

# ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY, 2020

### CALENDAR

**February 22, Saturday, 2 PM**—Eagle River Elks Lodge. 17111 Eagle River Rd, Eagle River

*“Thinking Outside the Box—Expand your Definition of Troughs”* by Kathy Swick. Love alpenes? Adore troughs? See the work of innovative gardeners and expand your definition of troughs. View some of the mountain features that have inspired crevice and rock design from Canada to Czechoslovakia.

**March 21, Saturday, 2 PM**— CES at Matanuska Experiment Farm, 1509 S. Georgeson Dr., off of Trunk Rd., Palmer [NEW LOCATION]

*“Hypertufa Trough Essentials—Building and Planting a Trough”* Jaime Rodriguez of the Alpine Garden Nursery will show how to make a hypertufa trough to give your alpine plant collection a great place to put down roots in your garden. The demonstration will include mixing the hypertufa concrete and packing it into the mold, taking the day old set container out of the mold, and how to plant it.

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### FROM OUR PRESIDENT, FLORENE CARNEY

This time of year I love to sit down with a cup of tea and plan what I want to do next summer. Seeds are coming in the mail and we are still poring over the seed catalogs and going through the Internet to see what new things we can order and try. I was going through one of my old journals and it was fun to see what we were excited about back in the early days. The first meeting of ARGS was March 22, 1997. There were twenty people at that meeting and with excitement we forged ahead never dreaming the journey it would take us on. Verna Pratt was the first President, and no one could have had more enthusiasm. We spent hours talking about possible plants to try, scouring the NARGS Bulletins for

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more ideas and wondering if, with global warming, we would be able to try some more exotic things. We talked about rock garden styles and use of rocks and how paths should be used. At that time there were “rules” about how things should be done. Over time the rules have relaxed and rock gardens now reflect the owner rather than the person who wrote the rule book.

Early on, we were enamored with *Lewisia*s and searched all known sources for *Lewisia tweedii*. We finally ended up ordering several from Mt. Tahoma and were so excited when they arrived. We passed them out at a meeting and when we unwrapped them were astounded to find a small tag on them saying, “Grown by Walt Mayr, Sutton, Alaska”. Needless to say, from that day forward Walt and Elsie were first on our list for new and replacement plants. Walt was an amazing plantsman and brought some delightful plants into our gardens.

Rhonda and Jeff Williams started Recluse Gardens a few years later and another wonderful plantsperson was in our midst. She was excited about *Gentians* and was always trying new ones. There were a few plants that we were crazy about that we looked on with regret later, such as some of the taller *Campanulas*. The seed catalogs always make them seem so harmless, but we have learned to be wary.

Carmel Tysver is also a wonderful plants woman and introduced us all to trough gardening. We made troughs in her garage and she always had a few plants to share. We attended National Conventions and learned what others had already experimented with hoping we could learn and jump our knowledge base forward.

Jaime Rodriguez also started growing very desirable plants that we all longed for. He has grown into a wonderful resource now.

Anyone who travelled came back with a plant or two they hand carried home. Everyone shared. We begged plants from neighbors that we thought

would be good in a rock garden or trough and all the time we researched, bought reference books, took seed trips to Denali, Nome and other wonderful spots.

All the while, we were sponsoring a seed expedition to China, hosting the National Convention, and assisting people all over our area in building their own rock gardens. We took turns being officers and newsletter editors and preparing programs and searching for speakers.

In the process, we fell in love with *Saxifragas*, *Pentstemons*, *Drabas*, *Gentians*, *Lewisias*, tiny *Campanulas*, and the natives that form the tapestry on our mountain hillsides. We always laughed and said “If we haven’t killed a plant three times we haven’t given it a fair try.”

Along the way we have formed some great friendships. We have lost some, some moved away, and our hearts were heavy. But we continued to grow our gardens and welcome new friends.

