**NEXT MEETING**

**JANUARY 11, 2015**

**Toronto Botanical Garden**

777 Lawrence Ave. East, Don Mills

1:00 pm Meet & greet other members

1:30 pm Frank Kershaw

‘The Recycled or Repurposed Garden’

Members’ Showcase:
Virginia Hildebrandt - Plunge Beds:
what can be grown and the rudiments of how the Europeans do ‘plunge pots’.

Seed Starting: yours questions answered -
A panel will discuss seed starting.
Send questions in advance to anna.leggatt@sympatico.ca

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**Meet the Speaker**

Frank Kershaw

**The Recycled or Repurposed Garden**

Frank Kershaw will have you giving a second look at yard sales after this presentation. You will be amazed at the many creative ways gardeners have added whimsy, interest and uniqueness to their garden with recycled items. This talk will feature many gardens throughout North America that have incorporated what might have been thrown away items and transformed them into new and endearing garden artifacts.

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Frank Kershaw is an award-winning horticulturist with more than 40 years experience in the parks, environmental and horticultural fields. He is active in teaching garden design courses at George Brown College in the Garden Design Certificate Program, a partnership program with the Toronto Botanical Garden. He has also taught at the University of Toronto in the Master of Landscape Architecture program. Over the years Frank has visited thousands of gardens, which has fueled his passion for horticulture and design.

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**What’s Coming Up**

**February 8, 2015**

**Erika Schroedersecker**

“Succulents of the Western Cape and Namaqualand—a Travelogue”

Members Showcase:
Anna Leggatt: NARGS 2014 Annual Meeting in Santa Fe
How did ORGS get started?

By John Gell

Before 1984 there were no rock garden societies in Canada east of the Rockies. There were two well-established societies in B.C., but on this side of the Rockies (the civilized side), there was nothing.

Gardeners here with an interest in alpine plants generally belonged to the American Rock Garden Society (ARGS), or the Alpine Garden Society (U.K.), or the Scottish Rock Garden Society, or specialty horticultural societies such as International Plant Propagators.

Andrew Osyany was a member of ARGS where the two big names were Norman Singer and Geoffrey Charlesworth. Singer was secretary of ARGS and a real promoter, and he kept urging Andrew to start a chapter of ARGS in Ontario. Andrew has often said that Norman Singer was “the Godfather of ORGS.” So Andrew finally decided to bite the bullet and try to get a rock garden society started.

In the fall of 1984, Andrew sent his now-famous letter to all ARGS members living in Ontario, inviting them to a founding meeting. Andrew knew Brian Bixley, who was on the board of the Civic Garden Centre, (now TBG), and Brian arranged a room for the meeting (and covered the cost). There was also some radio publicity from Art Drysdale, and there were announcements at various Horticultural Societies.

Finally the big day arrived: Sunday, December 2, 1984, and about 30 people showed up, six of those who came are still active members today: Andrew, Brian Bixley, the Jarvies, Joerg Leiss, Eva Maria Weyrauch, and Barrie Porteous, who was the speaker. I wish I could convey the enthusiasm for ORGS in those days. Terry and Jerry Leduc drove 300 miles from Maxville, Ontario to attend the meeting (Maxville is near Cornwall).

At the meeting it was decided to start ORGS, which would be a chapter or ARGS, and Norman Singer sent a welcoming letter. An Executive was elected:

- Chair: Pat Tucker
- Directors: Cyril Baker, Trevor Ashbee, Keith Squires
- Treasurer/Secretary: Carolyn Squires
- Editor of the Bulletin: Andrew Osyany

Membership fee was set at $10.00. It was decided that, just like now, ORGS would meet once a month except during the summer. Not all the meetings were held at the CGC. The third meeting was held at the Royal Botanical Gardens, and the June meeting was in Ottawa.

At the second meeting (January 1985), new members included Anna Leggatt, Frank Kershaw, David Tomlinson and Barbara Wilkins.

ORGS grew rapidly. In April 1985, ORGS had its first display at a garden show which brought in 20 – 30 new members. In May, ORGS had its first plant show and sale. By June, 1985, ORGS had over 100 members.

