

The Dodecatheon

NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE VALLEY CHAPTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, MARCH INTO SPRING “HOW TO BUILD A CREVICE GARDEN” WITH PAUL SPRIGGS

...submitted by Laura Axel and Janet Novak

Crevice gardens... the hottest trend in rock gardening! You can learn all about them on Saturday, March 23. DVC-NARGS and the Hardy Plant Society Mid-Atlantic Group have teamed up to arrange a talk by Paul Spriggs, co-author of “The Crevice Garden.” Paul will present during HPS’s ‘March into Spring’ Symposium, held this year at the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library in Delaware. This collaboration will showcase what a great organization the Rock Garden Society is to a much larger audience.

Paul’s talk is titled “How to Build a Crevice Garden—Crevice Garden Design and Construction.” Paul will show how to build your own crevice rock garden, whether it’s a large outcrop or a tiny trough. Paul will delve deeply into design, site selection, materials and staging. He will then offer a step-by-step guide that takes us from the first shovel of sand to the final planting and topdressing.

DVC-NARGS members have three options to hear Paul’s talk.

1. Attend March Into Spring. DVC-NARGS members get discounted rates: \$75 (\$150 for two people) until February 29 and \$95 thereafter. This is cheaper than the HPS members rate!

Go to: <https://hpsmag.memberclicks.net/rockgarden>

2. Attend just Paul’s talk. This is free to DVC-NARGS members, but registration is required. The talk is 10:45-11:45 AM.

Go to: https://hpsmag.memberclicks.net/mis_lectureonly

3. See the recorded talk. This is free, and no registration is required. All DVC-NARGS members will be emailed a link to the presentation a few days after the event.

What’s included with registration?

Besides Paul, the other speakers are Uli Lorimer, Janet & Jeff Crouch, and Mike Raupp. Full symposium registration includes free parking, morning coffee and snacks, vendor shopping (don’t forget our own plant sale table), book sales and signing, a boxed lunch, access to Winterthur’s stunning grounds, and a post-symposium tour of the grounds.

If you register for **Paul’s in-person talk only**, you get free parking, free access to Paul’s talk, vendor shopping, book sales and signing, and access to cafeteria at your own expense.

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What is this? Answer on page 3



Paul Spriggs, Photo by Squamish Anna 2021.

THE DODECATHEON

This publication is issued on the first of odd-numbered months. All copy must reach the editor no later than the 15th day of the preceding month. Any text in this newsletter may be used in any other NARGS publication, unless otherwise specified. Please credit the author and *The Dodecatheon*.



2023 CHAPTER OFFICERS:

Chairperson: Louise Clarke
HORTIGAL55@yahoo.com

Vice Chair/Programs: Laura Axel
LHALVP@comcast.net

Recording Secretaries:
Tracy Constantine & Nora Sirbaugh
DVCNARGS@gmail.com

Treasurer: Jerry Rifkin

Membership Secretaries: Erin Anne
Van Yahres & Leslie Morris Smith
DVCNARGS@gmail.com

Dodecatheon Editor: Sharee Solow
SLSOLOW@comcast.net

Directors at Large:

Lisa Roper & Jill Evans

AV equipment: Rick Ray

Coffee & Tea: Paula Burns &
Louise Clarke

Plant Sales: Janet Novak

Plant Show: Radford MacFarlane,
Gwynn Ormsby, & Michele Hall

Tour Coordinator: Linda Marcucci

Web Master: Janet Novak



For membership info, the latest program changes and bad weather cancellations check out our web site:

www.dvcnargs.org

We do send out email notices from time to time between issues of *The Dodecatheon* to those who have given us email addresses.

Please check your email address in the membership list and if it is wrong, send us the right one!



THE CHAIR'S CORNER

...submitted by Louise Clarke, Chairperson

Punxsutawney Phil was right - an early spring is upon us. As the days lengthen, and my bulb foliage pushes skyward to commingle with nodding snow drops, I am noticing garden reawakening. On walks with my dog, we've already seen Tommies bravely blooming, witch hazel flowers unfurling, sunny Winter Aconites, and honeybees foraging nectar and pollen.

If you've participated in the NARGS Seed Exchange, you've most likely received your seeds and are hopefully sowing. Perhaps you'll have a few plants to share for our future plant sales?

