



## Portland ReCap: A Crevice Garden Campaign in Portland, Oregon

By Jeremy Schmidt

During a one-week span in June, 2022, Kenton Seth, Paul Spriggs, and I transformed 30 tons of boulders and fieldstone at Sean Hogan's Rancho Cistus Botanic Garden and Cistus Nursery, shaping the stone into Portland's first public crevice garden. However, our overarching intent was to promote rock and crevice gardening to a national audience of horticultural professionals and plants-people.

The project was intentionally scheduled to coincide with the American Public Gardens Association's annual conference, where a busload of public garden professionals visited the worksite and later filled a modest-sized, but packed, conference room to hear Paul, Kenton, and I lecture about the history, benefit, and construction of crevice gardens. Also, several hundred people in the horticultural industry came together in the midst of the new-born crevice garden at Cistus Nursery to celebrate the announcement of the future birth of a Portland Botanic Garden. The next day, members of the Columbia-Willamette Valley Chapter of NARGS watched us stuff Sean Hogan's plant selections into the crevices. Kenton and Paul's groundbreaking new book, "The Crevice Garden," was in its first week of publication release.

Everything had to come together seamlessly to pull this off. The project was funded in part by a Norman Singer Grant from NARGS and private donors, and we needed approval by and collaboration with the American Public Gardens Association. We had a most hospitable host in Sean Hogan. There was a need for materials sourcing coupled with the availability of Kenton Seth and Paul Spriggs. All this was needed to make the magic happen.

It is truly difficult to capture the rapid-fire succession of events and interactions that we experienced, but here are several captioned pictures that may begin to set the stage for the upcoming lecture on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

### The Challenging Site

Upon arrival, dozens of cubic yards of crevice media and two dump truck loads of boulders were already staged on site. Unfortunately, they were literally on top of the site. In order to stack the crevice



garden, all of the soil and stone would have to be moved and then moved back again.



## Boulders vs. Basalt

During the months leading up to June, the crevice stone we had planned to use sold out. We settled for the next best choice which was nicely split camas basalt. Unfortunately, the 20,000 pounds of native Sauvie Island boulders looked nothing like the basalt: sedimentary vs igneous; weathered and mossy vs sharp and freshly quarried; warm, blunt-brown to distinctly vivid cool grey; and spherical vs flat. There was simply no way to blend these two diametrically opposed stones. They simply had nothing to say to each other.



## Breakfast and Planning

Any problem on earth can be solved over a cup of hot black coffee, at least that is how I felt awakening in the beautiful ambience of Rancho Cistus after a good night's sleep. Following some horticultural banter back and forth with Sean Hogan, and a successful quest to locate graph paper, and colored pencils, we made plans.

## Sorting and Stacking

Still a day away from Kenton's arrival, and two days from Paul's arrival (they were lecturing and signing books on the East Coast at a NARGS meeting in Ithaca, New York),

I had a window to work as hard as I physically could to move media and stack the boulders as well as clearing and prepping the site for the crevice masters to stack unimpeded. Enter Sean Hogan's neighbor, Mr. Beets, and his marvelous machine. He is perhaps the real hero in all of this. Mr. Beets skillfully operated his small backhoe, suspending large boulders so that they could be effortlessly rotated in the air and decisively set into place.







## Next Phase

With the boulders mostly set and Kenton and Paul now on site, we staged the basalt.



## Intersections

The efficiency and ease with which Kenton and Paul stacked stone was inspirational. I have placed millions of pounds of boulders and crevices over the past few years, but such a myopic statistic is easily forgotten in the midst of two people so in tune with stone and with each other. Working with Kenton and Paul was no work at all.



## The Reciprocity of Rock Gardening

Perhaps no caption is necessary here, except to say that Kenton and Paul are pictured doing what they love because, well, rock gardening IS a labor of love. Bringing stones together in the garden brings people together in much the same way.

## Ready for Show-and-Tell...and Planting

With most of the stones set, and a sample of Sean's infinite plant palate at hand, we were ready for the show-and-tell to the visitors.







## Interaction

In a collaborative effort with the American Public Gardens Association, a Rancho Cistus and crevice garden tour was scheduled. A bus full of horticultural leaders and professionals arrived to take in the garden sites. Many horticulture decision makers witnessed a crevice garden for the first time. Later, several hundred plants-people and garden enthusiasts arrived at Rancho Cistus for an event to celebrate the announcement of the plans of the new Portland Botanic Garden. Kenton, Paul, and I were onsite to demonstrate crevice gardening to a large and interested audience. Later in the week, the Columbia-Willamette Valley Chapter of NARGS stopped by for a tour of the new crevices and surrounding gardens. Wow!

## The Conference

As part of the Portland campaign, Kenton, Paul, and I gave a three-person lecture about crevice gardening at the APGA conference. The crowd was blown away. Paul discussed the history of crevice gardens; Kenton celebrated their many benefits; and I discussed the creation of the 400'-long, 3000-taxa crevice garden at Juniper Level Botanic Garden in Raleigh.



