

# ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 5  
September 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)**

**September 27, 2 PM ARGS Monthly Meeting, Anchorage at Carmel Tysver's.**

The next meeting of the Alaska Rock Garden Society will be at the home of our president, Carmel Tysver. Carmel's home is located at 2030 Patriot Circle, Anchorage. Directions: South on Minnesota to 100th. Turn right onto 100th, go through the 4 way stop, turn left onto Southport. At the circle, go 3/4 of the way around, which is a left hand turn onto Washington. Go 2 blocks turn right on to Constitution. Go 2 blocks and turn left onto Patriot Circle. House is in the cul-de-sac between the blue and the pink house. Telephone number 522-3490.

Bring ideas, pictures and let's review the past year and decide what we would like to do in 2004.

January 30-February 1, 2004. Eastern Winter Study Weekend. Host: Delaware Valley Chapter. Hilton Valley Forge Hotel. King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.

March 5-7, 2004. "Braving the Elements." Western Winter Study Weekend. Host: Emerald Chapter. Valley River Inn. Eugene, Oregon.

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## From Our President, Carmel Tysver

Dear ARGS Members,

I am writing this on a windy and cool day. Sure would like more of the warmth we had a few weeks ago. We were lucky in the weather category for both the Plant Show at the Alaska Botanical Garden Fair and for our first annual Open Garden Weekend. I want to thank Florene for the Plant Show. It was a great show for our first one and hope we can do this again next year and it will be larger. The entries were great and it was fun to participate. David Hale who was here as a speaker was very impressed at what we can grow, and grow well.

To all of the members in Wasilla and Anchorage who opened their gardens - Thank You! I was able to view all of the gardens in Wasilla, but not Anchorage as mine was also open and time did not allow me to view them before the weekend. I am already looking forward to see different gardens next year. Please seri-

*(Tysver Continued on page 2)*



(Tysver Continued from page 1)

ously think about opening your garden next year. It does not have to be completed or ready for Horticulture Magazine, or whoever, it's your gardening peers and they would enjoy seeing what you have done so far. It was fun to visit with the members who visited my garden.

For those of you who attended the talk on "Alpines of the Andes" by David Hale. We had a small turn out at both the Wilda Marston Theater and at the ABG Garden Fair. Any ideas of thoughts on increasing advertisement and visibility of our speakers would be greatly appreciated. The board has had many discussions on speakers in the summer months as we do not seem to get as much publicity or attendance. I had the pleasure of spending a week with David and Donna and found them very delightful, thankfully we had nice weather.

I had mentioned last newsletter that a trip to Thompson Pass in September was a possibility if there was enough interest. So far I have only heard from a few people. The date would be weekend of the 6<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> as people preferred. We have also had an offer of a place to camp at a home about 50 miles north of the pass and there is a campground at the pass. Please let me know what plans I should be making.

Also summer is almost past and will be time for monthly meetings or speakers again. I think Rita Jo has some ideas and will be letting us know in the near future. Will pass the information on as soon as I get it.

Our trip this year was to Inuvik, at the end of the Dempster Highway, north of Dawson City, Yukon, Canada. Not much flowering and on the way home the wildflowers were just starting to bloom. The annual Art and Crafts week was while we were there and I was able to take a workshop on Caribou Hair Tufting. What an interesting craft. Lots of laughs as I made a rabbit and all of the males wanted to see the Playboy Bunny. Highly recommend the trip especially when the Arts Festival is in progress.

Hope everyone had a fun summer and good gardening.

Carmel

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## Alaska Rock Garden Society First Annual Plant Show by Florene Carney

The Alaska Botanical Garden Fair was the perfect venue for the First Annual Plant Show sponsored by the Alaska Rock Garden Society. The weather cooperated and gave us two

absolutely perfect days for showing plants out of doors. The awning, provided by Debbie Hinchey, provided just the right cover and set a great atmosphere. The green covered tables showed the plants to the best advantage and passersby were awed by the beautiful display of rare and unusual plants being shown.

