

ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2022

*Regular Membership Meeting Via Zoom
February 19, 2022, 10:00 AM
Agenda*

**FROM OUR
PRESIDENT,
FLORENE
CARNEY**

Welcome
Introduce Speaker Ed Buyarski
Open Comments
Secretary's Report
Executive Board Report
Budget Update
Upcoming Programs
Closing

"Once upon a time" there was a group of plant enthusiasts who lived in the far north. After one very cold winter it was noticed that the Alpine plants and those deemed to be rock garden plants were the main things that survived. Those enthusiasts decided that they needed to have a way to improve on this nugget of knowledge. They wanted to share information, do research, write articles, and rejoice in the knowledge that they could bring to this cold country. So, they joined together and after much discussion and coffee drinking, called themselves The Alaska Rock Garden Society. They met joyfully, each sharing the plants that they were aware were hardy enough to be awarded the rock garden title. They joined the National group and lo and behold the world became their playground (at

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least in the information they had access to).

Potlucks were held. They met for breakfast and drank coffee and shared joyfully. International authors, like Helen Dillon were invited to come speak. Knowledge expanded and their gardens grew bigger and more beautiful. Folks were invited to come visit and hike our mountains and the group became aware of how beautiful the plants growing underfoot and taken for granted really were. Many travelled to national conventions and heard even more international speakers, and brought back even more information to share. Every member took ownership and participated. It was a heady time.

Sometimes Fairy Tales are just make-believe. However, this is a true tale. We have lost many of our original members. Some have moved away from the area, some went to greener pastures, and some just decided to do other things. I long for the time we can once again get together and have coffee and talk plants and smell the dirt and rub the leaves and spend time discovering what the name of a particular plant is shoulder to shoulder. Holding each other up and cheering when a member does a good job or makes a new discovery. We have had plenty of time to sit by ourselves and contemplate all the wonderful things we can do. Dorte has a great set of programs coming up this year. Let's enjoy those programs and cheer each other on and be grateful that we live in such a beautiful area.

Note: Your President may have spent too much time social distancing and wishing for time with folks of like interests. I'm hoping that in the coming year each of you will find a way to really participate in ARGS. Write an article, give a talk, lead a hike, share the description of a new plant that you are trying, give us the name of a new book you have read. Join NARGS and check out their programs. Share your successes and your failures. We will either cheer with you or grieve your losses.

Spring can't be too far away! Celebrate it.
Florene

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR FEBRUARY PROGRAM SPEAKER, ED BUYARSKI:

Ed Buyarski was transplanted from Upper Michigan through Southern Idaho to Alaska in 1983 after a visit in 1977 via bus, train, ferry and thumb. He and his wife Janis raised two children in Alaska and now visit them in California and pick fruit in the winter with their grandchildren.

Ed has been gardening in Southeast Alaska since then in Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Juneau and Haines. He started his business-[Ed's Edible Landscaping](#)-to give people a chance to have beautiful as well as tasty plants in their yards. Many fruits and berries have been planted with success resulting in a lot of fresh eating, jams and jellies and pies over the years. Growing and propagating many varieties of Primulas has become another profitable part of his business. Ed is a past President of the American Primrose Society as well as Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners and enjoys teaching gardening classes. He has volunteered for Alaska Public Radio as a host of Garden Talk on KTOO in Juneau and KFSK in Petersburg. [Ed was a participant in the ARGS seed collecting expedition to Yunnan, China, in 2000 led by Dan Hinkley and contributed to its success. – Ed]

WHY ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ARGS?

Bonnie Friedman (Anchorage) I am a relatively new member, having joined ARGS at the beginning of the pandemic (which coincided with my retirement). I am thrilled that in retirement I have the opportunity to return to many of my interests from early adulthood. Although my capabilities have diminished with the years, my love of hiking in the alpine and working in my gardens have not.

Last summer, ARGS provided me the opportunity to volunteer in the rock garden at the Alaska Botanical Garden. I have never had such an inspiring office in which to work and member Cathy Swick generously shared many tips that I could use in my own garden.

I was not able to join the hikes or the garden tours last summer, but I am looking forward to participating in this year's activities and getting to know the members better.



Alaska Rock Garden Society 2022 Proposed Activities

January	Crevasse Gardening in Czech Karst	Zdenek Zvolanek
February	<i>Primula</i>	Ed Buyarski
March	<i>Pulsatilla</i>	Jane McGary
April	<i>Fritillaria</i>	National speaker?
May	Plant sales	TBD
June	Hike/tour Anchorage area/ABG	
July	Hike Matsu Valley “Mini Conference” @ Florene Carney’s	
August	Trough Workshop, Building your trough @ Florene Carney’s	
September	Trough Workshop, Planting your trough @ Florene Carney’s	
October	<i>Lewesia</i>	National speaker?
November	<i>Gentian</i>	National speaker?
December	No meeting	



The following article has been reproduced with permission from The Newsletter of the New England Chapter of NARGS, January 2022. Mark McDonough (Mark), referred to in this article, is with the New England Chapter of NARGS.

