

THE NORTHERN OUTCROP

A Rock Garden Newsletter

July 2015

Upcoming Events

July 18, Janesville [Rotary Botanical Gardens](#) in Janesville Saturday from 9 (or whenever you can come) until noon.

Iza leads us in weeding and planting in the rock garden area of this lovely public garden. Just bring yourself and bottles of water. Tools are provided. No experience needed--if unsure about weed vs. plant, others will be happy to help.

We'll meet afterwards at a local restaurant and the chapter will pick up the tab for volunteers. The morning and lunch is a great time to visit with fellow members.

For those of us who wonder if we're missing a plant, [K&W Greenery](#) is near Janesville and has a wide variety of plants and other items for the landscape or gifts.

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Jane Gahlman participated in a June 2014 Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society tour of gardens in northeastern England, including the Royal Horticultural Society Garden Harlow Carr in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. Following is an excerpt from [her posting on our Web site](#): More pictures are on our site.

This large public garden consisted of several diverse garden landscape areas, including an Alpine House chockfull of exquisite jewels of the rock garden world.

Surrounding the outside of the Alpine House were numerous troughs of all different shapes and sizes, with some containing slate crevice gardens, and all of them looking adorable. Behind the Alpine House were several vertical rock walls with choice plants tucked in the openings between the rocks and growing down the front of the walls.



Editorial Ramblings

When you visit a public garden, nursery or other garden related establishment, please consider sharing photos or other information with me for inclusion in a newsletter and / or our Web site. This would also include Web sites, books, etc. that would interest other members.

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Our chapter plant sale is only a few months away. Look at your plants and see which ones can be divided to share. Plants suitable for the rock garden are always prized as well as other unusual perennials. The goal, not always realized, is to pot things early enough that they are recovered from being moved and then keep them happy during heat spells and too much or too little rain.

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I've become interested in peonies considered suitable for a rock garden. The peony above is commonly called the Memorial Day Peony, and according to Hidden Springs nursery Web site, has been cultivated since 1581.

The official name is *Paeonia officinalis rubra plena*. Mine flowered around Memorial Day, as it should, and is about 15 inches tall. Early Scout, Squirt, Thunbelina and Tinkerbelle are other short peonies I'm growing but that haven't bloomed yet.

These are still too big to actually be in a rock garden but provide nice foliage and flowers near one. *Paeonia tenuifolia*, the fern leaf peony, is also nice near the rock garden. This plant and its cultivars go dormant in the heat of summer. Although the initial plant isn't cheap, it spreads faster than many peonies.

Three years ago, I decided to get rid of all the grass at my new house and landscape with plants accumulated over 40 years. This may not have been one of my smarter decisions! For anyone else considering complete or partial lawn grass eradication, consider the following:

1. Consider the time and energy creating and maintaining the landscape will take and your work force. I am still working full time and am no longer young. More realistic planning would have meant more low maintenance plants but maybe not as much fun.
2. When grass has been removed with Roundup or digging, the area will need to be quickly replanted and kept weed free. My first two years were spent juggling clearing areas, mowing uncleared areas and moving plants from the previous house to cleared areas at the new one. I didn't have time to plan where specific plants should go, the goal was to rescue plants.
3. Starting with a blank slate means path planning is easier. I have space for wide paths and laid out tentative ones while moving plants. After some adjusting, wood chips identify the paths versus shredded bark mulching the flower beds.
4. Have understanding, patient neighbors. I'm sure there was wonder/ concern about what I was doing, especially the first year. The narrow area next to a side neighbor was completed last year. The fenced in back yard, which was a weed patch, is now generally under control. Bindweed and nightshade have pretty well been eradicated. Impressive how sturdy the vine form of nightshade can be!

I decided the rock garden is too small and will get another three yards of sand next spring. That means plants between the rock garden and street need to be moved for truck access. Fortunately not too much planted there before I decided to expand this bed.

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Please consider sharing your landscape decisions, both past and present, and plants you are interested in. All of you are reporters for this newsletter!

Happy gardening in the upper midwest!

Jean Halverson

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Editor Jean Halverson

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Membership Renewal Form

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Dues are \$10 per year. Please clip this form and send it along with your check (payable to WI-IL NARGS) to: Jean Halverson PO Box 101, Dodgeville WI 53533

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July 201