



Journal

September 2019

NEXT MEETING

Toronto Botanical Garden
777 Lawrence Ave. East, Don Mills
September 8, 2019

Speaker: Geir Moen

NOTE: 2 Talks beginning 11:00 am
Bring your Lunch!

11:00 AM— 12:00 PM:
"European Treasures: Plants of
Mountain Ranges in Europe"

12:30 pm—1:30 pm:
Members' Plant Sale
(Donations received before
11 or after 12. Volunteers
want to hear the talk.)

1:30 pm—4:00 pm: "Growing
Alpines in Southeastern Norway"

WHAT'S COMING UP

October 6, 2019

12:30pm - 4:00pm

Members' Plant Sale

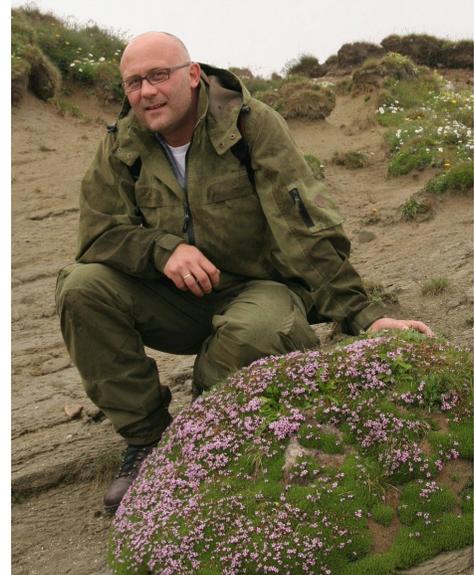
Peter Sellars

"The Joy of Sax"



Members with Last Names P—W
Please Bring Goodies to the
Meeting!

Meet the Speaker—Geir Moen



In his first talk in the morning, "European Treasures", Geir will show a selection of plant gems and wonderful scenery from different mountain ranges (Portugal, Italy, France, Spain, Greece and Romania). In the afternoon, Geir's second talk, "Growing Alpines in Southeastern Norway", he will share his experiences of growing Alpines where there are no mountains, summers are quite dry, and winter temperatures can drop below -30C.

Geir Moen lives about 70 km northeast of Oslo, Norway. He has been passionate about plants from his childhood when his grandmother taught him how to sow and grow annuals. By 11 he had saved enough pocket money to sign up for a membership in the Norwegian Garden Society! Later he trained as a professional gardener. Over the years Geir has grown a huge range of plants, from tropicals to alpines, but for the past 25 years alpines have been his major interest. He is particularly interested in propagation. His passion for growing plants led to his passion for exploring plants in their natural habitats. Geir has also organized several groups to the Carpathians and Maritime Alps and Tien Shan in Kyrgyzstan.



Message from the chair.

Wow! August is just about over, does that mean summer is almost gone?

Hope all had a good summer, just not sure if everybody had the right amount of rain although it was a good year for us. We had a nice rain weekly and so far have never had to irrigate and have even

managed to keep the rain barrels full. Hoping everyone who attended the alpine garden tour enjoyed it, we had around 60 people in the garden.

It is also time for collecting seeds for our yearly seed exchange, I have collected around 25 kinds so far and it looks like a good year for collecting seeds, just hard to make sure they are dry enough between rain showers. Donations have been dwindling the last few years, lets all try this year to make it the best year for the seed exchange.

I'm looking forward to the September's speaker. I have been following Geir Moen's Facebook page for quite some time, and he has some interesting plants in his new garden.

Our September plant sale will have a larger than usual number of vendors. Anna's Perennials and Majella Larochelle will be there this time besides the regulars like Virginia and myself.

If you have any extra plants in the garden, or are dividing perennials or some bulb clumps, dig them up, pot them up and label them and bring them to our own plant sale table. Remember all money that we make at these plant sales helps pay for those high-quality speakers we are used to!

Arie Vanspronsen

Chair ORG&HPS



URGENT! HELP NEEDED!

- After many years of distributing the electronic Journal, Ewan Mackay has requested that we find someone else to do this job. Please contact Ewan fivemackays@hotmail.com or Carol Clark carol.clark@utoronto.ca to volunteer.
- You would be mailing the newsletter from your home computer each month from August to May or June. The job takes under 1 hour.
- The newsletter is provided as a pdf which you would attach to an e-mail.
- From time to time, there are a few last-minute messages which you would include in the text of the e-mail.
- An updated distribution list is provided as an Excel file each month. The file's e-mail addresses are copied and pasted into the recipient line of the e-mail.
- Usually a few e-mails bounce when the mass mailing takes place. Any bounce reports need to be forwarded to the membership committee.



