin-on holder. We take our name tags out of a box when we come to the meeting and return it when we

leave. At least that is the plan and it works pretty well as long as the box is brought to the meeting and we either remember to leave our name tag or remember to bring it to the next meeting.

I expressed surprise about the reclassification of Dodecatheon and Ted Cochrane, who is Senior Academic Curator Emeritus at the UW-Madison Herbarium, sent me the following:

In the "The Northern Outcrop" for September 2013 the editor, having encountered the name *Primula meadia*, asked for information pertaining to the reclassification of Dodecatheon. I hasten to supply the following reference and brief explanation.

Studies of DNA have confirmed long-held suspicions that Dodecatheon is really a highly modified *Primula* (see Austin R. Mast & James L. Reveal, "Transfer of Dodecatheon to *Primula* (*Primulaceae*)," in the journal *Brittonia*, vol. 59, pp. 79-82. 2007), and it appears unlikely that *Primula* can be subdivided appropriately in order to retain Dodecatheon as a genus. In other words, the morphology, cytology, and DNA of the two groups all indicate their close relationship. Therefore, taxonomists are now including Dodecatheon within the genus *Primula*. Mast and Reveal have clarified the relationships between the taxa, for example, separating what were considered varieties of *D. meadia* from one another and placing them under different species of *Primula*. Gardeners may be reluctant to abandon a familiar distinctive name like Dodecatheon, but if we are becoming used to *Maianthemum canadense* instead of *Smilacina racemosa* for false Solomon's-seal and *Thalictrum thalictroides* instead of *Anemonella thalictroides* for rue-anemone, then we can soon adapt to *Primula meadia* for the captivating eastern shooting-star, now formally cited as *Primula meadia* (L.) A. R. Mast & Reveal.

The combining and splitting of genera and families (for example, including *Hepatica* within *Anemone*, separating *Boechera* from *Arabis*, splitting *Cleomaceae* from *Capparaceae*) and the shifting of genera to new families (*Acer* to *Sapindaceae*, *Chelone* to *Plantaginaceae*, *Viburnum* to *Adoxaceae*, etc.) will continue apace over the next 20 or more years, because similarities between characteristics of organisms, while they may appear to be natural, may or may not reflect evolutionary or genetic history. Contemporary systematists use the methodology of cladistics and emphasize monophyletic groups (groups that have arisen through diversification from a simple ancestor) [see correction at end of newsletter] involving shared and derived

characters. A polyphyletic group originates from two or more ancestral stocks and is not recognized by cladists. Cladistic relationships are presented in cladograms, trees showing common points of ancestry, the number of divergences connecting different branches, and the relative time of origin of one taxon to another. Cladograms may be based on morphological or anatomical characters, or they may be based on the molecules found in plants (molecular systematics), for example, nucleic acids (DNA, RNA), in which case they are called phylogenetic trees. The direct study of the genetic material, DNA and RNA, provides the most fundamental assessment possible of the relationships among taxa and has had a momentous impact on plant systematics over the past 25 years.

(I haven't become used to some of the changes that have already been made but the amount of reclassification will undoubtedly increase with more study of the genetic material JH)

#### 2014 Program Schedule (subject to change)

February 7-9      Garden Expo

March 15            Dave Collura on a visit to Scotland

April 19            Flower Factory visit

May

June

July

August               Kelly Norris talk on Claude Barr

September

October 15 (Wed)   Mike Kintgen joint with Hardy Plant Soc

November 15       Travels with Steve

December           Seed sorting



Gentiana verna the blue may be too bright. This plant died after blooming two years but will be replaced.



Iberis sempervirens "Little Gem" A beautiful cascade over a rock. Moving this plant may be a challenge.



Galanthus nivalis Aptly called snowdrops since it often blooms with snow on the ground.

## Membership Renewal Form

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

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

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues are \$10 per year. Please clip this form and send it along with your check (payable to WI-IL NARGS) to: Brad McDowell, 1535 Speedway Road, Verona WI 53593**

### 2014 Chapter Officers

Chairperson - Debbie Wopat, N5760 Hill Rd, Rio, WI 53960, (920) 992-3109,

Vice-Chairperson –

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### THE NORTHERN OUTCROP

#### Correction

I regret having made a mistake in the explanation of monophyletic groups. In the second paragraph, the statement “Contemporary systematists use the methodology of cladistics and emphasize monophyletic groups (groups that have arisen through diversification from a simple ancestor)...,” the phrase “from a simple ancestor” should have read from a single ancestor. A monophyletic group of organisms descended from a common ancestor. It includes the most recent common ancestor of all of its members and all of the descendants of that ancestor. A monophyletic group is called a clade, from the Greek word klados, meaning branch. Cladistics is the classification **of** organisms based on the branchings **of** descendant lineages from a common ancestor. – Ted Cochrane