New garden clubs formed all over our area and we find that anything we want to know can now be found on the Internet. It is evident that the time has come to really evaluate what we want from the Rock Garden Society. For me, I don’t have to prove anything, or set any new record or have my name on a plaque. I just want to garden and share with friends. I love the time spent in contemplation with a good gardening friend trying to figure out what a plant really needs and are we giving it what it needs and, if not, how do we do that? In this time of high speed everything slowing down and really enjoying the folks who love to do the same thing we do is rewarding. Let’s try to enjoy each other, be a friend, share a plant or knowledge with grace and every once in a while just get together to visit.

I’m looking forward to seeing all your faces at our meetings – share your ideas and needs and let’s see if we can be the club that we all want to belong to. Let’s slow down, have a cup of tea, laugh, love, and enjoy the beauty that nature has given us.





## WHY DID YOU BECOME A ROCK GARDENER?

BY FLORENE CARNEY

*[Editor—This article first appeared in volume 3, issue 3 of the ARGS Newsletter in May 1999. It clearly demonstrates the early dynamism at the time of the creation of ARGS that the society is trying to recreate two decades later as it evaluates the continued viability of ARGS.]*

A non-gardening friend recently asked, “Why in the world did you become a rock gardener?” I had to ponder that. Why did I?

It all started about twenty-five years ago during an innocent drive along Turnagain Arm, between Girdwood and Anchorage. I glanced up and spied the prettiest blue flowers that appeared to be hanging in thin air on the cliff above the highway. I insisted that we stop the car to have a better look. But alas, the lovely little plant was too high to really see. Since we had no binoculars, we parked the car and set out to climb to the top of the cliff, hoping to get a better view or at least find a companion plant that was more accessible. As we wound back and forth on what was probably a sheep trail, we kept trying to get a better look at the plant in question and looked all the while for another plant like it. As we reached the top of the cliff, I didn’t even notice the breathtaking view below. There, growing in the rocks was another little blue-flowered plant. On closer inspection the flowers were bell-shaped, and the plant seemed to grow right out of the rock. I was smitten.

For the next few years I tried, in vain, to transplant that little flower and also to find out what it was. That was in the time before Verna Pratt started publishing her guides and my best resource was Louise Potter, who had a guide of Alaskan flowers, which had hand-drawn pictures in black and white. After much searching and questioning, I determined that the plant I coveted so much was a Common Harebell, sometimes called Bluebells of Scotland (*Campanula rotundifolia*). It didn’t seem right that

this lovely little plant should be called common, but Bluebells of Scotland had a romantic ring to it and *Campanula rotundifolia* sounded rather regal. I could live with that.

I had been a gardener all my life, but as I struggle to provide an environment that this little beauty would survive in, I realized this was a whole new kind of gardening. Nothing about it was like a regular garden. These plants seemed to thrive on very little soil and lots of gravel, or were content to snuggle down in a crack in the rocks. It was amazing how they would light up the duller spot with bright blooms on tiny plants but only if conditions were right. I became a rock gardener, although I never realized it until years later when I stumbled across an article about the American Rock Garden Society in *Horticulture* magazine. Since that time the name has changed to [North American Rock Garden Society \(NARGS\)](#). If you aren't a member, the \$25.00 [ED.—now \$40] a year is worth it just for the [Quarterly](#) they publish. It is full of articles with glorious color photos and line drawings of plants you may never have seen but will surely start a search for. The first few years it was only Susan Lemagie and I listed under the Alaskan Members with a few people from Southeast thrown in. Slowly the list grew and then one day Les Brake called to see if I would be interested in forming an Alaskan Rock Garden Group. I quickly offered my home as the location for the first meeting and sent a little “Thank You” in the general direction of the stars. We were off and sprinting—I would say running, but it was a very fast start. The Alaska Rock Garden Society has grown from 20 people at the first meeting to almost 200 in a short two years. I wasn’t the only one hooked.

Since I started with that first little *C. rotundifolia*, I have collected not only Campanulas of all sizes but have become enamored of other rock garden plant as well. *Lewisia tweeddyi*, with its beautiful peach colored blossoms, the *Draba* that smells so sweet as you walk by, but it takes you a minute to spot them because they are so unassuming, and of course those lovely *Primulas* that are among the first to welcome spring. Since “The Bad Winter” about four years ago, all Alaskan rock gardeners

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have a penchant for Gentians of all varieties (*G. septemfida* and *G. verna* come to mind right away) as they were the big survivors of the holocaust of ice and cold.

