

The Trillium



Piedmont Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

Not Under the Tuscan Sun: Growing Mediterranean Gardens in the Piedmont

In the last 5 years a bit of research and guesswork--and some ongoing experiments--have allowed me to create 5 Mediterranean gardens (I call them Med Beds) for homeowners in Durham. I've also planted a Med Bed for a rental house and one for a restaurant, in addition to the one at our home.

A little over 2 years ago at our house, we turned a bermuda grass strip with a rock-hard stump into a Med Bed. Sometimes I wish every part of my home garden had the same pluses:

- * evergreen perennials
- * edible foliage on some
- * fragrant leaves and flowers on many
- * few bugs or weeds
- * pleasant to touch
- * very drought hardy
- * unattractive to deer
- * a permanent mulch
- * a coordinated color palette
- * a small appetite for fertilizer and compost

These qualities are desirable, but Mediterranean plants I've seen in Durham and Orange Counties frequently looked like victims of jet lag or trench foot. Or both. Given

(Continued on page 2)



Phlomis fruticosa—Jerusalem sage

“Legends in the Garden”— Who in the World is Nellie Stevens?

This is the question. When garden plants bear the name of a person or a place, would it not be interesting and add to the plant's attraction for people to know why it has its name? *Legends* is a book that tells 46 of these stories about cultivar names of American garden plants. It reveals the tales of passionate gardeners with keen eyes, dedicated nursery people, and amazing coincidences which brought these legendary plants to gardens for plant lovers everywhere to enjoy.

Besides ‘Nellie,’ there is ‘Frances Williams,’ ‘Corbett,’ Montrose, ‘Goodness Grows,’ Galle, to list just a few of the names in the stories. When Linda Copeland, *Legends* co-author speaks to the Piedmont Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society in Raleigh on October 21, 2006, she will talk about some of these stories and reveal how the idea to tell them came to be a book. She will also relate stories connected with the stories and show items of interest that are not included. Knowing how the detective work was accomplished may also add to the reader's enjoyment in becoming familiar with the stories in *Legends*.

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Ilex ‘Nellie Stevens’—Holly



(Continued from page 1)
 how wet our clay-based soils are and how far removed our humid southeast is from the dry Mediterranean basin, plants like lavender and dianthus have every right to look a little peaked 'round here.

I suspect the hopeful keepers of these gray and fuzzy exotics were following the advice of so many garden books which



Perovskia atriplicifolia 'Blue Spire'—Russian Sage

advocate mountains of compost and organic mulch for Mediterranean herbs and perennials. To the contrary, my memories of vibrant wild colonies of rosemary, sage, thyme and lavender in what's called the Mediterranean "garrigue"—essentially treeless zones dominated by many of our favorite fuzzy plants--didn't include any organic mulches. And I doubt there were



Euphorbia myrsinites—Myrtle spurge

any native gardeners top dressing the garrigue with compost. We can't modify the weather in our gardens, but we can modify the soil conditions and learn garden practices specific to Mediterranean plants that give them a chance to perform a little better. Here's a partial list of the plants that I've used in Med Beds over the last 5 years: Jerusalem sage, culinary sage, Russian sage, dwarf pomegranate, lavender, bearded iris,

rosemary, euphorbia myrsinites, oregano, lenten rose, common lilac, California poppies, dianthus, thyme, horehound, Algerian iris, lamb's ear, candytuft, peonies, rose campion, blue mist spiraea, chaste tree, leadwort and more.

My Med Bed adventure is still ongoing, so I don't have all the answers and I bet there are many gardeners with experience with Mediterranean plants that I can learn from. I hope to see those and other gardeners at the Sept. 16th meeting when I'll share slides and stories of growing Mediterranean gardens in the piedmont, which is definitely "Not Under the Tuscan Sun."



