THE BETTY FORD ALPINE GARDEN
A Zoom by Delainey Williams for March 13, 2021 at 10AM
...submitted by Laura Axel, Program Chair
The Betty Ford Alpine Garden, the highest elevation botanical garden in North America, boasts a large collection of rare alpine species from the Rockies and mountain ranges around the world. What started as a small garden in honor of First Lady Betty Ford, is now about 5 acres of garden space nestled into the larger expanse of Ford Park. Delainey will be giving a brief background on the garden, discuss her experience there as a horticulture staff intern, and highlight a few of her favorite plants in their collection.

CONIFERS FOR TROUGH AND ROCK GARDENS
A Zoom by Ginny Levy for April 10, 2021 at 10AM
...submitted by Laura Axel, Program Chair
What do Brachiosaurus and Hinoki Cypress (Chamaecyparis obtusa) have in common? They were strangers in a strange land, neighbors in the same neighborhood. During the Mesozoic Era conifers dominated the landscape and were likely important food for Brachiosaurus and other sauropods.

Hinoki Cypress and other coniferous species have withstood the pressures of time and climate while the gentle plant eating Brachiosaurus and his cousins were left behind. As time marched on, flowering plants evolved and began to overtake conifers as the dominant flora. Undeterred conifers found new frontiers and continued to adapt to the brave new world.

This transition from dominance to niche players has led conifers to be not only supporting characters in the world of rock gardens and troughs but has given them the perfect adaptive skills. As gorgeous alpine gems take a well-deserved period of rest and renewal the very nature of conifers continue to provide structure and beauty. Survivors of millenniums, conifers will not begrudge being slipped into small spaces or in companionship with their showy competition, the delicate angiosperms.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
While watching the snow fly from my home office window, I remind myself that spring is less than 30 days away. As winter wanes, I expectantly wait to see our early spring harbingers emerge from their snow-covered blankets, seeing my troughs re-emerge, welcoming the lengthening days and warming temperatures. My witchhazel flowers are held like tight fists, awaiting that whisper of warmth to unfurl.

The gradually longer days have already awakened my anticipation of vernal pursuits: removing withered top growth and leaves from garden beds that hopefully served as overwintering habitat for insects and other small critters. I’ll be watching to see if that bullfrog from my newly built water feature in 2020, who mysteriously found his way to my basement sump pump pit, migrates back outside.

As a NARGS Seed Exchange participant, I’ve been busy sowing seeds that need cold, moist conditions to germinate. Do you share that thrill of discovering seedlings emerge from grit covered seed pans? If only a few of those actually make it to my troughs and garden beds, I’ll be chuffed, as my British friends would say. For some informative reading, see Kenton Seth’s article ‘Winter Sowing Rock Garden Seed for the Home Gardener’, Rock Garden Quarterly, Winter 2020-21, pages 48-55. Kenton covers all the details you need to consider for germination success, including letting Mother Nature provide the cold stratification.

As thoughts turn to spring, I am anticipating that our chapter will once again hold live, in-person plants sales and garden tours, with appropriate health guidelines applied. Thanks to Janet Novak for spearheading our plant sales logistics. Morris Arboretum’s Bloomfield Farm will serve as the outdoor venue for our spring sale in June.

In our February Zoom meeting, I was heartened to see that some of you are receiving the COVID vaccines which will help to protect us in a return to in-person gatherings. For now, I am hunting pharmacy websites at all hours looking for open appointments; my holy grail quest.

On the national level, NARGS, our parent organization, is planning a live, in-person AGM in Durango, Colorado, June 17-20, 2021. Again, see the Winter 2020-21 issue of Rock Garden Quarterly for Panayoti Kelaidis’ compelling description of what awaits those fortunate enough to attend. Mike Smedley’s article also gives a great illustration of Durango, Colorado, and the siren song that lured him there.

For more glimpses of Colorado, be sure to join our March Zoom meeting when Delainey Williams, the Hay Honey Farm Natural Areas intern of Morris Arboretum, shares her summer intern experiences at the Betty Ford Alpine Garden in Vail, Colorado, the highest elevation botanical garden in North America.

In closing, here’s a snippet of Dorothy Howe Brooks’ poem ‘Karesansui’.

Stillness born of light and shadow
this unmoving present time
stilled and fully enclosed,
like this garden of rock.
MEMBERS’ 10 MINUTE TALKS, JANUARY 9, 2021

...submitted by Nancy Stedman, Recording Secretary

For the first DVC-NARGS meeting of 2021, five members gave 10-minute “Show and Tell” presentations about their gardening projects, followed by several creative examples of “tasty troughs.”