In the Amateur Category Mark White took the most blue ribbons, winning in the "Best Plant Grown from Seed" with *Saxifraga longifolia*; "Best Plant Not Showy, But Well Grown" went to his *Sempervivum calcareum - Montrosium* and "New, rare or Difficult Plant" was awarded to Mark's *Armeria maritima 'Nifty Thrifty'.* Other amateur winners were Loretta Weiler for "Foliage Plants" and Carmel Tysver in the category of "Best Trough/Amateur".

In the Open Categories "Best Plant Grown from China Seeds" went to Stan and Dona Ashmore for an outstanding yellow Primula, *Primula sikkimensis*. Second and Third prizes in that category went to Nicki Nielsen and Florene Carney. The other Open category "Best Plant of an Alaska Native Species", was won by Carmel Tysver with a beautiful and fragrant little Lily. Kathryn Zius also won a ribbon in that category.

The Professionals put on a show to be remembered. Sally Arant took the most ribbons in the Professional Category with her delightful *Primula cockburniana*, *Heuchera grossularifolia*, and "Best Plant Not Showy but Well Grown" – *Primula Linda Pope, x Primula allionii x primula marginata*. *Meconopsis rudis*, grown by Rhonda Williams won the Best Plant Grown from Seed/Professional and was a showstopper as well.

Among the plants to be remembered that didn't receive first place but were exceptional was the *Meconopsis punicea* entered by Stan and Dona Ashmore. Looking for all the world like a red balloon that has been deflated it caught the eye of many passerby. Additional ribbon winners in the Professional Category were Jaime Rodriguez and Doug Tryck.

Attendants at the Garden Fair were awed by the "Best of Show" a beautiful *Saussurea gossiphora*, entered by Rhonda Williams of Recluse Gardens. Passersby just couldn't keep their hands off this exquisite little silver plant that looked like it had been wrapped in a finely woven spider web. As well as the Blue Rosette, this category won a crystal planting pot with a plaque commemorating the win. The "Judges Choice Award" (a Blue rosette and a crystal paperweight with an orchid inside on a pedestal with a commemorative plaque) went to a lovely trough entered by Doug Tryck. This trough was well established, having been planted about five years ago and containing an exquisite display of several tiny hostas and a miniature monkshood in full bloom.

(Plant Show Continued on page 3)



(Plant Show Continued from page 2)

We hope to have photos of some of the plants on our web site in the near future. Check it out at [www.args.org](http://www.args.org).

David Hale, our speaker for the weekend assisted with the judging and was impressed by the quality of the entries. Thanks also to Rhonda Williams and Carmel Tysver who helped with the judging, recusing themselves when any plant they were familiar with was judged. Thanks also to the wonderful Nursery People who provided Gift Certificates: Forget Me Not Nursery, In the Garden, Tryck Nursery, Recluse Gardens, Bells Nursery and Sally K Nursery. If you stop by any of these businesses, please mention your appreciation at their participation. Thanks also to Alan Grainger of the Alpine Garden Society, for his assistance in lending photos and sending the current show book. Thanks also to Mark White, who found a Handbook of Flower Shows at a garage sale and picked it up. It was invaluable in setting up the program.

The Plant Show is being planned as an annual event, so start potting up plants right now to hold over the winter. You can review the categories and regulations by logging on to the Alaska Rock Garden Society Web Site [www.args.org](http://www.args.org) for complete information.



Left: Best of Show:  
*Saussurea gossipiphora*,  
entered by  
Rhonda Williams of Recluse Gardens



Right: *Meconopsis punicea*  
entered by Stan and Dona Ashmore



Left: *Meconopsis rudis*,  
grown by Rhonda Williams  
won the Best Plant Grown from Seed/  
Professional



Right: *Heuchera grossularifolia*,  
grown by Sally Arant



## Nome Notes Alaska Rock Garden Society 2003 Seed Expedition By Florene Carney

The 2003 Seed Expedition to Nome was lead by Verna Pratt, with the able help of her husband Frank, who was advisor/driver/entertainer (Jack of All Trades). The rest of the group included Rhonda Williams, Carmel and Neil Tysver, and me.