The new season brings new faces to our society's executive board. Janet Novak has stepped down from Membership chair and is being jointly succeeded by Leslie Morris-Smith and Erin Van Yahres. Thank you, Janet for helming membership, and thank you Erin Anne & Leslie for stepping up to fill this vital position. We are also welcoming Nora Sirbaugh, who you may know from Hardy Plant Society, as our new co-recording secretary. She will assist Tracy Constantine in that role.

After February's Zoom, we will return to in-person meetings. I hope to see you at March Into Spring, A Symposium for Gardeners, the Hardy Plant Society's annual event to be held at Winterthur on March 23rd. The 9AM to 4PM program will be preceded by 8AM check-in and sales of horticultural books and plants from several enticing vendors. Paul Spriggs, co-author of *The Crevice Garden*, will be a featured speaker. The early bird registration deadline closes February 29th, so leap on this opportunity.

In April, Marano's Gardens in Fort Washington will be hosting a trough filling workshop for the Hardy Plant Society as well as a session for our chapter. Joe Marano propagates rock garden plants at the nursery and will have choice plants for us to purchase. My trough will enjoy the refresh - how about yours? Joe and his very knowledgeable crew will offer expert guidance.

It's time to emerge from your winter slumber, like Phil. I'm wagering that our mid-January snows were it for real winter weather and that spring will rapidly advance, although the Philadelphia Flower Show is in the beginning of March. In years past, that event was a snow magnet. Whatever Mother Nature sends our way, I trust you are looking forward to the reawakening of the garden and the promise of spring.



Winter trough. Photo by Louise Clarke.



Tommies, Feb.15. Photo by Louise Clarke.

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 9AM: MEMBERS' FLOWER SHOW

...submitted by co-chairs Rad McFarlane, Gwynne Ormsby and Michele Hall.

New Location: Trinity Presbyterian Church, 1120 Darley Road, Wilmington, Delaware 19810

The true aim of the spring plant show is education as well as being a friendly and informal competition.

The Day's Details

- Plant registration will begin at **9:00 am** and member judging will start at **9:30 am**.
- **10am** is our guest's lecture: John Lonsdale, "Unusual Bulbs for the Garden and Greenhouse." (see page 7)
- Following the morning lecture, winners will be announced, and prizes awarded: First and Second place winners in each class as well as an overall Best in Show.
- Please note that the schedule of classes has changed from previous years. Please review the classes and simple rules and start grooming those winning plants!
- Members of other plant clubs are invited to participate in both entries and judging.

New class this year, Class 10: Miniature Flower Arrangement

An arrangement of flowers from YOUR garden in a diminutive vase (no more than 4 inches tall or 4 inches wide!) to show off your small rock garden and woodland flowers. There is no limit on the number of species that may be included in each arrangement.

You can provide a vase or we have about 30 small clear glass vases (3.5" tall) available as "loaner vases" for the show and we will have some space available for assembly or adjustment of your creations. Each exhibitor is limited to 3 entries in this class.

Plant Show Rules

- Entries must have been in the exhibitor's possession for a minimum of 3 months prior to the date of the show.
- There is a maximum of three plants per class by an exhibitor.
- Winners are decided by popular vote for each class, plus "Best in Show."
- Plants should be potted in clean pots, well-groomed and mulched, and tagged with correct botanical names.
- Plants must be entered between 9 to 9:30 am.

Schedule of Classes

1. Bloom: Rock garden plant (including bulbs) potted and in flower.
2. Foliage: Rock garden plant shown for foliage: green, silver, variegated, etc.
3. Succulent: A Sempervivum, Sedum, Jovibarba, Rosularia, or like.
4. Primula: Any Primula in bloom.
5. Container: Trough or container with one or more plant.
6. Seed Plant: Any rock garden plant grown from seed by the exhibitor.
7. Shrub: Rock garden shrub; evergreen or deciduous.
8. Woodland: Any appropriate woodland plant including ferns, grasses, shrubs.
9. Native: A plant native to within 50 miles of Philadelphia.
10. Miniature Flower Arrangement: A tiny bouquet in a small vase.

