



NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 2

March 2003

Calendar

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

March 15, 2003 ARGs Speaker. Stephanie Cohen will be speaking Saturday at 3pm the Wilda Marston Auditorium at the Z.J. Loussac Library. Her talk is titled "The Vertically Challenged Garden - Shorter is Better". Stephanie is currently the director of the Landscape Arboretum at Temple University, Ambler Campus and has received a grant from NARGS to redesign the rock wall. She is contributing editor to "Country Living Gardener", speaks at the Philadelphia Flower Show, and writes commercially for Yordor and Blooms of Bessingham. She has received numerous awards and honors. There will be a \$10.00 charge to cover costs.

April 19, 2003 ARGs General Meeting 2PM Rhonda and Jeff Williams will be speaking on new plant introductions and constructing rock gardens. Valley location TBA.

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

[Check the current status of the ARGs event calendar on page 6]

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From Our President, Carmel Tysver

Can you believe this weather! We recently returned from Arizona and New Mexico and they were also having record heat and lack of snow. The Acoma Indians say we are in a 72-year cycle and the drought will end soon. They also had a few other saying that were said tongue in cheek. So, believe it if you want. If you ever find yourself near Grants, NM we highly recommend the tour to the City in the Sky. The pots they make to store their seeds are true works of art.

Mark your calendar for March 15, 2003, as Stephanie Cohen will be speaking at 3pm at the Loussac Library Wilda Marston Auditorium. Her talk is titled "The Vertically Challenged Garden – Shorter is Better". I understand she is quite short in stature so

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(Tysver Continued from page 1)

the title reflects her as will as the plants. With her humor, it should be an interesting talk. Stephanie is currently the director of the Landscape Arboretum at Temple University, Ambler Campus. She has recently received a grant from NARGS to redesign the rock wall at the Arboretum. Her Biography is very extensive with numerous awards, a few of which include in 2002 the Perennial Plant Associations 'Award of Honor for Design', Award of Merit from the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society, and 'Garden Communicator of the year' award from the American Nursery & Landscape Association in 2000. She is currently a contributing editor to "Country Living Gardener" and writes for "Fine Gardening" and "American Nurseryman". She also currently writes commercially for Yodor and Blooms of Bessingham. I have included about half of what is in her bio and my hands are tired. Besides Anchorage she will be talking in Fairbanks, Homer and Kenai area. Having her speak in the other areas of the state is to try and bring in new members and provide our members not

in the Anchorage Wasilla area a chance to hear a nationally known speaker, especially as we are known as the **Alaska Rock Garden Society**.

Time to get your seeds planted. What a treat to get home and have the seeds from NARGS. Not only did I receive the seeds I had asked for but also the packages were labeled this year. Hopefully I will have some big enough to sell at the plant sales in May. If I get any started this winter (spring) as while on vacation I broke the left wrist. Needles to say it's the dominant one, UGH! Mark your calendars as it's always fun to sell and buy what someone else has grown. This year as in the past there will be sales in Anchorage and Wasilla.

We are planning a very active and busy year. Keep posted. Items will be on the web site as well in the newsletters.

Happy Gardening
Your President
Carmel

Come Be a Show Off! By Florene Carney

I have a lead crystal planter with a silver medallion on the front saying "Best of Show" just waiting for a home. It will go home with the winner of the first ever "Official" Plant Show held by the Alaska Rock Garden Society this summer. During the Alaska Botanical Garden Fair on June 28 and 29 there will be a section set up in the style of a true English Plant Show and judged in a similar manner. After consulting with Alan Grainer, who has been the Alpine Garden Society (United Kingdom) Show Secretary for 9 years, we feel we have basic information to move forward.

The most important part of a plant show is the exhibitors. That means YOU! So, as we move into spring, think about potting up your best plants to show at the Plant Show. You can start them from seed, order from one of the Alpine Nurseries, buy locally, or dig plants out of your garden. We hear rumors that in England plants people have been known to dig out some of their best plants and spend a great deal of time making them look like they grew in a pot. I am sure that Sally Arant will have some Primulas and Rhonda, at Recluse Gardens, already has plants threatening to bloom in her Alpine House. Check your favorite local nursery for a hidden treasure that could win a first prize! This is an opportunity for those of you who don't have a rock garden to grow those lovely little plants and have the added benefit of being able to compete with other enthusiasts. For this first show we recommend 6" terracotta pots (or larger if necessary to hold your specimen). Categories will depend on the entries, but we will be pretty liberal at the onset, so don't hold back!

There will also be a need for volunteers to help set up, receive plants, get set up for judging, do the actual judging, assist judges, set up plants for display after judging - for viewing by the general public, and last of all help to clean up. Call or e-mail me if you'd like to be included (376-5390 or snowfire@ak.net). This could be an opportunity to see plants first hand that you've only dreamed about before.

Additional information will be forthcoming at the upcoming meetings and in future Newsletters.