August 15, 2003. We arrived in Nome to brisk wind, temperatures in the 50's, clouds and scattered showers. Since the weather was relatively good we decided to go to the place that would be the worst if things turned bad. Wooley Lagoon won in that category. With Frank driving and Verna navigating we picked up sandwiches for lunch and headed out. The area is quite beautiful. Green rolling hills flowing into the ocean and up to the mountains in the distance. I think it could be termed "Tundra plains."

Nome was a very pleasant surprise. Definitely has its own character but the hotel is very nice and people are friendly. The grocery store is owned by Carrs and has a nice selection. The sandwiches were great.

The road out of town is paved for a couple of miles, but in good condition when it turns to dirt. Wooley Lagoon is located NW of Nome toward Teller. At about mile 36 we crossed the Feather River and turned onto the one car road leading to the fishing camp at Wooley Lagoon. Verna had made mental notes about where various plants were located from an AGS trip up there in the early July.

The first stop was a wonderful preview for the rest of the day. Many of the seeds had already gone by so we took plant samples when no seeds were available, being careful to leave no sign. The Saxifragas were particularly beautiful including *Saxifraga hirculus*, *S. unalaschcensis*, and *S. nudicaulis*. This site was very wet with gravel and rocks with an underlayment of permafrost. The *Wilhelmsia physoides* was found growing in shallow water and the seeds may be immature. In addition we discovered *Pinquicula vulgaris*, *Boykinia richardsonii*, *Empetrum nigrum*, *Antennaria friesiana*, and *Rhododendron camtschaticum*. *Saxifraga nudicaulis* was Verna's favorite as the bright pink stamens and sepals set off the white petals nicely.

Site #2 on the Wooley Lagoon Road had much the same gravel, light soil and wet conditions. The deep maroon leaves of the *Arctostaphylos alpina* were the first things to catch our eye. They would be wonderful in a fall Rock garden. *Campanula lasiocarpa* was still showing off its large blue bells even in the gravel along the roadway. Another standout plant at this site was *Minuartia macrocarpa*. A few flowers were still visible and lovely. Other plants found at this site included *Geum glaciale*, *Papaver macounii*, *Salix phlebophylla* (skeleton leaf), and *Artemisia globularia*.

Site #3 was still in wet gravel and close to sea level. Stars of this site were *Saxifraga nudicaulis*, *Chrysosplenium wrightii*, *Androsace chamaejasme*, and *Diapensia lapponica ssp. obovata*.

Site #4. When we actually reached Wooley Lagoon, we turned around at the fish camp which was perched between the ocean and the lagoon and could only be reached by boat. A very picturesque spot. As we headed back in dry scree we found the lovely white *Gentiana algida* as well as more *Minuartia macrocarpa*.

Site #5 House Rock – it really does look like a house! This area was dry, rocky tundra. An exciting site with tiny *Woodsia alpina* (ferns), *Saxifraga eschscholtzii* and *Eritrichium aretioides*. Much drier here although rocky and with more rich soil between. The highlight here turned out to be a beautiful *Oxytropis nigrecens ssp. pygmaea*, which some of us had never seen before. This was also our first glimpse of *Saxifraga oppositifolia ssp. smalliana*. It was worth the trip just to see those two plants. They would be a wonderful addition to any rock garden even if they never bloomed. We also found *Eritrichium aretioides*, *Saxifraga eschscholtzii*, *Chrysanthemum integrefolium*, *Artemisia senjavinensis*, *Phlox sibirica*, *Anemone drummondii*, and *Saxifraga follicles* (Grainy Saxifrage). This road was nearly deserted with only a few vehicles seen all day.

At the end of the first day we cleaned seed and set them to dry and packed plants carefully. Verna guided throughout the day in identifying plants – a very knowledgeable and capable guide who we appreciated more each day. It was hard to believe we had three more days to enjoy the beauty of this area.

August 16, 2003 Day 2 -Taylor Highway (Kougarok Highway to the Natives) Kougarok is now the final destination due to

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bridge washouts.

We awoke to almost clear skies and just a breeze. After a hearty breakfast at Fat Freddy's we picked up lunch material and headed out the Taylor Highway. We note more civilization along this road. It's quite beautiful with rolling hills, streams and lakes. Someone commented that it looked like Ireland in spots, very green with a mist around the mountains. Our first stop was Rocky Creek. This spot was wet and gravelly surrounded by typical tundra. We found more *Wilhelmsia* and collected seed for the dwarf *Epilobium*.