*Yes - Bring some snacks to share!
We will brew fresh coffee to serve and hot water for tea*

*Answer from page 1: Cyclamen graecum roots.
Photo from www.edgewoodgardens.net*

JOHN LONSDALE: UNUSUAL BULBS FOR THE GARDEN AND GREENHOUSE

John Lonsdale of Edgewood Gardens will be speaking before our Spring Plant Show April 13th awards. His talk covers all four seasons and habitats but focuses on fall and spring, since that is when most of his plants flower. He will bring plants to enter the show and some plants for sale, he takes cash, checks and credit cards.

John Lonsdale gardens at "Edgewood" which is situated 35 miles west of Philadelphia, in Exton, Pennsylvania. He has grown a wide variety of alpine and woodland plants and bulbs for more than 40 years and is a recipient of the Alpine Garden Society Gold Merit Medal. He has traveled extensively to study plants in habitat, especially *Trillium* in the SE USA. John regularly contributes articles to the publications of several horticultural societies, lectures widely and maintains a website (www.edgewoodgardens.net) featuring over 20,000 images of plants growing in his garden. He contributed a chapter discussing *Cyclamen* in North America to the book, "Genus *Cyclamen* in Science, Cultivation, Art and Culture," published by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. John received his Ph.D. in microbiology from the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and spent more than 35 years working in biomedical research, before driving a school bus for 5 years.

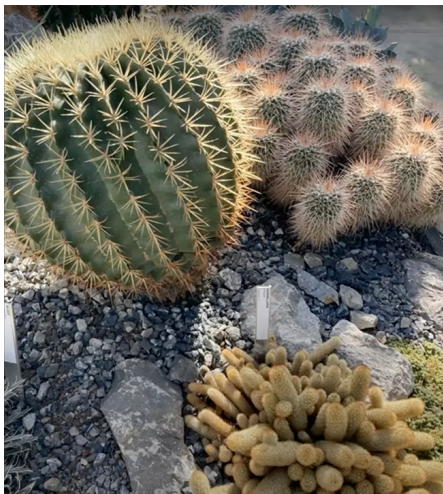


RECAP: MEMBERS' SHOW-N-TELL

...submitted by Tracy Constantine, Co-Recording Secretary

Andrew Bunting kicked off the Show-N-Tell with opportunities to exhibit and volunteer at the Philadelphia Flower Show. Volunteers get in free. Submitting plants for judging in the Horticulturist involves filling in some forms, and Andrew (abunting@PennHort.org) can assist with those forms. One volunteer role is as a passer, and many are needed. Passers meet with exhibitors, review nomenclature, check for pests on plants, and ensure plants are in the appropriate class and location. Exhibiting rock garden plants enables the public to check out these plants and ensures that rock garden categories remain active in future shows.

Cyane Gresham spoke on a hidden gem in Switzerland. The Zurich Succulent Collection, which is funded by the City of Zurich, is free and open daily from 9 am to 4:30 pm. It was started in 1931 with a donation from a private individual and has grown to over 6,000 species in 83 plant families. It lies on the shore of Lake Zurich, and is uncrowded and easy to get to. They also have a library, an herbarium, and a seed exchange with other organizations around the world.



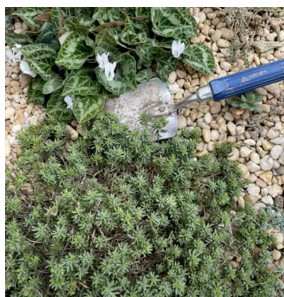
Cacti at the Zurich Succulent Collection.
Photo by Cyane Gresham.



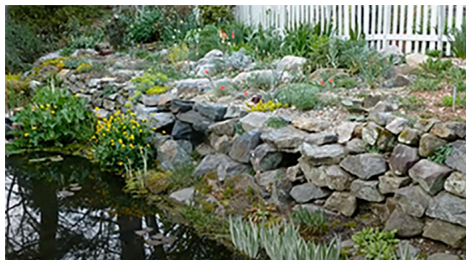
Cacti at the Zurich Succulent Collection.
Photo by Cyane Gresham.



Tibetan hellebore. Photo by Eric Sternfels.



Janet Novak's garden.
Photo by Eric Sternfels.



Cresson rock garden. Photo by Charles Cresson.



Stone supported by other stones to avoid sinking. Photo by Charles Cresson.

Eric Sternfels encouraged us to spend more time taking smart phone photographs of our rock gardens. Years ago, he posted a photo of *Helleborus thibetanus* on Pinterest. Now that photo is likely to be the second image returned when searching for *Tibetan hellebore* online, and the photo is available to others who can appreciate its beauty. Man-made items like a trowel or felco pruners can indicate the scale of plants. Perhaps members will accumulate photos to be used in a future chapter presentation.

