

ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 5

November 2001

Calendar

Mark Your Calendars Now! The next issue comes in February. Also check for late breaking current events at the Alaska Rock Garden Website at:

<http://www.args.org/>

November 17, 2001 2 PM Regular Meeting. Opportunity for Members to share print and slide photographs of their own gardens, other gardens, and plant material (need not be rock garden specimens). We'll provide the slide projector. Held at Mat-Su College, SNOD 103.

December—No meeting. Enjoy the holidays!

January 19, 2002 2 PM Regular Meeting. Preview of Alaskan yard and garden art and whimsy photo project, by Annie Nevaldine. Held in Anchorage, location to be announced.

January 25-27, 2002, Eastern Winter Study Weekend. Noah's Ark: Conserving Plant Diversity. Potomac Valley Chapter, Fairview Park Marriott

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From Our President, Florene Carney

Winter appears to be here to stay. This usually means that we get to relax a little and contemplate what we did this year and what we'd like to do next year. Many of our members are excited about alpine and rock garden plants, but don't have a rock garden. Now is the time to begin to plan. Start small. A corner of the yard that isn't being used or is overgrown with weeds can be turned into a classic small rock garden and give you a chance to try some of the exciting new plants that are becoming available. With a few rocks, a load of dirt (heavy on the gravel), and a visit to one of the spring plant sales you are in business. Don't be discouraged by poor soil. That is actually a plus in building a rock garden. A rocky area? Better yet! Although it isn't widely advertised, rock gardening is a great

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way to use a problem area and turn it into an asset for your property. Steep banks, rocks, gravelly soil all are ideal starting points for a show place right outside your door. Call on other members of ARGS if you have questions. I haven't met a member yet who wasn't excited about helping a novice learn more about our craft. There are many books available on the topic and they all make great winter reading. I love the books written by Lincoln and Laura Louise (Timmy) Foster. Lincoln is more scientific and serious in his writing, but sitting down with one of Timmy's books is like having a cup of tea with an old friend, who happens to know a lot about plants and rock gardening. "Cuttings from a Rock Garden" and "Rock Gardening" are both offered through Timber Press. "Rock Garden Plants" by Baldassare Mineo, is offered at Timber Press as well as many of the local book stores and is filled with the stuff dreams are made of. Plants from all over the world are included with color photographs and great descriptions that include the hardiness zones, height, color, and where they were originally found. Baldassare also owns Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery, in Medford, Oregon. His website at www.siskiyou.com will give you some ideas about what is available my mail order. Local libraries also have small collections of books on the subject. If you don't find what you want ask about an inter-library loan. You can borrow a book from another library (I got a great one from the Library in Kingston, Washington). You get to keep them for two or three weeks before they have to be returned. Come to the next meeting of the Alaska Rock Garden Society, and get inspired when members share photos, slides and commentary on their own rock gardens. By spring you can have your plan in one hand and shovel in the other, ready to start building your own "piece of the rock".

ARGS SEED EXCHANGE 2001

The ARGS Seed Exchange is fast approaching and as seed is being harvested now in our gardens, please consider becoming a donor in our exchange. Over the last few years our donors have consisted of ten people who have contributed to the exchange and I would like to see this increase considerably.

Donors will now receive five extra packets including the 15 they now receive as well as being the first to have their orders filled. If there are more donors, then more

seed packets can be had.

Please send clean, labeled seed to: Rhonda Williams, PO Box 872592, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 373-0925; e-mail: recluse@mtaonline.net

Vendor Applications for 2002 NARGS General Meeting

Applications are now being accepted for 2002 plant sale for the ARGS/NARGS general meeting at the Sheraton Anchorage June 11-14.

Open to members only, this promises to be an event you will not want to miss! Not only will you be providing plants for sale but will also have the opportunity to meet some of the worlds most knowledgeable gardeners and botanical scholars.

Not a member? You can join the Alaska Rock Garden society and receive all the benefits our membership offers as well as being a part of this exciting event! Just complete the membership application at the end of the newsletter and check the vendor box.

One eight-foot table will be provided as well as uniform signage to display the name of your company or organization. You set your own prices and receive all profits from your booth.