Barbara Peat Writes: SUPER PLANT SALE

We were a little down in member donations at this year's Super Plant Sale.

As you garden these next few months, be on the lookout for possible donations for next year.

Perhaps you can pot up some divisions and plunge the pots into the ground ready for next spring!



Cont'd...

SAVE THOSE SEEDS

There are many types of seed heads: berries, capsules, catkins, exploding and catapulting seed heads, nuts, pods and winged seed and they all need somewhat different techniques for collection and preparation.

Collecting:



- Make sure the seeds are ripe, on average about two months after flowering. Ripeness is often indicated a colour change from green to brown.
- Collect seed on a dry day and label the bag with the name of the plant

- Snip off stalks or capsules and place them upside down in a paper bag and place them in a dry, airy place. If the capsules don't open voluntarily when dry, gently crush the pods or capsules to release the seeds e.g. verbascum or digitalis seeds.
- Collect seed from fleshy fruits and berries by mashing them in a fine sieve and then rinsing away the pulp in cold water. Leave the seed to dry for a few days on paper towels. E.g. arisaema
- Exploding and catapulting seed heads such as geraniums, lupins, violas, euphorbia and gas plants (*dictamnous*), need constant supervision as they begin to ripen. The trick is to harvest them before they fully ripen and discharge their seeds. Having collected the pods, put them in a paper bag and, most importantly, close the top of the bag. If you don't you will be down on hands and knees trying to pick up seeds that have been catapulted all over the kitchen floor.

Cleaning:



After extracting the seed, clean off any surrounding chaff. Chaff can harbour moulds, pests and diseases. This can be done with "huff and puff", blowing the lighter chaff away from the heavier seed. This is quite a messy process and probably best done outdoors when you might find that a light breeze can assist you. Another method is to spread the seed/chaff mixture on a sheet of paper or a plate, which you then gently tip. This causes the heavier seeds to slide away from the surrounding chaff. Sieves of various sizes are also an option, as is a combination of any of these methods.

Viability – the likelihood of a seed growing

As the owner of Chiltern Seed Catalogue points out, "You may or may not get a seed to germinate and grow. However, if you don't plant it you definitely won't"

Viable seeds are shiny, fat, heavy and tough – regardless of size of the seed. A seed head, especially of the daisy family, will produce a multitude of what seem to be mature seeds, but only the biggest seeds are potentially viable. Apply the finger nail test. If the seed resists and skitters away when you press a finger nail on it, it is probably viable. If it is soft and flattens easily it probably isn't. The size of the seed is often a good 'giveaway', big ones are better. If you want to know what size a viable seed should be, try www.theseedsite.co.uk that has a photographic library of hundreds of seeds at their actual size. Is there any seed there at all?

Not all the plants in your garden are going to produce seed. Some hybridized plants like Geranium 'Roxanne', are sterile and do not produce seed. This is why they flower so prolifically over such a long period of time. I suspect that Salvia 'Marcus' may fall in the same category. Very double flowers often do not produce seed because the pollinators can't find the sexual parts of the plant in among the petals. During times of draught many plants just shut down and go dormant and do not produce much, if any, seed.

Even if the plant produces seed, it isn't always straightforward to find it. The evening primrose *Oenothera triloba* forms seed pods, not in or underneath the flower as is most usual, but at the base of the stem at ground level. Some sedges (*carex*) produce seeds on the ends of long stems which lay along the ground often feet from the original plant. (The New Zealand sedges are particularly prone to using this trick).

Storing Seeds

Some seeds, especially of the spring-flowering ephemerals like hepatica, trilliums, hellebores etc. Are best sown as soon as they are ripe as their viability lessens with storage.

For most other seeds:

- Make sure the seeds are clean and dry
- Place them in a paper or glassine envelopes
- Label them

Put the packets in an air-tight container in a cool dry place

SEND THEM OFF AS A DONATION TO OUR SEED EXCHANGE—SEE THE OCTOBER JOURNAL

The Reader Rock Garden—Calgary’s Hidden Gem

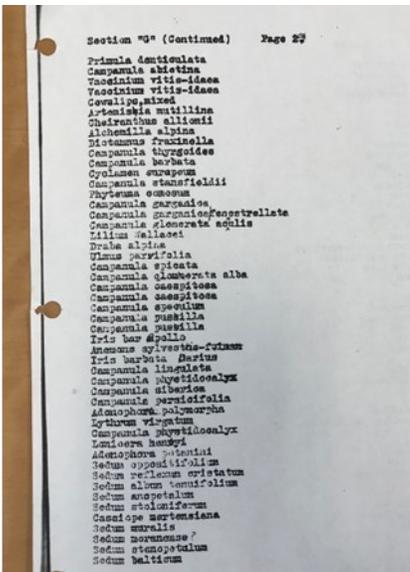
Part II—The Evolution of an Historic Garden

By Daniel Walker

Printed courtesy of the City of Calgary Parks Services

The life of a garden is always evolving and changing in so many ways. That can be positive but it can have some draw-backs as well. That small tree you planted in your yard has now matured and developed a beautiful shade-giving canopy that has your sun loving plants sulking for lack of sunshine. Weather patterns change, winterkill happens and cute little bunnies snack on the new supple woody plant material during the long, cold winters.