Charles Cresson shared the process of building a rock garden behind a pond at Hedgleigh Spring, his Swarthmore garden. A large area was excavated about 12–18 inches deep. Decorative stones to be exposed were supported by other stones, to avoid sinking, and then the hole was filled with material from a nearby creek bed. Some weed seeds from the fill did sprout, but the weeds were easily managed. The resulting garden is reminiscent of the central Asia steppe region.

...continued on page 5

...continued from page 4



Soldanella alpina. Photo by Janet Novak.



Ranunculus glacialis (glacial buttercup)
Photo by Janet Novak.



Neotinea ustulata (burnt tip orchid).
Photo by Janet Novak.

Janet Novak presented a photographic tour of the Swiss Alps and true alpine plants. In 2022, Julia Corden and Todd Boland lead a NARGS trip to the Bernese Oberland region in central Switzerland. Gondolas and trains criss-cross the steep terrain, replete with cows, glaciers, waterfalls, and wildflowers. Janet's favorite flower from the trip is *Ranunculus glacialis*, which grows only on high peaks and in unstable gravel soils. With great public transportation and abundant wildflowers, this beautiful region can be visited without a guide.

Sharee Solow told the tale of upheaval in her backyard oasis. Aqua, a water services company, was working to solve a sewer problem in her area. They sent a camera through old terracotta pipes and could not get beyond a 45-degree junction on her property. Aqua merely had rights to access the pipes, not the land. Sharee volunteered to have her garden area dug up to address the issue ... twice. The ordeal did have a silver lining. Sharee got the easy-care post birdfeeder that she's always wanted and was able to make her main walkways completely flat.

Rick Ray noted what caught his eye at the recent Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) in Baltimore. Plants of interest include *Leucothoe* 'Burning Love', *Cladrastis kentukea* 'White Rain' (Weeping yellowwood), the fern *Athyrium* 'Aubergine Lady', a noninvasive *Euonymus* (Burning bush), deer-resistant Tulip 'Lilac Winter', *Magnolia figo* (Banana shrub—a shrub which smells like bananas, for zones 8-10), and the Fairy Magnolia Series. For \$112, an electric wheelbarrow kit comes with a special wheel, batteries, and a switch to initiate assistance.

Many thanks to Louise Clarke, who organized the Show-N-Tell, and to members, who passionately shared their tips!



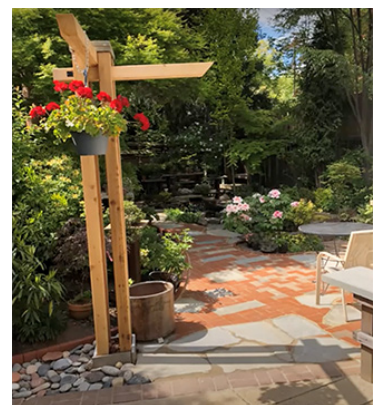
'Aubergine Lady' Fern. Photo by Rick Ray.



Electric Wheelbarrow. Photo by Rick Ray.



During the dig. Photo by Sharee Solow.



After the dig. Photo by Sharee Solow.

THURSDAY, APRIL 18 IN TWO SESSIONS: TROUGH FILLING WORKSHOP WITH JOE MARANO

...submitted by Laura Axel

Marano Gardens, 488 S. Bethlehem Pike, Ft. Washington, PA 19034.

Maybe you've made a hypertufa trough at another workshop and haven't yet planted anything in it? Or if you just want to spend a few hours with fellow members creating a beautiful planted container, then this is the workshop for you.

Two sessions: 10:00 AM – 12:00 Noon or 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Registration: Open to DVC-Nargs **Members only**; registration is required. Please mail 2 things:

1. **your check payable to DVC NARGS**
2. **a note with which session you'd like to participate in and your name, email address, and phone number**

Mail them to our Treasurer: Jerry Rifkin, 310 Valley Road, Merion Station, PA 19066.

Number of Participants: 10-12 per workshop, minimum 5 per session. Classes will be held outdoors so dress for the weather. If it rains or is extremely cold, we will move the class into the heated greenhouse. A portable toilet (porta john) is available.