More information will be provided to interested vendors as to times, unloading and loading, parking, and other details as information comes available.

Please note that these are well-educated gardeners so correctly labeled and clean plants will only benefit your sales and prevent embarrassing situations. As the majority of these people will be flying home, small containers for plants and native species as well as rock garden plants is a helpful suggestion. This is only a suggestion, plant material is your responsibility.

For additional information write to: Rhonda Williams, P.O. 872592, Wasilla AK 99687 or contact her at recluse@mtaonline.net

Alaska Rock Garden Society Income and Expense Summary

Jan 1-Sept 30, 2001

Checking Account Balance 9/30/01	\$17,710.11
Income:	\$17,642
Expenses:	\$(8,648)
Net Total:	\$ 8,994



The Renewal of a Garden and a Gardener

By Sally Arant

I thought today would be a great day to stop. How often do we get to STOP? Well, the snow is finally coming down...soft and sweet. It's a thrill for any weary Alaskan gardener to see that beautiful blanket after such a long Fall (and with a long cold Winter ahead). The outdoor work is done and now begins the season of reflection, dreaming, planning, research, recharging, and sharing time with family and friends.

I know lots of gardeners used this mild Fall to get some work done in their gardens which is next to impossible to do in the rush of Spring and Summer. I had a great time this Fall finally tearing into garden projects and thought other gardeners might enjoy a little food for thought.

When our two new (great) kids joined our family on Memorial Day of this year, I knew that this would not be a gardening summer. It was a Mom Summer, and a good one at that. Since my gardens are so public during the season our nursery, In the Garden, is open, I did a little bit of apologizing for the unweeded, overgrown garden and a lot of not really caring what people thought. What could I do? To care or not to care...? In a way, it was a great experience to let go of the firm grip on my garden and realize what a hold it also had on me and my need to care about all those plants. I love my plants and gardens and they give me great pleasure, but they are things and nothing more. Two kids from Haiti taught me that.

I decided that there were three directions I could go with the garden. I could let it go, let it be wild and casual with little bits of beauty and wonder amidst the tangle. I would certainly have more time for my family. Or would I? I could keep doing what I have been doing. Fighting the weeds, fighting the tree roots, fighting poor soil, and fighting the out of control groundcovers. A brutal pastime at best. I decided that instead of just fighting, I would put my efforts into trying to make right those things that conspire against my best gardening efforts. I would get rid of the groundcovers, underlay any new beds with a root barrier, create raised, edged beds rich in compost and fill the beds with only plant treasures. If I did this now while I am still "young" and able, perhaps I will be able to better enjoy my gardens not only now, but also when I am...older.

I'll tell you, this was one of my most rewarding gardening efforts ever. And ever is a long time. The new beds that were cut out in April were finally created in August. Oh, that felt so good. They looked so nice and were everything I wanted in garden beds (except bigger!). My existing beds looked ratty in comparison. To care or not to care...?

Concluding that I needed the exercise, I began an aggressive but loving archeological excavation of my oldest garden beds. First, the many treasure plants were recovered and literally stuffed into every available space in my new beds. As each plant was unearthed, I thought of its wild origins around the globe and which friend gave it to me. My curious fingers pried into the wonders of each plant's unique abilities to perpetuate itself.

Next, every rock was lifted and stockpiled. Every last groundcover was dug, disentangled from its neighbor, and potted up for sale. (Hey, another good reason to justify this gardening time!) I enticed my teenagers with cold cash to help in this effort and it worked well. The soil was then sifted for every sneaky little root that could undo my work later on. New rock edges and accents were quickly built, full of wild charm and much imperfection. A dead zone was left between the rock and the PVC lawn edging for ease of maintenance.

A base of good rich topsoil was put down and about a foot of garden compost was mixed in. Finally "harvesting" my compost heap after seven years was lots of fun. "I'm filthy rich!" My youngest daughter spent hours happily collecting buckets of worms for me and personally placed them all in their new homes with a child's concern for little creatures.

