



Blizzard 2015

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER of the North American Rock Garden Society February-March 2015

-2015 Calendar- Saturday Programs this Spring

**February 21, 2015 - Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

10:30 am Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies.

11:00 am *Russell Stafford, Exceptional Americans*

12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own) chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting

1:00 pm *Ellen Hornig, Sunrise at the Sow's Ear Ranch*

**March 21, 2015 - Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

10:30 am Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies.

11:00 am *Bob and Dee Stewart, Growing Ramonda and Haberlea*

12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own) chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting

1:00 pm *Book Sale*

**April 18, 2015 Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge,
680 Hudson Rd, Sudbury, MA**

10:30 am Welcome – coffee, tea and cookies.

11:00 am *Dieter Zschummel, Plant Exploration in Iran*

12:00 noon Lunch (bring your own) chat, check out our show & tell. Board Meeting

1:00 pm *Rare Plant Auction.* Donate what you can, bid early and often, and we will all have a great time!

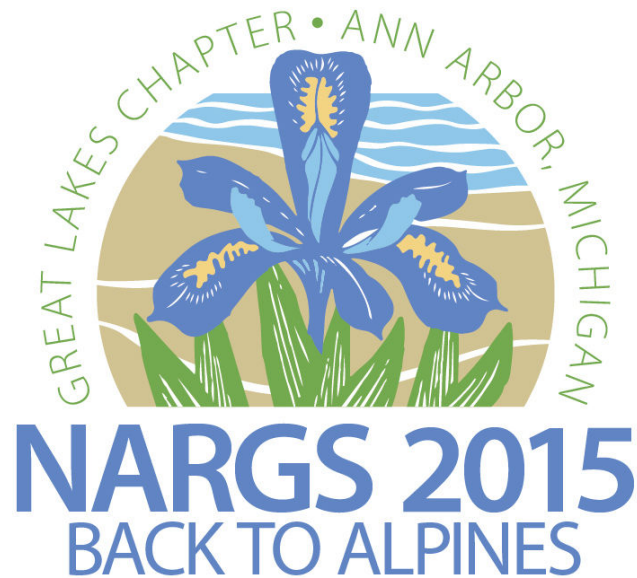
May 23, 2015 - Garden tours

11:00 am to 3:00 pm *Sudbury Gardens to visit:*

Helga Andrews, Marilyn Beaven, and Helen du Toit

Bonus Tour: Very close to the du Toit garden is **Greene Acres**, a hosta and daylily nursery owned by Steve Greene, that stocks dwarf hostas suitable for rock gardens, plus all sorts of other hostas and also daylilies. Helga suggested the nursery would be a very worthwhile side trip after seeing our gardens. Directions to follow in May.

BACK TO ALPINES – NARGS UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETING



The last time our Chapter was on the docket for a National Meeting was 2003 – when we conducted a successful Winter Study Weekend. This time, we are “on” for the Annual Meeting, and we have a great program outlined. Our venue will be Ann Arbor’s own Weber’s Inn. This will be a superb chance to see and hear great speakers and see great gardens, to say nothing of buying super plants, tufa, troughs, and books!

We hope as many of you as are able will take advantage of this meeting. It is also a rare chance to meet and talk with Rock Gardeners from all over the US and Canada together in one place. We need support from our membership – and feel free to pass this Newsletter to gardening friends who may be interested. If you are local, you can attend while staying at home, and just take advantage of Weber’s fine dining and facilities. If you are out of town, we have negotiated a very favorable rate of \$99 per night (plus tax).

Tony Reznicek Newsletter Editor, Great Lakes Chapter, NARGS
N.B. The full program is printed at the end of the Newsletter

Notes from the Chair

As I write this, on January 19, I’m convinced I’m hearing the first faint birdsongs of spring. In the garden a lone ragged blue primula, left over from December’s warm spell and revealed by yesterday’s snow melt, lies among tattered leaves. On the mud porch an assortment of less-than-hardy plants mostly hibernates, but I see that *Narcissus* ‘Julia Jane’, and an unnamed hybrid seedling narcissus,

generously donated by our own Roy Herold to the Pacific Bulb Society seed and bulb exchange, are in bud (www.pbs.org). In the basement, seed-sowing continues; and recently, in a true excess of optimism, I ordered bulbs of *Crinum* “scabrum” (the old Southern milk-and-wine lily, and not a valid species) and *Crinum x digweedii* ‘Stars and Stripes’, both to be planted out in my “Mediterranean” garden (the warm west-facing corner by the patio) to take their

chances alongside the needle palm (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*) and three *Nerine bowdenii* cultivars.

