



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2018

Alaska Rock Garden Society Meeting
September 15, 2018, 2:00 P.M.
Medium Meeting Room at MTA Building
480 Commercial Dr, Palmer, AK 99645

AGENDA

Call to Order

Welcome

Secretary's report and approval of minutes of last meeting

Treasurer's Report

New Business:

Central meeting location sought – Eagle River/Chugiak

Committee re-instated for Aline Strutz Award, Jerry McEwen leader

Would someone like to help out with Valley Garden Tours?

Old Business:

Who can do seed exchange? Teena's program in March is "Starting from Seed"

Committee Reports:

ABG Rock Garden Kathy/Madge

Palmer Visitor Center (PVC) Rock Garden - Jaime

Membership – Gina

Newsletter – Charles

NARGS – Carmel

Plant Profile: Androsace

PROGRAM: Plant Exchange – Bring up to 3 plants to exchange

FORUM: Approximately 10 minutes each to have question, answer, and discussion among the group.

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CALENDAR

- Sept. 15th:** Plant Exchange – Valley MTA –
Plant profile: *Androsace*
- October:** Anchorage - Last of Verna's Programs –
“Hardy Plants for Alaska Rock Gardens”
Nomination of Officers
- November:** Valley -Election of Officers
Pechakucha – four talks; each lasting
less than ten minutes on different topics –
fast and fun!
Profile: *Pulsatilla*
- December:** No Meeting
- January:** Valley - Welcome new members
How to Build a Rock Garden Slide show
and possible demonstration in parking
lot – a panel of four people will be avail-
able to answer questions and add infor-
mation as the program progresses.
Profile: *Phlox condensata*
- February:** Kathy Swick, “Penstemons”
Kathy has a beautiful little rock garden
right in the middle of Anchorage and is
an expert plantsperson
Profile: *Cypripedium guttatum*
- March:** Teena Garay – “Starting from Seed”
Teena went to China with the ARGS
group, has a beautiful garden in Homer
and is knowledgeable in all areas
Profile: *Aster Alpinus*
- April TBA:** Sears Mall Garden Show (depending on
construction this could be changed up
some)
- May 11th:** Clean-up at ABG
- May 18th:** Anchorage Plant Sale at ABG
- May 25th:** Plant Sale at Snowfire
- June 15 or 16:** Rock Garden Tours – Valley
- June TBA:** Clean-up Rock Garden at Palmer Visitor
Center
- July TBA:** An Evening in the Rock Garden At ABG
Rock Garden plants for sale, demonstra-
tion on planting troughs date

August 17th: A Day at Hatcher Pass

If you have an idea for a program get with any Board Member and we will work with you to do it or try to find an “expert” to present that program. We’d love to hear from you.

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, apply at: <http://www.akrockgardensociety.org/>.

Individual Membership \$15.00 US

Family Membership \$20.00 US

Membership is for the calendar year so renew now if you have not already done so!

ARGS ENDOWMENT. ARGS started collecting money for an endowment for the Rock Garden at ABG last March. The endowment is managed by The [Alaska Community Foundation](#). The intent of the endowment is to let the funds grow. The funds will not be used for many years. Present and future ARGS members will determine how funds are used. Some uses of funds include the purchase of plants to replace dead plant, purchase plants for research for hardiness, and general upkeep and maintenance.

ARGS would like to ensure that the Rock Garden at ABG will continue to be an important part of Alaska. We want a place where our children and grandchildren can appreciate the beauty and learn about the plants.

Seed money from our savings was the start of the fund. The money that had been raised for seed expeditions was given back to the club by that group. A donor offered to match any other donated monies up to \$10,000. With your help we were able to reach that goal!

Donations can be made directly to The [Alaska Community Foundation](#) or to ARGS, PO Box 244136, Anchorage 99524.



Ideas for Troughs

By Harvey Wrightman (former owner of Wrightman Alpines Nursery)

One of the best “trends” to hit mainstream gardening is container planting—trough gardening for most of us. Adaptable and accessible to most any situation, troughs can be used as accents to an alpine garden or perennial garden; or, they can be use the sole feature with a varied number of sub-themes. Each container represents its own particular ecological/horticultural expression. Using the Czech style of narrow clay crevices, it is possible to provide a better growing environment for both the easy alpines and those that we know less about their specific cultural needs.

Containers—Almost any sort of container will do for a first effort. Hyper-tufa troughs are readily available and will last about 10 years, or more. For more permanent troughs, look for ones that have a good customer rating.

