



VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1
JANUARY—FEBRUARY
2007

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

Orchids in the Garden

Orchids are among the most universally admired of all plants. Once their cultivation requirements became generally known, the epiphytic species exploded in popularity, and are now among the most popular of houseplants. The terrestrial species lagged on behind, and except for the slipper orchids, are still less commonly cultivated, at least in temperate climates. Plants of some of the tropical terrestrial genera, such as *Sobralia* and *Arundina*, are too large for the hobbyist grower to handle. Until recently many of the temperate orchids were considered difficult to grow, and most were available only as collected specimens. A few species, such as *Bletilla striata*, have long been popular garden plants. Within the last 20 years great strides have been made in the seed propagation of other terrestrial genera, and many wonderful plants, notably *Cypripedium* spp. and *Calanthe* spp., are now readily available to gardeners. This talk will give an overview of some of the orchids I have grown in my gardens, with tips on cultivation and propagation.



Bletilla striata

Obviously we will be concentrating on terrestrial orchids here. However a single epiphytic species is native to North Carolina and may possibly grow in a sheltered spot, such as a courtyard or a screened porch, in the Raleigh area. Extremely rare but apparently still extant, *Epidendrum conopseum* (*E. magnoliae*) has been collected only at Lake Waccamaw in Columbus County. It is an attractive plant with cane-like stems 5-10 inches tall, and terminal clusters of greenish

(Continued on page 2)

Seneca Hill Nursery

I started Seneca Hill Perennials, in a casual sort of way, roughly 15 years ago, when I was still a tenured professor of economics at SUNY-Oswego. As I recall, my very first venture involved potting up some *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus', sticking it in a yard sale, and marveling at how fast it went. My first *serious* venture came when Mojmir Pavelka, of Euroseeds, offered me tubers of *Arisaema candidissimum*, and I imported a boxful (sweating mightily over the risk I was taking;



Epidendrum conopseum (*E. magnoliae*)

that check for a few hundred dollars looked big to me in those days, when we still had four children at home). I had no trouble peddling the arisaemas at an obscenely low price, and soon people were writing to ask what other "choice" plants I had to sell. I had none, but I was determined to do better.

Between various friends who were much more sophisticated gardeners than I, the Internet, and a growing reference library, I gradually wet my toes in the wonderful world of horticulture. Roy Herold and Nina Lambert deserve particular mention for getting me started growing cyclamen, and Steve Marak for piquing my interest in aroids, but I

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 1)

or bronze-colored flowers. This species may perhaps be worth a try permanently mounted on the bark of an evergreen tree, but it would probably best be grown on a slab of bark or tree fern so it could be taken indoors during extremely cold weather.

Plants of the genus *Bletilla* are the most readily available and commonly grown hardy orchids in the U.S. Native to both China and Japan, *B. striata* is the most familiar and easily grown species; with its bold plicate foliage and purple and lavender, cattleya-like flowers, it is a handsome and very satisfactory plant. It is remarkably adaptable, growing well in gardens from southern Ontario to the tropics. A variety of selections are available, with white or



Bletilla formosana

pink flowers and variously variegated foliage. The remaining species, all Chinese, are smaller and less showy, but perhaps more charming; they are also less cold-hardy. The low-growing *B. formosana* has pink and white flowers on a branched inflorescence, and the variable *B. Yokohama* is its hybrid with *B. striata*. The beautiful yellow-flowered *B. ochracea* is slender and later-blooming. We have a large and vigorous, un-named species with either pink or yellow flowers that blooms into early summer here in Florida. Dr. Warren Stoutamire, of



Bletilla ochracea

light, but shaded from the afternoon sun.

The Japanese species of *Calanthe* are certainly among the showiest of hardy orchids. The easiest species is *C. discolor*

with a green to purplish-brown perianth and a white or pink lip, and scapes to 18 inches tall. This species is long-lived in the garden, and spontaneous seedlings were common at WE-DU Nurseries.