I'm not the first to say it, but growing is definitely all about optimism. And as the new chair of NE-NARGS, I am abundantly optimistic that this is going to be an entertaining and stimulating year for our chapter.

We start the year, at our February 21 meeting, hearing from Russell Stafford of Odyssey Bulbs on the subject of lesser-known and garden-worthy American plants species. Russell is my friend and hiking buddy, and I am awestruck by the breadth and depth of his botanical knowledge. He has spent long, patient hours trying to teach me how to identify the oaks. But the oaks are promiscuous, and I am always confused by possible hybrids. That's my excuse, anyway.

Yours truly will also be speaking on February 21, describing the joys of starting a new garden from scratch. In my mind's eye, my trees are 30 feet tall, and my little rhododendrons are towering mounds, filling my woodland with glory. The understory is spangled with hefty clumps of glaucidium among drifts of *Primula sieboldii*, dryopteris, asarum, and *Phlox divaricata*. The reality is somewhat different, but hey, as I said, optimism is everything.

On March 21, we'll have the pleasure of hearing from Dee and Bob Stewart about how to grow some of the hardy gesneriads (ramonda, haberlea and others). These are challenging gems, and it will be exciting to learn more about them. It will also be, dare I say it, an opportunity to learn something relevant to rock gardening. Purists we are not, I know, but from time to time it's a good thing to go back to our roots (ouch). Also at our March meeting, we'll float a trial balloon in the form of a book sale, conducted along the same lines as our annual plant and seedling sale. Our now-unused chapter library will form the core of the sale, and your donations will make up the rest. See the box elsewhere in this newsletter for more details.

Moving on, in April we'll have the great pleasure of hosting a talk on plant exploration in Iran by Dieter Zschummel. Mr. Zschummel's speaking tour has been arranged by the NARGS national organization, so let me take this opportunity to remind those of you who belong to the New England chapter but not the national organization that we exist because of them, and that many good things flow from belonging to the national (in particular, the annual seed exchange). Join today! Visit NARGS online (www.nargs.org), click on the "Join NARGS" link at the upper right, follow the instructions, and presto – you'll be in. For the \$30 it costs, you can barely get a decent dinner.

Mr. Zschummel's talk will be followed, in the afternoon, by our beloved Rare Plant Auction. Be sure to dig and pot your contributions earlier rather than later, so they get off to a good start.

Our last spring event will be our annual garden tour. This year we'll be heading for Sudbury, MA, where Helga Andrews, Marilyn Beaven, and Helen du Toit have generously agreed to open their gardens to us. More details will follow in the next newsletter.

Fall is still a long way off, and we're still firming up some details, but much excitement awaits. We'll have our annual seedling and plant sale; Stefan Cover will examine the photos that all of us (that means you) will take this coming season of the bugs in our garden, and tell us what they're up to and why we should love them; and as part of a new initiative to cast a wider membership net and establish ties with other horticultural organizations, we'll have a fall meeting at Tower Hill Botanic Garden (www.towerhillbg.org) on Sunday, October 4, to hear Peter Korn of Sweden speak. More on this later, too, but I think we have a lot to look forward to.

All in all, if the larger world around us doesn't implode, it could be a great year. Fingers crossed.

Ellen Hornig

Notes from The Vice-Chair

An 18th Century Nursery

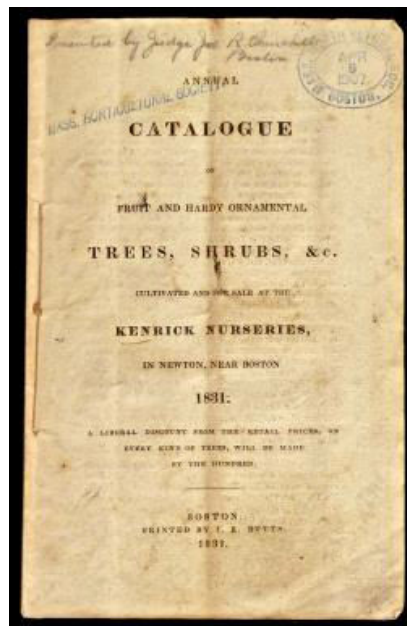
In August of 2010 my family, the Weinbergs, moved from a contemporary home set on six rural acres in the Western NY snow-belt to a 1917 center entrance colonial with only 1/3 of an acre in East Newton. I had spent the summer sketching the new garden layout. Every plant would have to pull its weight and the lines would be much more formal than I had designed in the past. The overgrown shrub border was pulled out and in what seemed like a manner of minutes the beds were made and planted. Now what? I suggested we remove the remaining grass which was quickly vetoed by the husband. Citing a need to keep up with



Durant-Kenrick House

the neighbors he finally had his green carpet complete with watering system and "natural" chemicals.