## Back to Nature

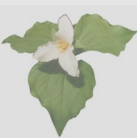
On the last day in Oregon, Sean led an excursion around Mt. Hood. Wow!!!!!! What a perfect way to wrap up a marathon week.

In closing, I hope everyone reading this teaser trailer can attend the September 17<sup>th</sup> NARGS lecture



at the JC Raulston Arboretum. I'll go into more detail, provide more pictures, and celebrate a successful and joyous endeavor.

[Jeremy Schmidt is Grounds and Research Supervisor at Juniper Level Botanic Garden and owns a side business called Hortco. He and Meghan Fidler maintain their personal garden south of Raleigh called Bristol Briar.]



## Piedmont NARGS Speakers

### Fall 2022 – Spring 2023

**September 17, 2022**

**Jeremy Schmidt**

Juniper Level Botanic Garden

Raleigh, N.C.

“Installing a Crevice Garden in Portland, Oregon”

**October 15, 2022**

**Patrick McMillan**

Juniper Level Botanic Garden

Apex, N.C.

Topic: “Creating a Natural Community Garden with Southeastern Native Plants”

**Saturday, October 22, 2022**

10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Open Garden: **Jeremy Schmidt & Meghan Fidler**

1109 New Castle Ct., Raleigh, N.C. 27603

**November 5, 2022**

**Linda Cochran**

NARGS Traveling Speaker

Port Ludlow, Wash.

Topic: “Inspired by Nature: Photography and Digital Painting”

**Late November or Early December 2022**

Date to be announced

Garden Visit: Fall Snowdrops Woodland Walk

**Nancy Goodwin’s Montrose**

Hillsborough, N.C.

Details to be announced

**January 21, 2023**

**(mini talks—15 minutes each)**

**David White:** Adirondacks NARGS Pre-Conference Tour

**Tim Alderton:** Voice of America Field Trip

**Amelia Lane:** NARGS Swiss Trip

**Scott Zona:** “A Gardener’s Guide to Botany”  
And book signing by Scott

**February 11, 2023**

**Hsuan Chen**

NCSU Horticultural Science

Raleigh, N.C.

Topic: “What’s the Fun about Plant Tissue Culture?”

**March 18, 2023**

**Todd Boland**

Memorial Univ. of NF Bot. Garden

NARGS Traveling Speaker

St. John’s, Newfoundland

Topic: “Spring Alpines of the Spanish Argonian Pyrenees”

**March or April**

Date to be determined

Spring Botanizing Trip to White Pines

Nature Preserve, Chatham County, N.C.

Details to be announced

**April 15, 2023**

**Jay Sifford**

Landscape Designer

Davidson, N.C.

Topic: “Making Garden Magic: Designing Gardening Spaces”

**Saturday, May 6, 2023**

Spring Picnic

Rain date May 7

**Kyle and Mary Sonnenberg ’ garden “Sunny Mount”**

Southern Pines, N.C.

Details to be announced



**“The Crevice Garden”**  
**Kenton Seth and Paul Spriggs**  
**Filbert Press, 2022**

**Review by Joseph Tychonievich**

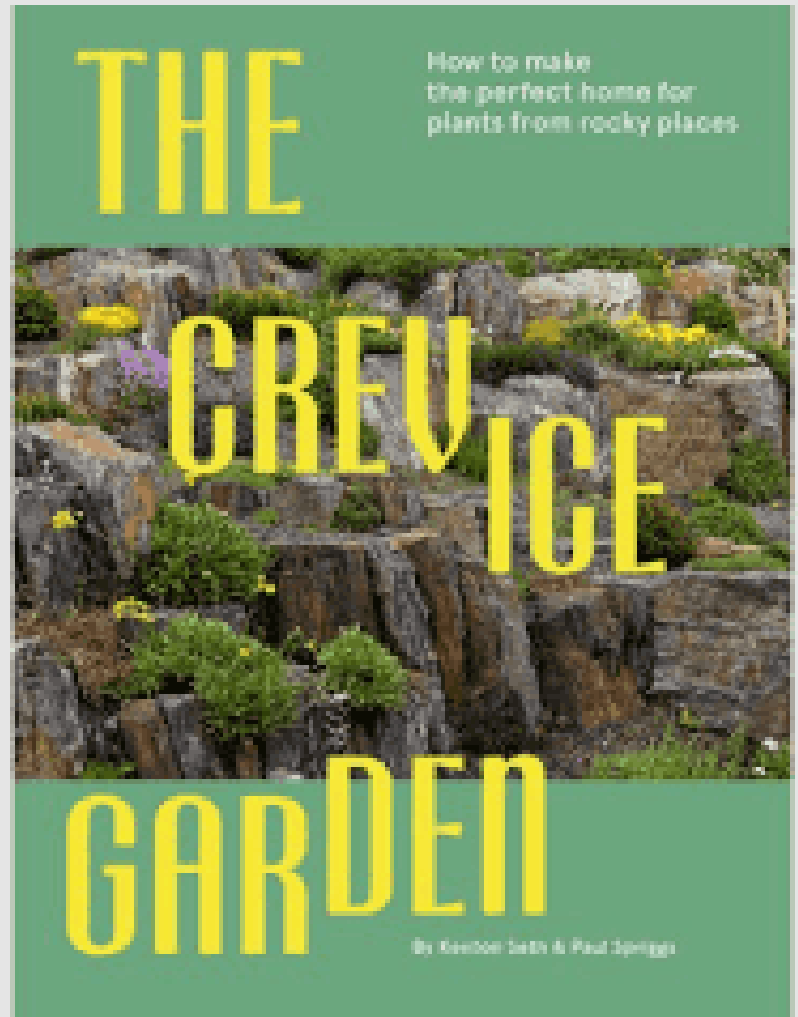
I'll be honest. Despite being an avid gardener, a lover of books, and writing about gardening for a living, I have a pretty small library of gardening books. Lately, that collection has been shrinking, not growing. There are lots and lots of beautiful books about plants and gardening out there, many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