I’m interested in how Andrew and others set the tone for ORGS right from the beginning. In the second journal (February 1985) Andrew writes, “We are not going to be restricted to alpine plants; if we have a purist among us I have not yet met him. In 2008 ORGS even changed its name to the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society (ORG&HPS).

ORGS was also set up to be very non-bureaucratic. The executive are just volunteers – they assume positions of responsibility as a service to the members. It’s not a top-down organization at all. Every member is an independent gardener, and we come together for friendship and mutual benefit. This, in my view, is one of the great strengths of ORGS. There have been attempts over the years to make ORGS more tightly bureaucratic but these efforts have been aggressively resisted.

In 2013, ORGS&HPS honoured Andrew and Sue Osyany with Lifetime Memberships.

Photo by Panayoti Kelaidis

The first Seed Exchange was organized by Joerg Leiss. Donors had to have their seeds in by December 1985 and the first Seedex listing appeared in the January 1986 Newsletter.
The Journal is 30 years old!

It has been an interesting project to go back over the early editions of the Journal to find out how it began. One of the things that struck us was that although a lot of peripheral things have changed—such as the Journal being created on a computer instead of a typewriter, having an electronic version which has hugely cut down on the numbers being sent through the post, having lots more photographs, etc.—when it comes to the really important things such as the content, identification of the audience, and the importance of member contributions, very little has changed at all.

Over the coming year, issue by issue, we will reprint extracts from the first-year editions of the Journal. The most extensive article in the first issue was written by Barrie Porteous on the subject of Lewisias but as an updated version of that article appeared in the October 2012 edition of the Journal, we elected to run “Easy Rock Plants from Seed” by Terry Leduc. To give a clear idea of “how it all began”, following is Andrew Osyany’s editorial from that first Journal, titled “Gentle Reader”

Today’s editors: Diana and Barbara

I've lost my heart completely to my rock garden. This I've known for years, only now I think my head is gone, too. Let me explain. On bidding for a plant at our first meeting on December 2nd in Toronto I ended up bidding against myself in my enthusiasm to acquire something new for the rock garden. My husband Gerry, being a businessman, of course noticed, but I was blissfully unaware until told. Oh well, good-bye head - welcome new plant.

Over the years (20 odd) I have grown seedlings on every window sill in my home. Not having an alpine or greenhouse has its disadvantages, but it need not stop you from growing your own plants. (At least not the easy ones, or even a few of the more difficult ones.) There is an abundance of easy, attractive and suitably small plants, which come easily from seed. If your rock garden is sunny and well drained and your soil is reasonably fertile, you won't have any problems growing all the most common small plants which put on such a show every year from early spring on to summer and late fall. With the help of early spring bulbs, small evergreen shrubs and a few grey-leaved plants, along with a few annuals, there is interest and beauty as long as the garden is free of snow cover.

I would like to mention a few plants I have grown in a variety of different species; some alpine and some just suitable in size and that just look at home among stones. They are very common indeed, but what a joy to succeed so easily with such a variety of colourful little plants. They furnish you with new plants every year (if you need them), not to mention hybrids that frequently occur, or especially good forms of this or that plant. This they do
by themselves (with free help from the bees) with no special effort from you. In this time of outrageous prices, where else can you hope to have so much for so little?

The plants I have grown with such enthusiasm and pride will not impress those who go in for more difficult plants you can grow in a purely alpine garden, but I can vouch for every one of them as suitable and lovable for an ordinary sunny rock garden like mine.

**Dianthus alpinus**  
Dianthus for instance, is at the top of my list of favorites. It's so easy to grow, in so many different species, and so diversified in size. What a joy to grow them. Most are true alpines. Their perfume intoxicates you with pure joy. From 2 to 12 inches high with blue, grey or green foliage, in tuftets with their pink, white, red or even two colour flowers dancing above, they are traffic stoppers. One woman drifted into the garden one day and said 'What is that heavenly smell? For a moment I thought I had died and was in heaven. What smells so nice?' Dianthus, of course!

