



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 1  
January 2003

## Calendar

Mark Your Calendars Now! The next issue comes in February. Also check for late-breaking current events at the Alaska Rock Garden Society Website at: <http://www.args.org/>

- January 18, 2003, Saturday, 2 PM Regular Meeting. "Growing Primroses" by Sally Arant at Co-op Extension Rm. 130. Anchorage.**
- January 24-26, 2003 Eastern Winter Study Weekend. "Lost in the Woods" hosted by Great Lakes Chapter, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Michael Kaericher, registrar (734) 459-5386 or mkaericher@alum.mit.edu
- February 19-23, 2003 Northwest Flower & Garden Show. Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, Washington. Information: (206) 789-5333 or NWinfo@gardenshow.com
- February 28—March 2, 2003 Western Winter Study Weekend. "Treasures of the Plant Hunters" hosted by Alpine Garden Club of BC, Vancouver, BC. Moya Drummond, registrar (604) 738-6570 or moyadrummond@shaw.ca [See related article on page 6]
- July 8-13, 2003 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

## From Our President, Carmel Tysver

For those of you who do not know me, let me introduce myself. I have been involved with ARGs since its conception and am an avid rock gardener. I have been one since I was a child helping my mother build hers as a child in Palmer. My garden in Anchorage has a small rock garden, a tufa crevice garden, a rock wall, a dry stream that is still in the process of being refined and my favorite way to grow alpenines – hypertufa troughs. I like hypertufa troughs so much I even make them to sell and teach classes as time allows. My favorite plant is what ever I am presently looking at. I start seeds in a small greenhouse that is attached to the kitchen, advantage of designing your own home. My husband, Neil, is a rock hound so our hobbies are very compatible. He brings home the rocks and those he leaves in the yard I put into the garden. He says that I have some museum quality rock and mineral specimens in my yard.

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The past year was a very busy one for the local members with the NARGS convention here in Anchorage. I see the next two to be a time for us to regroup and have fun in Alaska. Together with the board planning for 2003 is underway. There will be speakers, trips for gathering seeds, garden tours, and meetings in other areas of Alaska and this year we would like to have an alpine garden show. We can benefit from education regarding growing and showing plants in containers. In this newsletter is a questionnaire, which I hope people will think about and let me, know what you think. I can be called at 522-3490, faxed at 522-3731, e-mailed at garden@corecom.net, or tell me at a meeting.

Your President  
Carmel Tysver

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## NARGS Travel Tour of northeastern Oregon in July 2003

The NARGS Expeditions Committee is pleased to announce further details of its third travel tour, which will be to the Wallowa Mountains in northeastern Oregon. The group will rendezvous in and depart from Portland, Oregon on Thursday July 17, 2003 and return to Portland late on Tuesday, July 22. Leaving from Portland the tour will travel to John Day in the east central part of the State. John Day, named for a Virginian scout of the Astor overland expedition of 1811, is well-known for its fascinating geology and fossil beds, but also for nearby Strawberry Mountain. Tour participants will make their initial botanical foray of the trip in this area where *Epilobium obcordatum*, *Pellaea breweri*, *Claytonia megarhiza* var. *bellidifolia*,

*Collomia debilis* and *Penstemon procerus* var. *formosa* are a handful of plants that may be seen. The first night will be spent in John Day.

From there the tour will travel to Enterprise, stopping en route for a short hike from Anthony Lakes into a glacial basin where lakeshore and wet meadow habitats will be explored for *Dodecatheon jeffreyi*, *Allium validum* and many others. We will also make a brief stop at Bridge Creek Wildlife Area, an ungrazed site that supports a rich diversity of bulbs. The next four nights will be spent in Enterprise in northeastern Oregon. Enterprise is convenient for day trips to both the Wallowa Mountains and Hells Canyon. Field trips to both of these areas will provide opportunities to view a wide range of plants, some of which are unique to this fascinating corner of Oregon. One of the days will feature accessing a high ridge in the Wallowas by gondola and then exploring alpine tundra and outcrop communities with numerous species of *Penstemon*, *Phlox*, *Eriogonum*, *Lomatium*, and composites, as well as Arctic-Alpines like *Cassiope mertensian*, *Dryas octopetala* and *Eritrichium nanum*. The final day of the tour will feature a limestone canyon with an unusually diverse flora, with many alpines occurring at unusually low elevation.