Fee: \$60.00 This includes: A bag of trough soil mixture, 1 small conifer (to be selected by participant), 2 trough plants (to be selected by participant), assorted slate, river rocks, and grit.

***Registration is open and will close April 15th**

Joe Marano is a co-manager and head grower at Marano Gardens. He is a graduate of Delaware Valley University with a bachelor's in Ornamental Horticulture. He taught Woody & Herbaceous college courses at Del Val. Joe is a member and long-time volunteer with the Philadelphia Horticultural Society (PHS) and the Philadelphia Flower Show. He is the former President of the Conifer Society, Eastern Region, and a lifetime member of the National Association of the Rock Garden Society (NARGS).

Mary Marano-Holena is a co-manager and leads retail sales at Marano Gardens. She has a master's in Landscape Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and worked for over 5 years at the Bucks County Planning Commission before returning to Marano Gardens. Mary taught a night class at Delaware Valley University and adult classes at Wissahickon High School.

Natalie A. Marano also comes from a 'plants' background with her family's nursery and other horticultural endeavors in Maryland. She taught for over 25 years at the elementary and high school levels. Natalie has continued building her horticultural knowledge at Marano Gardens and propagates a variety of plants and vegetables.

Hypertufa Pots:

Participants are welcome to **bring their own** hypertufa trough/container or a selection of hypertufa troughs will be available for purchase. Prices range between \$35.00-\$75.00.

Additional plants or troughs/containers are available for purchase.

20% discount on any plants or troughs for the day.

DVC-NARGS PLANT SALE AT MARCH INTO SPRING

...submitted by Janet Novak, Plant Sale Coordinator

DVC-NARGS will be selling plants at March Into Spring, the Hardy Plant Society's annual garden symposium. It's Saturday, March 23 at Winterthur in northern Delaware. We expect to have over 100 different plants to sell, so come and shop! A plant list is on our website <https://dvcnargs.org/plant-sale.html>

DVC-NARGS members can access the shopping area for free: register at https://hpsmag.memberclicks.net/mis_lectureonly which also gets you free entry to hear Paul Spriggs speak on crevice gardening.

Anyone who isn't a DVC-NARGS member must either register for March Into Spring or hold an entrance ticket to Winterthur.

The shopping hours are a bit peculiar, because they are arranged around the talks: 8-9 • 10:15-10:45 • 11:45-12:45 • 1:45-2:15 • 3:15-5:00.

To make this work, we need volunteers! We still need volunteers for the afternoon:

- Early afternoon sales: 11:45-12:45 and 1:45-2:15
- Late afternoon sales and take-down: 3:15-5:15

Let me know if you're willing to take one or more shift. I am especially eager to get volunteers who have experience with taking credit cards on a Square device or who are willing to learn.

To sign up, email me: botany@indri.org



...a memo, once again there will be a full schedule of free talks at the Flower Show and March 9th, Sharee Solow will give her talk "DIY Rock Garden" promoting our chapter.

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 11AM TO 3PM, CHAPTER GARDEN TOURS

...submitted by Linda Marcucci, Garden Tour Coordinator

Every year I look forward to our spring visit to area gardens and this year we will have another three splendid home gardens to visit. This year we will be in the Media and Wallingford area thanks to the generosity of Lisa Roper and Allan Summers, Adam Levine and Tom Borkowski, and Marcia Spoor. I'm sure you will agree that the descriptions and photos show what a special day this will be to add to your calendar.

Lisa Roper, Gravel and Ruin Horticulturist at Chanticleer and her husband Allan Summers, a Principal with RAS Landscape Architects have gardened their 1/3-acre garden for the past 24 years. They try to balance their love of unusual plants with aesthetic sensibility. An *Acer griseum* that they grew from seed when they were students at Longwood Gardens is now 34 years old. A *Taxodium distichum* that once was a seedling give-away from Scott Arboretum is now a major feature. Herbaceous and woody plants are a mix of native and exotic ornamentals. Hardscaping includes a gravel patio and a water feature that Allan installed. Chickens share the space. Ceramic sculptures by Lisa's mother, Rhoda Roper are placed in the garden.

