

GardenNOTES



NORTHWEST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2009

DIVERSE, DELICIOUS, DURABLE: *BRASSICA OLERACEA*

EAGLESONG

*“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings.”*

The Walrus and the Carpenter
by Lewis Carroll

TODAY’S SURGE OF INTEREST in home and local food production is unequalled since World War II and the Victory Garden era. I think the Walrus is right: “The time has come...To talk of many things.” As an herbalist and kitchen gardener my focus in the garden is cultivating life in the soil to foster great tasting, nutrient dense food, and viable home-grown medicine integrated into beautiful landscapes.

While employed as head gardener for the Herbfarm restaurant, I aimed to put something grown in the garden on the plate at every meal. January through March posed a real challenge for winter-hardy green vegetables, although roots, i.e., parsnips, salsify, beets, leeks, and Jerusalem artichokes were easy enough to cultivate in our mild climate.

I discovered ten of the most common vegetables eaten by people are a single species, *Brassica oleracea*, and are not distinguished from one another taxonomically, but only by



Melissa Savoy cabbage, summer harvest (EagleSong)

the horticultural category of cultivar groups. So, botanically speaking, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, and Brussels sprouts are the same plant. *B. oleracea* cultivar groups are determined by the plant part, i.e., leaf, bud, stem, etc. manipulated by selection to enlarge. These vegetables are tough, durable, interesting plants that were developed over time by equally tough, diligent, interesting characters, the market gardeners of Europe. Many were bred to produce through

the short, cold days of winter.

The *Brassica oleracea* vegetable groups hit their stride in the late 1800s as continued selection and successive improvements substantially increased varieties in Europe and America to feed the increasing population migrating to cities.

Diversity within each group is described in Fearing Burr’s *Field and Garden Vegetables of America*, 1865, reprinted in 1988 by *The American Botanist*. Burr listed 20 kale/borecoles, ►

DELICIOUS, DIVERSE, DURABLE: *BRASSICA OLERACEA* . . . cont. from page 1

Melissa Savoy cabbage, winter harvest (EagleSong)

32 broccolis, 36 cabbages, and 12 cauliflower varieties. With text and line drawings, M.M. Vilmorin-Andrieux described over 146 types of *B. oleracea* in his treatise *The Vegetable Garden* published in 1885 in Paris. This is a tribute to one plant's extraordinary value to human kind and to cooperative effort over time.

As current interest in heirloom vegetables blossoms, *Brassica oleracea* sets a perfect stage to investigate and further develop a unique, diverse species. The vast body of genetic information adapted by climate, soil, and culture, and passed through generations is still alive for gardeners to co-create into living gems. So jump in, join the fracas, and use the myriad brassicas to add interest and function to your garden in creative ways.

We're a long way from the diversity seen in the last century, but the good news is that this group of plants may be the easiest to grow from seed for local gardeners. Territorial Seed Company in Cottage Grove, OR, has many winter hardy brassicas to start your adventure.

Start times for plants with 220 day "to harvest" times are critical. Territorial makes planting easier with their winter collections that come to fruition over several months. For a full winter of good eating you can seed once in May/June in mid-sized plugs and transplant to garden soil in June/July.

I found January King and Melissa Savoy cabbages to be reliable, and purple sprouting broccoli is beautiful as well as tasty. The cabbages are ready from early January through March when the sprouting broccoli kicks in. Winter cold enhances sweetness as starches change to sugars. Winter

cabbages tend to be toothy and are better cooked than raw; broccolis are tender and welcomed fare at winter meals.

Generally, brassicas love manure-rich, limed soil, but over-wintering crops need to establish healthy roots so use a starting mix amended with a higher phosphorous level. In late summer or early fall, side dress lightly with nitrogen for top growth. Little or no winter cover is necessary. If cabbage root flies or cabbage moths trouble your garden, use floating row covers in summer to protect young plants.

By including the winter cole crops popular in northern Europe, our Northwest gardens and diet become more diverse and we join a long lineage of cooperation to enhance our dining pleasure.

Perhaps Ambrose Bierce's definition of cabbage in *The Devil's Dictionary* as: "A familiar kitchen-garden vegetable about as large and wise as a man's head" was misplaced cynicism. With the increased interest in healthy, nutrient-dense, local food perhaps the lowly cabbage family with its vast diversity, cancer-fighting constituents, and ease of culture is wiser than once thought. With its beautiful forms, textures, flavors, and colors, *Brassica oleracea* is a decided improvement to bare winter soils in our maritime gardens. And, when we gather in the dark of winter to eat fresh local food, we'll "talk of many things." 🍷

EagleSong is the director of natural beauty at Willows Lodge, Woodinville, Washington. She tends a kitchen garden and herb school at RavenCroft Garden, her home in Monroe, Washington. She teaches about local food, slow gardening, and herbal medicine throughout the Northwest. See www.ravencroftgarden.blogspot.com for more information.

January King cabbage, winter harvest (EagleSong)



SEED INFO

Territorial Seed Company
www.territorialseed.com
Renee's Garden Seeds
www.reneesgarden.com
Nichols Garden Nursery
www.nicholsgardennursery.com

INFORMATIVE WEBSITE
www.seedambassadors.org/Mainpages/winterbrassicas.htm

BOOK
Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest: Cool-Season Crops for the Year-Round Gardener
 Binda Colebrook

VISIT WONDROUS MEERKERK RHODODENDRON GARDENS

LISA IRWIN

MANY PEOPLE THINK OF rhododendrons as just spring-flowering shrubs, but a summer trip to Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens allows visitors to explore the diversity of fine foliage, late bloomers, and companion plants in a lush green setting.