As we moved on it was easy to visualize the hills Verna pointed out being covered with *Rhododendron camtschaticum* in full bloom earlier in the summer as the leaves have already taken on their burgundy fall color.

Site T2 (Taylor Highway, second stop) was at mile 31 ½ where we searched for and found, not only *Rhododendron camtschaticum* but *Primula anvilensis*, *Primula tschuktschorum*, *Lagotis glauca*, *Castilleja hyperborea* and *Pedicularis sudetica*. As we searched we grazed on delicious big blueberries and marveled at all the beautiful plants growing in this area. This was also a wet, rocky scree area.

After passing Salmon Lake and climbing further into the mountains, we ate lunch while waiting for a rainsquall to pass over then began to climb to a higher elevation on foot. This is an area with a lot of frost boils in the tundra and jutting ridges of calcareous rock. A gold mine of little plants in both the boils and growing right out of cracks in the rocks. Many pictures were taken of little vignettes of natural plants that would make beautiful troughs. The find of the day was Rhonda's *Douglasia alaskana*. Of course each person had a different favorite and special plants they were looking for. It was beautiful whether we were looking down at the tundra or up and out at the panorama before us. Green tundra, just beginning to take on the fall colors of Alaska, flowed up to the mountains and was dotted with jewel-like lakes.

At this site, dubbed T3, we discovered more *Wilhelmsia*, *Epilobium*, *Primula anvilensis*, *Minuartia obtusiloba*, *Cassiope tetragona*, *Parrya nudicaulis* (commonly known as Parry's Wallflower), *Bupleurum triradiatum*, *Lloydia serotina* (Alp lily), *Saxifraga oppositifolia smalliana*, *Ligusticum mutellinoides*, *Lesquerella arctica* and more *Rhododendron camtschaticum*. This was truly an exquisite day of wandering the high hills.

August 17, 2003 – Day 3 Council Road

They warned us that the weather in Nome can change fast and it's true. We awoke to the sound of the waves pounding the shore and it was very blustery and overcast. Dressing for the occasion in many layers of clothing and rain gear we headed out the Nome-Council Road South along the coast. First stop (C-1) was the Nome River to gather seeds of the tiny *Primula sibirica*. They are difficult to find on a still day and in a blustery wind even more so. Enthusiasm of the crew lagged until Verna found a plant in bloom. Bright pink it shone out of the mud and grass and spurred us on. At this site we also harvested seed for *Pedicularis sudetica* and *Ranunculus cymbalaria* (Spade leaf buttercup).

Traveling further along the coast we enjoyed seeing the fish camps of the local people perched all along the beaches. They are painted bright colors and each has a collection of driftwood and fish drying racks near by.

At the "Last Train to Nowhere", near Solomon, we absorbed some of the history of this incredible area and marveled that men could get all of this heavy equipment into such a remote spot. We only found one *Primula sibirica* seed at this site.

Traveling up through the Skookum River Pass (C-3) we were thrilled to see a huge herd of Reindeer grazing on the mountain tundra. Stopping at the top of the Pass it was like being on top of the world. We climbed up to some fairly steep ledges of rock where we found *Dryas octopetala*, *Diapensia lapponica*, *Saxifraga spicata*, *Primula eximia* and *Cardamine bellidifolia* before a rainsquall drenched us and sent everyone scurrying off the mountain. We lunched while enjoying the scenery from this lofty perch and then moved down the way we had come to an area with great looking ledges and screes that we had spotted on the way up the mountain. Blueberries were huge and delicious in the lower area. As we worked our way up to the ledges there were spots where picturesque areas of stones provided beautiful examples of nature at her best. Exquisite little plants draped themselves down the sides of huge stones that looked much like a napoleon with a bite taken out and tossed into the tundra. The plants have forced their roots between the tight layers pushing them apart just enough to thrive and decorate the rock beautifully. At this spot, C-4, we found a *Saxifraga oppositifolia smalliana* that was so petite we dubbed it "minute form". *Rhododendron camtschaticum*, *Diapensia lapponica*, *Potentilla hypartica nana*, and *Chrysanthemum integrefolium* carpeted the mountainside

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and crept up the ledges. Under a large overhang Verna and Rhonda spotted *Primula anvilensis* thriving in an area protected from the fierce weather around it. Verna found a row of dwarfed Cottonwood trees there below a protecting ridge. This was our first sighting of trees growing naturally in the area.