A few houses down the street there was a startlingly green home with a flat façade surrounded by a large lot—a rarity in our area of Newton. On a dog walk I read on a faded sign on the sidewalk in front of the house that this was the Durant-Kenrick Homestead from 1732. Next to it was a fund raising sign with a goal which looked nearly complete. Several months later



Kenrick Nurseries catalogue 1831

we received an invitation in the mail to attend a preview for the Historic Newton Museum opening in a few months. We toured the home and property. It turns out that from 1790 to about 1850 the

grounds had been part of one of the largest plant nurseries in New England. With approximately 111 acres extending from Brighton into Newton, John Kenrick had initially specialized in fruit trees. Later he branched into ornamentals including shrubs and perennials. The son, William Kenrick, invested in the "Mulberry Mania" which eventually wiped him out in 1845 forcing him to sell the nursery and subdivide the

property. Today the homestead sits on just under two acres. We have an old stone wall traversing our property which likely dates to the time of the original Durant-Kenrick farm. The initial plan for the museum was to restore the home which was just

about complete. The next restoration was to be the grounds and they were in need of volunteers—just what I was looking for to quell my gardening impulses.

Proposed plans had been researched and drawn up by an historic landscape designer and miraculously the Massachusetts Horticultural Society had Kenrick Nursery catalogues in their archives from 1828 -1845. These were generously photographed by a volunteer and made available to us all. In the next 12 months we started clearing away the decades of overgrowth, freeing-up several specimen trees including an enormous copper beech, oaks, a *Magnolia acuminata*, a *Cornus florida*, and a *Laburnum anagyroides* that had sprouted from

an old trunk and even flowered last year. Our job done, the Durant-Kenrick house is ready to face its 283rd year with a renewed sense of place in the neighborhood.

Ellen Weinberg

****February 21** First meeting of 2015**

Morning session 11:00am

Exceptional Americans

Russell Stafford says, "The American flora contains a wealth of gems for the garden, many of them still virtually unknown to horticulture." He will talk about some native species (and their many varieties and forms) that are begging for further exploration by gardeners and plantsmen.



Hortiholic and plant evangelist **Russell Stafford** transplanted his first perennial at age 7, and thereby began a lifelong addiction. He is founder, owner, webmaster, nursery manager, propagator, shipping and telemarketing supervisor, data entry specialist, custodian, and all other positions at **Odyssey Bulbs** (and Odyssey Perennials), an on-line micronursery specializing in cool and uncommon plants. He also works as a plantsman and horticultural consultant specializing in the naturalistic and the obscure, and as a freelance writer and editor. He formerly served as curator and head of horticulture at Fernwood Botanic Garden in Niles, Michigan; as horticultural program coordinator at the Center for Plant Conservation (then located at the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts); and in various other horticultural capacities. His academic degrees include a

masters in forest science from Harvard University. He lives, works, and plays with plants in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. Russell is a former editor at www.learn2grow.com and a frequent contributor to gardening magazines including *Horticulture* and *The American Gardener*.

February 21' 2105

Afternoon session 1:00pm

Sunrise at Sow's Ear Ranch

Our own Ellen Hornig will share the challenges, frustrations and rewards of starting a garden in a yard that was devoid of anything but lawn and a few foundation yews. She opened her garden for our annual tour last spring and our members were excited by her efforts. We look forward to seeing and hearing about the latest developments.



Grafton St. before



Grafton St. after

Ellen says, "Moving gives you a wonderful opportunity to take everything you've learned about gardening and start anew with a fresh perspective. True, I moved to Shrewsbury with a separate 15-foot truck packed to the roof with my favorite plants (potted, dormant, and boxed) - how else

could I start to fill a garden? - but in all other respects I had to start from scratch. In this talk I'll take a look at how I turned a derelict half-acre lot into my new garden, and how I sorted through old and new interests to decide what (and what not) to plant."