Whidbey Island's Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens was developed in the 1960s as the home estate of Max and Ann Meerkerk. Max was a Renaissance man originally from Prussia, and Anne was an artist from Minnesota. They were inspired by Max's time spent in Asia and at Rothschild's Exbury Gardens

in England, our native *Rhododendron macrophyllum*, and Ann's artistic background to create the garden on 13 acres. To complete their vision, they purchased an additional 40 acres full of Northwest natives and woodland trails.

The Meerkerks began hybridizing rhododendrons and importing unique specimens of rhododendrons, flowering trees, and conifers. In 1979, before Anne's death, she bequeathed the garden to the Seattle Rhododendron Society to steward as a "peaceful woodland garden with an emphasis on rhododendrons and companion plants." Today Meerkerk Gardens is a not-for-profit foundation open to the public.

Meerkerk is also a research facility working to create new and improved hybrid rhododendrons. The garden's genetic library is made up of over 150 years of combined hybridizing from such historic leaders as Lem, Brandt, and Ostbow, as well as modern hybridists Fujioka, Watson, Barlup, and others.

A summer visit highlights many of the late-blooming rhododendrons that can make welcome garden additions. *Rhododendron* 'Purple Passion' and *R.* 'Blue Boy' are terrific purple rhododendrons that bloom in June. 'Blue Boy', a Great Plant Picks selection, is a well-shaped, heavy-blooming upright rhododendron with vibrant violet trusses.

Rhododendron 'Polar Bear' is a late-blooming large hybrid,



The Meerkerk entry gatehouse is framed by *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Acer palmatum* 'Bloodgood', and a seasonal display of perennials, bulbs, and ferns. (Melanie Hester)

with good-sized fragrant white blossoms. *R. auriculatum* is another large plant with long leaves and fragrant white flowers that blooms as late as August.

Rhododendron 'Aladdin', one of the Meerkerk's original plantings, is a stellar specimen nestled beneath towering firs. This Rothschild hybrid tree-form bears vivid pink, fragrant flowers on a sculptural trunk with beautiful exfoliating bark. Other late-blooming large Rothschild hybrids include *R.* 'Angelo', with huge fragrant flowers—pale pink outside, white inside—with green spots held on upright trusses.

According to Kristi O'Donnell, the vibrant purple-clad director

of Meerkerk, "One unsurpassable aspect of rhododendrons in summer is watching the new foliage emerge. Leaf scales of pink to red and all shades of green accent the landscape as the leaves unfurl. The foliage then turns color as it matures. Plants with *R. thomsonii* in their heritage have orbicular leaves, many of which emerge with coppery or bronze to red tones. And the triflorum varieties, like *R. augustinii*, when planted in a sunny location have bronze new growth which changes to green tones as the summer canopy matures."

Warmer weather brings on the summer flower show at Meerkerk, featuring Asiatic and Oriental lilies, bird-planted native lupine in mounds of grape-scented beauty, and towering foxtail lilies rising above white clouds of feverfew. Meerkerk also has a picnic area and nursery where many hard-to-find rhododendrons are available for sale.

Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens is open daily in summer from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The admission charge is \$8 per adult (children are free). For directions and more information on the gardens and their Summer Concert Series, please visit www.meerkerkgardens.org. 🌸

Lisa Irwin is an NHS board member and a volunteer "Grateful Dead header" at Meerkerk Gardens.

~ FIFTH ANNUAL TOUR ~

NHS BOARD MEMBERS OPEN THEIR GARDENS

SOUTH SOUND

Sunday, July 19. 12 pm–5 pm

SEATTLE AREA

Sunday, August 9. 12 pm–5 pm

IT'S ALMOST TIME ONCE AGAIN to visit some of the marvelous NHS board members' garden. In 2005, Nita-Jo Rountree and her membership committee dreamed up the tour as a way for board members to socialize with other members. We encourage you to share the fun with your friends so bring along non-members to introduce them to the benefits of NHS membership. And the best part is, it's FREE!

Whether you have questions about NHS or an idea for a lecture, a class, or a *Garden Notes* article, we hope you will join us for the tour this summer.

SUNDAY, JULY 19 SOUTH SOUND GARDENS



**THE OLD GOAT FARM
THE GRAVES GARDEN
20021 ORTING KAPOWSIN HWY E
GRAHAM, WA 98338**

THE OLD GOAT FARM has a one acre garden set around a 104-year-old farm house with a specialty nursery attached. Out back you will also find a large number of farm animals including goats, ducks, chickens, and peacocks.



**THE CHASE GARDEN
16015 264TH ST. E
ORTING, WA 98360**

THE FOUR AND A HALF ACRE garden created by Emmott and Ione Chase features a panoramic view to Mt. Rainier. Ione used native plants and other perennials, trees, and shrubs which fit well with the natural surroundings.