Selection and placement of the new plants was a joy. Every last one of them, plants that I loved. In place of the lily of the valley that had overtaken one entire bed were now *Cypripedium*, *Uvalaria*, *Disporum*, *Hepatica*, *Epimedium* and *Anemonella*. Little wonders of nature in a treasure garden I will love, not fight. My primroses, which rank somewhere between "things" and family, now thrive with their companions in sweet harmony.

Gardens are never big enough to contain all my gardening dreams but at least now, the beds I do have are being renewed into things of joy. Next year I will plow through the other half of the garden beds. Then the next year...aaaaah! The pond! In the meantime, I can stop, enjoy the snow...and dream of Spring.



Calendar

(Continued from page 1)

Hotel, Falls Church, Virginia.

February 6-10, 2002, Northwest Flower and Garden Show. Seattle, WA.

February 16, 2002. 2 PM Regular Meeting. Planting alpines in pots and troughs, by Rhonda Williams of Recluse Gardens. Held in the Valley, location to be announced.

February 22-24, 2002, Western Winter Study Weekend. Rocking on the Rogue. Siskiyou Chapter, Red Lion Hotel, Medford, OR.

March 2, 2002. 2 PM Regular Meeting. Dr. Finn Haugli, Director of the Arctic-alpine Botanic Garden in Tromsø, Norway, the world's northernmost botanic garden at 70° north latitude. Precise topic, time, and Anchorage location to be announced.

April and May, 2002 Meetings. Topics and locations to be announced. May be devoted to training and preparation for the NARGS Annual General Meeting hosted by the ARGS.

June 11-14, 2002, NARGS Annual General Meeting, Sheraton Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska. Our chapter's number one goal for next year to showcase our plants and expertise. Organizational meetings will occur one hour before the general meeting for those interested in helping. Contact Jaime Rodriguez at (907) 357-2747 or jaime@matnet.com to offer your assistance in whatever capacity you are able. A key component to the success of the conference will be the field trips with knowledgeable guides. Additional guide training is planned for this winter and spring. Contact Verna Pratt at (907) 333-8212 or akkrafts@alaskakrafts.com to put on the list for future training sessions.

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.

Calendar Items of General Interest to the ARGS Membership should be sent to the Newsletter Editor at thule@alaska.net.

ARGS Newsletter Dates

	<u>Submission date</u>	<u>Mailing Date</u>
Feb/Mar issue	January 15	February 1
Apr/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



A Knock-Your-Socks-Off Alpine Book?

By Panayoti Kelaidis

What is the best alpine, rock gardening book? Practically every book written on the subject of rock gardening is written by and for plant nerds. No offence, dear fellow subscribers (I myself certainly fit the description to a "t"), but let's cut to the chase: we're the nerdiest of plant nerds. I believe this is both the strength and weakness of rock gardening: there are just enough of us (p.n.'s for short) to justify a number of fine small magazines, a constant flow of modest books, a chummy community. Nevertheless, I have always regretted that the enormous pleasures available to rock gardeners: the aesthetic thrill of foliage and rock and the astonishing beauty of our favorite flowers, not to mention the way that rock gardening connects one to the entire world, all this is shared by a tiny fraction of the world's population. I believe it may not just be stingy to keep this treasure of an art esconced, as it were, among a mere couple tens of thousands of people, it may be short sighted. If, as Henry David Thoreau once said, in wilderness is the salvation of the world, I can think of no finer portal to wilderness than rock gardening. Wilderness transportable, as it were.

I blame Robinson for this fix we're in: him and Henri Correvon: these two undisputed fountainheads of rock gardening were so plant focused in their books, so scientific in their methodology and thinking that rock gardening that they imprinted the craft with more botany than art. Had Gertrude Jekyll published a separate book on rock gardening (instead of "Wall and Water Gardening") we might have seen the rock garden, or at least some part of our art develop along artistic lines like the perennial border. Which isn't to say rock gardens aren't artistic: even the gardens of the nerdiest among us can look pretty stunning in May. And there are the occasional rock gardeners like the late Duncan Lowe, Linc Foster and Harland Hand who were truly artists in their gardens, not to mention the likes of Nina Lambert, Bodizar Berginc, the Redfields and who knows how many Czechs whose rock gardens are so artful in their colors that it takes a while to realize they are even better as collections of plants.