Closely related but much showier, *C. sieboldii* has beautiful, large, concolor bright yellow flowers. The Takane hybrids, with these two species as the parents, have flowers in a wide color range, including many oranges and bronzes. Among my favorite species, *C. tricarinata* also occurs in the Himalayas, and the Japanese plants have been segregated as *C. torifera*. It ranges to Hokkaido, the northernmost Japanese island, and is among the hardiest of all the *Calanthes*.

The exquisite flowers, with a chartreuse perianth and a maroon lip, are quite large, but are not as many per spike as in the previous species. Probably the hardiest of all, *C. nipponica* is seldom cultivated. It is a small slender species with yellow to yellow-green flowers, and though very charming, is not particularly showy. A desirable but less hardy species, and one that struggled at WE-DU Nurseries, *C. aristulifera* closely resembles *C. sieboldii* and *C. discolor*, but with concolor white or pinkish flowers. *Calanthe* species are best grown in a soil that does not dry out severely, and



Calanthe discolor



Calanthe sieboldii

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

under high deciduous shade; at least *C. sieboldii* and *C. discolor* can take morning sun as well.



Calanthe tricarnita

The genus *Cypripedium* is made up of 48 species distributed throughout the North Temperate Zone, with the majority being native to eastern Asia; a few extend into the subarctic and fewer still are tropical. These are among the most desirable of all orchids for the garden. Many of the spectacular Chinese species are now becoming available, as are an increasing number of interspecific hybrids. Here I will concentrate on some of the easier species that I have grown over the years. The American yellow-flowered lady's-slippers are among the most reliable orchids for general garden cultivation, and seed-grown plants are now available from a number of sources, as are nursery-grown divisions. The commonest and most widespread species includes several quite distinct varieties, which are somewhat confused nomenclaturally. The large-flowered variety with a generally greenish perianth and a mild, rose-like fragrance is now known as *C. parviflorum* var. *pubescens*. It occurs in rich, mesic woods from Newfoundland to Alaska, south to Arizona and Georgia. The small-flowered variety



Cypripedium parviflorum var. *pubescens*

with a generally maroon perianth and a strong, sweet fragrance is presently known as *C. parviflorum* var. *makasin*. Its range largely overlaps that of the preceding, but it is absent from the Southeast. Both species make beautiful clumps in the garden if planted in partial shade in humus-rich,

moist but well-drained soil. The relatively recently described *C. kentuckiense* is found in scattered localities throughout the Southeast. It differs from the preceding in its longer peduncle, and its larger, pale yellow or ivory lip with a distinctively shaped orifice. This is among the most vigorous of all lady's-slipper species, and is a very fine garden subject.

The showy lady's-slipper, *Cypripedium reginae*, is native to fens and meadows from Newfoundland and Saskatchewan south to Arkansas and North Carolina. It is distinctive in its white perianth with flat petals and large, subglobose rose-colored lip. It regularly produces two flowers per stem and forms impressive clumps in the wild. It is best grown in full sun or light shade in moist, slightly basic to neutral soils. I used a layer of mortar pieces in the bottom of the planting hole with good effect. All of the species discussed so far are clump-formers, but a few Asiatic species are rhizomatous and colonial. The best-known, *Cypripedium japonicum*, is native to Japan and China, where it often grows in bamboo thickets. It is a distinctive and striking plant with its two, large, fan-shaped leaves borne on a stem above the ground. The flower is equally distinctive with its

green perianth and large, drooping, cleft lip which is pale pink with red markings. This was vigorous in my Boston garden, in dense shade on a



Cypripedium reginae

pronounced slope. A close relative, *C. formosanum* is native to Taiwan. It is more refined than the preceding in all respects, with a fuller flower that is all white except for the red markings on the lip and the perianth. It is also less cold-hardy and considerably easier to grow. It is considered by some to be the easiest of the genus. In my Boston garden I dug it each fall, overwintered it in the soil at the bottom of a cold frame, and replanted it in the garden each spring; it bloomed reliably. It should be perfectly hardy here in the Raleigh area.