**THE KOI GARDEN
JOYCE HAWKINS
4817 PALMERO DR. SW
OLYMPIA, WA 98512**

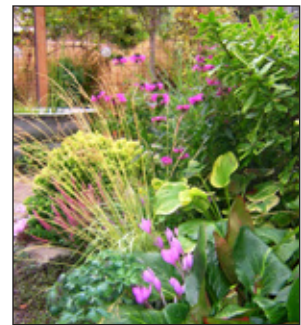
JOYCE HAWKINS FEELS the two beautiful large Japanese koi ponds containing seventy-five multi-colored, jewel-like fish are the *pièce de résistance* in her one-acre garden. Examples of her special concrete leaf castings and "dinosaur eggs" are on display throughout the garden, which also showcases several patios, a new gazebo, stunning tropical plants, and a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and perennials. Visitors have commented that they experience a peaceful, almost spiritual-like feeling while touring this unique garden.



**THE JUDY MONTOURE AND
DORIAN SANCHEZS GARDEN
2016 86TH COURT SW
OLYMPIA, WA 98512**

THE THREE-QUARTER ACRE garden has two distinct personalities and provides year-round interest. The front garden is a peaceful, relaxing woodland park setting with raised beds featuring Japanese maples, specialty conifers, ornamental grasses, ferns, perennial ground covers, and a large pond with a waterfall. The back garden is an eclectic blend of hardy bananas, palms, cannas, bamboo, taro, large colorful annual containers, and many other intense plantings that provide variation in texture, form, and color.

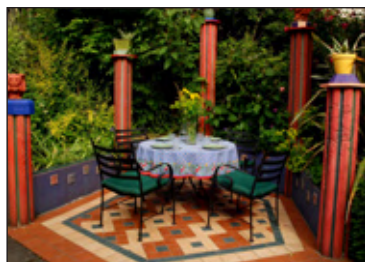
SUNDAY, AUGUST 9 SEATTLE AREA GARDENS



**THE EDWARDS FORKNER GARDEN
WEST SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD
4764 55TH AVE SW
SEATTLE, WA 98116**

NEWLY REWORKED FOR COMFORT and flavor, the Edwards Forkner garden is designed

in pursuit of a “good and delicious” life. Berries and fruit trees mingle with ornamental plantings while an expanded, yet still tiny, vegetable garden and areas for relaxing offer an abundant landscape that nourishes in every way.



THE SPARLER/SCHOUTEN GARDEN
SEWARD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD
5920 SEWARD PARK AVE. S
SEATTLE, WA 98118

DESTRUCTION AND RENEWAL are the themes of Daniel and Jeff’s Garden of Doom this year. The icy blows of Death struck with a double whammy: December’s arctic blast and Seattle Parks Department’s demolition. Reasons to visit: 1. **Schadenfreude** (Look how far they’ve fallen!). 2. **Curiosity** (Is this a garden, or a hillbilly junkyard?). 3. **Commiseration** (Share some sympathy and raise a glass to better days ahead.)



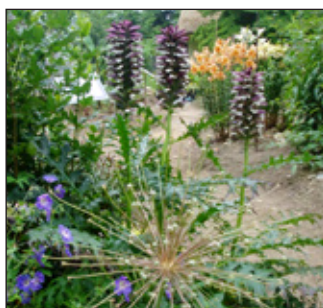
THE MASSONG/BUTLER GARDEN
QUEEN ANNE NEIGHBORHOOD
470 MCGRAW ST
SEATTLE, WA 98109

THIS IS A SEASON of wait and see. We are hoping for a phoenix rising.



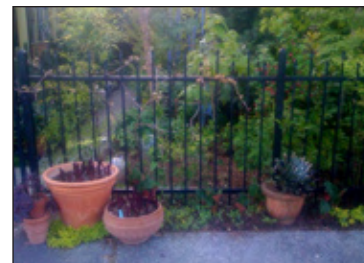
THE SUE DICKSON GARDEN
RAINIER VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD
4512 S. HOLLY
SEATTLE, WA 98118

AN OASIS GARDEN in the heart of Rainier Valley, the small front yard features many interesting shrubs of *Ceanothus*, *Raphiolepis*, *Arbutus*, *Berberis*, and *Edgeworthia*. The hot, sunny backyard explodes in a riot of colors and textures. Definitely a collector’s garden, there are fun and riveting combinations everywhere in the beds and around the path that leads from the second story deck. It’s a work in progress full of passion and possibility.



LANDWAVE GARDENS
THE REYES GARDEN
15745 DAYTON AVE. N
SHORELINE, WA 98133

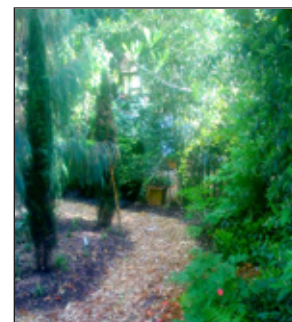
A LANDSCAPE PROGRESSION composed by a young plantsman who takes on more than he can possibly handle. Browse the incredibly diverse collection of plants and be told that it probably isn’t for sale. Yet. Bring your checkbook anyway!



BENJAMIN HAMMONTREE GARDENS
GEORGETOWN NEIGHBORHOOD
6422 CARLETON AVE S
SEATTLE, WA 98108

WELCOME TO MY PEACEFUL Georgetown jungle container, within containers. My garden is a very small walk-through with a lot of plants to see, but don’t touch. If you’re nice I will have the house open so you can see my paintings and studio.