*Gentian sino-ornata* has bloomed in Susan Lemagie's garden late in the fall right through the snow! That is a treat for the eyes, bright blue blossoms over pure white first snow.

Rock garden plants don't all have the same growing requirements and some research is needed for each one. Lean, gritty soil or a crack in a rock for Campanulas; a little richer mixture for Gentians and everything well-drained. That's part of the challenge. I now have plants from all over the world. *Primula cowichan* from Canada, *Stachys monnieri* from the Pyrenees, *Thymus comosus* from Romania and a long list of glorious little plants from the Himalayas. Experimentation is part of the fun. If I haven't killed a plant three times, I'm sure it is hardy and keep trying.

At first the rock garden was my respite from a full-time, high stress job and the challenge of raising three children. Now I find that another bonus of rock gardening is that I have met the most wonderful people who are also captivated by those rare little plants that require a special environment to survive: Sally Arant, garden designer and a local nursery owner, introduced me to shade rock gardens when she gave a program at the ARGS meeting last spring; Rhonda Williams, owner of Recluse Gardens and avid plant collector is a kindred spirit and keeps me wondering what exotic plant she will come up with next; Carmel Tysver shared her expertise in troughs and has encouraged me to give them a try; Teena Garay, from Homer has readily shared tips on propagation. The list goes on.

The frosting on the cake is the wonderful lectures we have had in the first two years. Every lecture has been wonderful and provided more information than I will ever remember, but getting to meet and spend an evening with Helen Dillon was very special to me. Helen lives and gardens in Dublin, Ireland, but travels extensively studying plants and flowers and lecturing on her gardening

experience. She was definitely a bright spot in an otherwise gray February day. Ms. Dillon is the author of *Garden Artistry* and *The Flower Garden*; both published by Wayside Gardens. If you haven't read Helen's books check them out next time you are in a bookstore. Her style is witty and very wise, and the pictures are glorious. Her books are wonderful reading on a cold winter day. I love to brew up a pot of Irish Tea and snuggle down with Helen. It doesn't even have to be a cold winter day.

"What about rocks?" you may ask. Truthfully, I was a rock collector long before I was a plant collector. I have always loved a beautiful chunk of pink quartz or a big rock with a well in it that can be used as a little birdbath. My first rock garden was a conglomeration of my rock collection with plants stuck in between. Eventually, I tore that apart (partly because the nearby trees had sent roots all under the plantings and they had to be removed). When the rocks were replaced it was with an eye to what the plant needs were, not just to show off the rocks. The rock garden at the new house (this will be our second summer here) is like a dream come true. When the snow started to melt last spring, there was a big dip in the back yard, then a hump that went over the old the old potato storage, we call the Keep. As yards go, it left a lot to be desired, but you could see the potential. Al and Nancy Williams, from Williams Excavating, were here working on excavating and replacing the soil around the foundation. After we discussed the area, I explained that I visualized filling in on the upper level and leaving the drop off between the upper and lower level to be used as a rock garden. They quickly caught my vision and as we worked, Nancy remembered a pile of rocks up the road that a neighbor wanted to get rid of. After negotiating for several days, we struck a deal and Al hauled in four dump truck loads of wonderful rocks. Then Nancy stood back and said, "You need more definition." By that she meant that I, as usual, had managed to square everything up. She got on the Bobcat and hauled gravel and sand and dirt and designed some beautiful curves. The really exciting part came when we started to place the rocks. Al, using the Track Hoe skillfully placed each rock as Nancy and I

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 directed him. Some we moved several times, but he stuck with us. Then my husband mentioned that he would like to have a little pond and waterfall. We started out to do a small pond with a fern grotto at the far end of the rock garden but the location where we wanted to put it was so sandy, we couldn't get it to hold. By that time all four of us had a hand in and it turned out to be a much larger water feature with a full-fledged waterfall and a larger pond than our original vision. We think the results are pretty spectacular. The August meeting will be at my house, I hope you can all come and see what we have done. [Ed.- *Snowfire Gardens will be on the valley garden tour.*] It's a fun thing.