Other native orchids should be considered as garden subjects. The showiest are the fringed orchids of the genus *Platanthera*. Several species such as *P. grandiflora*, *P. ble-*

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

phariglottis, *P. ciliaris*, and *P. lacera* are common and conspicuous in North Carolina; others such as *P. integra* are on the



Photo courtesy of the UNC Herbarium & Dr. D.R. McAdoo

Platyanthera grandiflora

and their beautifully fringed lip. Unlike the preceding, this species is easy to propagate and to cultivate, and nursery-propagated plants are readily available at very reasonable prices. Natural increase is relatively rapid, and the species comes easily from backbulbs. It grows well in moist peaty soil in full sun, and naturalized nicely in a wet, grassy ditch at WE-DU Nurseries. Woodland species such as *Goodyera pubescens*, *Aplectrum hyemale*, and *Tipularia discolor*



Photo courtesy of Kevin Taylor

Platyanthera blephariglottis

are often grown more for their attractive evergreen foliage than for their flowers. All are relatively easy to cultivate, and Warren Stoutmire reports that *Tipularia discolor* is easily grown from seed.

A few other exotic species should be considered here. Foremost of these is *Cymbi-*



Calopogon tuberosus

dium goeringii. This reaches its northern limit on Okushiri Island off the coast of Hokkaido, Japan and is the northernmost distributed species of *Cymbidium*. It blooms well into Zone 6 if grown in partial shade and a well-drained soil. The grasslike leaves are persistent during the winter, but the tips burn in particularly cold weather. The flowers are solitary, borne from the base of the pseudobulbs, with a green perianth and a white lip spotted with red. The variable *C. sinensis* could also be hardy in the Raleigh area. Pleiones are beautiful little plants, and *Pleione bulbocodioides* flowered for us at WE-DU Nurseries. The plump, conic pseudobulbs are borne above ground, so hard freezes could pose a problem. I grew mine in natural moss at the base of a rock, and mulched heavily with white pine needles. The beautiful flowers with their extravagantly fringed and spotted lip are, unfortunately, attractive to slugs as well as to gardeners. The egret flower, *Pecteilis radiata* (*Habenaria radiata*) is another attractive Japanese species that can be grown successfully in North Carolina with a little extra effort. It is best in full sun, with the tiny pseudobulbs (corms) pushed deeply into a bed of living *Sphagnum*.

Many of the orchids discussed above can be successfully propagated by the hobbyist gardener. Of course, the most straightforward method is by simple division. The yellow-flowered species of *Cypripedium*, as well as all species of *Bletilla*, *Calanthe*, and *Cymbidium*, form sizeable clumps in relatively short periods of time. These can be divided periodically. Many gardeners prefer to do this in the fall, probably the best time for the *Cypripedium* species, but I prefer to divide my *Bletillas* and *Calanthes* in the early summer, soon after the foliage is mature. Doing it then lessens the chance of damaging next year's buds, and the divisions are able to become established before the onset of winter. All of the orchids discussed here grow sympodially, annually producing a new growth which flowers in season and then becomes dormant, eventually to wither and die. The new growth in many of these, with the obvious exception of *Cypripedium*, is a pseudobulb, often referred to as a "corm", especially in *Bletilla* and *Calopogon*. The old pseudobulbs, or "backbulbs" have dormant buds, which become active if the front bulb is damaged. These backbulbs can be manually removed and planted, and even those several years old will produce shoots and eventually new plants. This can be done in the fall, when the front bulb is well developed, or in the spring either just before or just after the plants have broken dormancy. This method of propagation works well for species of *Bletilla*, *Calanthe*, *Cymbidium*, *Calopogon*, *Aplectrum* and *Tipularia*.