AND



WALLINGFORD NEIGHBORHOOD
1407 N 40TH ST
SEATTLE, WA 98103

UNDER THE CEDARS is what I call it. This is another small garden with the cutest little house and another jungle. Most of the trees and shrubs I planted from very small starter plants from local nurseries. The canopy is mature now and there is something to walk under, along with the cedars. The patio will have summer annuals in pots along with a bit of art. Enjoy! 🌿



VOLUNTEER PROFILE: LORENE EDWARDS FORKNER

MARY C. GUTIERREZ

YOU MAY KNOW LORENE Edwards Forkner as a nursery owner, award-winning garden designer, or author. In 2006, Val Easton called her a “rock star” of Seattle’s garden scene. Regardless of the descriptor, Lorene is a passionate plantswoman.

Her young son, Max (the “wild child”), drove her to horticulture. He was a busy baby; going outside gave him room to roam while Lorene found respite among the plants. By the time she was ready to reenter the working world, she was smitten with gardening.

Lorene was hired to water at West Seattle Nursery in 1991 and by 1995 she was the proprietress of Fremont Gardens, an urban nursery oasis. She offered fine plants along with generous helpings of advice in a customer newsletter that she penned.

When her friend Linda Plato succumbed to breast cancer, Lorene was chosen to complete *Hortus Miscellaneous*, the book that Linda started before her illness. Lorene established



Lorene and George in her favorite place: at home in her garden. (James Forkner)

herself as a horticultural author just as her nursery business wound down. She closed Fremont Gardens in 2007 and launched her career as an author and garden consultant. Her new book *Growing Your Own Vegetables, an Encyclopedia of Country Living Guide* was just published. Her next book titled *Canning and Preserving Your Harvest* will be out this summer. (Sasquatch Press in Seattle published all three aforementioned books.)

Between writing projects, Lorene redesigned her garden. A new seating area made of gabions surrounds a fire pit. She is experimenting with wheat as an ornamental feature. And the signature Lil’ Loafer camper that was part of her Founder’s Cup award-winning garden in the 2003 Northwest Flower and Garden Show is still a focal point. If you would like to see Lorene’s garden, it will be open on August 9 as part of the NHS Meet the Board garden tour.

Many years ago, Lorene trained as a painter only to find that her best medium is plants. She has a command of the science of horticulture that she combines with an unconventional creative style, a sophisticated plant palette, and a bit of homesteader’s sensibility. The result is a modern garden aesthetic: part high art and part victory garden. 🌱

Mary Gutierrez is the editor of Northwest Garden News located at www.northwestgardennews.com.

~ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ~

Barbara Bakulich
Abbi Barr
Laura Batte
Mary Jo Bench
Matthew Berberich
Philip Bloomquist
Janet Brandt
Kit Cameron
Christine Charbonneau
Geraldine Cherry
Rachel Costenbader
Martha W. Dankers
Kate Domoszlaj

Frank Garcia
Lorrie Herman
Cindi Herrera
Marcia High
Judith E. Hjorth
J. J. Jacobi
Aimee Jacobson
Cassy Johnson
Frankie Marazzi
Karen A. Mattson
Anne McCartney
Linda Messier
Susie Nieto

Terri Rasmussen
Christopher Savard
Danika Schmidt
Lorrie Scott
Carrie Sparlin
Sharon Sylvester-Smith
Sue Teeter
Donna Thomas
Babette Thompson
Walter S. Wilson
Sidney S. Wright
Deborah Yand

**NHS wishes to thank
Wells Medina Nursery
and Monrovia
for co-sponsoring the
WINDCLIFF –
ROY LANCASTER
event coming up on
September 5, 2009.**

MILLER LIBRARY NEWS

BRIAN THOMPSON



WE ARE LIVING IN INTERESTING TIMES and the Miller Library has not escaped unscathed. Beginning this September we will need to reduce our hours, staffing, and new book purchases.

A drop of 46 percent in the University of Washington's endowment income is the cause for these reductions. The library is fortunate to have these UW endowments, which in good economic times provide about half of the operating budget.

Despite this news, there is still much to celebrate. There will be no lay-offs. The Miller staff reached a consensus to cut our hours by 20 percent, recognizing that each of us—with over 50 years of collective experience at the Miller Library— has an important and unique contribution to the care of the collections and to the services we provide to the public.

To meet the realities of reduced staffing, we will need to cut our hours. Starting September 14, 2009, we will be open on Mondays only from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The rest of the week will be unchanged. Saturday hours from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm will still allow access for those who work during the week. And the very successful partnership with the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium and the King County Master Gardener's Clinic will continue on Monday evenings, as will special hours before NHS lectures.

Our book buying will be impacted, too. But we will continue to look for innovative ways to obtain new books, and always welcome donations.

The Miller Library has been looked after very well by the Northwest Horticultural Society, both as a whole and from the many contributions by devoted individuals. The library is also increasingly in demand, with all our usage statistics up sharply over the last year. We are needed in these difficult times.

Together, we will pull through. And together we look forward to a bright future for the Elisabeth C. Miller Library. 🌱

Brian Thompson is the manager and curator of horticultural literature for the Elisabeth C. Miller Library.