Another easy one from seed is **Alyssum spinosum** (also called Ptilotrichum spinosum, but I like 'Alyssum' better), and it's a darling. A few years back I was lucky and received some good seed from A.R.G.S. They have grown and prospered in my garden and they seed themselves around. This is quite different from ordinary yellow Alyssum, and it is not yellow. Wait 'til I tell you. A real dwarf with sharp spines and looking like a gnarled old tree shrub six inches high with small grey leaves, and when in bloom it covers itself in shades of light to dark pink with an occasional white thrown in. I have it growing on an island with campanulas, and draba, but it just about covers the whole space. Anyone for seeds next year? I also grow some yellow ones, _A. montanum_, which forms low mats of trailing wood stems and has light yellow crucifer flowers and small grey leaves. It's very nice. I have _A. saxatile_, but is seems to be a hybrid. It blooms much longer than the other saxatiles I have. A bonus plant, I think.

**Anacyclus depressus** is also very easy from seed. It grows very close to the ground, forming a wheel-like pattern of fine-cut green foliage touched with grey frost, and the charming daisies that are red beneath and pinkish white on top, grow at the tips of the branches. A charming little plant that always draws attention when in bloom.

**Aubrieta** - another easy one from seed. It comes in shades of pink to red to purple or mauve. They are gorgeous as wall or crevice plants. They have a long period of bloom in late spring. They resemble phlox from a distance when in bloom. I have a double one with blue-purple flowers that's a beauty. They don't seed around very much. Cut back after blooming.

**Arabis** blooms early, and that makes it welcome in my garden. I have a small variety that is lovely and pure white. Last year I noticed a pale pink plant among the white. These are very well behaved plants, not at all like Albida which rampages over everything around it. They look so beautiful together, that pale pink and white, that I will use some in other spots in my garden. Of course they also are very easy from seed or division in spring.

**Corydalls** I have in two varieties _C. lutea_ and _C. wilsonii_. _C. Lutea_ grows about 10 inches high and looks like a yellow bleeding heart. It is almost ever-blooming and has ferny green foliage. _C. Wilsonii_ is a dwarf with lovely blue-green ferny foliage that is very attractive and is covered with yellow blooms early in spring. A lovely little plant, only 2 or 3 inches high.

Cont'd/...
Germinating seeds with GA3 by Robert Pavlis

GA3 is a short form for one of the Gibberellins, a plant hormone, which is used to speed up the germination of some seeds. In this report I am documenting some of my observations as a first time user of GA3.

If you have used our Germination Guide before you will have noticed that GA3 is suggested for some seed. It is not suitable for all species. In many cases it has no effect on the germination process. In others, it promotes germination but results in weak seedlings that die soon after germination. The concentration of GA3 is also important. Too little and the seed does not germinate. Too much, and the seedlings will be deformed. This may sound more complicated than it is, but for some seeds it is very useful and worth a try.

Some species of Aquilegia germinate easily at room temperature, but some are more difficult to germinate especially once the seed has dried out. I tried using GA3 on several varieties including *Aquilegia flabellata var. nana*, a species that has been very stubborn for me. GA3 did not make any difference. It is quite possible that my seed was too old, or the concentration was wrong. It is worth trying again with other Aquilegia species.

As part of my research (see reference 2) I learned that GA3 helps with old Aquilegia seed, but that it is not needed for fresh seed. This summer, I collected *Aquilegia flabellata var. nana* from my own plants and started germinating them as soon as they were ripe. I just left them sitting at room temperature and within a month they started to germinate.

In each of the past couple of years I was very fortunate to receive some *Glaucidium palmatum* seeds from the ORG&HPS Seedex—thanks to everyone who donates seeds. The recommended procedure for germination is...
to plant as soon as they are ripe. That is not possible with our regular SeedEx since we don’t get the seed until it has dried for several months. I tried temperature cycling but that did not work. According to our Germination Guide and Fr. Deno (reference 2), *G. palmatum* is one species that does germinate easier with GA3, and I just happen to get a good number of seeds from the left over seeds this year. I decided to try some seed with GA3 and some without. The seeds were put into a baggy along with some Promix potting soil. They were all left at room temperature, some with room light, and some in the dark.

Darkness is not required for germination. Seeds treated with GA3 started germinating one week after treatment and continued for a couple of months. Non-treated seed started germinating after about two months. The % germination was almost 100% with GA3 and around 50% without. None of the seedlings treated with GA3 were deformed, and they all grew well.