Seed propagation is somewhat more difficult. I have known a number of people to claim to have successfully

(Continued on page 6)

Plant Profile: *Prunus mume*



The late JC Raulston's enthusiasm for mumes (*Prunus mume*; the flowering apricots) is legendary. The words 'personal crusade' have been aptly used to describe his tireless efforts to have this plant more widely used. I am one, among many, to whom he introduced this plant. As a freshly relocated Yankee, seeing them bloom in the middle of a North Carolina winter in the 1970's was a life-changing experience. What a contrast to the drab winters of the Northeast! I soon planted the ubiquitous California cultivar 'Peggy Clarke'. What a dispeller of winter gloom it was in my Chapel Hill garden. The many conifers in my garden were the perfect foil for it. In the early 1980's, I purchased an old 83-acre farm 10 miles west of Chapel Hill. With all this space and encouragement from JC Raulston, I decided to collect mume seeds and experiment with seedlings.

The fruit from a variety of named cultivars from both the Coker and Raulston arboretums was collected. In a good year, it literally covers the ground but your timing has to be precise because it soon disappears. The fruit was submerged in water and allowed to ferment. A smelly mess resulted. Nevertheless after several weeks, the flesh of the fruit was easily separated from the large seeds by gentle mashing. If your going to try this, make sure you plan for an empty space on your social calendar; the odor lingers. After washing them thoroughly, the seeds were planted immediately in raised beds. By the next spring, there were hundreds of seedlings. In the fall of their second year, they were planted out in the mowed fields and at the edge of the woods in groups rather than in rows. There was considerable variation in the rate of growth and even in leaf size.

In a few years, I was starting to see a wide range of traits. Some were very floriferous and some were shy bloomers. Almost all of the seedlings had some fragrance in bloom but a few had outstanding fragrance. Flower color ranged from pure white through a range of pinks to a rich purplish red. The time of bloom varied over a range of months. This wide seedling variation was consistent with some of the literature claiming that the cultivated mumes are not a single species and are not true apricots, but rather complex hybrids: a consequence of a thousand years of selection and breeding by the Japanese. It is estimated that there are between 300 and 400 named cultivars of mumes in Japan. There are probably a comparable number of cultivars in China.

Each blooming season, I tagged the showiest trees. It helped me to remember outstanding individuals by nam-

ing them after family and friends. It seemed that there was an embarrassment of riches. How would I choose the ones to keep? There were so many pretty ones. Mother Nature soon solved that dilemma. Many, but not all, of the seedling trees started to decline. Some looked poorly but did not die, others died after a few years. My friend Sylvia Stanat identified the culprit, black knot. The fungus *Apiosporina morbosa* causes this disease. It is readily recognized by grotesque, warty black galls on the bark and twigs. The chokecherry trees (*Prunus virginiana*) in the surrounding woods are highly infected. Curiously, it does not seem to infect the Japanese flowering cherries that I grow. Some of my gardening friends claim that pruning away the black knot is a cure. In my experience, that's so if you detect it early and you're very diligent. Early infection is hard to detect. It usually appears as small light brown swellings on the previous year's growth. Later these swellings become black and obvious. Of course, on a highly susceptible tree, pruning does not guard against re-infection and on a mature tree, it is a really big job to prune it all away. Not surprisingly, some years the black knot problem is worse than others. Last year was particularly bad; some of my trees that had not shown any signs of infection for more than 20 years were infected for the first time. Perhaps older trees are more susceptible.