~ THANKS TO OUR 2009 PATRONS ~

The Wednesday Evening Lecture Series would not be possible without the tremendous support of our patrons. Their generosity helps NHS provide a world-class educational program for Northwest gardeners. Thank you, patrons!

Mr. & Mrs. Don G. Abel	John MacKean
Phoebe Andrew	Theresa Malmanger
Lois Andrews	Hans & Tina Mandt
Alison Andrews	James K. Marshall
Barbara Asmervig	Judy Massong
Charlotte Behnke	Bruce & Coco McDougall
Jim & Suzette Birrell	Shirley McEvoy
Constance Bollen	Irene & Robert Mills
Elisabeth Bottler	Renee Montgelas
G. Maria Carlos	Ciscoe Morris
Barbara Carman	Maureen Morris
Patricia L. Church	Sue Moss
Marianna Clark	John & Lee Neff
Michael Coie	Charles Ogburn
Stacie Crooks	Mary Palmer
Lynn & Ralph Davis	T. Keith & Janet L. Patrick
Craig Delphey	Peg Pearson
Tanya DeMarsh-Dodson	Rose Peck
Sue Dickson	Lois Pendleton
Tina Dixon	Susan Picquelle
Anita Dunn	Phyllis Pierce
Mrs. Phil Duryee	Dianne Polson
Janet & Michael Endsley	Suzanne Ragen
Dave & Cindy Fairbrook	Sashi Raghupathy
Carolyn Fisher	Ravenna Gardens
Betsy Fitzgerald	Judy Redmond
Kathy Fries	Pat Riehl
Maren Gilliland	Elsa C. Rosenkrantz
Marilyn Glenn	Nita-Jo Rountree
Greg Graves	Marilou Rush
Pam & Jay Green	Liz Sanborn
Mary Louise Griffin	Michelle Scannell
David B. Grimes,	Gale & Marcel Schwarb
Yardworks Etc.	Stephanie Smith
Jean Hanson	Leah Soltar
Richard W. Hartlage	Richie Steffen
Joyce Hawkins	Philip R. Stoller
Deborah Heg	Nancy Strahle
Jackie Hightower	Sunnyside Nursery
Catherine Hillenbrand	Bernadette Swensson
Martha Holschen	Brian Thompson &
Gail & Ty Hongladarom	Jack Henry
Jocelyn Horder	Lois Vania
Deborah Horn	Marie Weiler
Darlene & Dan Huntington	Beth Weir
Lisa Irwin	Wendy Welch
Becky Johnson	Joanne White
Ann Keller	Carolyn Whittlesey
Katherine King	Madeleine Wilde
Karin Kravitz	Lois Willman
Kurt Laidlaw	Sherri Wilson
Denise Lane	Glenn Withey &
Raymond J. Larson	Charles Price
Barry & Susan Latter	Martha Woodman
Julie Lawrence	John A. Wott
Jeanne Marie Lee	Jennifer Wyatt
Ann LeVasseur	Kathy Yerke
Janet Lewinsohn	Zenith Holland Gardens
Kiki & Dave Lewis	Marlene & Lee Zuker

THE STORY OF PLANTS: NASTURTIUM

DANIEL MOUNT

MY BARE-FOOTED AUNT NANCY padded out into the garden, her freshly lacquered toe nails glistening orange. She chattered happily about the beauty of the day, keeping her steps small so that I, just 7 years old, could keep up. Then she stopped, plucked an orange flower nearly the color of her dyed hair, and popped it in her mouth. She plucked another and offered it to me. I imitated her, popping the whole flower in my mouth. She laughed warmly as I winced. The peppery pleasure my aunt found in the orange petals burned in my sweet craving mouth. Yet, a nasturtium lover was awakened in me that day.

Eighty-six species of *Tropaeolum*, the nasturtiums, are found from southern Mexico to southern South America. Only a few are found in our gardens. The common nasturtium with its multiple colors and forms arises from the Andean species *Tropaeolum majus* and the hybrids of it with *T. minus* and *T. peltophorum*. A perennial in warmer climates it might be an annual here along with two other commonly grown nasturtiums, *T. peregrinum*, canary creeper, and *T. speciosum*, flame creeper. The perennial *T. tuberosum* 'Ken Aslet' has proven to be a good performer in Northwest gardens. I grow it at the base of an Italian cypress where it stays dry and cloaks the conifer with blue-green foliage, punctuated with scarlet blooms in summer. In Peru, because it produces high yields of edible tubers on very lean soils, it is a

staple among the poor who call it *masbua*. Traditionally, they were only eaten by women and children. The recent discovery of high levels of estrogen in the tubers might explain why.

When I told my partner, Michael, I was writing about nasturtiums, he wrinkled his nose in disgust, like he does when he finds the reptilian seeds soaking in a cup on our kitchen counter. As a northern Californian, common nasturtiums are invasive weeds to him. Sometimes I wonder myself about the prolific reseeding in my own garden. "They're easy to weed," I say each year as the nearly white cultivar 'Milkmaid' takes over another ten feet.

I had not planned on taking up arms to defend the lowly nasturtium, though the name *Tropaeolum* has a militaristic origin. Linnaeus, seeing shields in the leaves and helmets in the flowers, recalled the Greek word *tropaion*, the root of trophy, signifying the shields and helmets of the conquered displayed on the battle field. "Nasturtium" means "nose twister" referring to the pungent compounds in the leaves. Another common name "Indian cress" comes from an earlier link to water cress (*Nasturtium officinale*), a plant with a similar pungency from a different family.