All this is preamble to saying that no, there has yet to be a sumptuous coffee table book on rock gardens as garden art. I don't know a single rock garden designed primarily for artistic effect, although Sir John Thouron's and Frank

Cabot's Stonecrop would seem to fit the bill, until you look closely and see how large a collection of plants they contain, and how the plantings are designed with the plant nerd in mind. I know, I know, Edinburgh, Gothenburg, Nymphenburg and the Thomas Everett Garden at NYBG all have rock gardens of enormous beauty but I maintain this is less a result of conscious planning as it is the result of the fact that most traditional rock plants have flowers more or less in pastel shades that combine well, and if you grow enough of them the result--at least in April and May--can be stunning. It is very sad that Harland Hand never completed a book on his theory of garden design--I believe this would have gone a long way to providing us with a manual on the art of rocks and plants--does anyone know how close to completion his book was at the time of his death?

I believe that potentially there is a tremendous market among amateur and professional gardeners for sound information on how to design and build artistic rock gardens. Information that doesn't end up being yet another compendium of Latin names, a book that shows how to optimize color and texture through the calendar year. Moreover, I think rock gardens designed along artistic lines (rather than as museum pieces, so to speak, to house plant collections) would surpass most perennial borders in garden impact and utility due to their much lovelier winter appearance and potentially longer season of showy bloom. I believe, furthermore, that a renewed inquiry and respect for the aesthetics of rock gardening, a willingness to grant space on Alpine-L and especially among the Society journals to the art of combining rock plants in gardens would consequently open the door to a much wider audience for our art.

Why bother expand the audience? I believe rock gardening is a valuable pass time and occupation for anyone. But I believe that it is much more than this: rock gardening is the best sort of education one can have in ecology and floristics. Who among us doesn't cherish the wild more because of it? It casts a spotlight on nature, and raises the value of pristine wild places in the face of ignorant development and human overpopulation. The more people who grow wild plants the more that the wild models of our gardens matter as well. The more apt we are to have the world survive to be as beautiful as our gardens.

[Panayoti Kelaidis is Curator of the Plant Collections, Denver Botanic Gardens in Denver, Colorado.]



NARGS Travel Tour of the Anchorage, Alaska, area in June 2002

The NARGS Expeditions Committee is pleased to announce its next travel tour, which will be to the Anchorage, Alaska, area from Saturday, June 15 through Tuesday, June 18, 2002. The group will rendezvous for a social and dinner on Friday night, June 14, in Anchorage after the NARGS Annual Meeting. On June 15, the tour will proceed to the Matanuska Valley where we will visit gardens in Wasilla not seen on the Annual Meeting tour. Along the way we will see coastal marshlands and the 7000-foot high Chugach Mountains, magnificent fertile farmlands, and rushing glacial rivers.

The expedition continues beyond Chickaloon on a winding and scenic drive to Sheep Mountain (approximately 3000'), where we will spend the first night at a lodge near Sheep Mountain. On June 16 we will hike over dry fields and gravel stream beds up the steep mountain (500' to 1000' elevation gain) to enjoy the alpenines that prefer these hot gravelly slopes. Dall sheep are frequently seen here feeding on *Dryas octopetala* and other native alpenines. We then return to the lodge near Sheep Mountain for the night.

On June 17, we drive to the Victory Bible Camp near Strelshia Mountain for a trek up a wooded hillside covered with early summer wildflowers and then onto a rock glacier. We will walk on ridges and enjoy alpine treasures on this full day's trek, and then drive down the Seward Highway, bypassing downtown Anchorage, to the village of Alyeska (a ski resort 35 miles south of Anchorage) and spend the night in this quaint village with great restaurants. The Seward Highway is a lovely scenic byway wedged between Turnagain Arm and the Chugach Mountains. Dall sheep frequent the rocky, south-facing slopes.

On the last day, June 18, we will visit Portage Glacier, Turnagain Pass (if snow free), and numerous flower-filled spots at roadside stops along the drive back to Anchorage. We will stay overnight at a motel close to the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport.