Punica granatum var. *nana*—Dwarf pomegranate

☞ Frank Hyman studied horticulture under JC Raulston at NC State. He writes about gardening for the Independent Weekly and the N&O. He operates his business, Cottage Garden Landscaping, from his home, Bayleaf Cottage, which he shares with his gardening wife, Chris Crochetiere. ☞

Plant Propagation Workshop A Success



Piedmont Chapter Board Member Todd Lasseigne taught a plant propagation workshop on Saturday, August 5, 2006 in Raleigh for the Piedmont Chapter of NARGS.

The twelve participants learned about rooting hormones, propagation techniques, how to take cuttings, and the science of plant meristems. Then the group practiced on six plants, taking cuttings that Todd will hold in a misting chamber through the fall for the attendees. The group practiced on Juniperus, Gardenia, Cryptomeria, Hydrangea, Spirea, and Eucomis.

The class was full with twelve people. However, if there is sufficient interest in holding another workshop for those on the waiting list, contact Bobby Ward at biblio@nc.rr.com or 919-781-3291.



☞ Bobby Ward



NOTES FROM THE SEED EXCHANGE – FERNS FROM SPORES

Although many of us are familiar with growing plants from seeds, there seems to be a magical element to growing ferns from spores. In Shakespeare's day, fern "seed" were felt to be invisible and to confer invisibility on those who possessed them. We know now that ferns reproduce in a two stage process beginning with the release of the finer than dust spore from fertile-fronds. Using simple techniques and a bit of patience, it is easy to achieve a much higher rate of success in fern reproduction than nature is able to accomplish on its own.

My own experience began with a packet of spore from an Azeri fern sent to the NARGS seed exchange by a Danish gardener. I forgot about its existence until the pot sported a lovely cluster of sporelings. Since that time, I have joined the American Fern Society and the Hardy Fern Society. With a variety of spores, some up to six years old, I have had a 90-plus % success rate in raising ferns to the young sporeling stage.

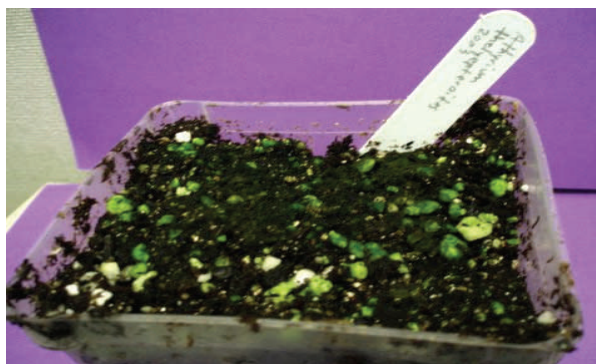
The first key is sterile soil. I personally know that baking or microwaving potting media is possible. The resulting stink, however, led to my being banned from the kitchen and an alternate sterilization technique. Clean 3 ½-4 inch plastic pots are filled to the top with dry potting soil, and boiling water is poured through them twice. I am using Fafard Mix Number 3, but the type of potting media probably does not make a big difference.



Adiantum

Once the pots have cooled, the spores can be scattered across the surface and the pots placed in resealable plastic bags, one per quart or two per gallon bag. As the spores are so light and tend to drift, care must be taken not to scatter the spores near another pot. The pots may start out sterile, but the spores and any accompanying chaff are not sterile and may harbor contaminants such as fungi or rogue spores of another type of fern. As with any exchange, the resulting ferns may be mislabeled to start with.

I have experimented with two growing situations, with one clear winner. In my first batch of spores, duplicate pots were placed in January on a north facing windowsill in my office vs. under a cool greenhouse



Anthurum

bench with temperatures kept above freezing. The office pots all produced healthy prothalli (except for the finicky *Botrychium* sp.) while the cool greenhouse pots produced very few. In general, one expects to see within about two weeks a green haze appear on the surface of the soil as the spores grow into filaments. In about a month, they will widen into the lentil-shaped prothalli which are the first (gametophyte) stage of the fern life cycle.