Christopher Lloyd says nasturtiums "should never be underrated." I was surprised how many people do just

that, seeing them as messy, garish, and amateurish. I was amazed how few people said they were easy, pretty, or nutritious. All parts of this edible plant are high in vitamin C. Formerly, sailors would take the pickled green seed pods on long journeys to fight scurvy.

Nasturtiums are also said to have the ability to restore emotional warmth to those drained from an excess of intellectual activity, like writers.

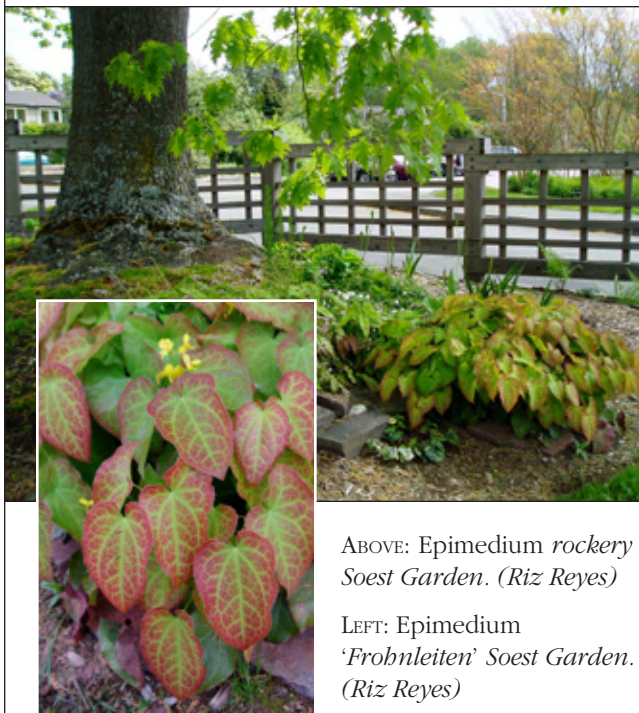
"To love is to resemble," says the Sufi mystic Serif Catalkaya. I have only painted my toe nails orange once and have never dyed my hair, but I always plant nasturtiums. I've grown fond of their peltate (shield-shaped) foliage, like water lilies run aground, and their flowers that seem more like warm laughter than thought. But I am mostly fond of their peppery taste, sweet with memories. 🌱

Daniel Mount writes regularly for Garden Notes, exploring the relationships between plants and people. He works as a gardener and designer in the Seattle area.

Suzanne Ferris, who drew the nasturtium illustration above, is a garden designer and artist who owns Deodara Arts, a garden design company. She can be reached at suzanne@deodara-arts.com.

DRY SHADE GARDENING: ONE YEAR LATER

Rizaniño “Riz” REYES



ABOVE: *Epimedium rockery* Soest Garden. (Riz Reyes)

LEFT: *Epimedium 'Frohnleiten'* Soest Garden. (Riz Reyes)

LAST YEAR, I SHARED with you my experiments in dry shade gardening as I planted up a section of the Center for Urban Horticulture's Soest Perennial Display Garden. After two complete growing seasons and having absolutely no supplemental irrigation all of last year, I can finally report on the results and discuss which plants are currently doing well and those that could probably benefit from being transplanted into a much more favorable location.

SPRING EPHEMERALS

After a colder than usual and late winter this year, the dry shade oak bed at CUH still showcased a number of early blooming plants that liven up this part of the garden. *Galanthus nivalis*, the precocious snowdrops, are starting to form small clumps along with the pure white and pale blue forms of *Anemone nemorosa* that are definitely a

sight to behold when in full bloom in late April. Our native fawn lily, *Erythronium oregonum* and *E. revolutum*, have impressed me with their stately presence with bold, mottled foliage and elegant, bell-shaped flowers on thin, wiry stems.

THE RESILIENCE OF EPIMEDIUM

My infatuation with this genus continues to this day as I've been most impressed at how tough these plants really are despite their delicate appearance. There is a wide assortment to

choose from, but *Epimedium x perralchicum* 'Frohnleiten' tops the list. Its colorful foliage persists throughout the summer and takes on a striking purplish bronze with net-like green veins during the cold winter months. Amassed in sunny yellow blossoms in late April into May, it is simply outstanding. Equally impressive, but even more captivating in flower, are the large bicolor blossoms of *E. acuminatum* and the hybrids of *E. wushanense* x Asiatic hybrids. Asian epimedium have traditionally required more water compared to their European relatives, but these have really thrived in this bed and are just smothered in flowers in spring. They are certainly worth trying if you see them offered in the nursery.

SLOWLY, BUT SURELY

Groundcovers I had hoped to carpet the beds with are certainly slowly

taking off. *Omphalodes verna* has just started sending out runners, but it flowers profusely in late March to April. *Ophiopogon clarkii* hasn't taken off as well as I had hoped, but most mondo grasses do take time to fill in, and once established, will be relatively carefree.

