



NEWSLETTER

September 2019

President's Corner
Florene Carney

What a summer this has been! Record breaking temperatures and very little rain. Burn bans, water hoses everywhere, and summer clothing more days than ever remembered. ARGS members are a varied and very talented group, not to mention interesting and interested in such a wide variety of projects it's hard to keep up.

The spring started out with plant sales at the ABG and Snowfire, followed by clean up and continued weeding and upkeep at both the ABG Rock Garden and the Palmer Visitor Center Garden (both are looking good as fall approaches). I encourage you to visit both gardens when you have a chance. The Garden Tour in the valley was one of the best I've seen and we thank all the wonderful gardeners who volunteered to let us visit their gardens. A wide variety of gardens were visited and it was very inspiring and fun to see what can be done in our climate.

We didn't accomplish everything we had hoped to this summer but we will put those things on the back burner and bring them up again for next year. We look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming meetings. Please bring your ideas and let us know where you are able to participate – it takes a village you know!

**The next ARGS Meeting will be September 21st
at the Eagle River Community Covenant Church,
16123 Artillery Rd, Eagle River, AK 99577**

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Calendar

September 5th, 10 AM: ARGS Board Meeting
Chugach Senior Center
Members are welcome to attend.

September 21st, 2 PM: ARGS Members Meeting
The program for the meeting is a plant exchange. Please bring three (or fewer) Alpine or Rock Garden plants, with the name clearly marked.
**Eagle River Community Covenant Church,
16123 Artillery Rd, Eagle River, AK 99577**

Spruce Bark Beetle Kill

Kathy Swick

I have ten, that's right TEN, large old spruce that are in the 2ND year of their bark beetle infection, which (I just learned) is the first year that you can see obvious damage. I have three more that are in their first year of infestation and have a slim chance of surviving with injection of a sys-

temic insecticide. My adjoining neighbors have 4 more trees that are stricken. I have followed the advice about plentiful watering for years, but the epidemic is so pervasive that few of the older trees are going to survive this. The certified arborist says he has also seen Scotch pines and larch that were infected. He thinks at the height of the coming wave that any conifer will be susceptible. The epidemic is just building, it will get much worse in the next three years he says. The aura of my place is defined by the trees, for privacy, moisture, coolness, microclimate. This is not only a big loss for me, but also for the whole plant community that has adapted to this microclimate. All my midday shade will be gone as well as the fall rain protection that some of the dryland plants depend on.

Moral of the story: Get your trees checked even if they appear healthy.

Now!

(I highly recommend Gage Tree Service. The arborist took a lot of time to educate me and the neighbor, showed us grubs, egg galleries, larva in midst of changing to adults, answered all questions, etc., all from trees on site.)



ARGS Mailing List

When anyone joins ARGs and receives a membership list, they are assured that the list will be used only for garden-related issues.

Thank you for honoring that pledge.



2019 Valley Tour of Rock Gardens

The Valley Tour of Rock Gardens was an outstanding event with people coming from Talkeetna to Anchorage. The Gardeners were gracious in welcoming the group and sharing their beautiful gardens. The Tour Group was polite, complimentary, and grateful to have the opportunity to enjoy the hard work put into these gardens. There was a drawing at each garden and the winner received a *Cypripedium guttatum* (Lady's Slipper) plant to take home. A thank you plaque was given to each gardener as a memento of the day. Part of the fun of the day was the opportunity to visit with other gardeners and hear of their successes and challenges in their own gardens. A wonderful day all around!

Dan and Marian Elliott's

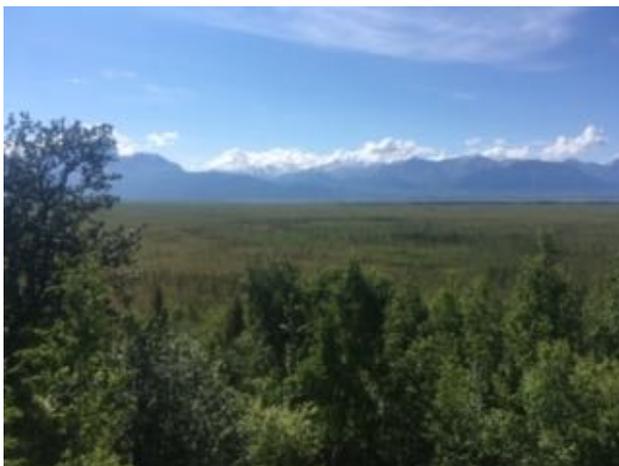


Our first stop on the Valley Rock Garden Tour was Dan and Marian Elliott's beautiful garden on Fairview Loop Road. Marian has two beautifully designed rock gardens, one inside the fence to keep moose out and one outside. Marian chose her rocks carefully so she has stepping stones and seating spots. Dan's orchards and berries were a bonus on the tour.