Something that previously puzzled me from my reading was that mumes are claimed to be very long-lived in Japan. In contrast, some American authors warn that they are relatively short-lived. It appears that black knot and perhaps other endemic American pathogens are responsible for this difference. One might presume that this fungus is not endemic to Japan. The ubiquitous cultivar 'Peggy Clarke' is very susceptible to black knot. Presumably, black knot was not much of a problem in the area of California where the 'Clarke' series of mumes was developed. 'Rosemary Clarke' and 'W.B. Clarke' seem more resistant than 'Peggy Clarke'. The Japanese selection 'Kobai' gets the fungus but does not seem to be too seriously impaired. In any group of my seedling trees, one or two would be apparently free from infection, others would have obvious infection but were still surviving and others would be dead. From these observations, I deduced that there were degrees of susceptibility to black knot; also that virtually complete resistance was relatively rare.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 4)

raised a variety of orchids by scattering ripe seeds about the garden, but this has never worked for me. However, I have had spontaneous seedlings of *Calanthe discolor*, *Calopogon tuberosus* and several *Spiranthes* species appear in my various gardens. Germinating orchid seeds and growing the resulting seedlings in sterile culture are possibilities for the hobbyist gardener. Appropriate media are available from commercial orchid laboratories, and sterilization can be accomplished in a pressure cooker. However, it is difficult to prevent fungal contamination while sowing the seeds and replating the seedlings. *Bletilla striata* is an excellent species with which to experiment, because the seeds germinate in a week or two and the seedlings grow rapidly; *Calopogon tuberosus* is another good species for the beginner. Other species are more difficult since they require a cold period before the seeds will germinate or before the protocorms will begin to develop. Seeds of *Platanthera* species must be soaked in bleach for extended periods until the seed coat becomes permeable to water. Of course some commercial laboratories will germinate the seeds of many species for you and replate the seedlings, for a very reasonable price. The great majority of orchids offered commercially are grown from seed. Now gardeners have access to these beautiful and rewarding plants without having to worry about them having been wild-collected.

✍ Richard E. Weaver, Jr.

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"Beautiful at All Seasons: Southern Gardening and Beyond with Elizabeth Lawrence" by Elizabeth Lawrence

Edited by Ann Armstrong and Lindie Wilson
Duke University Press, 264 pages. \$24.95

Reviewed by chapter members Nancy Godwin, Emily H. Wilson and Bobby Ward, all of whom found it engaging, warm and full of useful information. The book is expected to arrive at your bookstore in February.

(Continued from page 5)

I no longer had an embarrassment of riches. However, it now appeared that the disease-resistant trees might be worthy of introduction provided they were also garden-worthy. So I watched and waited. JC Raulston was particularly excited about a promising seedling that I called 'Josephine' after my daughter, mother and grandmother. It had good-looking foliage even after our long hot summers. It was showy in bloom (pale pink), disease resistant, a strong grower and easily propagated from cuttings. JC reasoned that since the mums bloomed when nurseries had few customers, it was difficult to promote them especially if the foliage looked unimpressive during the busy season. He wanted me to introduce 'Josephine' but I decided to wait and to evaluate it further. I thought that perhaps one of the other seedlings of similar color was even more worthy of introduction than was 'Josephine'. Alas, JC did not live long enough to see it introduced.

One negative attribute of mums that my seedlings did not provide much opportunity to ameliorate was their growth habit. They are all small trees, some larger than others, but not exactly what you would call picturesque in their branching structure. If left to their own devices, they formed an unattractive mass of intertwining branches. This is especially so in full sun. The Japanese prune the flowering apricots heavily but not the flowering cherries. Luckily, the apricots tolerate pruning very well and the cherries do not. From a garden standpoint, the former desperately need it, while the latter do not. Nature seems to be working with the gardener in this case. One cultivar with a picturesque form as judged by the plant in the Raulston Arboretum (winter garden) is the gracefully weeping 'W.B. Clarke'. It appears to be a grafted plant; perhaps that explains its good form or perhaps someone has been shaping it. I suspect the latter since all of the mums in the Arboretum are single trunk trees and I know from experience that if they are not pruned they look more like very large bushes than small trees.

One advantage of the overabundant branching habit of mums is that it provides copious material for cuttings. I remove the bright green shoots (pencil thickness) in winter and cut them up into 8 to 12 inch pieces. After a dip in rooting powder, they are pushed deeply into a raised bed of prepared soil. I leave only an inch of stem above the soil line. By next fall, there are usually nice plants to share with friends. However, as with so many other mum traits, there is considerable variation in the ability to root. Professional growers with misting systems also take softwood cuttings around June 1 in North Carolina.