*Podophyllum hexandrum* seeds are fairly difficult to germinate and usually require one or more cold/warm cycles. When the seed finally germinates it only produces a radicle and in some cases it shows the cotyledon leaves. The first true leaf is not made until the seedling goes through another cold cycle which means it takes another year before you see a true leaf. So it can take two—three years before you see the first true leaf after starting the seed. Kristi Walek of Gardens North has reported that treatment with GA3 contracts the first two—three years into one. So in the first year the seed makes a radicle and a true leaf, and then grows normally in the second year. If GA3 would save a year or more in getting mature plants it was worth a try.

I used seed from my own plants that had been dried and stored for five months. All of the seed was put into baggies along with moist peat moss, and left at room temperature for three weeks—nothing happened. The reason for this initial incubation is that I did not have any GA3—yet. When the GA3 arrived half the seed was treated with GA3 and the other half was left untreated as a control. The treated seed started to germinate within two weeks and continued with a few seeds germinating every week. Untreated seed did not germinate in the following six weeks so I treated the non-treated seeds with GA3, and they started to germinate within a week of treatment. Some seedlings started developing a true leaf three—four weeks after germinating. Some showed only the seed capsule above ground. For this latter group I dropped GA3 solution right onto the seed and radicle. Within a couple of weeks a true leaf started to grow.

None of the seedlings seemed to die or be spindly as a result of GA3 treatment. In a couple of cases the seedlings made two true leaves which I think is unusual. Hopefully that translates into a stronger plant next year.

In the case of *Podophyllum hexandrum*, GA3 reduced the long temperature cycling period to a few weeks at room temperature, and it save a years’ worth of growth.

This initial experience with GA3 was very positive, and I plan to use more of it next year.

References:

1) Description by Gardens North for germinating *Podophyllum hexandrum* with GA3: [https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.229102397177180.58376.130083313745756&type=3](https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.229102397177180.58376.130083313745756&type=3)

You Write:

Dear Carol: *Cyclanthera pedata* is a seed I originally got from the Seedex and at the time there was no germination information—in fact the note led you to the Kew difficult seed list which was hoping for germination information. From experience and from the Internet I know that it is simply a warm germinator and should be planted in situ when the soil is very warm in late spring early summer. It might also be noted it germinates quickly and growers should not plant too many because the vines are quite rampant. I debated about including this seed as part of my offering because it’s a vegetable and it’s not hardy. But because of its interest I decided to include it. Both the seed pods and the young tips of the vines are edible, although to be honest the pods are almost without flavour. The tips are lovely raw in a salad. Hope you’re well, Glen Spurrell
UPGRADE YOUR LIFE

We have ten meetings each year, generally the second Sunday of the month, at the Toronto Botanical Garden. To join, send your name, address with postal code, telephone number, e-mail address and your cheque payable to ORGS & HPS to: 88 Cottonwood Drive, Toronto, ON, Canada M3C 2B4.

Canadian individual membership: $25.00
Family membership: $30
US membership: US currency as above
Overseas memberships: $30 Canadian

Membership is for the calendar year. The ORGS&HPS Journal is published ten times per year in printed and electronic formats. Canadian chapters: Ottawa Valley, Calgary, Quebec, Newfoundland & Nova Scotia.

North American Rock Garden Society: To join send US $30 cheque, Visa or MC. to Bobby Ward, PO Box 18604, Raleigh, NC USA 27619-8604. 4 bulletins a year, the premier NA gardening publication, 3 annual get-togethers; 2 winter, 1 summer, Seed Exchange with over 6,000 items, book store, etc.

MEmber's Showcase

There is now an additional feature at our monthly meetings. — Member's Showcase, where, following the main speaker, members do short presentations on a variety of subjects of horticultural interest.

Anna Leggatt is the co-ordinator and if any member wants to take part in the showcase, on subjects such as travelogues, favourite plants, a demonstration, garden visits etc., just let her know at anna.leggatt@sympatico.ca

member's Showcase

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Remember, we are always interested in your comments or articles.

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Deadline for February Journal
January 12, 2015
Editor will be Barbara Lee

SHOWCASE

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