Marian Elliott pointing out the spot where a moose snacked on her blooming rock garden plants.



Madge Oswald joins the tour group enjoying the sunshine as she peruses Elliott's rock garden.



The view from Elliott's beautifully designed and kept garden is breathtaking.



Jim and Linda Steele's



Jim and Linda Steele's rock garden shows off large rocks carefully placed. Linda served lemonade and cookies on the deck and welcomed the tour group to see her kitchen garden and flower beds as well.



Linda Myers-Steele and Jaime Rodriguez enjoying Linda's rock garden. The group enjoyed Linda's beautifully appointed rock garden featuring big rock, pathways, rock stairs, and pristine plantings.

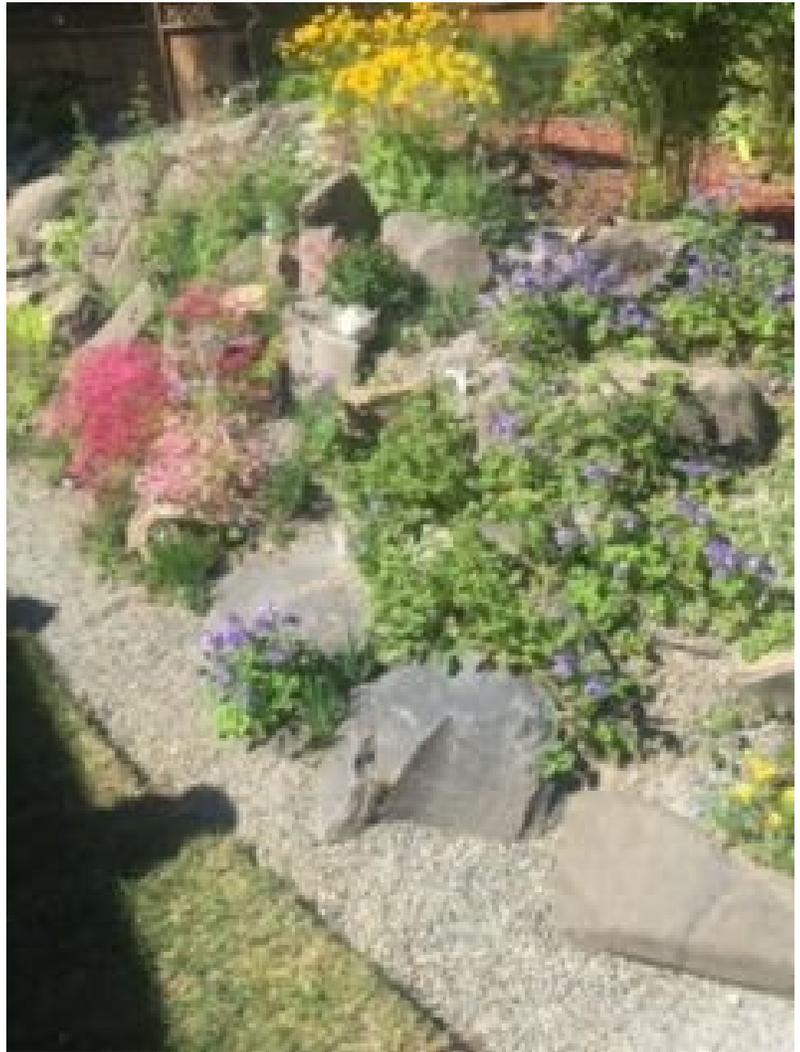


Mike and Pat Ott's



Mike and Pat Ott welcomed the tour to their garden with tables set up for enjoying the sack lunches everyone brought, along with juice and water the Ott's provided.

Ott's beautiful rock garden, tucked in behind their house, west of Walla Walla.



A beautiful *Lewisia tweedyi* flourishing in Ott's garden.



Dorte Mobley's



Dorte Mobley started her garden tour off with a beautiful collection of troughs.

The tour group enjoyed seeing Dorte's rock garden, and the interesting metal art her son has made for her before moving on to see her pet Emu and new greenhouse.



Jaime Rodrigues'



Jaime Rodriguez welcomed the group to his newly improved patio area and rock garden built into the hill behind his house.

Looking up the hill toward the bench in the middle of Jaime's rock garden. The garden is filled with rare and unusual plants, some of which can be purchased from his Alpine Gardens Nursery.





Palmer Visitor's Center Rock Garden

Jaime Rodriguez

Beginning the second Thursday this May, and every Thursday morning throughout the summer, a team of ARGS volunteers worked on renovating the rock garden beds at the Palmer Visitor's Center. ARGS was last involved with these beds when we helped renovate them in 2008. In the last eleven years, a few robust plants got a little out of control. It has been a very satisfying project to reclaim valuable geography, and the club has acquired some great plant material for our sales next year. Even with a fresh top dressing of traction sand, it is a weekly task to stay on top of the weeds that blow in on the Palmer wind. A shout out of thanks to Jaime Rodriguez, Dorte Mobley, Kristina Tornqvist, Florene Carney, Jamie Smith, and Pat O. for their help this summer.