At this point, another bit of magic occurs as in most ferns species, the haploid gametophyte phase will produce male and female gametes on the underside of the prothallus. Often, no additional coaxing is required for

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Dryopteris



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There are many unknown stories to be told from the history of American Horticulture and the plants introduced in the United States. *Legends* uncovers some of this history in hopes that it will give to readers a better understanding of the passion, hard work, and dedication that has gone into providing the wonderful plants we have come to enjoy and praise, especially those with names so often heard and recognized. ‘Nellie R. Stevens’? She was a popular school teacher and gardener in Oxford, Maryland, at the beginning of the last century!

~ Linda Copeland



Hosta ‘Frances Williams’

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM Piedmont Chapter, NARGS

Please take this opportunity to renew your Chapter membership.

Circle one:

Single Membership \$15 / Year

Household Membership \$20 / Year

Please print clearly:

NAME #1 _____

NAME #2 _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ State/Zip _____

Email _____

Are you a member of North American Rock Garden Society?

Circle one: Yes No

Membership in NARGS is: \$30/year. You may include it in your check to have it forwarded to NARGS secretary.

Checks made payable to: Piedmont Chapter, NARGS

Mail to: Bobby Wilder, Treasurer

2317 Elmsford Way, Raleigh NC 27608

Phone: 919-755-0480 Email address: wilder@nc.rr.com

In Memory Of Rob Gardner

It is with regret that we acknowledge the passing of former Piedmont Chapter member Rob Gardner on August 6, 2006. Rob will be remembered as an educator, writer, horticulturist and a friend of this chapter who served on the board for several years.

Ferns from Spores (Continued from page 3)

a sperm to swim to and fertilize the egg, resulting in the sporophyte generation or “sporelings”. In practice, it is easy to drench the mature prothalli with water to expedite the process. The sporelings are usually visible as immature fronds growing from the prothalli within 3-4 months. If not, the prothalli may be thinned or reflooded with water. Any fungal contamination may be treated with dilute Physan solution or physically removed. When the sporelings have more than one leaf, they may benefit from dilute fertilizer and soon be ready for the shock of leaving 100% humidity. This acclimatization is best carried out by gradually opening the plastic bag containing the pots over two weeks and keeping the soil from drying out. Now ready for transplant, the young ferns should not be allowed to dry out as they mature for a season before being placed outdoors.

I owe a special thanks to Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery for sharing his insights and years of experience in raising ferns.

~ Walter Pharr



Piedmont Chapter Programs 2006-2007

September 16, 2006

Frank Hyman
Writer and Gardener Durham, N.C.
“Not Under the Tuscan Sun: Mediterranean
Gardens in the Piedmont”

Annual Chapter Plant Sale follows

October 21, 2006

Linda Copeland
Author and Gardener Atlanta, Ga.
“Legends in the Garden: Who in the World is
Nellie Stevens”

November 18, 2006

Cliff Parks
Botanist and Plant Explorer Chapel Hill, N.C.
“The Wild Camellias of Southwest China and
Their Cultivated Derivatives”

November 4, 2006

Hypertufa Trough-Making Workshop (Raleigh)
Taught by Amelia Lane & Beth Jimenez
Registration and fee required (\$30)
Limited to eight registrants All materials supplied

January 20, 2007

Richard “Dick” Weaver
(former co-owner of We-Du Nursery) Ocala, Fla.
“Orchids in the Garden”

February 17, 2007

Ellen Hornig
Seneca Hill Perennials Oswego, N.Y.
“Before Zebra—and Beyond: the Plants I Grow in My Gar-
den.”

March 17, 2007

John Elsley
Song Sparrow Nursery and Beaver Creek Nursery
Greenwood, S.C.
“Exciting New and Underutilized Plants for Local Landscapes”

April 21, 2007

Allen Bush
Jelitto Perennial Seeds
(former owner of Holbrook Farm & Nursery) Louisville, Ky.
“What the Seed(y) Guy Grows in His Garden”

May 5, 2007

Picnic at Paul J. Ciener Botanical Garden
Kernersville, N.C. Hosted by Todd Lasseigne

It's Not Too Late! Register Today!