The tour will be led by NARGS members. Collection of plants will not be permitted during any part of this trip. There will be ample opportunity to view, photograph, observe and appreciate not only the botanical discoveries we come across, but also the wonderful scenery and natural history we are sure to experience. Spaces are limited for this tour, so early application and registration is encouraged. For a tour brochure and application, contact: Tom Clark, 253 Batchelor Street, Granby, MA 01033. Telephone: (413) 467-2714. E-mail: tclark@mtholyoke.edu

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## Alaska Rock Garden Society Questionnaire:

1. What is your goal for ARGS?
2. Would you like to participate in a seed collecting trip?
3. Where would you like to collect?
4. What topics would you like covered at meetings?
5. Speakers – Who would you like, topics, and how often each year?
6. Would you be willing to write articles for the newsletter?
7. Would you like to tour gardens? Any specific gardens?

Please bring your ideas to the meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm at the Cooperative Extension Room 130, or e-mail Carmel Tysver at garden@corecom.net.



## Why "Rock"?

By Nicholas Klise

Why is rock gardening called "rock"? What is it that always requires this particular mode of gardening to have such a peculiar modifier? Usually gardening is accepted on its own terms without any modification. Obituaries say "she was a gardener" and leave it at that. We assume that the deceased grew plants-maybe petunias in coffee cans, maybe tomatoes, maybe perennial flowers, maybe trees-but it really doesn't matter because all modes of gardening can be generalized under the umbrella of the conventional and traditional terms by which we reckon gardening. Rock gardening stands apart as one always has to say the word "rock."

It is an unfortunately confusing modifier for the word "garden," but unfortunately we are going to have to live with it as there is no alternative. Even if one were to come up with a better and more descriptive term, how would that word supplant a recognized phrase that has been in coinage for more than one hundred and fifty years?

From the very beginning of the nineteenth century when improved transport allowed plant collectors access to remote regions, gardeners realized that most of these unfamiliar plants required gardening techniques different from those employed up to that time. The first mountains that Europeans explored for plants were their own Alps, the root of the word "alpine" that means the "environment of mountains." The most conspicuous element of the landscape in which floriferous, small plants grew was the exposed rock. Consequently, there was an immediate connection between these alpine plants and the rock in which they flourished. Growers who attempted to cultivate these alpine plants in low elevations very quickly figured out that there *was* a connection between rocks (or at least, soil) and success. Pioneers in this new type of gardening displayed plants with exposed rock as a way of defining this gardening technique as distinct from growing vegetables or common flowers, for example.

There is little evidence that having exposed rock piled somewhere in the garden will assure one success in growing plants. To the nineteenth century horticulturist, this rock pile was more symbolic--a mark of a sophisticate who was a citizen of the world (or, at least of Europe) and was the most progressive, up-to-date gardener (or pretended to be.) Charlatans dismissed the growing of alpine plants altogether and just opted for an elaborate display of rocks. Even today there are extant rock piles on British estates that bear witness to this early phase of rock gardening. By the end of the nineteenth century the term "rock gardening" was both firmly established in the vernacular and perversely confusing, as it remains today. At the end of the twentieth century, there were world-wide clubs that celebrate this distinct type of gardening. However, the general public, and people who call themselves gardeners, haven't a clue as to the meaning of the term, particularly to the word "rock."