FERNS COULD BE FONDER

Ferns haven't been thriving as well as I had hoped; the lack of supplemental water and limited soil stunts their growth. Even the foolproof Western sword fern, *Polystichum munitum*, though it thrives, stays quite small. Perhaps naturally shorter growing ferns will work better, but we lose the impact of the large fronds. Overall, these could probably benefit from being transplanted to a more favorable location, but they're still attractive where they are now and consistently come back.

All in all, I feel like I met my goal of sprucing up what was rather a dull site into something far more interesting for the casual garden visitor to admire. There are plants that still need to fill in, but there are also opportunities for new varieties, concepts, and ideas. Dry shade shouldn't be a burden. This project aims to demonstrate that with careful planting and initial care for the first two seasons, an attractive solution can be found when it comes to gardening under these difficult conditions. 🌱

Rizaniño "Riz" Reyes is an NHS board member and the perennial gardener at the UW Botanic Gardens. For a list of recommended plants for dry shade e-mail Riz at rhrplants@hotmail.com.

NHS BULLETIN BOARD

~ 2009 SUMMER CLASSES ~

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm **Concrete Leaf-Casting with Sandy Milam**

This is a hands-on project with each participant leaving with a cast hosta leaf, materials list, and complete written instructions. Sandy will also discuss various finishing options and demonstrate the process for making larger cast leaves. Bring a sandwich—dessert and drinks will be provided.

LOCATION: MILAM GARDEN/STANWOOD

FEE: MEMBERS: \$50.00 NON-MEMBERS: \$60.00 LIMIT: 15

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm **Hydrangeas with Greg Graves**

Tour the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden with head gardener Greg Graves and view their beautiful collection of hydrangeas. Over the years the staff has continued to add hydrangeas, hydrangea relatives, and their companion plants to Mrs. Miller's original hydrangea collection in the woodland garden. Learn how to add real punch to the mid to late summer garden with this glorious plant.

LOCATION: MILLER GARDEN/SEATTLE

FEE: MEMBERS: \$25.00 NON-MEMBERS: \$35.00 LIMIT: 15

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm **Propagation with Riz Reyes**

Join avid plantsman, Riz Reyes, at the Dunn Garden to learn about how to propagate your favorite perennial plants. Enjoy a guided tour of the curator's garden lead by Glenn Withey and Charles Price. Take note of plants that catch your eye and then join Riz for a fun and easy lesson on plant morphology to learn how those plants grow and reproduce. Riz will show you how to root cuttings, divide an overgrown clump, start seeds, and understand how plants are mass produced through a process called tissue culture. Attendees will be permitted to tour the Olmsted designed Dunn Gardens at the conclusion of the class. Beginning gardeners are encouraged to attend.

LOCATION: DUNN GARDEN/SEATTLE

FEE: MEMBERS: \$25.00 NON-MEMBERS: \$35.00 LIMIT: 15

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm **Slope Gardening with Richie Steffen**

Slopes are a common gardening challenge in the Northwest. These difficult sites are often hard to water and weed and can be a maintenance nightmare. Join Richie Steffen, curator of the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden, to learn some techniques to help stabilize these areas and what plants will grow well in these tricky conditions.

LOCATION: MILLER GARDEN/SEATTLE

FEE: MEMBERS: \$25.00 NON-MEMBERS: \$35.00 LIMIT: 15

SAVE THE DATE!
2009 FALL PLANT SALE
SEPTEMBER 18-19
Warren G. Magnuson Park
7400 Sand Point Way,
Seattle

~ 2009 SUMMER CLASSES ~

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm **Hypertufa Planters with Sandy Milam**

This is a hands-on project with each participant leaving with a small planter (approximately 12 x 12) ready to be removed at home from the form. Excess material will be used to create moss balls. There will be a complete materials and instruction sheet provided and information on the requirements of rock garden plants. Sandy will have a display of a variety of forms and planted containers. Bring a sandwich—dessert and drinks will be provided.

LOCATION: MILAM GARDEN/STANWOOD

FEE: MEMBERS: \$50.00 NON-MEMBERS: \$60.00 LIMIT: 15

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 11:00 am – 2:30 pm **Kitchen Garden II: Results, Harvesting, Planning for Next Year with Lee Neff and Nancy Heckler**

Here is a chance to spend time wandering in a newly designed and recently planted kitchen garden: the work of passionate food growers, Lee Neff and Nancy Heckler. Topics for discussion: kitchen garden design and location. What do you really want to eat or give away? How much? What do you want to process: can, freeze, or dry? Kitchen garden choices for ornament as well as eating. Guilt. Choosing and buying seeds and plants. Sources: locating unusual selections. Crop placement and rotation. Resources: Books and seed or plant sources. Lists of plants to start indoors or to direct seed. Pest control. Bring a sandwich—dessert and drinks will be provided.

LOCATION: NEFF GARDEN/KINGSTON

FEE: MEMBERS: \$25.00 NON-MEMBERS: \$35.00 LIMIT: 18

PORTLAND GARDEN TOUR **July 25-26**

Traveling by coach, we will leave Seattle early Saturday, returning to Seattle Sunday early evening. During our visit we will visit several private gardens recommended by Portland garden designer and writer Lucy Hardiman and Nancy Goldman. Included in the tour is the garden of noted designer Michael Schultz, recently featured in *Horticulture Magazine* and the garden of Lauren Hall-Behrens featured in *The Seattle Times* on May 17. There will also be a tour of the Japanese Garden with garden curator and visionary Sada Uchiyama and a shopping detour on the way home to Cistus Nursery.