Ellen is the current chair of NE-NARGS. She owned and operated Seneca Hill Perennials (Oswego NY), selling fine plants and some oddities, from 1991 to 2010. She now lives and gardens in Shrewsbury, MA.

Mark your calendar for March 21, 2015

In our morning session members Bob and Dee Stewart invite us to share their joy in growing plants from the genus *Ramonda* and *Haberlea*. Dee says, "*Ramonda*, *Haberlea* and their relatives are gesneriads and are generally thought of as tropical plants. Actually, there are a few that are hardy here in New England. In addition, there are many more that will thrive in an alpine house. We'll discuss both groups and tell you how we grow them." Those of us who visited their garden for the September 2013 seedling sale know how attractive those plants are having seen their collection first hand.



Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgi



Ramonda myconi

NE-NARGS Book Sale **Afternoon session March 21, 2015 1:00pm**

Tired of gazing at the screen? Missing the old-fashioned pleasures of turning pages and sniffing paper and glue? Here's your opportunity to restock your library while rehoming the books you no longer need.

The core of our March book sale will be the contents of our now-defunct chapter library (so if you're holding on to anything you once borrowed and never returned, please bring that back to the sale). The rest will be made up of your donations (plant-related only, please). Some items will be sold at silent auction, some will be specially priced, but most will be offered first for \$3, then for \$1.50, then for \$.50, and after that for nothing at all. As in our seedling and plant sale, donors will get to choose ahead of the pack.

If you're donating anything of significant value (check Amazon.com or BookFinder.com), please include with the book a note showing the lowest price at which it's offered on the web. We may then price it separately or put it in the silent auction.

An email to Ellen Hornig hornig@oswego.edu by March 12th would allow us to include your donations in a club email but please bring your donations even if you do not have time to pre-list them. On March 14th we will send out a current book list so you can be prepared to bid on items of interest to you.

All proceeds go to NE-NARGS.

“My Rock Garden Wish List for 2015”

We know that our members are knowledgeable about worthy plants for the rock garden (and the un-rock garden) as well as being the first to know about new cultivars coming to the market. So we sent out a query and asked, “What is on your wish list for 2015?” Here are some responses. Eds.

From Ernie Flippo: Snowdrops are in bud in my yard. Yay. My wish list is tempered by the challenges of both the limited time I can spend in the garden, which must survive despite my benign neglect, and the microclimate – open winters and droughty spells in summer. But for cold season interest in my little patch of dry duff woodland I might add some newer hellebores, either for foliage from the *foetidus* group or possibly for flowers from the *niger* and/or interspecies crosses, and possibly for warm season company additional drought tolerant ferns, in the male fern (*Dryopteris*) section or maybe a nice holly fern such as *Polystichum dycei*.

From Annie Hill: I'd like *Dodecatheon pulchellum* or other species because I have *Dodecatheon meadia* and think it is charming and exquisite. I will search forever to replace a vibrant orange, tiny *Erysimum* that I lost. Maybe it survived by self-seeding for those few years, but I loved its fragrance and intense color.

From Helga Andrews: The very first thing I lusted after in Ellen Hornig's garden was a lovely pale green variegated-leaf plant that was new to me. She thought it was a peucedanum, so when I saw in the NARGS seed list a variegated plant with the unpronounceable name *Peucedanum ostruthum* 'Daphnis' I decided to take a chance and order it. We'll see what it turns out to be if I ever get around to planting my seeds.

Every Christmas season I ask myself why I don't grow one of the heavily berried forms of winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, so that I will have my very own berries for display; this year I shall try to remember in the summertime and go find one.

From Helen du Toit: If I could choose 3 new plants for my garden, the first would be the tree-form *Wisteria floribunda* 'Black Dragon' in the White Flower Farm catalog. (This is a pure pipe-dream, it wouldn't fit into my garden!). Secondly I'd choose *Calycanthus x raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine', which I first saw live (as opposed to a photo) in John Trexler's garden this summer. Possibly I could fit this in somewhere. And third would be *Helleborus* 'Red Sapphire' from the Bluestone catalog and this I'll definitely order! P.S. I got the Rare Find catalog today and in it there is *Calycanthus* 'Aphrodite' from Tom Ranney/Mountain Crops Research Institute. "The addition of fragrance to 'Hartlage Wine' blends the best qualities of both parents, with large raspberry-colored flowers. Great hybrid vigor, fast-growing, floriferous and showy. Not fussy as to soil, sun or shade." If all this is true, this seems like an even better choice.