Charles Cresson: Winter Flowers from Hedgleigh Spring
In his Swarthmore, PA garden, Charles Cresson likes to put winter-blooming plants in proximity to each other to create a strong seasonal display. Every year is different. Some of these plants, such as snowdrops, bloom around the same date each year. But many others, especially shrubs, are opportunists--the timing of their flowering is affected by weather conditions. Hedgleigh Spring proves that winter can be as exciting a garden time as any other season. Fragrance is contributed by *Hamamelis mollis* ‘Wisley Supreme’ (sweetly-scented), *Chimonanthus praecox* and *C.p.* ‘Luteus’ (the wild species is the most fragrant), *Sarcococca orientalis* (long-blooming, with a vanilla scent) and *Prunus mume* ‘Peggy Clarke’ (imparts a “sweet, clovey” smell, in Charles’ words). Silver-leaved cyclamens are so eye-catching that “you don’t need flowers,” said Charles. But if you do want blooms, it’s hard to beat *Camellia* ‘Ryuko’ and ‘Winter’s Beauty’ (pictured).

Norm and Ginny Badler: Everyone Must Get "Stoned"
In 1989, Norm and his wife Ginny bought a house in Haverford, PA that sits in the middle of nearly a square acre, much of it originally lawn. A dramatic transformation took place over the next three decades. Stone work, including the addition of a stone patio, was a big part of the change. Paths were converted from red gravel to stone such as slate. “These stone paths unify the yard,” explained Norm. A koi pond serves as a focal point, with a waterfall raised in elevation by a tufa rock garden which is planted with moss phlox plus sedum. An old koi pond was made into a Zen garden with a bubbler and edged with stone slabs. For a curving retaining wall, Norm and Ginny brought glacial erratics back from their home in the Catskills. (See picture.)

Rick Ray: Saving Trees
1. Planting: Rick suggested planting the root ball of a tree about 10% above grade to account for potential soil-settling. Don’t top the root ball with mulch, he advised. Instead, place a 2-3” layer of mulch by the edges of the root ball and spread it out to cover the backfilled soil beyond the tree. Ideally, with a ball and burlap tree, you would remove all the burlap and wire, but if you can’t, at least cut off the top two horizontal wires.

2. Deer proofing: From the middle of August to the middle of March, bucks can rub the trunks of trees and harm their bark. For the last 15 years, Rick has been successfully protecting trees with A.M. Leonard’s rigid plastic mesh tree guards. [https://www.amleo.com/leonard-rigid-plastic-mesh-tree-guards-4-inch-diameter/p/VP-BG](https://www.amleo.com/leonard-rigid-plastic-mesh-tree-guards-4-inch-diameter/p/VP-BG) “They are much stronger than garden fencing and are at least three times the thickness of deer fencing,” Rick said. (See picture.)

3. Repairing damage: A linden tree, 6” diameter and over six feet tall, had a split in its trunk that was 4” wide. With a chain saw, Rick re-wounded the bark along the edge of the split in order to stimulate the cambium to grow callus tissue over the wound.

Laura Axel: Creating the Garden Path
When Laura Axel’s husband Matt bought a mid-century modern house in Wyndmoor, PA in 1989, the sloping backyard was covered in ivy. Over the years, Laura added beds containing trees, shrubs, perennials, ephemerals and rock-garden plants around the home. A 4’ wide stone pathway led visitors from the front of the house into the garden on the left side.

Continued on page 4
of the backyard. On the right side, a steep grass path went from the driveway down into the yard. The various family dogs had “destroyed everything there,” reported Laura. While the slope was great for sledding in the winter, the path became slippery when it rained. Anticipating holding a future daughter-in-law’s bridal shower in the backyard, and nudged by DVC-NARGS member Jill Evans, Laura decided to remake that path in the fall of 2019. She hired nearby talent to create a four-foot-wide walkway of Colonial Gray flagstone, which makes a sweeping entrance into the garden (pictured). The crew also built a retaining wall that links the two pathways, plus two more walls by the original steps that divide the back slope into terraces. The improved drainage allows evergreens from other parts of the garden to thrive here. These areas also provide great spots for Laura to show off her large, intriguing, container plantings. As for the clients who perhaps matter most—Laura’s canines are totally enthralled with the new runway. And, with any luck, Laura will be able to host the postponed bridal shower this June.