In 1929 Sir William Lawrence met with a few enthusiasts in London with the intent of starting a rock garden society. These people were real horticulturists and immediately started to debate the terms by which this new club would be defined. At first the ones who had grown up with the term "rock garden"-let's call them the rock contingent-insisted that that the term was legitimate and self explanatory. The more horticulturally inclined protested that the term was vague and misleading since there was ample evidence that middle class pretenders had debased the term by piling rocks together without the slightest interest in, or knowledge of, horticulture. The "hort" contingent won the argument and proclaimed that the club would be called the *Alpine* Garden Society. The rockers protested that they were interested in much more than alpine plants. The name became engraved on "stone" as the Alpine Garden Society.

It is true that the term "alpine" seems limited, but, with its usage expanded to be a substitute for "mountain" it does make more sense. After all, mountains contain many habitats including deserts, meadows, bogs, fens, dark forests, sunny screes, aquatic areas, glacier-fed moraines, tundra, and rocks-lots and lots of rock. As our knowledge of the world became manifest, it became apparent that not only were there many habitats (and plants) but that there were different kinds of mountains-strikingly different from the Alps. The mountainous hinterlands of China contain a universe of plants, but this region is markedly different from the Appalachians, the mountains of Turkey or Central Asia or those of New Zealand. When one realizes this, the term "alpine" seems as ill-defined as the term "rock."

Similarly, gardeners have trouble with the term "hardy plant." Although most of the plants we are interested in growing are hardy, it is useless to use the term "hardy" in defining our rock garden plants because that term, unfortunately,

*(Why "Rock"? continued on page 4)*



(Why "Rock"? continued from page 3)

has another meaning. The term means that a plant is not tender. By the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth century it also came to represent a style of gardening. This gardening concept of the use of hardy plants rather than tender exotics grown under glass was a revolution against the Victorian *modus operandi*; however it has now become standard practice. The word "hardy" carries with it the weight of this history and, with regard to a kind of gardening, implies ornamentation of the landscape using trees, shrubs, and perennial flowers that can be grown without any special protection. Coincidentally, that term evolved about the same time that that rock gardening was becoming popular. This is not exactly rock gardening; rock gardening concerns itself with more than this.

A few years after the Alpine Garden Society was formed, the pendulum swung back to the "rock" contingent with the formation of the Scottish Rock Garden Club and the American Rock Garden Society. Perhaps these new organizations used the "rock" word to emphasize their independence from England. They really had no choice because, ambiguous as it is, there is no other term that describes this mode of gardening.

There is something to be said for this ambiguity in that it is both inclusive and exclusive. North Americans (and maybe Scots) may find the word "alpine" limiting whereas "rock" sounds ambiguous. It is exclusive in that only those who distinguish "garden" as a noun from "garden" as a verb can hope to come to terms with the word "rock." Those who think gardening involves buying annuals from a garden center in the spring and spreading a few bags of mulch will never, ever comprehend the universe that can be seen through the lens of rock gardening. Forget these people; they will never be a member of the club. The word is inclusive because, to the cognoscenti after all, it encompasses the whole world; the entire planet is a rock. The English flower gardener digging manure into a perennial border, the Midwestern farmer plowing a corn field or the backyard gardener digging a hole for a rose bush probably will never understand that the soil they are working with is but an infinitely tiny layer upon a gigantic lump of rock.

If one is interested in growing plants from all over the world, or is interested in one genus in all its forms, or one type of ecosystem as it exists in various places, or is interested in the wild plants that inhabit the regions near home, then one has to get used to the term "rock gardening." I hope that you proclaim unapologetically that you are a *rock* gardener. It is not worth the effort to try to explain the term, because the person on the other end of the line probably wouldn't really understand the word "garden."

Years ago, while attending my first NARGS Winter Study Weekend, eating a snack in a coffee shop near the hotel with Morris West and Rose Wolford, a young man was intent on hailing our attention by staring at us with drug-dilated eyes. Finally, oblivious to our trying to ignore him, he approached us and asked why we were in town on such a winter weekend. We said that we were here attending a gathering of rock gardeners. "Oh, wow!" he exclaimed, "You mean . . . man, you mean, you're all *musicians*?"