From Ellen Weinberg: My wish list includes any *Soldanella* genera and any *Nomocharis* genera. I've killed them before but would like to try again.

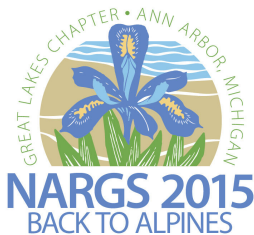
From Marilyn Beaven: Ever since Carol Yee brought her selection of Warren Berg's dwarf rhododendron plants to a NARGS meeting I have wanted to own some. Last fall I was surprised to see 'Ginny Gee' at Russell's and I quickly scooped it up. It is doing well in my back yard, but it needs company, maybe 'Wanna Bee' or 'Queen Bee'?

From Ellen Hornig: My number one plant ambition for the year is to grow *Asclepias humistrata*, get it established in the driest and sunniest part of the garden, and see it come up and bloom next year. There's about a one percent chance of succeeding, if that. It's native to sand plains in Florida. Hope springs eternal. I do have the seeds sitting here, waiting to be planted in spring.

My other ambition is to see the giant form of *Athyrium filix-femina* that I collected last year come up again and still be giant. In the wild it was roughly 4' tall, and towered above the "typical" *A. filix-femina* around it. It looked tetraploid, too, with an unusually sturdy stem (technically, rachis) and more persistent late-fall foliage than its companions. But will these characteristics prove to be genetic, or are they just caused by having damp feet? Time will tell.

From Rachel Ross: At our meeting in March 2014 Ed Bowen was our speaker and gave an informative presentation titled "The Unusual". He discussed wonderful plants and I was particularly interested in growing *Rabdosia longituba* – their flowers are a beautiful shade of blue. I believe Ed had some for sale but they were soon bought by other members of our Chapter.

N.B. We will post "Wish List" comments in the next newsletter, too. I would like to include your selections as well. Please send them to mmbeaven@comcast.net



BACK TO ALPINES – NARGS UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETING

Program Highlights

THURSDAY, MAY 7

4:00 – 5:30 Dinner on own

4:00 – 5:30 PM Sales area & Silent Auction open

5:30 – 6:30 PM: Evening Reception (hors d'oeuvres, cash bar)

6:30 PM: Door Prizes & Auction

7:00 PM: Introductory Remarks [brief program after this commenting on past inspirational gardeners of the Chapter that we have lost recently – including Betty Blake, Fred Case, Leila Bradfield, Dick Punnett]

7:30 PM Evening program – Tony Reznicek – *The Michigan Landscape and Gardening in It*

8:30 – 11:00 PM Sales area & Silent Auction open

FRIDAY MAY 8

7:00 AM: Breakfast

8:30 AM – 3:30 PM Bus tours of local gardens and natural areas

4:00 – 5:30 PM Sales area & Silent Auction open

5:30 – 6:30 Evening Reception (hors d'oeuvres, cash bar)

6:30 PM: Door Prizes & Auction

7:00 PM: Dinner

8:00 PM Ger van den Beuken – *Growing High Alpines at Sea Level or Below*

9:00 PM Ger van den Beuken – *Argentina & Chile in 50 minutes - for dedicated gardeners*

10:00 – 11:00 PM Sales area & Silent Auction open

SATURDAY MAY 9

7:00 AM: Breakfast

8:30 AM – 3:30 PM Bus tours of local gardens and natural areas

4:00 – 5:30 PM Sales area & Silent Auction open; Silent Auction Bids end 5:30 PM

5:30 – 6:30 Evening Reception (hors d'oeuvres, cash bar)

6:30 PM: Door Prizes, & Auction & Silent Auction wins

7:00 PM: Dinner
8:00 PM NARGS Awards, etc.
8:30 – 9:30 PM – Malcom McGregor – Rock Gardening – or What’s a Heaven For
9:30 – 11:00 PM Sales area open

SUNDAY MAY 10

10 AM – 5:00 PM: On your own – Open Garden Tours, Nursery visits, etc.

12:30 PM – Departure of Post Conference Trip

OUR SPEAKERS:

Tony Reznicek – *The Michigan Landscape and Gardening in It*

Tony is Curator at the University of Michigan Herbarium, expert on the Great Lakes region flora and sedges, and an avid gardener, used to battling the climate and local fauna.