I'm experimenting with using mumes as 'landscape bonsai' plants. This consists of pruning them heavily at least once a year. Shaping by thinning the more congested branches is the major goal. They respond to this treatment very well. It's a good way to keep them looking their very best. It is also possible that thinning out the branches improves air circulation and consequently helps control the growth of the black knot fungus.

An attribute of mumes for future exploration is how far north they can be grown and if there is seedling variation in cold hardiness. Three years ago, I planted 'Josephine' and an unnamed seedling in my mother's garden in Zone 5. Both have survived several winters with no damage but neither has bloomed yet. A well-respected Philadelphia gardener refused my offer of mume plants because "they bloom too early for our climate". I'm sorry I didn't pursue the point further to try to determine if he was making an assumption or speaking from experience. An article by T. Megan Ray of the Brooklyn Botanical Garden states that mumes are hardy to Zone 6, but recommends protection so that the flower buds will not be damaged. I suspect the plant is hardy in colder zones but might not reliably bloom there. In light of the genetic diversity of the mume cultivars, I hesitate to make any generalizations. If I had to garden again in Zone 5, I'd begin by planting some of the later-blooming cultivars or perhaps start from seeds and try to select showy, cold hardy ones. According to Dirr, mumes are recommended for Zones 6 to 9 and to Zone 10 in California.

David Parks of Camellia Forest Nursery in Carrboro, NC has kindly propagated and introduced some of the mume selections that I have made: 'Big Joe', 'Josephine' and 'Nicholas'. In addition, Sam Allen of Tar Heel Native Trees in Clayton, NC (wholesale only) has propagated and sold my selections 'Josephine' and 'Luke'.

Here are the descriptions of my mume selections.

"Big Joe" is a very strong grower. David Parks said it's the biggest mume he's ever seen. The original tree has a very impressive foot thick trunk. The flowers are white with



Photo: 'Big Joe' in early season is showy but still has a lot of unopened buds making for an extended period of bloom.

the barest touch of pink and many years start before Christmas. It has an exceptionally long season of bloom with flowers opening in succession during warm spells. It is very fragrant and has curiously curled leaves. It has good but not complete resistance to black knot.

'Josephine' is a strong grower with good foliage and light pink mid-season flowers. It's a very tough, pretty plant that sets a lot of fruit. It was the late JC Raulston's favorite because it has good late-season foliage. It has good but not complete resistance to black knot.

'Luke' is a rich purplish-red mid-season bloomer. It is mildly infected by black knot but like its reddish cousin 'Kobai', the fungus does not usually seriously impair its overall health. I think that Luke is much showier in bloom than 'Kobai'.

'Nicholas' is a good grower with deep pink semi-double large mid-season flowers. It is gorgeous in bloom. The tree's year-round appeal can be greatly improved with judicious pruning. It has good but not complete resistance to black knot.

There are a few seedling trees that I'm still evaluating and haven't yet decided if they are good enough to introduce. They appear to have complete resistance to black knot. Time will tell. It helps to ask friends to plant cutting grown

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

plants from a promising seedling. For example, Nancy Goodwin of Montrose in Hillsborough, NC grew 'Nicholas' after her 'Peggy Clarke' started to decline from black knot. Her positive experience with it and high opinion of it helped me to make the decision to introduce it.

David Parks of Camellia Forest Nursery offers a wide selection of mumes. David's father Cliff, the Camellia expert, collected mume seed in Japan and grew them up. He and David selected an outstanding weeping form 'Bridal Veil' and an early white 'Fragrant Snow'. These selections have black knot resistance. David is also evaluating some recently introduced cultivars from Japan for disease resistance.