Let's do it again next year!





Progress Report on ABG Rock Garden

Kathy Swick

In September, 2018 the final phase of the hardscaping was finished. The elevated slate wall was continued throughout the trough area and around most of the woodland bed in the approach path. This really improved the overall visual impact by tying everything together and making all the troughs and beds look more unified, creating an attractive setting for Verna's memorial bench. The troughs (approx. 30) are very eye-catching and accessible by being slightly elevated. Visitors tend to be drawn to them and spend the most time there versus the other beds.

Last fall a small group of members, Will Criner of ABG staff, husbands, and helpers, with the aid of a skid loader, rebuilt the southern end of two rock garden beds. Elevation was increased in the middle bed and some large rocks placed in both areas. Jaime Rodriguez guided the basic design of the new outcrop and wrestled more than his share of rocks around.

In spring, 2019, more rocks were added by Madge and Kathy in the empty spots and on slopes to control erosion. Some restructuring was also necessary to discourage visitors from climbing on the face of the outcrop. Some of the new plants that found a home there were purchased from Wrightman's and The Alpine Garden Nursery. The rest were divided from the home gardens of Madge and Kathy, or germinated from NARGS, American Penstemon Society, and Alplains seed. Additional seedlings reserved for this area are not yet ready to be transplanted. Some things, like gentians, just need a little more time.

It was a very challenging summer to keep newly planted seedlings alive, especially on the stony south-facing outcrop, due to very high temperatures and cloudless days. For awhile the seedlings required shading plus watering every other day. Without the cooperative efforts of Kathy Swick, Madge Oswald, Gina Docherty, and Will Criner from ABG, none of those plants would have survived. The watering crew is still very much on duty for weekly or twice-weekly check-ins, even though it is late August. This is one year when we all hope for rain.

Many of the new plants are growing quickly and might start blooming next year, eventually making mats. In general, starting out with young plants has proven more successful than trying to transplant mature ones.



Other plants will be added to the garden as they become ready. We will eventually have a varied, thriving community of alpine plants. When the new area is more established, then we will be able to turn our attention to rejuvenating plants in the older part of the garden. One of the long-term goals is to increase the number of native plants in the collection, and to site them more consciously according to their needed microclimates.

To summarize, the keyword for this period of time in the ABG rock garden is **"Evolving"**.



Positions of Responsibility

President: Florene Carney; (907) 376-5390;
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Vice President/Program Chair: Dorte Mobley

Secretary: Jamie Smith; (907) 376-7863;
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Treasurer: Madge Oswald; (907) 345-5144;
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Past President: Carmel Tysver

Membership: Gina Docherty

Newsletter Editor: Charles J. Utermohle; (907) 231-5460; Thule@alaska.net

Seed Exchange: Debbie Hinchey

Librarian: Kathy Swick

Palmer Visitors Center Garden: Jaime Rodriguez; (907) 357-2747;
jrtinker@mtaonline.net

ABG Rock Garden: Madge Oswald; (907) 345-5144; johnmadge@chugach.net

Sunshine Committee: Dorte' Mobley

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.

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 \$40/year (plus \$10 for additional members). Register online at <https://nargs.org/join>. The NARGS website is at www.nargs.org.

FREE MONEY - NARGS Link to Amazon

Have you ever purchased an item online through Amazon.com? Most of us have. Are you a regular shopper at Amazon.com? Many of us are. Have you ever shopped at Amazon.com through the [NARGS](#) website link? Very few of us do. Do you know what the NARGS [Amazon.com](#) link is? Every time an individual (NARGS member or non-member) goes to the NARGS.org website and then clicks on the link to Amazon.com, the [North American Rock Garden Society](#) earns a commission on each item purchased. The commission varies based upon the item purchased and typically ranges from 4% to 18%. You make your purchase just as if you had gone to Amazon.com directly, and there is no additional cost to you. It is free money to [NARGS](#). Make your next Amazon.com purchase by starting at NARGS.org. It is a winner for us all! Here is how to financially support NARGS.org through Amazon.com.

Go to the NARGS.org website.

There is a black banner with a link to Amazon.com. Click on that link and the next web page is the Amazon.com site. (Mozilla Firefox does not provide the link.) Shop as you normally do.

Shop at Amazon.com through NARGS.org web link! Together, we can ensure the future value of [NARGS](#)

[ARGS Website:](#)

Check the [ARGS Calendar](#) for current and future Events.



Anchorage, Alaska 99503

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ARGS Memberships are for the calendar year. Please renew now if you have not already done so for 2019.

2020 NARGS ANNUAL MEETING CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Ithaca, New York, June 18–20

EXPLORATION & INNOVATION

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN (for tours only)

See NARGS website for info: www.nargs.org