Now comes the labor of love (I started to say chore, but it isn't); selecting plants and getting it all laid out to look natural. My goal this time is to have it look like an Alaskan mountain, up high where the sheep roam, then moving down to where you would see a stream and waterfall. I am planting seeds, scouring the catalogs, pestering the local nurseries, and gleaning advice from people in the ARGS group who are much more knowledgeable than I. There is no turning back now.

As to why I became a rock gardener. It's like asking why you chose a dance partner. I didn't choose rock gardening; it chose me, and this is one dance I'm glad I don't have to miss.

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## THE ROCK GARDENING OBSESSION

BY VERNA PRATT

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*[Editor—This article originally appeared in ARGS Vol. 7, issue 3 in April 2003.*

*The calendar of events being planned for 2020 are intended to recreate the activities and interactions that fostered the creation and success of ARGS when the membership approached 200 members. There will be plant hikes, garden tours, plant sales, seed exchange, and rock garden maintenance to meet the diverse interests of ARGS members.]*

Four of our Alaska Rock Garden Society Members attended the NARGS Western Winter Study Weekend in Vancouver, British Columbia from February 28th to April 2nd, 2003. We had a great time, visited some wonderful gardens and learned a lot from the lectures and workshops. It isn't easy to attend these functions when you live in Alaska, but what a shame that more of our members have not taken advantage of this. I believe that less than a dozen have attended any of these meetings.

I recall my first Eastern Winter Study Weekend in 1991 when I was asked to speak at Long Island, New York. I had been a member of NARGS for some time but rarely, if ever, read the [Quarterly](#) bulletin. I knew the scientific names of Alaska native plants and the common names of the garden variety rock garden plants that I was growing, however, most of the names and plants that I saw in the [Quarterly](#) I had never heard of. Some I had tried and already lost because of our harsh winters. The speakers at the Eastern Winter Study Weekend were excellent and great companions, but I must admit that I felt a little bit intimidated. Plants that I knew nothing of were talked about like old friends, and I was overwhelmed. Our hosts, I might add, were very gracious and accommodating, and since then we've become very close friends. When they later visited Alaska, we convinced them to stay and travel with us for 3 weeks.

Despite my feelings of inadequacy, I continued my membership in NARGS. The camaraderie of the attendees was very convincing. Rock gardening was always a special love of mine. Even as a child, I admired the low plants filling spaces between large rocks with water-washed ripples in them. We had gathered these from a nearby creek, and considering the amount of water that flowed in the creek, the rocks must have been there for eons to have produced such wonderful and deep gullies. I am still not sure which I like best, the beautiful plants or the wonderful rocks, or maybe it's just the challenge of putting them together in an attractive way.

The only other Winter Study Weekend that I attended was held in San Francisco in February 2000.  
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There, I had a dual reason for attending. First, to absorb all that I could about rock gardening because, by that time, I was very comfortable attending and choosing choice plants from the wonderful array on display. Secondly, was a reunion of myself and 3 of my sisters (two of whom also attended the meeting). This was to be the first time that we had all been together in 50 years! It's wonderful you can find other reasons to attend these gatherings other than to acquire more plants. Of course, I never go home empty-handed. Avid rock gardeners have devised many ways to hand-carry plants back to their homes. One of the best that I had seen was a cat carrier. This allows for air circulation but does not protect the plants from the cold. I discovered that some gym bags are the proper size to insert a 24-can soft-drink box into (for strength), and they always have these at the meetings. These bags give protection from the wind and are deep enough for the plants in 3" tall 2" pots. Bless the growers that use these instead of 4" pots as they take up less space and you can bring more plants back home with you. I soon found, however, that filling a gym bag with tall 2-inch gravel-filled pots was much too heavy to carry around in an airport.