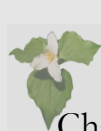
*The Crevice Garden* has instantly joined those ranks.

I would recommend this book to a novice who has never made – or even seen – a rock or crevice garden before. I also whole-hearted 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 details 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.

[*Joseph Tychonievich is the editor of the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly.*]

*The Crevice Garden* may be purchased by attendees at the September 17 meeting for \$30 - a \$9.95 savings off the Amazon list price. Only ten copies will be available.

## Membership Form Piedmont Chapter—NARGS

Membership year is from July 1 to June 30

**Membership Options:** Individual: \$15  
Circle one. Household: \$20

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

**Second person name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Make Check payable to: **Piedmont Chapter, NARGS**

Mail to : **Bobby Wilder, 2317 Elmsford Way,  
Raleigh, NC 27608**

Visit <https://www.piedmontnargs.org/> to learn more about the Piedmont Chapter

## **\*\* Calendar Note \*\***

### **Upcoming NARGS Webinars**

**November 19, 2022**

Geophytes (Bulbs, species peonies, and more)

**January 14, 2023**

Small Woodies (Ericaceous plants, conifers, and more)

**February 25, 2023**



## Garden of Fantastical Creatures—Cantigny Park, Wheaton, Illinois

These paper mache fantastical creatures create a dream world animals in Cantigny Park in Wheaton Illinois. I visited earlier in August. The artists are Mexican. It is a beautiful garden west of Chicago. There is more info at the parks website. Amelia Lane









## 2022 Bulb Sale

Elsa Liner

When one mentions bulbs, we usually think of spring. But there are some very nice bulbs that bloom in the fall, and our chapter will be selling some of those this year. Each packet will contain 3 *Lycoris sprengeri*, 5 *Sternbergia lutea*, 3 *Cyclamen coum*, 5 *Gladiolus byzantinus*, and 5 *Gladiolus callianthus*. A packet will cost \$25 – a really good buy for these beautiful bulbs, especially as fall bulbs are typically more expensive than those that bloom in spring.

All of these bulbs are planted in late winter/early spring so we will take orders in the fall for delivery in January. Details on how to order packets will follow. ❧



*Lycoris sprengeri*



*Cyclamen coum*



*Gladiolus byzantinus*



*Gladiolus callianthus*



*Sternbergia lutea*





## **NARGS Piedmont Chapter Meeting**

**In-person meeting, but the speaker will  
be zoomed from the JCRA meeting  
room for attendees and members.**

**Saturday, September 17, 2022  
McSwain Center at the Raulston Arboretum**

**Jeremy Schmidt  
Juniper Level Botanic Garden**

**“Installing a Crevice Garden  
in Portland, Oregon”**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Bobby Ward, Quality Review Editor

### **OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:**

Plant Sale Manager: Tim Alderton  
Plant Sale Chair: Jim Hollister

## **Message from the Chair:**

### **Happy New Year!**

Cyndy Cromwell

It's New Year's season for the Piedmont Chapter, whose activities run from September to May. If all goes well, 2022-2023 will mark the first time since 2018-2019 that our chapter meets in person at the JC Raulston Arboretum, September through April! Thanks to JCRA's co-sponsorship, our meetings will continue to be accessible online and the recorded programs available soon after.

I do hope that many of you will be able to attend in person, if possible. Nothing can replace the friendships and exchanges of information that happen when plant people gather!

Program Chair Bobby Ward has once more assembled an outstanding lineup of speakers for us, beginning with Jeremy Schmidt's talk on September 17. The complete schedule is included here in *The Trillium*, along with other exciting plans: an October open day at the garden of Jeremy Schmidt and Meghan Fidler, a late fall trip to see Nancy Goodwin's famous early-blooming snowdrops at Montrose, a January book signing by Scott Zona, spring botanizing at the White Pines Nature Preserve and the May picnic in Southern Pines.

As a reminder, the complete list of programs is also available on the *Meetings* page of our website. Also at [piedmontnargs.org](http://piedmontnargs.org), check out the *Home* page, highlighting upcoming speaker details, and featuring summer travel photos submitted by members. By the way, it's not too late to send in photos from your summer adventures! The website also lets you join the chapter, renew membership, read about our chapter's history, and see details of upcoming plant sales as they become available.

Hope to see you soon - virtually or in person - to celebrate our Piedmont Chapter New Year! 🌸