Propagation of Primula By Seed By Sally Arant

Many primula species have very specific requirements for seed germination while others are easy as can be. The key is to use seed that is as fresh as possible. Refrigerate seeds after drying collected seeds or receiving seed by mail. It is also important to simulate as closely as possible the conditions the seed experiences in the wild. This often involves a cold period prior to germination.

Seed may be sown in the garden as soon as the seed matures. This is often the easiest way to keep a good stock of new plants coming along in the garden for personal use. You can also sow seeds in trays and leave them outdoors, where they will germinate the next spring and be ready for planting out in late summer. If you want more control over the process, and want plants that can be planted out in early summer, it is best to start seedlings indoors under lights.

A highly successful and easy method of starting primula from seed is to sow seeds on the surface of very moist seed starting mix in small, sterile seeding trays set in sterile flats. Cover the seed lightly with a dusting of soil. Do not cover seed so small that it looks like powder. This seed will settle into the soil just enough by misting down the surface. A variety of seed mixes is available, but it is preferable that the mix remains porous after wetting it down.

Sow seeds in December or January and give them a cold period, one week to three weeks long, not necessarily below freezing. This can be accomplished quite well by covering seed flats with a protective cover, such as another flat, then wrapping them, top and bottom, in thick layers of old blankets and placing them in a covered outdoor area or unheated garage. The blankets insulate like a layer of snow without the trouble of digging out the trays when you are ready to bring the seeds indoors.

After being brought indoors, the flats of seed trays are then covered with a clear covering and put under shoplights at close range for approximately 12 hours a day. Give them a little bottom heat to simulate early spring. Very low heat for a few hours a day with a heating pad works well. Check the seeds twice a day, lightly misting the soil surface as needed to keep a high level of humidity. Most seem to prefer cool air temperatures, high humidity and bright light best. Don't cook seeds that were meant to germinate happily high in the snowmelt of the Himalayas.

Keeping a seeding journal from year to year helps to remind you how long particular species take to germinate. Some take as little as two days and others may take weeks or longer. Some will even germinate sporadically over a period of years to ensure that a good number will make it at some point or other! If seeds do not germinate within a few weeks, you may want to try another cold period.

After seeds germinate, it is preferable to reduce the bottom heat and continue the lights as usual, cool and bright. Some seedlings may grow faster with continued bottom heat. Do what works for you. As soon as seedlings are sturdy enough to handle, prick them out with a pencil and transplant them into cell packs filled with Pro-mix or similar. Most varieties may be pricked out 2 or 3 in a bunch and grown on as a more robust clump. Begin fertilizing with a dilute water-soluble fertilizer with every watering. Never allow young transplants to dry out. Grow these on for 1-2 months then transplant on up to 4" pots until they can be planted in the garden in spring or grown on further in gallon pots.

[Primrose seed propagation was the subject of the extremely popular presentation by Sally Arant at the January ARGS meeting. This article is an excerpt from her new handbook, An Alaskan Primrose Primer, which will be richly illustrated with photographs from her garden. —Editor]



Growing Primroses In South Central Alaska By Sally Arant

Are you interested in learning about growing primroses in South Central Alaska? You are invited to join garden designer and plantswoman Sally Arant in a fascinating, informative, intensive and fun study of this great plant genus. This class is for plant lovers and gardeners of all abilities.

The class will cover primula origins around the world, how to adapt our gardens to meet their needs, feeding, propagation, hardiness considerations and winter protection, primula for different situations, designing with primula, and more.

We will also learn about all the primula species grown in and native to Alaska. Information will be based in Sally's new handbook entitled *An Alaskan Primrose Primer*. Each student will receive a copy.

There will be lots of great photos to study and be inspired by, light refreshments, cushy chairs in a beautiful room, lively discussions among friends and a selection of primula seedlings to take home. This is a great opportunity to learn about a plant genus that we can grow extraordinarily well, thanks to our cool summers with long daylight hours as well as our winter dormant period. I guarantee you will find a new challenge and passion in growing primroses in Alaska, if you aren't hooked already!

The classes will be held in the new Dimond Center Hotel Kachemak Bay Boardroom.

There will be four opportunities to take this class. Each is limited to 25 people.

Session 1 March 8 10AM - 1PM
Session 3 March 15 10AM - 1PM

Session 2 March 8 3PM - 6PM
Session 4 March 15 3PM - 6PM

Cost is \$50. This fee covers the class, handbook, seedlings and light refreshments.

Call Sally for reservations at 345-9168. Don't wait until the last minute or you'll miss out! Make checks payable to Sally Arant upon confirmation of your class time and date.