Some recommendations for suppliers:

- [HaddonStone](#) - manufactured stone; but, very well sculpted troughs. They are heavy and permanent. Only 2 styles listed on the website.
- [Betsy Knapp](#) - sleek, modern looking, these troughs are light and very, very durable. Also, Betsy can make shapes and sizes not normally seen.
- [Oliver Nurseries](#) - Lori Chips is the Alpine Manager, and she creates beautiful and unusual troughs for purchase, as well as providing fully planted troughs and tufa for very competitive prices.
- [Wrightman Alpines](#) - a variety of natural stone troughs in sandstone, limestone and tufa. The tufa troughs are lighter in weight (~40%) than other stone. Tufa has an earthiness that helps to create the mountain atmosphere of the planting.



Soil - We use Spanish River Carbonatite (SRC) in most of our container mixes. The carbonatites are particularly good sources of minerals in a form that feeds at a steady rate and does not over-stimulate growth. A reasonable substitute would be “greensand”, which may be easier to source.

For troughs I use:

- Course sand as a base material, ~65%
- SRC, ~20%
- Composted pine bark or some other organic material.

This is a physically heavy mix, but it provides long-lasting, stable structure and nutrition for the plants. Mixes that use a lot of organic material tend to negatively change in a short time. One could add pumices or Perlite to lighten the mix.

Planting - Now comes the part where you must ditch all the poisonous cultural teaching of agrarian-derived societies; i.e., the rock formation that you will create will be elevated and not appear to be stable. For the chasmophytic plants, what they desire is a place without the competition of those aggressive flatland grasses and forbs - the basis of agricultural crops. When you think about it, the narrow crevices where the special ones grow will have thin veins of soil that have been brought in by wind and water. The soils that will stick are mainly the smaller particles of silt and clay which also provide more nutrition for the plants though the actual volume may not be very much at all. For the basic formation in a trough,



you can use any type of stone that has flat surfaces that you can then align to form a narrow crevice. It may be vertical or tilted. There may be one or two parallel lines in the formation for the trough. Don't make it too complicated or you will be lost in the details. This crevice line presents a significant space for a good number of plants to grow. One side of the crevice is plastered with a sticky clay. The plants, rooted cuttings or seedlings (minus most of their potting mix) are laid out on the clay with their roots suitably spread out. You can now see the advantages:

- 1) A greater choice of plants as larger, potted specimens can be used.
- 2) Immediate contact with a growing medium (clay), and less damage to the roots.
- 3) "Perfect drainage." I love those words used to describe the right site for a plant: "...rich soil, moist, but well drained." How is that possible after a huge rain and the air turns steamy? An elevated position means the crevice will provide a more constant moisture level and allow the area around the crown to dry quickly. The crown is where most disease problems occur.
- 4) The drama of vertical plantings, cascades falling over a cliff are obvious and appealing. This is the best way to improve the beauty of a planting. Although the technique is simple, I am always amazed at the variety of compositions that I see in the workshops we run.
- 5) It is important to keep the crevice to less than 1/2" wide. Capillary movement of water is better in a narrow column. Also, some erosion of clay will occur until the plants cover the line. This is less of a problem in a thinner line. You can always dress-up the line with mot planting mix. Adding some small gravel bits helps too.
- 6) Almost any plant in our catalogue can be used. The decision then lies in what the combinations will be. Ever wonder how confusing that can be? The great thing about this method is it intuitively directs you to place things. To make the verticals work, you need small mat-formers such as spreading clay on "bread" - roots laid in clay. For the tiny sort. These plants spread quickly enough to stop erosion. They are small enough that other, showier plants can grow through the mats. Semps, which are so easy to establish, are especially good. Once they outgrow their usefulness, they can be removed with little disruption. The mats provide a good foil to set off the choicer plants—these are myriad in number, tight growing plants such as *Androsace* spp., *kabschias*, tiny *Campanulas* like *C. zoysii*, *Arenaria tetraquetra*, *Draba bryoides*, *Silene acaulis*, *Gypsophila aretioides*, *Asperula* spp. and the ultimate plugger, *Sempervivum*. The method uses does take a little nerve and daring, but that's why you're here, right? I'm sure as more people employ the technique and the results are seen, that it will become a valuable tool.

Reprinted by permission from his daughter, Esther Wrightman. Originally published in *Alpine Line*, Newsletter of the Allegheny Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. August/September 2018.