The biggest problem in my early years of rock gardening in Alaska was access to nice plants. Plants offered by nurseries in Alaska were very mediocre, and usually not alpiners. Plants ordered from the "Lower 48" usually arrived in an atrocious condition and shipping charges were outrageous. It seemed that we were paying an extreme penalty for living and gardening in Alaska. The same year that the Alaska Rock Garden Society was formed (1997), we finally had a new local nursery interested in glowing alpiners. Rhonda and Jeff Williams (who are early members of our chapter) owners of Recluse Gardens in Wasilla, had just started acquiring seeds from seed collecting expeditions and other alpine seed collectors. Of course, for a few years this was like playing Russian Roulette. No hardiness information was available and the winter of 1997-1998 was the coldest in over 50 years. We were amazed and pleased to see that many plants that grew at a very high elevation in

the Himalayan Mountains were hardy in our climate.

Slowly, other local nurseries have been acquiring other different plants for Alaskan gardeners. Unfortunately, however, they introduce more slugs, which we never had before plants from the Pacific Northwest were offered for sale. Many plants never had a chance of survival as most local nurseries were being supplied by growers in the Pacific Northwest which is 3 to 5 zones warmer than Southcentral Alaska. Nurseries that carry alpine plants are now much more reliable in their packing techniques, also. One of the best ways to acquire new plants for yourself is through seed exchanges. Sometimes, however, identification may not be correct, so it is best to try more than one source.

Attending Annual Meetings increases your knowledge and exposes you to many new plants as well as new friends and ideas. My introduction to NARGS Annual Meetings (usually held in the summer) was in Minneapolis in May 1997. This was soon after our Alaska Chapter was formed and Frank and I felt that it would be good to introduce ourselves as it was 6 years since we had attended the Winter Study Weekend in NY. We established many good relationships and gathered a wealth of knowledge from the programs at the Meeting. The field trips were great. We visited many different gardens; saw different ways to cope with difficult situations; and visited nurseries and botanical gardens. Many people had pools of different sizes and configuration. Nice ideas abounded. The biggest disappointment was masses of wonderful plants that we didn't know. We couldn't predict the hardiness and, unfortunately, it was assumed that anything that grew there would grow anywhere. Noting other plants around the area told us that this wasn't necessarily so. Some woodland gardens contained Helleborus and Galanthus all very happy, and eagerly spreading Hepaticas everywhere. Everyone there mulched heavily with leaves as they had an abundance of deciduous trees.

Bearded Iris were common. Everyone had large masses of blooming *Phlox subulata*. There were many species of Maple trees which indicated that they have deep warm soil in the summer. Having

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lost so much money to non-hardy plants, I was reluctant to return to Anchorage with many plants from Minnesota. I did, however, purchase a few plants from a conscientious and good-hearted nurseryman that seemed to understand the dilemma that we were facing here.

Despite prodding from NARGS old-timers, I definitely balked at the suggestion of our brand-new Chapter hosting an Annual Meeting in 2002. After all, at that time, I believe that Frank and I were the only members of the chapter that had ever attended an Annual Meeting and there was just so much to plan and organize. Since our Chapter's response to the idea was an overwhelming YES, I decided that we should attend every Annual Meeting that we could in the coming years and take copious notes on Do's and Don'ts. I returned to Anchorage with a new found enthusiasm to enlarge my own rock garden space. Taller perennials were pushed back, so that my pool was surrounded by rock garden plants instead of being engulfed with sprawling larger plants. Attending each of the next four Annual Meetings really helped us to plan for hosting the 2002 Annual Meeting. I gained a phenomenal amount of plant knowledge and rock garden design ideas. Some of this I have incorporated into the designs of more new rock gardens and, yes, I brought back lots of new plants, bulbs and seeds. Your right, I'm addicted and obsessed; but, by being exposed to more species I've found that many more plants are now available to all of us and we have become more informed of their hardiness. I now have a small bag with wheels to make it easier to bring plants home. I now thoroughly enjoy the [Quarterly](#) bulletin and I glean every bit of information that I can from it. It often helps me to decide what plants in which to invest. I only wish that I had begun this pursuit much earlier in my life.