In my first Chapel Hill garden, I grew a hybrid of *Prunus mume* x *Prunus cerasifera* 'atropurpurea' (x *blireiana*). Its pink blossoms came just after the mume season but were still quite early. Its foliage was the color of the latter parent. I liked it very much but have had difficulty in finding a replacement plant. Its existence suggests that more interesting hybrids are possible. Along these lines, Tim Alderton of the Raulston Arboretum staff brought to my attention a really interesting *Prunus* hybrid in front of the necessary at the arboretum. This year it started blooming before Christmas. It is not as yet named and was obtained from the National Arboretum.

If you have room in the garden for only a single mume, which cultivar should you plant and how do you choose the best site? For those of us in the fungus-friendly humid Southeast, my first advice would be to plant one that is known to have some degree of resistance to black knot. Avoid the readily available 'Peggy Clarke'. It's pretty frustrating to wait years for a tree to reach a decent size and then have it decline and look bad. In town, away from infected native trees, it may take longer for your mume to be exposed to the fungus but, sooner or later, a country bird on a visit to town will sit on a branch and spell doom. With mumes, color choice is not the same problem as at other seasons when flowers have so many rivals. The distance from house windows is a more important factor in choosing the color than is coordination with other blooming plants. If your chosen site is close to a path or window, the reddish ones are good choices. But if the site is more removed, the whites and pinks carry better. Near red brick, white is best. If you like going out into the winter garden, I would choose one with strong fragrance. It can be enchanting on a sunny winter's day. Of course, an evergreen background sets the blooms off splendidly. All the mumes bloom best in full sun, but put on a good show and are more open and graceful without pruning in partial shade. In deep shade, they are too spindly and do not bloom well. Of course, the weeping ones (WB Clarke, Bridal Veil, and Pendula) have sculptural

qualities that may fit your site best. There is even a contorted selection (Contorta). If you have deer, you'd better protect your young plant. I find a 3 ft. high circle of wire fencing works. After the plant grows above the height of the wire circle, it usually doesn't need protection. Before you choose your site and a cultivar, I urge you to make winter visits to gardens that feature mumes. Locally, the Raulston and Coker arboretums have a good selection.

If you'd like to see my mumes in bloom, want to try your hand at cuttings, or have questions or information you'd like to share, please email me at sicajoe@mindspring.com.

✍ Tom Krenitsky

(Continued from page 1)

hesitate to start mentioning names lest the list grow too long and someone still be omitted.

The nursery gained momentum after I quit my academic job of thirteen years (never a good fit) in 1998 and became a full-time nursery person. I continued working with a great team of tradespeople (heavy equipment operator, electrician, and plumber), and between them and my husband seven greenhouses and a potting shed were erected over the course of several years. I also had the great good fortune to hire Terry Fultz, who knew nothing about nursery work but knew what she liked to do, and is with me still, now with incredible skills, and always a source of energy and encouragement.

We have always grown a somewhat unpredictable and at times inexplicable collection of plants, though I would say that I am developing a surer sense of what I want to grow and what I don't. Cyclamen have always been an item here, but we have shifted away from trying to do the full range of species, and towards producing larger numbers of a more limited range of hardy species (*C. hederifolium*, *C. coum*, *C. purpurascens*). I have paid particular attention to selecting superb stock plants, so that the plants we sell are mostly fancy-leaved. Similarly, we used to grow a longer list of arum and arisaema species than we do now; I've chosen to focus on breeding spectacular forms of *Arum italicum* and *Arisaema consanguineum*, and have cut back on other species.

Ever since Panayoti Kelaidis sent me a selection of seeds collected in the Drakensberg and blithely assured me they'd be hardy in Oswego, I have been smitten with hardy South Africans. Panayoti was right: large numbers of these *are* hardy in Oswego, though I suspect there are not too many other similarly cold places where they can be grown. I'm guessing that the combination of consistent snow cover in winter, which

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

protects them from cold much more severe than they'd encounter in the Drakensberg, and relatively comfortable summer temperatures coupled with adequate summer rainfall, makes the climate here unusually accommodating for these plants. In any case, I grow a large collection, getting larger, of kniphofia, eucomis, dierama, tritonia, gladiolus and miscellany, and yes, most of them survive and even flourish in the open garden.