The major rehabilitation in the history of the Reader Rock Garden began in 2004 and was completed in 2006 with the grand reopening on May 29, 2006. This began with the help of ICAP—the Infrastructure Canada Alberta Program which included funds from municipal, provincial and federal government levels. The main champion of the project was Anne Charlton who was a project manager with the City Planning Department. Together with the help of a team of experts that included landscape architects, heritage restoration architects, horticulturalists, geologists, arborists, irrigation specialists, alpine plant specialists and many others, together they were able to uncover the hidden beauty of the garden. Decisions were made bearing in mind the new Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places. A management committee was created



to develop a set of Parks department rules for this unique asset. One of the main rules was to follow Reader’s plant lists and plant locations within the garden. Fortunately, documents exist regarding these.

It took dozens of volunteers and city staff to remove the vegetative material and uncover the

pathways and rocks that make up the garden.

In the end only 32 species of herbaceous material were found to have survived in the garden, a small number considering that over 4,000 plants were trialed in the garden during William Reader’s time. Many plants had been “rescued” during the garden’s decline by avid gardeners and home owners to prevent them from dying out. In an attempt to get a baseline inventory of the garden, The City put out an amnesty call for anyone who may have taken plants from the garden to please return them to the Parks department. Dozens of species were happily returned when news spread that the gardens were being worked on.

Now the rest of the meticulous growing of material by members of the Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society could begin and plant orders were compiled and delivered to site.

The City quickly learned that the garden’s light levels had changed over the years due to the maturing of trees and shrubs. This proved a challenge to successfully growing sun loving plants in what had become a shady environment. For quite a few years this was an issue as the staff tried to follow the rules of putting plants in their original documented beds rather than in situations where they were most likely to thrive. After many failures a decision was made to save money and effort and allow plants to be placed in more appropriate places. Plants were now to be placed in beds that would best fit their cultural needs while attempting to keep them in their original beds or as close as possible.

Fast forward a decade later to the garden that was looking rather overgrown and a touch messier than an arts and craft style garden should look. Beds were beginning to look overgrown and the tenacious and evil creeping bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*) was starting to take hold of the garden once again due to the decline in the number of staff maintaining the garden. 2016 saw the beginning of the battle of the creeping bellflower in an attempt to bring the garden back to its former glory. Beds were carefully selected by the amount

of bellflower in them, visual impact within the garden and over-all bed “fatigue”.

Once the beds were prioritized, large monocultures of one species were downsized. Parts of plants (if weed free) were placed in our holding beds to be saved for other parts of the garden. The remainder were to be dug up and moved to other City of Calgary Parks. In the end this work helps us reduce the amount of plant material being composted. Weed and bellflower infected clumps were discarded to help stop the spread. Both cultural and chemical methods were used to further eradicate the perennial weed. This consisted of two treatments in four weeks followed by the entire bed being fallowed for one year beginning in mid-August. During the fallow year, starting in spring, rocks were carefully exposed after years of soil erosion coverage and great care was taken to lift the rocks to further expose them



Clearing vegetation and exposing and lifting the rocks

It was amazing how some beds showed no signs of rocks until investigations began. Lifting the rocks was an extremely tedious process as mechanical help was out of the question due to the sensitive nature of the garden space. All the rocks were lifted slightly using wood dunnage and metal pry bars. They were then situated to look as “natural” as possible. Countless hours went into

this work, but the appearance of the exposed rocks after the fact was worth it.

A low-salt-content compost blend is used to amend the soil. Originally one inch was placed every three to four years which may have been a contributing factor to the rocks disappearing in the garden. Now a maximum of 3/4-inch of compost is placed to add nutrients into the soil while not adding copious amounts of volume to the beds. After a month with the compost (usually beginning in mid-June), all re-growth of the weeds is sprayed once more with a chemical. This won't get rid of all the bellflower but it will set it back immensely and give the garden a fighting chance.

Then the best part of the job begins, the re-planting! I have taken it upon myself to really dive deeply into the “bible” that is William Reader's plant list and it almost becomes an obsession for me to want to have them all! The renovations have provided an opportunity to diversify the garden and continue the quest to get as many as possible of the beautiful and unique plants back into the garden.