I hope that more of you will come to realize the benefits of attending these great meetings and will plan to attend at least one in the near future. They are usually 3 days in length, but often can be extended with special field trips or garden visits. I encourage all of you to seek out this venue --- wonderful lectures, hikes, gardens, plants and people. What more could you ask for?

*[Editor-We would like to share more stories on how members became interested in rock gardening. Please send your stories to the ARGS Editor at [thule@alaska.net](mailto:thule@alaska.net) or to Kathy Swick at [swick@alaska.net](mailto:swick@alaska.net).]*

**Foresight 2020: Exploration and Innovation**  
**NARGS Annual Meeting**  
**June 18-20, 2020 on the Cornell University Campus, Ithaca, New York**

Hosted by Adirondack Chapter NARGS  
Co-sponsored by Cornell Botanic Gardens

In conjunction with the annual meeting next year, the NARGS Tours and Adventures Committee has organized a pre-conference tour on June 15 – 17, 2020, to see the native flora of the Adirondack region, including vegetation of Whiteface Mountain and bogs of the western Adirondacks. Also, a post-conference tour will be on June 21 – 23, 2020, and will visit five public and private gardens in the Hudson River Valley.

Conference information can be found on the [NARGS website](#).

This is YOUR rock garden society. The organizers and coordinators would like this society to be responsive to YOUR needs and desires. What topics would YOU like to see addressed in our monthly meetings? What would YOU like to learn (more) about? What speakers would YOU like to hear? What program topics would draw YOU to a meeting? Please address all comments, suggestions, requests, feedback, etc., to our program coordinator, Dorte Mobley, through our president, Florene Carney, (907) 376-5390; [snowfire@mtaonline.net](mailto:snowfire@mtaonline.net).

**LOOKING FOR SPECIAL SEEDS?**

Jelitto has a large selection of seeds for the rare and unusual - [www.jelitto.com](http://www.jelitto.com)



## Plant Profile—*Androsace sempervivoides*

Submitted by Kathy Swick



This fragrant primula relative blooms the last week of May, inspiring cheer every time you pass by. It originates in the northwestern Himalayas on grassy slopes and stable gravel above the elevation of 9000 feet. After flowering the rosette sends red runners over the mulch to form a new rosette at the end of each one. (Reference material claims the original rosette then dies, but I have not observed die-off in my garden since 2003.) It can handle full sun in cool climates but likes midday shade in warm ones. It resents winter wet so make an effort to give it snow cover even if you have to shovel it on. It is not particular about soil p.h. and is hardy to zone 3.

Propagate by seed or by detaching rooted stolons. Do not plant seeds in peat moss or ProMix. Use a light airy mix with lots of extra perlite. Stratify the seed for 4 weeks at temperatures near freezing, like

primulas. You can also stratify them under the snow for a longer period.

*Androsace sempervivoides* will be easy or challenging depending on how well you meet its basic needs. It likes extremely well-drained gritty soil with organic matter and consistent moisture at deeper levels. Heavily amend at least the top four inches of soil with sharp sand and small gravel, and give it a generous surface mulch of small sharp gravel. It also does well in troughs. In favorable conditions it will make a loose handsome mat with foliage an inch high, and flower stems that gradually elongate to a height of two inches, making a long-lasting bright spot in the rock garden spring after spring.

See NARGS Plant of the Month profiles at <https://www.nargs.org/plant-of-the-month>







## Plant Profile—*Paris quadrifolia*

Submitted by Shirley Ryan

*Paris quadrifolia*, Paris or Herb Paris, is not the flashy celebrity in the garden, all glitz and glamour, demanding attention with color and splash. Also known as Herb-Paris, it is dramatic nonetheless. Herb Paris will turn your head and is quite beautiful when you look give a second look. North American Rock Garden Society and Alpine Garden Society have both seen fit to give it the spotlight as of “Plant of the Month” October 2015 and March 2018, respectively. Though it would not be your



first though as classic sunny rock garden plant, it would be perfect in the moist shady rock garden.