Another set of plants with which I am smitten are the hardy asclepiads. I am trying or have tried roughly 25 of the roughly 76 species of American asclepias, and am also growing such South African asclepiads as I can procure (now that I've trained some South African sources to watch for these; unaccountably, they are not the first thing your average seed collector looks for). I would happily agree that many are not suitable for most gardens, but they are a fascinating group of plants, and it turns out that monarch caterpillars eat not only the American species, but the South African as well, so if they aren't attractive they can at least function as fodder.

Beyond that, we grow species peonies, vast numbers of *Glaucidium palmatum* and *Anemonopsis*, different color strains of *Hepatica nobilis*, and - well - a lot of other things. Elegance is a valued attribute, but sometimes my curiosity gets the better of me and I grow things that are fairly weird.



Anemonopsis

And now, back to mundane details. Seneca Hill Perennials is a mostly mail-order nursery, and a suitable request plus \$4 will put you on the mailing list for two years. If you'd like to visit the nursery, we schedule Open Days in spring (listed in the catalog and on the website,



Glaucidium palmatum

www.senecahillperennials.com) during which visitors may browse in selected greenhouses and enjoy the gardens. At other times, visits may be arranged by appointment.

✍ Ellen Hornig

NARGS Eastern Winter Study Weekend

January 19 - 21, 2007

"The Evolution of a Rock Garden"

Host: Genesee Valley Chapter
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Rochester NY

Speakers are Gwen Kelaidis, Bill Mathis, Tim Gruner, Nicola Ripley, Carl Heilman II, Rex Murfitt, Henrik Zetterlund, and Mike Shadrack.

In addition to these excellent speakers the weekend will include early arrival tours, workshops, members slide shows, raffles, outstanding vendors, and meals with a local flair!

Kate Van Scott, Registrar,
PO Box 346, Fishers, NY 4453
Checks payable: NARGS
585)-924-1739 or kpvensco@rochester.rr.com.

NARGS Annual Meeting 2007

June 14 - 17

Canaan Valley Resort, Davis, West Virginia
Appalachian Mountain Refuge

The meeting will feature field trips to Dolly Sods Wilderness Area, Blackwater Falls State Park. The Dolly Sods, at 4200 feet, is an Alpine boreal ecosystem with amazing displays of *Kalmia* and *Rhododendron* as well as acid bog flora. Blackwater Falls is a lower altitude and has a Appalachian woodland flora. Both of these sites are refugia, places where plants remained after the Wisconsin Glacier retreated.

Speakers will include Bill Cullina of Garden in The Woods, Bill Grafton of West Virginia University, and Bonnie Issac of The Carnegie Museum. They will discuss the plants we see on the field trips and why they are there.

The Canaan Valley Resort lies amid the beautiful hills of West Virginia as well as the wonderful scenery there is a golf course, swimming pool, tennis courts as well as many interesting hiking trails.

More information will be posted on the NARGS website soon.

Piedmont Chapter Meeting

January 20, 2007

Dick Weaver
(former owner of
We-Du Nursery)
Ocala, Florida

“Orchids in the Garden”

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bobby Ward, Chair

Mike Chelednik, Program Chair

Bobby Wilder, Treasurer

Marian Stephenson, Past Chair

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE:
Kirt Cox

Dave Duch

Tom Harville

Todd Lasseigne

Marlyn Miller

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. S—T

Oct. F—J

March U—Z

Nov. K—M

April- any and all

Jan. N—R

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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Upcoming Programs and Events

February 17, 2007

Ellen Horning, Seneca Hills

Oswego New York

“Before Zebra-and Beyond: The Plants I Grow in My Garden”

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 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. Cerner Garden, Kernersville, NC

Hosted by Todd Lasseigne