



# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3

APRIL 2003

## ARGS CALENDAR

Mark Your Calendars Now! The next issue comes in June. Also check for late-breaking current events at the Alaska Rock Garden Society Website at: <http://www.args.org/> or call our voice mail at 566-ROCK (7625)

**April 19, Saturday. ARGS General Meeting 2PM, Recluse Gardens, Wasilla. Rhonda and Jeff Williams will be speaking on new plant introductions and constructing rock gardens.**

**April 19, Saturday. Sears Mall Annual Garden Show** (contact Verna Pratt at (907) 333-8212 if you can assist before or after the meeting above).

**May 9, 10, & 11, Friday through Sunday - Northway Mall Mother's Day Garden Show.** (Contact Verna Pratt at (907) 333-8212 if you can assist on Saturday).

**Sat May 17, Saturday 9 AM to 4 PM - Plant Sale in Anchorage at Sally Karabelnikoff's 7435 Old Harbor Rd. house at the corner of Old Harbor and Creekside.**

**Sun May 18, Sunday - Alaska Botanical Garden rock garden clean up. 2:00 p.m.**

[Check for additional ARGS and related events on page 6]

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT, CARMEL TYSVER

Dear ARGS Members,

I have to say it again! What a weird spring! Now, we get snow and cooler weather, just when I am really ready for spring. As soon as the splint was off my wrist I came home and planted seeds. I am now transplanting. It does the soul good to see green shoots and new life. It was great seeing flowers and hearing about plants from Stephanie Cohen. For those who missed her talk she was funny and informative. Thank you goes to Rita Jo Schoultz for inviting her to Alaska and being her tour guide to Fairbanks, Anchorage, Homer and Kenai. I have heard from a few members in all of the areas and her talks were enjoyed. I would like to hear from more members to see if they would like more speakers to travel

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and speak in another city not just Anchorage.

As you will notice in the calendar there are many activities planned for the next few months. I hope people are growing lots of plants for sale. Verna would like some plant to sell for the show at the Sears Mall and then in May there are the two annual plant sales and a chance for members to sell their extras and earn a little money for buying plants from other members. It's a shame the April meeting conflicts with the show at the Sears Mall, but this happens every year. The April meeting will be a time to see new plants at Recluse nursery and how to plant them and be impressed at the big rocks Jeff has used in the rock garden. It will be a good time to select plants to grow out for the plant show at the Alaska Botanical Garden Fair the last weekend in June. Florene is planning the show and should have a schedule for us soon. Then we can pot up and grow our winning entries for ribbons and maybe even the big award.

Friday evening June 27, 2003, at 7 pm David Hale will be speaking at the Loussac Library on the flora of Chile and Patagonia. There will be a fee of \$10.00 per person to attend the talk. He will also be speaking at the Garden Fair, unfortunately slides just don't work at the garden so if you want to see pictures of plants and Chile you'll need to attend the Friday evening talk. We are hoping he will hang around to view our first plant show and give our members a chance to visit with him. David and his wife want to visit some of our wildflower sites while in Alaska. I had the pleasure of viewing his garden several years ago when I attended the Western Winter Study Weekend in Portland. He had an Alpine House with lots of blooms, and small hypertufa troughs mounted on the outside wall of his home so he viewed them daily as he entered or left his home. I have not figured out a way to try to do the same at our home. Too much shade by the front door. I understand he has been to Chile 15 or 16 times. He has also written articles for the NARGS Bulletin on plants in the past year.

Then for all of us want to learn more on the care of our rock gardens and plants Verna will be at the ABG Rock Garden weekly, Thursday evenings, during the summer months and will need help weeding and will answer all of our questions. Let's take advantage of her time and expertise.

There is a lot to take advantage of and we hope of interest to our members. We are always open to suggestions

and have plans to have some garden tours and more trips this summer. If you have some time to volunteer we can always use your help. This club will only grow and be able to offer all of the activities if we have lots of help.

Happy Gardening  
Carmel

## PLANT SHOW FOR ALPINE AND ROCK PLANTS BY FLORENE CARNEY

The first ever Plant Show for Alpine and Rock Plants is coming to our neighborhood. The Show will be held at the ABG Faire on June 28-29<sup>th</sup>. There will be ribbons, trophies and gift certificates as prizes. Start now to look for plants that you can enter.

### **Awards will be given in the following categories:**

Best Plant Grown from Seed, Amateur  
Best Plant grown from Seed, Professional

Best Plant not showy, but well grown, Amateur  
Best Plant not showy, but well grown, Professional

New, Rare, or Difficult Plant, Amateur  
New, Rare or Difficult Plant, Professional

Best Trough, Amateur  
Best Trough, Professional

Best Plant Grown from Seeds of the ARGS China Expedition (Open)

Best Plant of an Alaskan Native Species (Open)

**BEST of SHOW:** Award for most points of show

**JUDGES CHOICE AWARD:** Judges choice of best plant in show. Rarity, showiness, and difficulty of cultivation will be top considerations.