It is a member of the diverse family *Melanthiaceae*, with its closest cousin, *Trillium*. In fact, taxonomists had it had formerly in the family *Trilliaceae*, before that, *Lilliaceae*. Though Paris’ ancestry has been in flux, it does give an insight into the cultural preferences that it shares with *Trillium*... moist woodland humus, cool dappled shade.

Herb Paris came to be known romantically as “True love-knot,” its whorl of four equal leaves had reminded of sixteenth century lovers of the Burgundian cross or lovers knot. The genus name *Paris* comes from ‘*pars*’ or ‘*partis*,’ Latin for ‘parts.’ Arranged in a whorl of four equal leaves that resemble the lovers cross, its four-leaf species name is appro-

priately, *quadrifolia*.

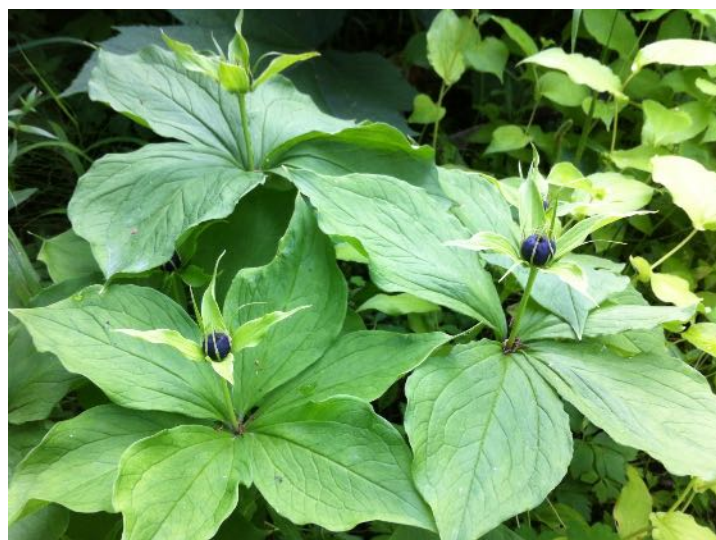
This woodland plant marches steadily, but never menacingly, to form colonies of up to 1’ tall stems which support four large ovate green leaves. Above these are a single intriguing flower with four green sepals and four wispy light green petals and eight gold stamens that eventually give way to a large blueberry-looking single berry. This fruit contains roughly 50 ovoid brown seeds and is borne above the whorl of four leaves produced at





[*Paris quadrifolia* Continued from page 9]  
the end of the season.

You can find references to Paris in medieval herbal medicinal texts as treatment for just about every affliction including as a remedy for “those who had lost their minds through bewitchment, or as an antidote for mental confusion due to supernatural causes.” At the same time, its plant parts and fruit is listed among plants considered poisonous. It is likely both; if a little of something is good, a lot is not necessarily better. The big juicy blueberry-looking berry produced in fall could look enticingly edible, but has been said to have a “repulsive” taste and there is not much danger of mistaking it for something good.



and colonize steadily in a woodland setting.

Following has been my experience with *Paris quadrifolia* in my Alaska garden and list of good reasons to grow Herb Paris:

Really pretty plant, long season interest

Hardy, dependable, reliable

Colonizes in a good way, not aggressive, BUT grows tight enough to crowd out many weeds.

Friendly enough to share space with *Trycyrtis latifolia*, *Corydalis solida*, *Arisaema amurense*, *Fritallaria meleagris* and other woodlanders in my garden.

Sturdy; can take wind as long as it doesn't dry out, driving rain, some neglect, light frost.

Easy enough to propagate by divisions of its slender rhizomes, but also seed. Seed is slow, however.

Pest free: No bugs, no slugs, no mice, no moose, no mold, no mildew.... whew!

You ultimately love Herb Paris because it's just lovely, well behaved, it will thrive here; is hardy, dependable and adaptable. We should encourage gardeners from all over Alaska to give it a try in their gardens as it may prove to be hardy in many other regions in Alaska. I can imagine it would grow well in Southeast, and in coastal communities in Southcentral Alaska.

[Editor—Profiles of your favorite alpine plants are encouraged for the newsletter and ARGS website.]