The winter months are my research time. I hunt through the internet trying to find local nurseries who can supply me with the plants that I need. The unfortunate part is that many of the cultivars are very rare if not extinct so many of my searches meet a dead end.

I have been able to find some wonderful supplies here in Canada. *Cypripedium* like *C. passerinum*, *C. acaule* and soon to be *C. montanum* have all been re-introduced in the past two years.



Cypripedium acaule



Cypripedium montanum



Dactylorhiza maculata with its beautiful mottled leaves recently made it through its first winter and bloomed beautifully this year.

Dactylorhiza maculatae

I was over the moon excited to get the adorable *Juniperus communis compressa* back into the High Rockery.

Through some private growers from down east in Ontario I obtained the heirloom Hemerocallis: *H. lilioasphodelus*, *H. dumortieri* and *H. middendorffii*.



Calystegia hederacea 'flore pleno'

Cypripedium speciosum and native plants (*Castilleja miniata* and my favourite *Pulsatilla patens*) along with rare specialty plants like the China rose vine (*Calystegia hederacea* 'flore pleno') have been reintroduced to the garden.

We grow the stunning Eremurus pot-in-pot here in the garden so I can overwinter them in our seasonal cold room. *Eremurus stenophyllus*, with its foxtail yellow towers, was a show stopper in the garden this season. It took two overwintering years to get three to bloom but patience was rewarded. We were also able to acquire *E. robustus* and *E. himalaicus*.



Eremurus stenophyllus

One of the easiest ways of acquiring rare plants is by ordering seeds from all the societies that have wonderful seed exchange programs. Seeds are inexpensive and more easily transported across borders. We have acquired, through seed exchange programs, wonderful new additions such as the cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) and the telekia relative *Inula helenium* that have proved wonderful architectural additions to the garden.



Inula helenium

Pincushion cactus (*Escobaria vivipara*) and Devil's tongue Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) are growing nicely in our greenhouses for 2020 planting. They are a test of patience but will be well worth it in the end.



Escobaria vivipara



Opuntia humifusa

Blue himalyan poppies (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*) are now a specialty of the garden. Tended by volunteers, we have a couple of hundred plants germinating each season from the seed from our garden population.



Meconopsis betonicifolia

The addition of some woody material has brought some sensory joy. Winter daphne (*Daphne mezereum*) with its spicy fragrant purple/pink flowers in spring is deciduous in habit in our climate. Bayberry (*Myrica pennsylvanica*) with its wintergreen scented leaves, edges a pathway and the many roses including *Rosa moyesii* 'Geranium' and *Rosa gallica* var. *officinalis*, sweeten the air with their perfume.



Daphne mezereum

The succession planting of our tree canopy has allowed us to track down and reintroduce the Butter Nut (*Juglans cinerea*) and we are hoping in 2020 or 2021 to obtain a Amur Cork tree (*Phellodendron amurense*) as well as sugar maple (*Acer sacharum*)

The extensive *Iris germanica* collection is growing closer to its original 150 types since we were able to reintroduce 43 cultivars thanks to the Historic Iris Preservation Society's rhizome sale. We are extremely excited as this will bring our total collection to almost half of the original.

We aim to renovate three to four beds each season, depending on their size, and will try to do one in each of the three areas to help minimize the impact of the renovations. Signs stating the fact that garden improvements are in progress are placed to help notify visitors that change is coming and to stay tuned. So far people are thoroughly enjoying the "new" introductions to the garden and are looking forward to what the gardens will look like in years to come.

I hope one day you can come and visit the garden. The peak bloom time is mid-May to the end of June but really there is always something to see in the garden.

This rock garden was built in the 1920s by the Superintendent for Calgary Parks, William Roland Reader. In 2006 it was restored using the original plans and plant lists and is now a National Historic Site. We are pleased to have Daniel Walker, its head gardener, as one of our members.

**THIS JOURNAL WAS EDITED BY DIANA POOKE.
THE OCTOBER JOURNAL WILL BE EDITED BY
BARBARA LEE.**

THE DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2019.

Send in those items and articles

Your editors want to hear from you. We would really appreciate you writing a short piece about a favourite plant, garden, speaker or any horticultural subject. Send your item to us (See below for "How To Contact The Editors"). If you have a photo—all the better.

Upgrade Your Life

We have eight 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.

Household membership (Canadian, U.S. and Overseas) \$25 CAD

Student membership \$10

Join on-line: www.onrockgarden.com

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 \$40 cheque, Visa or MC. to Bobby Ward, PO Box 18604, Raleigh, NC USA 27619-8604. 4 bulletins a year, the premier NA gardening publication, three annual get-togethers; 2 winter, 1 summer, Seed Exchange with over 6,000 items, book store, etc.

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