JC Raulston Arboretum Symposium September 22-24, 2006

Keynote Speaker: Roy Lancaster
Backed by this outstanding line-up:

Roy Dicks
Michael Hayman
Bill McNamara
Don Shadow
Kim Tripp
Bobby Ward
Open Garden Tours

www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum.org
for complete information.

Chapter Annual Fall Plant Sale

It's time to get them divided and potted up. We're hoping for member-propagated contributions to this sale. Good plants of all sizes, shapes and seniority are needed. We encourage you to pot up your contributions early, so they will have some time to establish, rather than waiting until the day before.

Bring plants in clean pots and label each pot; we don't have time to do it that morning. Remember to have the labels complete, accurate and legible.

We will start setting up when the Totten Center opens at 9:00 am and will be eagerly accepting plants at any time between then and the start of the sale. The program starts at 10am with the sale beginning immediately afterwards. Remember that contributors will lead the way at the start of the sale.

For more information, contact me at 919-489-7892 (H) or by email (kirtley@nc.rr.biz.com). Kirt Cox



**Piedmont Chapter Meeting
September 16, 2006**

Frank Hyman
Writer and Gardener
Durham, N.C.

“Not Under the Tuscan Sun:
Mediterranean Gardens
in the Piedmont”

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bobby Ward, Chair

Bobby Wilder, Treasurer

Marian Stephenson, Past Chair

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Kirt Cox

Dave Duch

Tom Harville

Todd Lasseigne

Marlyn Miller

David White

TRILLIUM EDITORS:

Dave Duch and Marian Stephenson

OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:

Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox
Refreshments: Gwen and Maurice Farrier

REMINDER

We encourage you to bring goodies to share during the meetings this year. If your last name begins with the letters below, we hope you'll bring something to the appropriate monthly meeting. Thanks.

Sept. A—E

Feb. R—U

Oct. F—J

March V—Z

Nov. K—M

April All of us

Jan. N—Q

May—Picnic

The Trillium, Newsletter of the Piedmont Chapter
The North American Rock Garden Society
1422 Lake Pine Drive, Cary, NC 27511

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ABSTRACTS FROM THE AUGUST 10 CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

Bobby Ward, Chair, announced the resignation of Mike Chelednik from the board and thanked him for his years of service to the chapter. The Board nominated David White to replace Mike whose nomination will be voted on by the membership at the September 16 meeting.

Tom Harville was appointed chair of a nominating committee to recommend actively involved new members to the board by next spring.

Maurice and Gwen Farrier were selected to receive lifetime membership from the chapter in appreciation for their long-term service as refreshments chairs. This will be announced at the September meeting.

The board voted to continue to make a \$500 contribution to the N.C. Botanical Garden as a gesture of appreciation for our meeting space. Additionally, a motion to support to the JC Ralston Arboretum with \$200 and the Paul J. Ciener Botanical Garden at \$100 was passed.

A proposal to support a student to attend the week-long Cullowee Native Plant Conference in July, 2007 with a \$315 stipend was passed. An additional \$500 was committed to the Tom and Bruce Shinn Native Plant research Program, which has been underway for several years, for student research on native plants. This amount will be matched by the NC Native Plant Society. Tom Harville is charged with the task of selecting the recipient from applications received by the Society.

The 2007 NARGS annual meeting will be in Davis, W.Va. at Canaan Valley Resort Park. If any of our members want to serve as wildflower guides for the trails, step forward. Marlyn Miller suggested that there might be enough interest to rent a van for chapter members who plan to attend. If you are interested in exploring this, contact Marlyn at marlynmiller@earthlink.net.