Originally Paris' Old World historic distribution is wide; from Iceland to Japan, and along with many other choice plants, its greatest concentration is in China. Though its population is declining in its native range due to loss of habitat from development, *Paris quadrifolia* has increasing availability worldwide and has adapted well to a variety of soils and climates in the New World as well. On this side of the pond, it is often found in collectors gardens, but really should be planted in any garden that is neither too sunny nor too dry. In nature, it grows in deciduous forests in cool damp woodsy humus-rich soil, dappled shade and along stream banks. It is also written that it prefers calcareous soils, but I have found Paris to be completely adaptable to my more acid soil in my garden in the woods. I have also had it pop up in others beds from errant seeds, in places I didn't plant it and some of those are fairly sunny though not allowed to dry out. I prefer plants that not only don't die, but actually THRIVE and Paris does just that. Paris is courteous. It is never a pest, but will spread





## POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

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**Treasurer: Madge Oswald**, (907) 345-5144; [johnmadge@chugach.net](mailto:johnmadge@chugach.net)

**Past President: Carmel Tysver**

**Membership: Gina Docherty**

**Newsletter Editor: Charles J. Utermohle**, 5021 Southampton Dr., Anchorage, AK 99503-6964; (907) 231-5460; [thule@alaska.net](mailto:thule@alaska.net)

**Seed Exchange: Debbie Hinchey**

**Librarian: Kathy Swick**

**Palmer Visitors Center Garden: Jaime Rodriguez**, (907) 357-2747; [jrtinker@mtaonline.net](mailto:jrtinker@mtaonline.net)

**ABG Rock Garden: Madge Oswald**, (907) 345-5144; [johnmadge@chugach.net](mailto:johnmadge@chugach.net)

**Sunshine Committee: Dorte Mobley**

**[WWW.AKROCKGARDENSOCIETY.ORG](http://WWW.AKROCKGARDENSOCIETY.ORG)**

Webmasters: Carmel Tysver, Florene Carney, and Gina Docherty

ARGS is on FACEBOOK at:

<https://www.facebook.com/alaskarockgardensociety/>

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

### Join Us!

We have about six meetings per year, plus Plant sales, Field Trips and a Seed Exchange. Our meetings are generally on the third Saturday of the month, Fall, Winter, and Spring, and rotate between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage. To Join, and receive this newsletter, send your name, address, Phone number, e-mail address and a Check payable to ARGS at 12001 Audubon Dr., Anchorage, AK 97516 or on the web at <https://www.akrockgardensociety.org/membership.html>

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Individual Membership \$15.00  
Family Membership \$20.00  
Canada Membership: \$20.00 US  
Overseas Membership \$25.00 US

Membership is for the calendar year and includes all issues of the newsletter for that year. The ARGS Newsletter is published 6 times per year. We invite your contributions. Please contact Charles Utermohle, ARGS Editor, at [thule@alaska.net](mailto:thule@alaska.net) or 907.231.5460.

## ARGS Newsletter Dates

	<u>Submission date</u>	<u>Distribution Date</u>
Feb/Mar issue	January 15	February 1
April/May Issue	March 15	April 1
Summer issue	May 15	June 1
Sept/Oct issue	August 15	September 1
Nov/Jan issue	October 15	November 1

**THE GARDENING LIFE MAY BE FULL OF SWEET DELIGHTS, BUT GARDENERS ARE GENERALLY NOT HEDONISTS.**  
**DES KENNEDY**



## JOIN NARGS

If you are not already a member, considering joining the North American Rock Garden Society. (NARGS) The “Rock Garden Quarterly for Winter 2019/2020” just came and it is pure eye candy. Great articles on alpines, gardens, and upcoming events. Go to [www.args.org/join](http://www.args.org/join) and give yourself a gift that lasts all year.

## Your Article Here

Send your story ideas to:

Charles J. Utermohle  
5021 Southampton Dr.  
Anchorage, AK 99503-6964  
[thule@alaska.net](mailto:thule@alaska.net)

**Next Program: February 22nd, Eagle River Elks Lodge, 2 PM:**

# Thinking Outside the Box

**Crevice Environments & Troughs**