As we headed back toward Nome, Neil directed us down a mine road he wanted to explore. After fording a rushing stream, we had the brief experience of traveling into a mine on a road built on tailing piles with the mountain on one side and river on the other. The road ended abruptly when we came to a washed out bridge. Neil continued on to his destination on foot and the intrepid collectors left behind followed a game trail around a hill and found the most exquisite patch of *Campanula lasiocarpa* in full bloom. It was a much darker blue than any of us had ever seen and we were excited to see that there were also many ripe seeds, ready for the picking. At this stop we also found *Anemone richardsonii* and *Arnica lessingii*, *Cardamine microphylla*, and mega blueberries.

Almost back to Nome we stopped for a photo opportunity at Dredge Number Eight and Verna managed to find *Ranunculus pallasii* and *Mertensia maritima* in the area. (Site C-6)

Then it was back to Nome and a very pleasant evening walking to dinner in a light breeze and sunshine. The light was finally right to have our pictures taken in front of the "Iditarod End of Trail" sign.

August 18 – Day 4 - Anvil Mountain

The day greeted us with mist, sunshine, and a double rainbow reflected in the waters of Norton Sound. It was so beautiful that people were stopping on the street to enjoy and comment on it. On the way to Anvil Mountain we were treated to more rainbows and sunshine, a great start to the day. Anvil Mountain was a treasure trove of Alpine plants. The south side had very wet boggy areas yielding up seed for *Boykinia richardsonii*, *Anemone narcissiflora*, *Senecio atropurpureus*, *Gentiana algida*, *Cardamine pratensis*, *Parrya nudicaulis*, *Cassiope tetragona*, and *Dodecatheon frigidum*. We worked our way across the boggy side of the ridge and up to the higher ground and limestone ledges, then around to the North side of the mountain. It was like walking through a time warp back to the early spring. (Verna told us that this area was still covered with snow when they were here in July.) We were thrilled to see *Erigeron humilis* and *Chrysanthemum integrifolium* in bloom. *Silene acaulis* (Moss campion), *Rhododendron camtschaticum* and the bright yellow *Saxifraga hirculus* dotted the landscape. We hiked from one beautiful alpine vignette to another. Seeds were few on this side of the mountain but it was a highlight of the trip to see so many of these exquisite little plants in bloom. We were calling back and forth to each other over and over to "Come see this!" Other plants in bloom included *Gentiana algida*, *Gentiana propinqua*, *Myosotis alpestris*, *Cardamine pratensis*, *Claytonia sarmentosa*, *Valeriana capitata*, *Geum rossii*, *Papaver macounii*, *Saxifraga hieracifolia*, and *Potentilla fruticosa*. As we worked our way around the mountain the rains came once again and we decided to abandon our search and head back into town.

The rest of the day was filled with sightseeing and enjoying the local color. Seeds were getting dry and were packed up for the trip home. We left Nome the next morning a little nostalgically. It had certainly been a trip of a lifetime. There is nothing like a couple of excellent guides and truly good company to make an excursion move to the top of your "Memories of a Lifetime" list.

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## ARGS SEED EXCHANGE 2004

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. Last year there were 16 donors and I would still like to see this increase considerably.

Due to the overwhelming response of donors last year, we were able to increase the number of seed packets to 15 for non-donors and 20 to those who donate at least 5 packets of seeds to this year's exchange. 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.

Some seed from the above expedition is being offered so please have your seed donations to Rhonda no later than the end of October if possible to be included in the next round of the Alaska Rock Garden Seed Exchange.

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

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## 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

**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 Momens, 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.

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 5

September 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.  
Send inquiries about dues to [moline@alaska.net](mailto:moline@alaska.net).