Louise Clarke: Advanced Trough-making

Louise set out to build two unusual troughs. For the first one, she made a frame out of scrap wood and inserted root trainers on the sides. The cells of the root trainers have holes in their bottoms, which lets air get into the finished pot (pictured here). For a second project, Louise opted for what she calls a “mega trough.” Louise constructed a plywood frame for a trough that is 30” long, 25” deep, and 18” wide. She used an entire bag (!) of Portland cement to make the mega trough, adding in wire to reinforce the floor and walls. “The trick is to keep the trough together when you’re removing the mold,” Louise said.

Virtual Flower Show: Zoom in Bloom

Class 1 (there was only one class this year): TASTY TROUGHS

Several people contributed photos of edible troughs that they had concocted: Jill Evans, Charlotte Wiegand, Diane Powell, Laura Axel and Ilona Ontscherenki. Sharee Solow took her creation on a whirlwind world tour of garden spots, including the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, the Boston Flower & Garden Show, and Algarve, Portugal. Our designers used peanut butter as glue, potatoes as rocks, green onions as trees, colored meringue for flowers, and crumbled graham crackers for soil. Troughs were made from meringue, wood, bread, a pineapple and a squash.
CONIFERS FOR TROUGHS ...continued from page 1

Join Ginny as we look at this wonderous group of survivors, what makes them tick, what are the best choices for years of enjoyment and where and how did these diminutive representatives of their majestic parents originate?

Ginny Levy began at Longwood Gardens in 1998, first as a volunteer before joining the staff 2002. Working first in the horticulture department and on seasonal displays throughout the conservatory, in 2012 Ginny took over the floral design duties until retiring that position to work more closely in the Continuing Education Dept. Ginny holds both Certifications of Merit in Ornamental Plants and the Certificate of Merit in floral design. She has taught numerous floral design and horticulture classes and has been the lead instructor for the Certificate Series Conifer course since 2014.

Ginny is a vice chair of Horticulture Judges for the Philadelphia Flower Show and is the current Zone V Chair for The Garden Club of America. (Zone V includes the 14 clubs throughout Pennsylvania and Delaware).

PLANT SALE PLANS FOR 2021...continued from page 1

Chapter Members’ Plant Sales

- June 12 at Morris Arboretum Bloomfield Farm
- September 12, location to be determined

Holding the June sale at Morris Arboretum (rather than our traditional location of Robbins Park) will allow us to reduce COVID risk. We will have more space for social distancing and more air circulation. Note, however, that the sale will be in the open, so, if it rains, wear a raincoat or bring an umbrella.

We may make other changes to make the sale safer. Some of the ideas we’re considering:

- Encourage plant donors to price their plants before arriving. If we do this, we’ll mail price labels to donors.
- Alphabetize the plants on the sale tables to make shopping faster.
- Require that payment be by check or cash with exact change. If the cashier doesn’t have to make change, that will speed payment and reduce crowding.

It’s too soon to know level of precaution will be required. We’ll decide on and announce the COVID precautions by late May. If you have ideas on how to make the sale safe, let me know.

Meanwhile, you can start thinking about what you can divide or propagate to donate for the sale.

For the September sale, we’ve noticed that our usual date (the second Saturday in September) often has competing events. So, as an experiment, we’re going to hold the sale on Sunday afternoon. The location has yet to be decided.

Public Plant Sale

- August 28 at Meadowbrook Farm

For several years, we had been selling plants to the public as part of Morris Arboretum’s plant sale in May. But Morris no longer has a plant sale, and this May is too dicey for a public event. So we’re going to sell plants at the Hardy Plant Society’s Fall Gardeners’ Market (Saturday, August 28 from 8:30 to 12:30 at Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown). This sale draws not only Hardy Plant Society members, but also other experienced gardeners seeking something beyond the usual. Therefore, I think this will be a good venue for us to sell rock garden plants and troughs. And maybe we’ll get some new members out of it.
REVIEW OF OUR ZOOM TALK, FEB 13 2021

submitted by Hope Punnett, Recording Secretary

We were fortunate that Elisabeth Zander, NARGS president, was able to fill-in as speaker on very short notice for our February meeting. Her spectacular rock garden is located in Goshen, in the Berkshires, the northwest corner of Connecticut, zone 4-5, a more hospitable environment for alpines than the Delaware Valley. She and her husband Rod, an accomplished stonemason, have transformed one acre of trees, grass and vegetable bed into a series of rock gardens over a period of twenty years. The removal of 17 trees was the first step in the transformation. Then that area was scraped of soil, down to the underlying stone. The rocks that were uncovered or left over were the nexus of the first garden. Before beginning, however, Elisabeth visited many types of rock gardens, including crevice, trough and tufa. Among them were Harry Jans’ tufa walls and Marijn van den Brink’s recycled concrete garden walls, both in the Netherlands.