Alan Grainger, who was Secretary for the Alpine Garden Society Plant Shows for eight years has graciously shared tons of information and is giving ongoing advice. Check his website for more information and ideas: <http://www.thealpinegarden.com>. There are beautiful photos of the plant shows in England and Scotland to give you an idea of what we are trying to do. More information will be available at the upcoming ARGS Meeting. Come join in the fun.



## THE ROCK GARDENING OBSESSION BY VERNA PRATT

Four of our Alaska Rock Garden Society members attended the NARGS Western Winter Study Weekend in Vancouver, British Columbia from February 28<sup>th</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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. 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 how 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 alpinines. 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 alpinines. 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.

*(Rock Gardening Obsession continued on page 4)*



(Rock Gardening Obsession continued from page 3)

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 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. If you have never been to a NARGS meeting before, NARGS will give you \$150 to help defray the cost of registration. Only one person from each chapter can receive this award for a meeting. All you need to do is let your chapter president know that you wish to attend. A recipient for this benefit for this year's Annual Meeting at Breckenridge, Colorado, has already been chosen. I encourage all of you to seek out this venue --- wonderful lectures, hikes, gardens, plants and people. What more could you ask for?



## ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting March 15, 2003

President, Carmel Tysver, shared a Thank You letter from NARGS President, Bobby Ward, for the contribution ARGs made to the Singer Memorial. She also shared a Thank You from Polaris school for ARGs contribution to their Garden show.

There was discussion of the 2001 NARGS Convention Wrap-up. Follow-up should be completed soon.

Verna Pratt has a sign up sheet for manning a booth at the Sears Garden Show, April 19<sup>th</sup>. It is the same day as the meeting in the Valley at Recluse Gardens. Verna will set up a booth with membership brochures and a poster if the booth has to be left unmanned. Also for the Northway Mall garden show, Mothers Day weekend in May.

Discussion of the Plant Show to be held during the ABG Fair. Rhonda Williams made a MOTION to budget \$300 for prizes and other needed materials, SECONDED by Mary Moline. PASSED unanimously.

Florene Carney recommended that the Alaska Rock Garden Society set up an Alaska Chapter Award, to be named for Aline Strutz and honoring a person contributing greatly to the promotion of rock gardening in Alaska. After discussion President Tysver directed that Ms. Carney come back with a full recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION by Jeff Williams to put off the Patagonia trip. After discussion the Board ACCEPTED the recommendation.

There was a discussion on the China Seed Trip Field notes. Clarification of where the process is was asked for. Carmel has sent out questionnaires asking for information from those shareholders that purchased seed. There was agreement that this needs to be completed and the issue closed.

Meeting adjourned so Carmel could go set up for Stephanie Cohen's program.

## ARGS PLANT SALES 2003 BY JEFF WILLIAMS

The time is almost here folks! Time to garden, time to play and almost time for your local clubs to have their annual plants sales. This is an excellent way for you to make a little money to support your own garden expenditures as well as it happens to be a great way for the club to increase their fund raising too. The following is meant to be a suggestion to increase your chances of sales and make it easy for the people holding the sales for you!

Since we are an alpine society, smaller types of plants are preferable, but other plants are also welcome. The Alaska Rock Garden Society sponsors two plant sales. The first will occur on Saturday, May 17, in Anchorage at Sally Karabelnikoff's, 7435 Old Harbor Rd. at the corner of Old Harbor and Creekside, from 9 AM to 4 PM. The second occurs Memorial Day weekend on Friday through Sunday, May 24, 25, & 26, at Recluse Gardens in Wasilla

Proper labeling is a must! All plants in pots must have a label identifying them by their correct scientific name, and a good description of height, color, bloom time, and soil requirements. Another label of a different color is used for your name and the pricing. Without this it becomes confusing for all involved, leaving you to face the prospect that you may end up selling some of your product, but not be able to receive the money for your efforts. Provide the club or your host of the sale with a list of what you have brought, complete with pricing and your phone number!

Your product should be disease and insect free! It is simple professional courtesy to do the very best to manage these two aspects. No one wants to purchase an infested plant only to take it home and face the possibility of wiping out

*(Continued on page 6)*



*(Plant Sales Continued from page 5)*

their greenhouse. This is looking to be a banner year for insects because of the mild winter. Call your local nursery for advice if you are having trouble, they should be able to help you manage this...

If you are bringing a lot of product, take a little extra time to do some marketing! Wind, weather, and rain proof signage will increase your sales! People loved to see and read about your plants, providing this to them will help them make the decisions to buy your product over others. Beautiful, healthy plants in a clean acceptable container will translate to more sales for you!

Lastly, please be considerate to your host, make arrangements to have your plants picked up right after the sale. Leaving your plants there for weeks or months increases the work load, and drags out the accounting process for the host as well as the club. Doing this will also insure that your product will make it to the next sale on time and in great shape.