FEE: MEMBERS: \$338 NON-MEMBERS: \$358 LIMIT: 35
INCLUDES TRANSPORTATION, HOTEL (DOUBLE OCCUPANCY),
BREAKFAST, AND TWO LUNCHES.
SINGLE OCCUPANCY \$112.00 EXTRA

FOR RESERVATIONS E-MAIL NWHORT@AOL.COM
OR CALL KARIN KRAVITZ AT 206-780-8172



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HANS MANDT

HERE WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE of May and although it's definitely spring, this season seems to be colder than spring was last year. Who would have guessed it—global warming and local cooling! There is an upside, at least in our garden. The cool weather has protracted bloom times, so that the spring ephemerals weren't nearly as ephemeral as usual. So that if you bought plants at our spring ephemerals plant sale in March, which was very successful, you have a longer season to enjoy them. Thank you also to everyone who helped out at the sale. The *Erythronium revolutum* were just spectacular this year and lasted at least five weeks, as were the *E. oregonum* which bloomed even longer. The cool weather also meant I had a longer time to plant all the new plants I bought at the sale, some 150 *Galanthus nivalis* plants for our back hillside, and two sets of trilliums from the Dunn Garden for the woodland. Even though it seems impossible, I also "squeezed in" another ten hellebores.

Right now our Magnolia 'Elizabeth' is down to its last few blooms of light creamy yellow. This was the first yellow hybrid developed, bred at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and is well worth seeking out. It can fit nicely into a smaller garden, and its flowers are gorgeous. Across the entrance stairs from the magnolia is a *Paeonia daurica* ssp. *Mlokosewitschii*, which I got at A&D Peonies about six years ago. It has thrived and is now a spectacular plant with at least twenty blooms on it. The standing joke about this plant is that it blooms on May 14 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Well not this year. It's held all its blossoms for the last ten days and will continue to bloom at least another week. The same is true for *Paeonia rockii*, on our dining terrace, which produces dinner plate size flowers in pure white with a deep purple inner blotch. Since it is a tree peony, I prune to keep it (somewhat) contained, but I still manage to get about eight to ten flowers a year which is more than enough for a big show.

The Cliff Mass lecture in April, which NHS cosponsored with The Dunn Garden, sold out and was a real success. The surprising information about local weather is the large variability of conditions, especially temperature depending on your location, so it pays to take the time to record and understand your garden's microclimates.

Speaking of successful events, our spring symposium was also sold out and received great reviews from attendees. The consensus is that this was one of the best symposiums NHS has put on. We will continue to strive to reach this level of quality and information at our future events. The major theme could be characterized as "right plant right place" which is a fundamental tenant of the "new perennial movement." We found out that this term isn't so new after all, but goes back to work begun in the early 1900s. Today it is nurtured by studying the native habitats of garden plants and trying to locate them in similar environments in our gardens. I've been fooling around with this concept on our back hillside. After three years I'm finding what doesn't work (and ripping things out) and some of what does work. Again, as I said last time, patience is a gardener's best friend. 🌱

Hans Mandt is the president of NHS.

EDITOR

Judy Redmond
judyredmond@verizon.net

DESIGNERS

Judy Redmond and
Constance Bollen,
cb graphics,
cbg@speakeasy.net

CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ISSUE:

EagleSong
Suzanne Ferris
Mary Gutierrez
Lisa Irwin
Karin Kravitz
Hans Mandt
Daniel Mount
Judy Redmond
Riz Reyes
Nita-Jo Rountree
Richie Steffen
Brian Thompson

PRINTER

Mike Klinke,
Impression Printing

WE NEED NEW GARDEN NOTES WRITERS

HAVE YOU EVER WANTED to see your name in print? Do you have an idea for an article you'd like to see in *Garden Notes*? Do you have a favorite gardener or garden you'd like to profile? Have some garden-related poetry or humor? Please drop the *Garden Notes* editor, Judy Redmond, an e-mail with your idea(s) and submission(s). Please note that you must be an NHS member to write for *Garden Notes*. Judy can be reached at judyredmond@verizon.net.

WE NEED NEW MEMBERS

YOU, AS A MEMBER of the Northwest Horticultural Society, know better than anyone how great it is to be a member of this wonderful organization. Not only do you receive our fabulous quarterly *Garden Notes*, but you also have the opportunity to hear local, national, and internationally known speakers during our Wednesday night lecture series and our yearly symposium. Additionally, we have optional

classes that are usually held in a private garden, regional and international tours, and free "Meet the Board" garden tours. As you know, we also raise funds to support the Miller Library and award scholarships and grants.

Please let your friends and acquaintances know about the advantages of membership. To join, they can go to www.northwesthort.org or they can call Karin Kravitz at 206-780-8172. 🌱



Cornus alba 'Aurea', Alstroemeria aurea, and Sambucus nigra 'Eva'

*"Summer makes a silence after spring." Vita Sackville-West, 1892–1962,
English author, poet, and creator of the Sissinghurst Castle gardens.*

🌹 Telephone: 206-527-1794 🌹 Web: www.northwesthort.org 🌹 E-mail: nwhort@aol.com



NORTHWEST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 4597
ROLLING BAY, WA 98061-4597

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 4842