*[Nicholas Klise is a member of the Mason-Dixon Chapter of NARGS. He gardens with Morris West in Red Lion, Pennsylvania.]*

**[Read a related article, "The History of Rock Gardening in North America" By Marnie Flook, NARGS Archivist, at <http://www.nargs.org/info/narghist.html> — Editor]**

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### Special Price on NARGS "Bulbs" Book

The NARGS Book Service is now offering to NARGS members "Bulbs of North America" (edited by Jane McGary) at a special price of \$20. The price includes free shipping by U.S. media mail. NARGS chapters who want to order five copies or more for door prizes, chapter fund raising, members gifts, etc., should contact the Book Service Manager for special rates. To order copies of this award-winning book, contact Janet Slater, NARGS Book Service, 4411 New Holland Road, Mohnton, PA 19540-8654; telephone voice or fax (610) 775-9084; email [nargs@voicenet.com](mailto:nargs@voicenet.com).

[Ed—Look for additional book bargains for NARGS members at <http://www.nargs.org/pub/books.html>]



## Alaska Rock Garden Society Meeting Minutes

### Alaska Rock Garden Society Regular Meeting 11/16/02

Meeting opened at 2:05 P.M. by Vice-President Carmel Tysver.

**Present:** Verna Pratt, Frank Pratt, Rhonda Williams, Carmel Tysver, Jaime Rodriguez, Charles Utermohle, Alice Lynch, Corrine Reintjes, Jamie Smith, Kathy S, Dan & Marion Elliot, Carol Johnson **Absent:** Florene Carney

#### Vice President's Report:

Request from NARGS for a follow-up report on China trip. What has grown? Is anything invasive? Etc. No final report of NARGS Annual Meeting. Jaime Rodriguez will have it by the next meeting.

#### Old Business:

##### Nomination Committee:

The following slate was presented by Rhonda Williams:

President: Carmel Tysver

Vice -President: Jeff Williams

Secretary: Jaime Rodriguez (nominated from the floor by Carmel, Seconded by Frank)

Programs: Rita Jo Schoultz

Treasurer: Mary Moline

Editor: Charles Utermohle

Membership: Mary Moline and Charles Utermohle

Slate was elected by unanimous consent.

#### New Business:

Polaris School has a bazaar January 31, 2003 and they would like ARGs there. Verna Pratt will be there. It would be nice if there were others from our group, too. One night only. Carmel Tysver will be there to help.

#### Planning for next year:

Meeting in Homer, possibly late June.

Bring in a speaker

Dan Carter w/ AK Pioneer Fruit Growers wants to bring someone, and can help w/expenses.

Wasilla garden Club is hosting the State Association of Garden Clubs July 17, 2003

Charles Utermohle would like to see another Seed Collecting expedition inside Alaska.

Donation of reference books to local libraries. Example: "Encyclopedia of Alpines" from AGS, 2 volume set.

#### NARGS Meetings:

February 28-March 2003, Treasures of the Plant Hunters, Vancouver, B.C.

January 24-26, Lost in the Woods, Ann Arbor, Michigan

July 8-13, 2003, Rush to the Rockies, Breckenridge, CO.

#### ARGS Seed Collecting Expedition:

Jeff Williams is working on searching for an expedition leader to Patagonia. So far there is no success in finding a leader. There is also a political/terrorist alert for that region.

#### Business meeting closed at 2:32 p.m.

Carmel gave a slide presentation of NARGS Rocky Mountain Flora from the NARGS slide library. Slides by Phyllis Gustafson. Carmel included a few of her own slides taken while traveling around Alaska this summer.



## Treasures of the Plant Hunters

### February 28–March 2, 2003 Western Winter Study Weekend

**Dr Christopher Grey-Wilson** is eminently known for his books. ‘*Cyclamen – a Guide for Gardeners*’, ‘*The Genus Dionysia*’, ‘*Poppies*’, ‘*Clematis, the Genus*’ and ‘*Gardening on Walls*’ are among the many he has written. He is the Editor of the *Alpine Garden Society Quarterly* and the Editor of the *New Plantsman* (RHS). He has led or participated in numerous plant hunting expeditions from the Mediterranean to China. He will present ‘**Plant Hunting on the Frontier of Tibet**’ and ‘**Spring Flowers of the Nepalese Himalaya**’.