Alaska Rock Garden Society
September 8, 2018 Board Meeting
Alaska Botanical Garden Greenhouse

ARGS Board:

President:	Carmel Tysver	Absent
Vice President:	Florene Carney	Present
Secretary:	Jamie Smith	Present
Treasurer:	Madge Oswald	Present
Past President:	Jaime Rodriguez	Absent
Program Chair:	Florene Carney	Present
Newsletter Editor:	Charles Utermohle	Absent
Website Coordinators:	Carmel Tysver	Absent
	Florene Carney	Present
	Gina Docherty	Present
Membership Chair:	Gina Docherty	Present
Member-at-Large	Debbie Hinchey	Present

ARGS Committees:

Alene Strutz Award:	Jerry McEwen
	Gina Docherty
Field Trip:	Florene Carney (Valley)

Gardens:

ARGS Rock Garden at ABG:	Madge Oswald
	Kathy Swick
Palmer Visitor Center Garden:	Jaime Rodriguez
NARGS:	Carmel Tysver
Nomination:	Jaime Rodriguez
Seed Exchange:	Vacant

New Business:

Florene led today's meeting in Carmel's absence.

Madge:

Endowment Fund: The Endowment Fund is in two parts. Part One contains funds from Plant/Garden Sales SPECIFICLY for the Endowment Fund. Part Two contains funds from Investment Accounts (essentially, tax write-offs) SPECIFICALLY donated to the Endowment Fund.

QUESTION: Do we want to combine both funds into one? Advantage of combining: Growth of the Endowment Fund would be faster due to higher interest. Disadvantage of combining: We wouldn't be able to touch the funds for approximately two (2) years.

There was a brief discussion regarding the two-year waiting period during which everyone agreed that would give us time to find someone capable of taking over the care of the ARGS Rock Garden at the Alaska Botanical Garden.

Jamie Smith made the motion to combine both funds into one.

Gina Docherty seconded the motion.



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The motion PASSED unanimously!

Operating Funds: For clarification, Jamie asked source of the ARGUMENTS Operating Funds. Madge explained those funds are from membership dues, plant sales, other donations – Miscellaneous Income NOT specific to the Endowment Fund. Thank you, Madge.

Florene:

Program for 2018-2019: Board Meetings and Membership Meetings will be run according to Roberts Rules of Order, as stated in ARGUMENTS Constitution. We will return to having monthly meetings to keep everyone current and encourage new members to join us. Committees will be established for specific topics / projects. Everyone is invited to Chair a committee or be a member of a committee. The President / Vice President cannot do everything. (NOTE: Some committee chair volunteers were accepted during the Board Meeting. An updated list will be available for the October Newsletter)

Meeting Location: Gina Docherty and Kathy Swick volunteered to check into possible meeting place in the Eagle River / Chugiak area. Our hope is to have ONE location roughly halfway between the Valley and Anchorage so no one has extremely long distances to drive for the meetings. Madge said paying for the meeting place IS an option, as we do have funds to cover a reasonable cost.

Name Tags: Board Members will have name tags to wear not only at Board Meetings, but more importantly to wear during Membership Meetings. Simple ‘peel & stick’ name tags will be available for members at the sign-in desk for the membership meetings.

Alene Strutz Award: The ARGUMENTS Board unanimously nominated Carmel Tysver for this award.

SAVE THOSE SEEDS!

Remember, all you plant lovers, that seeds are where it all begins! NARGUMENTS and ARGUMENTS both collect seeds to be redistributed to members who want to grow a plant they can’t buy, something rare or that has been seen in the wild or a friend’s garden. We will talk about seeds at the September meeting and you can look forward to Teena Garay’s talk in March about “Starting From Seed”. So now is the time to collect the seed and put them in paper bags or envelopes, carefully marked with the name and date and collection location. If you have a hankering to be in charge of the ARGUMENTS Seed Exchange, contact me at snowfire@mtaonline.net. We will be forever grateful!

Florene Carney

Why garden with rock and alpine plants?

compact size means more variety in a small space	native plants support pollinators
unique and diverse plants from the mountain regions of the world	small troughs or large crevice gardens can be showcases
hardy plants, well-suited to Alaska’s climate	use of rocks and alpine plants is inspired by nature



POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

President: Carmel Tysver; (907) 727-7645;
garden@gci.net

Vice-President: Florene Carney; (907) 376-5390;
snowfire@mtaonline.net

Secretary: Jamie Smith; (907) 376-7863;
topgun@mtaonline.net

Treasurer: Madge Oswald; (907) 345-5144;
johnmadge@chugach.net

Past President: Jaime Rodriguez; (907) 357-2747;
jrtinker@mtaonline.net

Members-at-large: Debbie Hinchey
Gina Docherty

Membership: Gina Docherty

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

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.

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Anchorage, Alaska 99503

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SEPTEMBER 2018