Lisa Roper and Allan Summers



Tom Borkowski and Adam Levine



Even though this is a small property, only a tenth of an acre, the interlocking geometry of paths and beds and patio, and the carefully placed fences and screen plants, help create an element of surprise during a stroll around the garden's paths. Tom designs and builds gardens for a living, and all the hardscape (patio, walls, walkways) for this garden was created by him and his employee Frank Hayes in fall 2007. Except for a few shrubs saved from the previous owner, all the plants were planted by us. In spring the garden includes a variety of bulbs, both in pots and in the ground; a nice collection of hellebores, and other unusual and classic perennials. Several spaces are devoted to a display of annuals and tender plants that changes each year. A collection of tender bulbs and succulents in pots, along with a changing collection of unusual found objects, are used as accents on the patio and in other parts of the garden.

Tom has worked as a landscape designer with his own design/build firm since 1989, and Adam is an award winning garden writer, author of five books and many magazine articles, and the former editor in chief of GROW, the magazine of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.



Marcia Spoor

I have lived in a 300 plus year old house for almost 23 years. When I moved here there was no garden, just a 300 year old Spanish chestnut tree. Since that time I have planted an extensive garden. This includes, annuals, perennials, shrubs, fruits and vegetables. I especially enjoy growing unusual plants and vines.



The Dodecatheon

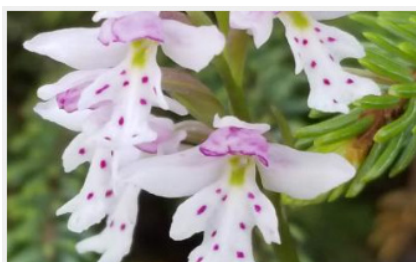
Sharee Solow, Editor
7914 Park Avenue
Elkins Park, PA 19027



A Last Minute Offer

A free Flower Show ticket for volunteering for the Phila Area Plant Societies exhibit, co-chaired by Leslie Morris Smith. Signup at https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0B-44ACAC29A6F85-47700838-delaware#

NARGS Tour, June 2024



8 day tour

\$3255 USD per person double occupancy;
\$3915 USD single occupancy

Newfoundland Limestone Barrens

28 Jun 2024 - 06 Jul 2024

The unique limestone barrens of Newfoundland, a habitat found nowhere else on earth, are located at a botanical cross-roads. Here you can find the southernmost distribution of many Arctic plant...

LOOKING AHEAD

Delaware Valley Chapter NARGS

Saturday, March 23, Crevice Gardens by Paul Spriggs, and chapter plant sale at Winterthur, Delaware.

Saturday, April 13, Member Plant Show and guest speaker, John Lonsdale.

Thursday, April 18, Trough-filling Workshop, with Joe Marano, Marano Gardens, 488 S. Bethlehem Pike, Ft Washington, PA 19034.

Saturday, May 4, Chapter Garden Tour, Wallingford/Media (page 7)

Saturday, May 11, Chapter Garden Tour, Ivyland, PA

Saturday, May 18, Chapter Plant Sale

Check The Dodecatheon and the DVC/NARGS website (www.dvcnargs.org) for details before each meeting.

* A tree note shared by a new member, Andrew Bunting:

Many evergreen magnolias are now worth trying in our area, including *M. insignis*, *M. yuyuanensis*, *M. lotungensis*, as well as the magnolias Rick is talking about - 30 years ago many of the *Magnolia grandiflora* cultivars were barely hardy.

You can still see the Show and Tell video on our chapter website for "the rest of the story."

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE AND DUES REMINDER

...submitted by Leslie Morris Smith, Erin Anne Van Yahres, Membership Secretaries

Dear Valued DVC-NARGS Member:

It's been a great year for our chapter and we know you will want to continue your membership to enjoy the exciting plant show in April, the garden tour to follow, plus all the garden visits and plant sales in the year ahead.

We are collecting dues for the 2024 year from those who have not yet renewed. We still have *Paypal* and you can use that option through our chapter website under "Membership" at <https://dvcnargs.org>

Delaware Valley Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society

Join at dvcnargs.org or by using this form

Please print the information as you would like it to appear in our membership directory. This directory is solely for NARGS activities.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone number: _____ Email Address: _____

☐ Individual \$15.00 ☐ Household \$20.00

Circle the committee(s) in which you might like to participate:

Plant Sales Newsletter Programs Hospitality Annual garden tour: opening your garden to members

Make your check payable to **DVC NARGS** and send it to Erin Anne Van Yahres, 64 Birch Lane, Paoli, PA 19301.