Ger van den Beuken – *Growing High Alpines at Sea Level or Below & Argentina & Chile in 50 minutes* Ger is an internationally known Dutch rock gardener, experienced with growing and propagating choice alpinists, especially Daphne, and the use of tufa.

Malcom McGregor – *Rock Gardening – or What’s a Heaven For* Malcolm is a popular lecturer known to us all as Editor of the Quarterly, and as an expert on and author of a comprehensive book about Saxifrages.

These are all great speakers, sure to be both entertaining and informative.

THE GARDENS we will be visiting with the bus tours are all local, keeping driving time to a minimum:

Don & Mary LaFond; Tony & Susan Reznicek;

Jacques & Andrea Thompson; Bev & Bob Walters:

Complete information about registration and hotels can be found at <https://www.nargs.org/ann-arbor-agm>

Along with these four gardens, we will have brief (20 min) workshops at each garden as a “how to” showcase of some of the unique elements in the garden.

Plus, we will be visiting two NATURAL AREAS – a sand barren NW of Ann Arbor where we should be able to celebrate a large colony of the Bird’s foot violet, the finest eastern North American species and also a rich deciduous forest where we will show visitors our beautiful burst of spring bloom, especially trilliums.

There will be OPEN GARDENS & NURSERIES to visit on Sunday, May 10.

Plus, we will have POST CONFERENCE TOUR, May 10-12. The post conference field trip will be to the “Straits Region” of Michigan, about 280 miles north of Ann Arbor, with stops on the way there and back. The focus will be on natural rock gardens and rock garden plants in the wild. We will look at shaded and sunny rock outcrops, rocky, gravelly, and sandy beaches, and open communities back of the beaches, plus a stop to see large stands of trilliums, and brief stops for other selected items including sand dunes, and, if time allows, jack pine barrens. It will be early for large scale bloom, but we should certainly see bloom in many species with some nice displays. This is limited to 24 people.

NARGS-New England Chapter Membership and Dues

Membership in NARGS-NE is \$10.00 a year payable January 1 to Ernie Flippo, 264 Wales St., Abington, MA 02351. Payment may also be made in person at the first meeting of the year.

Local Chapters: –There are thirty-eight NARGS affiliated chapters active in North America. Chapter events include lectures, an email Newsletter, garden visits, field trips, demonstrations, and plant sales. These friendly gatherings provide a wealth of information; offer a source for unusual plants, plus the opportunity to be inspired by other gardeners in your region. Our Chapter meets 6 times a year, February, March, April, September, October and November, publishes a newsletter in email format and organizes Garden Tours in May and June.

National Organization: We encourage you to join the national NARGS organization. www.nargs.org Dues are \$30.00 a year. Benefits include a seed exchange, a quarterly publication, and an on-line web site featuring an archive of past publications, a chat forum and a horticultural encyclopedia. NARGS national also conducts winter study weekends and holds their Annual Meeting in interesting places.

Support for NARGS national underwrites a **Speakers Tour** bringing internationally known speakers to North America. Local chapters have the opportunity to hear and visit with outstanding plants people from around the world who present talks and workshops.

Directions to Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge
680 Hudson Road,
Sudbury, MA.

from Route 95/128 and the East: Take Route 20 (Boston Post Road) West through Weston. Turn right onto Rt. 27 and follow this into Sudbury. Stay straight on Hudson Rd. and go about 3 miles to Winterberry Lane on the right. The Parking/building is 0.4 miles in on the left.

from Route I 495: Take Exit 26 to Rt. 62 for 6.5 miles as merges with Sudbury Rd and go another .5 miles on Hudson Rd. On the left is Winterberry Lane and the parking/building is .4 miles in on the left.

Chapter Officers for 2015

Chair: Ellen Hornig: hornig@oswego.edu

Vice-Chair: Ellen Weinberg: weinbergellen@gmail.com

Past Chair: Rachel Ross: h.rachel.ross@comcast.net

Secretary: Rosemary Monahan: rosemonahan@comcast.net

Treasurer: Ernie Flippo: fortknox4rocks@gmail.com

Editors: Helga Andrews: hanjm@aol.com

Marilyn Beaven: mmbeaven@comcast.net

Librarian: Roy Herold: rherold@yahoo.com

The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society is published 3-4 times a year. In 2015 expect February-March, April-May, August-September, October-November issues and occasional notices of special events.



Galanthus nivalis photo ALAMY