**Janis Ruksans** from Latvia has organized and taken part in many expeditions for new bulbous plants in Central Asia, the Caucasus, etc. He has run the Janis Ruksans Bulb Nursery since 1991 and written several books on bulbs in Latvian. He is also recognized as one of the foremost authorities on *Corydalis*, *Crocus*, *Allium*, bulbous *Iris*, and *Fritillaria*. His talks will be on ‘**Juno Iris**’ and ‘**Corydalis**’.

**Steve Hootman**, Co-Executive Director and Curator of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden has led or has participated in a number of expeditions in remote regions of Asia looking for rare and new taxa of *Rhododendron*. He will be giving a talk about ‘**Dwarf Rhododendrons**’.

**Judith Jones** is well known to everyone on the west coast for her superb knowledge and expertise in the growing of ferns. She has given many talks both nationally and internationally, which are always very well received, due to her vast knowledge and dedication to the fern world. In 1995 Judith relocated to a five-acre property in Gold Bar, Washington for her Fancy Fronds Nursery. She will talk on ‘**New Fern Introductions from Around the World – of the Easy to Grow and the Hard to Grow**’.

**Steve Doonan**, the well known and acknowledged superb plantsman of Grand Ridge Nursery fame has the world wide respect of those who are fortunate to know him. He will speak about ‘**Cypripediums**’ and ‘**Shortias**’.

**Charles Sale** is a transplant from Toronto where he created two gardens from scratch and restored another. Presently, he and Margaret Charlton are expanding their two-acre garden in North Vancouver. Among many offices held, he was President of the Rhododendron Society of Canada, is a member of Friends of the Garden at UBC and is on the board of the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society in Surrey BC. The talk to be given by this very knowledgeable gardener is on ‘**Arisaemas**’.

#### **“How To” Workshops**

Dr. Christopher Grey-Wilson: “How to grow *Meconopsis* successfully”

Janis Ruksans: “How to use the natural variation in plants of different genera for breeding”

Steve Doonan: “How to germinate and establish ericaceous plants”

Judith Jones: “How to increase your ferns the easy way.”

#### **Accommodation**

The host hotel is the Vancouver Airport Conference Resort, 10251 St Edwards Drive, Richmond, British Columbia, V6X 2M9. This is the same hotel as '94 and '98 with a new name and a face-lift. Rooms are being held until January 29, 2003 at the rate of \$99.00 CDN (plus tax) for single or double occupancy. Call locally at 604-278-9611 or toll free at 1-866-482-8444. Please confirm as “2003 Winter Study Weekend” to ensure the preferred room rate.

#### **Registration**

To Register by email, please include your name and postal address, the number of people attending, your choice of workshops and your credit card number and expiry date. Your credit card will be charged in Canadian Dollars. Alternatively, please print out a copy of this page and mail it to Moya Drummond at the address below. We look forward to meeting you at what promises to be a very enjoyable and interesting weekend.

#### **Contacts**

Registrar: Moya Drummond

moyadrummond@shaw.ca

3307 West Avenue

Vancouver, BC V6R 1T2 CANADA

604-738-6570

Chairman: Dana Cromie

danacromie@telus.net

604-733-7566



## 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 : Rotating Pending A Regular Volunteer**

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

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

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

**Newsletter Editor:** Charles Utermohle, 5021 Southampton Dr., Anchorage, AK, 99503, (907) 561-1662 email: thule@alaska.net

**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 Already 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 Momens, Exec. Secretary of NARGS, PO Box 67, Millwood, NY 10546 or register online at <https://www.hubris.net/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 [webmaster@args.org](mailto:webmaster@args.org)

### 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, (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 1

January 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).