Transportation will be a touring bus with bathroom facilities. We will have ample time along the trails to see the flora and take photographs. The tour will be led by NARGS members. No collection of plants will be allowed. Because spaces are limited, you will want to sign up early.

For a brochure on the tour and an application, contact Bobby J. Ward, 930 Wimbleton Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-4356. Telephone (919) 781-3291. Or email request to biblio@pagesZ.net.

NOAH'S ARK: Preserving Plant Diversity January 25 – 27, 2002 NARGS Eastern Winter Study Weekend

Our gardens often harbor plants that may be rare in nature. These plants may come from exotic places that we may never hope to visit. Let us take you to some of these places. Specialists will focus on particular groups of plants, obtaining, selecting and propagating them, before distributing them to the public. Learn about some of the legal issues of plants that may affect gardeners from a panel discussion "**Plants and the Law: a Capital Perspective.**"

Speakers:

Alexej Borkovec, a founding member of the Potomac Valley Chapter, celebrated rock gardener in Silver Spring, MD, frequent contributor to the Rock Garden Quarterly and Alpine-L

Christopher Grey-Wilson (United Kingdom), author, botanist, lecturer, plant explorer, editor for the Alpine Garden Society

Tony Hall (United Kingdom), curator, Alpine House, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, plant grower extraordinaire

Vojtěch Holubec (Czech Republic), plant geneticist, plant explorer, seed collector

Judith Jones, lecturer, exhibitor, former president and program chair of the Northwestern Chapter of NARGS, owner of Fancy Fronds, a mail-order nursery specializing in ferns

Don Humphrey, plant hybridizer, winner of NARGS Award of Merit, former National Park Service planner, former manager of Green Spring Gardens Park, builder of the first public rock gardens in the Washington, DC area

Darrell Probst, plant breeder, plant explorer, owner of Garden Vision, a mail-order nursery specializing in epimediums and other choice shade perennials

John Spain, board member of the Hardy Cactus Society, a founder of the Connecticut Cactus and Succulent Society, chair of the Berkshire Chapter of NARGS, chair of the 1995 NARGS annual meeting

Barry Yinger, plant explorer and introducer, owner of Asiatica, a small mail-order nursery specializing in rare Asian shade plants

For additional information about the weekend, visit the website:
<http://www.nargs.org/meet/ewsw2002.html>



Positions of Responsibility

President: Florene Carney, HC 31 Box 5212, Wasilla, AK, 99654. (907) 376-5390; e-mail: snowfire@ak.net

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

Secretary : Kate Gordon, 7500 Beacon Hill Drive, Anchorage, AK, 99516. (907) 346-1603; email: kgordon@gci.net

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

Membership: Thais Thomas, P.O. Box 93003, Anchorage, AK 99509. (907) 243-1666; e-mail: Thomas_Thais@msoil.asd.k12.ak.us

Program Chair: Annie Nevaldine, 4960 E. 5th, Anchorage, AK, 99508, (907) 333-2100; e-mail: anealdine@corecom.net

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

Archives: Marcia Hamilton, P.O. Box 870344, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 746-3296; e-mail: mlh@matnet.com

2002 Committee: Chair- Jaime Rodriguez (907) 357-2747, Florene Carney (907) 376-5390, Harry Deuber (907) 276-5571, Kate Gordon (907) 346-1603, Debbie Hinchey (907) 278-2814, Sally Karabelnikoff (907) 333-8237, Frank Pratt/Verna Pratt (907) 333-8212, Rhonda Williams (907) 373-0925

Welcome New Members!

Susan Baxter
Rosemary Borchardt
Linda Goentzel
Ed Kosiarski
Ruth Lavrakas
Dennis Lee
Erma MacMillan
Karen Mattson
Christine Smith

WWW.ARGS.ORG

Webmasters: Kate Gordon and Frank Pratt.
Contact them at 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 to :

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
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Anchorage, AK 99524-4136



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ARGS Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 5

November 2001

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 -

Interested in being a vendor at the NARGS Annual General Meeting, June 11-14, 2002, in Anchorage? Please check the box— , provide your company/organization name as you would like it to appear and return with your 2002 dues. Name: _____

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 2001 or later, your membership has expired!