Send checks to: Sally Arant 3021 De Armoun Rd. Anchorage, AK 99516

[Sally Arant is the author of a new handbook called *An Alaskan Primrose Primer*. Especially valuable will be the lists of *Primula* appropriate for Alaska covering the range from cool moist partially shaded rockeries and north-facing slopes to sunny to partially shaded rockeries and scree beds. The handbook will be available in March. Copies can be ordered from the author after March 15th by calling her at 345-9168. The handbook will also be available at "In the Garden," a shop co-owned by her in Anchorage, Recluse Gardens in Wasilla, and Fritz Creek Gardens in Homer. Copies may also be available at future ARGS meeting— Editor]



Alaska Rock Garden Society Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting January 18, 2003

Introduction of new officers and committee chairpersons

Carmel – President Jell Williams – Vice President Jaime Rodriguez - Secretary
Mary Moline – Treasurer/Membership Newsletter Editor – Charles Utermohle
Program Chair – Rita Jo Shoultz Publicity Chair – Les Brake

Chairpersons needed -scrapbook / archives
- refreshments for meetings – one person for the valley and one for Anchorage

March 15th Speaker - Rita Jo Shoultz has arranged for Stephanie Cohen to speak here in Anchorage and in Homer.
Site to be announced. Suggestions accepted.

Meeting Stipends – If you have not ever attended a NARGS meeting and a member of NARGS you may be eligible for a one-time stipend of \$300. Rhonda Williams will be receiving a stipend to attend the Conference in Breckinridge, CO. If you will to receive a stipend please let me know.

Meetings: Eastern and Western Study Weekends; Annual meeting

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 garden?

Our speaker for today is Sally Arant. She is co-owner of “In the Garden” a nursery that is open in the spring and sells hardy perennials and shade plant plus many others. She is in the process of writing a booklet about Primroses in Alaska, which I am sure we are all waiting for. Today Sally will be showing slides of primroses that are growing in Alaska.

Regular Meeting February 18, 2003

President - Carmel - Call meeting to order

Secretary – Jaime - Any additions to notes from last meeting

Treasurer – Mary – Financial Report

Plant sales: Jaime or Mary any dates or information

Announcements re NARGS tour – Plant Exploration in Northeastern Oregon, Brochures available

Thank you from Mark White - approval reimburse Jeff for the flowers?

ABG Garden Fair Show – Florene is chairman

Seeds – ARGS has seeds from both the China trip and Denver Botanical Garden from 2000; Disposition – suggest they are taken to Vancouver the end of the month

Book: Encyclopedia of Alpines – Do we or do we not purchase a copy? For where?

Stephanie Cohen – Going to Fairbanks. Request for ARGS to pay airfare. Do we send a member of ARGS with speaker?

Donations: Copy of letter from Sue Jensen forwarded to board. Alaska Botanical Garden = Wants to apply to the Rasmussen Fund for a grant for signage. Needs to show that other organizations are willing to help. The Native Society has given \$500.00.



(ARGS Minutes continued from page 5)

NARGS – Norman Singer Endowment Fund will receive a donation challenge grant of \$15,000 if they able to match that amount. To date they have received \$8,190. Do we wish to make a donation to help them receive that goal? The NSE Fund can be used by groups or individuals to help with a rock garden or a rock gardening project.

Results of Questionnaire – minimal number of responses.

2. Places to collect seeds – Nome; Aleutians; Prudhoe Bay; Brooks Range; on the road system; A circle of Bison Gulch, Denali Highway and maybe Isabelle Pass, or any one of those areas; Thompson Pass; Tangle Lakes; Black Rapids area; Donnelley Dome

4. Meeting Subjects – hypertufa troughs, Concrete birdbaths, seed harvesting, keeping a garden journal how has it changed and why, any of the plant families in the format of a botany brief, plants to specific areas of Alaska,

7. Gardens – Les, Florene, Verna, Carmel, Kenai area, Homer area, Jaime if he has one at home

Les Brake: has asked re seeing if Lauren Springer would be a likely speaker in Sept. Talk needs to be rock garden related. Not listed as a NARGS speaker

Newsletter – Charles wants to get out a newsletter by the end of the month. Would like to have a schedule re trips, speakers. Able to print a full calendar. Can also do pictures. In the near future Charles would like to have someone work with him in getting the newsletter ready and able to take over in the future.

Alaska Rock Garden Society Calendar

April 12 Saturday - Sears Mall Annual Garden Show

April 19 Saturday—ARGS General Meeting: 2 PM at Valley location TBA, Rhonda Williams will be speaking on New Introductions and Jeff Williams will show slides on Rock Garden Constructions.

May 9, 10, & 11 Friday through Sunday - Northway Mall Mother's Day Garden Show

Sat May 17 Saturday - Plant Sale in Anchorage at Sally Karabelnikoff's Old Harbor Rd location.

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

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

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

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

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

August Seed Collecting Trip - Nome \$400 RT airfare.

TBA - Road Trip - Thompson Pass.



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 Rodriguez

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 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.hubris.net/nargs.org/info/smembership.html>. The NARGS website is at www.nargs.org.

WWW.ARGS.ORG

Webmaster: Frank Pratt
Contact them at 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
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ARGS Newsletter

Volume 7, Issue 2

March 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.