## ROCK GARDENING CALENDAR

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**May 18, Sunday - Alaska Botanical Garden rock garden clean up. 2:00 p.m.**

**May 24, 25, & 26, Friday through Sunday - ARGS Plant Sale at Recluse Gardens in Wasilla**

**June 1 through August at 7:00 PM every Thursday—Standard, weekly maintenance time for the Alaska Botanical Garden Rock Garden**

**June 27, Friday, 6:30-9:30 PM—ARGS Presentation at Wilda Marston Auditorium at the Z.J. Loussac Library: David Hale will speak and show slides on Alpines of the Southern Ancestry. There is a \$10 admission fee to cover expenses.**

**June 28-29, Saturday & Sunday - ARGS Flower Show and Plant Sale at Alaska Botanical Garden "Garden Fair"**

**July 8-13, NARGS Annual Meeting. "Rush to the Rockies"** hosted by the Rocky Mountain Chapter, Breckenridge, Colorado. Jane Flannery, registrar (303) 841-5860 or [janesgarden@worldnet.att.net](mailto:janesgarden@worldnet.att.net).

**July 17-23 - NARGS Expedition: Plant Exploration in Northeastern Oregon.** Contact Tom Clark at 253 Batchelor Street, Granby, MA 01033 USA, by email at [tclark@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:tclark@mtholyoke.edu), or by telephone at 413-467-2714.

**Fall Seed Collecting Trips - TBA. Ideas currently include Thompson Pass, Denali Hwy, and Arctic Valley. Contact Carmel Tysver at [garden@corecom.net](mailto:garden@corecom.net) if you are interested and have a preference on time and place.**



## POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

**President:** Carmel Tysver, 2030 Patriot Cir., Anchorage, AK, 99515. (907) 522-3490; email: garden@corecom.net

**Vice-President:** Jeff Williams, PO Box 872592, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 373-0925; e-mail: recluse@mtaonline.net

**Secretary:** Jaime Rodriquez

**Treasurer:** Mary Moline, 9601 Copper Dr., Anchorage, AK, 99507 (907) 333-4419; email: moline@alaska.net

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**Program Chair:** Rita Jo Schoultz, PO Box 15226, Homer, AK, 99603-6226, (907) 235-4969; e-mail: ritajo@alaskahardy.com

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**Seed Exchange:** Rhonda Williams, PO Box 872592, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 373-0925; e-mail: recluse@mtaonline.net

**Expedition Coordinator:** Jeff Williams, PO Box 872592, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 373-0925; e-mail: recluse@mtaonline.net

### CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Alaska Rock Garden Society is a diverse group sharing an appreciation for rock gardening. Help make the society valuable to you by contributing suggestions for presentations, articles, plant sales, and field trips.

The newsletter is always looking for meaningful content on rock gardening in Alaska. Send your articles and/or pictures to the editor at thule@alaska.net. Events related to other gardening will also be posted as space allows.

## THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE RENEWED FOR 2003!

### Join NARGS

Join the North American Rock Garden Society. Benefits include a subscription to the *Rock Garden Quarterly*, seed exchange, garden book purchases at a discount, study weekends, and annual meetings, as well as other benefits. Membership in the Alaska Rock Garden Society is separate from NARGS, the national organization. Membership is \$25/year. Send payment to Jacques Mommens, Exec. Secretary of NARGS, PO Box 67, Millwood, NY 10546 or register online at <https://www.nargs.org/info/smembership.html>. The NARGS website is at [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org).

### WWW.ARGS.ORG

Webmaster: Frank Pratt  
Contact them at [frank@alaskakrafts.com](mailto:frank@alaskakrafts.com)

### 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.

Individual Membership \$15.00 US

Family Membership \$20.00 US

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. Back issues are available at \$1 each. The ARGS Newsletter is published 5 times per year. We invite your contributions. Please contact Charles Utermohle, editor, 5021 Southampton Dr., Anchorage, AK, 99503-6964, (907) 561-1662 email: thule@alaska.net

**Alaska Rock Garden Society**  
**P.O. Box 244136**  
**Anchorage, AK 99524-4136**



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ARGS NEWSLETTER VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3 APRIL 2003

## **NEW MEMBER AND RENEWAL FORM**

ARGS Membership: - New - Renewal: - W/O Changes or - W/Changes  
Dues: \$15 US - Individual, \$20 US - Family/Canada, \$25 US - Foreign

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+ 4: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

ARGS may share its membership list with like-minded, non-profit organizations. If you DO NOT want to receive these notifications, please check the box -

Send form and payment to:  
Alaska Rock Garden Society  
P.O. Box 244136  
Anchorage, Alaska 99524-4136

Membership is for the calendar year. If the year after your address is not 2003 or later, your membership has expired!  
Send inquiries about dues to [moline@alaska.net](mailto:moline@alaska.net).