From the beginning, Elisabeth had help from Zdeněk Zvolánek, a Czech crevice garden expert. She was ready to start. Quarry boulders, smaller stones, fine sand and gravel from the quarry were brought to the cleared area, the bed established, the stones firmed in place and planting begun with aubrietas, saxifrages, Primula allionii.

Daphne velanovskyi did well here as did gentians, anthyllis and many more.

Continued on page 7

2021 PHILADELPHIA FLOWER SHOW

Proposed Map...submitted by Sharee Solow, Editor

Although we will not be creating an exhibit at this year’s event, I thought you might like to see the proposed layout to plan your visit.
Then, said Elisabeth, “I went to work.” Crevices were added, planted with ramondas, gentians, saxifrages, *Daphne arbuscula, Campanula pilosa* from seed and many more.

*Primula allionii* “theater” was another highlight. Troughs were added, *Lonicera crassifolia* was surprisingly hardy in one. And then tufa beds! *Primula sibthorpi* was an early bloomer there. By then, the grass was limited to a small area at the edge. To replace it with a new crevice bed, 80 tons of soil were replaced with 100 tons of sand, limestone rocks were split and added to establish a new full sun crevice garden. Next came a sunken garden and a patio garden on an old cistern. Western plants including cacti were happy here. A new woodland rock garden necessitated planting trees for shade. Here, primulas, hepaticas, trilliums (including *Trillium grandiflorum* ‘Flore pleno’) among others were happy. There was space against the house for more ...more crevice garden, more troughs. Elisabeth concluded with a video showing the early work, soil removal, rock placement, crevice development. The enormous variety of plants grown in the many beds was amazing and they are all listed in a separate email that was already sent to members.

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**THE INTERNATIONAL ROCK GARDENER**

*...submitted by Sharee Solow, Editor*

The Scottish Rock Garden Club hosts a free monthly online magazine for Rock Gardeners. What a resource!

“Each issue will have a mix of photo based items, our target being a minimum of pots and a maximum of plants in the wild and in gardens, from photographers in different countries. This will be an international celebration, if you will, of mountain plants in habitat and our gardens. This venture will be coordinated and compiled by Margaret Young, Zdenek Zvolnek and Ian Young. The world of rock gardeners is just that: an international community of people with a deep interest in the flora of the mountains and wild places; we hope to provide a regular electronic glimpse of these plants. A full Index to *International Rock Gardener*, prepared by Glassford Sprunt, is updated each month and is available to download: https://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/index.php?log=international

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**CISTUS TEA?**

*...submitted by Sharee Solow, Editor*

During Elisabeth Zander’s talk, she mentioned drinking a tea made from a plant that I had not known as a medicinal but it turns out that every part of it is usable! *Cistus incanus* is one of the richest sources of polyphenols-phenolic compounds belonging to the group of plant substances, which has antioxidant activity that supports the human immune system. There is quite a list of antibiotic properties ranging from Anti-viral/fungal/bacterial to gastro-intestinal infections and Lyme disease.

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Vertical Crevice Garden, Zdenek Zvolanek designer, Montreal Botanic Garden, 2012
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jardin_crevasses_FB.jpg

One of the many examples of Cistus incanus tea products you can find on the internet.
LOOKING AHEAD

**Delaware Valley Chapter NARGS – Meetings and Activities**

**March 13, 2021, Saturday:** Chapter Zoom meeting will be about the Betty Ford Alpine Garden by Delaney Williams.

**April 10, 2021, Saturday:** Chapter Zoom meeting will be “Conifers for Troughs and Rock Gardens” by Ginny Levy.

**June 12, 2021, Saturday:** Chapter Members’ Plant Sale, Morris Arboretum

**August 28, 2021, Saturday:** Public Plant Sale, Meadowbrook Farm

**September 12, 2021, Sunday:** Chapter Members’ Plant Sale, TBD

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

SHOW AND TELL THANKS

...submitted by Jill Evans, Show and Tell Coordinator

Profuse and sincere thanks to those people who stepped up to the plate and volunteered to give a presentation for our January Show & Tell Zoom meeting! The stars of the show were (in order of appearance): Norm and Ginny Badler, Charles Cresson, Laura Axel, Rick Ray, Louise Clarke and Sharee Solow.

To add a touch of whimsey we held a Zoom in Bloom Flower Show consisting of one class: Tasty Troughs. The out-of-the-box edible troughs were created and planted by (in order shown): Jill Evans, Charlotte Wiegand, Diane Powell, Laura Axel, and Ilona Ontscherenki. Bravo! Let’s give all these wonderful volunteers a round of applause!

Thanks and thanks again.