Woodland Iris From Seed

As we know from some of Mark's previous talks, he has been enthusiastically working on hybridizing woodland irises for the last 3 years. Since it takes 4 years to see bloom from most of these species, it is a work in progress, and we all look forward to seeing the results. Most woodland iris seeds have elaiosomes, which are fleshy structures rich in lipids and proteins and are intended to attract ants. This mechanism for dispersal by ants is common in other spring ephemeral plants as well. Seeds are best sown fresh, and if the seed is dry it can delay germination significantly. His typical germination rate from fresh sowing is 35-45%, but he keeps the seed pots and gets additional germination (of up to 60 - 70%) after the second year. He places organza bags (usually used for wedding favors) around the seed pods both to catch the seeds and to keep them from being eaten by chipmunks).

Iris cristata

Mark has been doing a variety of crosses with cultivars including:
'Montrose White' (a large white),

'Precious Pearl' (a small white selected by Barbara and David Schmeider with nice, arching foliage.)

'Navy Blue Gem' (a dark blue, which was originally described as 'Dark Blue Violet' by Laurie's Garden until Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer renamed it and registered it in 1998)

'Dash It All' (also from the Schmeiders) – this is a vigorous clone and flowers a lot

'Powder Blue Giant' (found by Sam Norris in Kentucky in the 1960s – it was named and registered in 1998 by Jan and Marty)

Mark has been making crosses in both directions (with one cultivar being the pollen parent, and then the other). Because of the drought last year, he had to hand-water all his seedling pots, and is expecting to start seeing blooms after 4 years. He covers his seed pots with wire mesh to foil chipmunks and mice. Now he is putting pots up on tables to keep them away from jumping worms. He uses pressed fiber pots and puts them on top of a 1.5" layer of moist mulch on top of the 2' tall tables – this help keeps the pots moist.



Iris cristata 'Precious Pearl' (l); 'Montrose White' (r)



Iris verna smalliana 'Brumback Blue'



Iris verna Mark said that no one has worked on hybridizing this species before. All 12 of the named cultivars are selections from the wild. Many of them were named by Fairmount Gardens. He said that there are now only 3 cultivars in circulation. The ones he is hybridizing with are:

‘Brumback Blue’ (named after Bill Brumback at Garden in the Woods) – this has an orange color band over a white signal

‘Alba’ – this originally came from Dick Redfield and has shiny evergreen foliage

‘Cleo Chapel Road’ – this is from a plant that Darrell Probst collected in the southeast

Iris koreana Mark created a large patch of seedlings from open pollinated seeds. He sees a lot of variability in terms of size and marking, so he now has several selected forms of koreana. I

Iris odaesanensis Mark has been growing ‘Chuwang San #3’ and ‘Chollipo’ as well as ‘Ice Wisper’ which he is crossing with white odaesanensis. These are warm germinators and like moisture.

Iris gracilipes Mark showed the cultivar ‘Buko’ (a dwarf white from Mt. Buko in Japan) and ‘Cobblewood Charm’, which is a spontaneous cross of ‘Buko’ and the regular purple gracilipes. It was introduced by Joe Pye Weed Gardens (Jan and Marty’s) and the first new cultivar of *I. gracilipes* in more than 60 years. He has planted out a lot of seeds from ‘Cobblewood Charm’ and is seeing a lot of color variation. He has selected one with pale amethyst flowers with gold veins. Mark donated 80-100 plants of gracilipes to the Acton Arboretum and will be following those as well.



Iris cristata ‘Powder Blue Giant’

Iris dabashanensis* and *Iris probstii These are 2 new species in the chinensis section, with one named after Darrell Probst, and the other named dabashanensis (formerly known as *I. henryi*). In 2021 Mark focused on crossing *Iris odaesanensis* with *I. dabashanensis*, some seed has germinated and seedlings are being overwintered on a sunny windowsill, need to wait 3-4 years to see the results of a possible interspecific hybrid.

Iris speculatrix There are 3 clones available of this evergreen species:

Lonsdale clone

Probst clone

Waddick-Shanghai clone The seed pods in this species uniquely turn sideways and have fleshy white roots, not rhizomes, and the leaf fans grow in a circular pattern.

Iris sp. nov. Chen Yi #41 Mark has been working with the new species for about 8 years. It has very different flowers and foliage that looks like *I. tectorum*, and has horizontal rhizomes. In some of his ‘Chen Yi’ seedlings he is finding plants with no rhizomes so they may be an interspecific hybrid with *I. speculatrix*. With that, the talk ended, and members greatly look forward to hearing about the results.



Wild and Tame Alaska Primroses

by Ed Buyarski

For many, the only primrose they know arrives in the supermarkets in the spring when they are tired of winter and need the cheery color of a flowering plant. Unfortunately they are usually disappointed when it dies shortly after they bring it home. Grown fast and pushed hard, these plants may do well in Seattle as an annual in their cool moist spring but do not make good houseplants and are seldom hardy enough to even survive a nice Alaska summer.

While Alaska does have up to 9 or 10 wild species, more than any other state, most of those do not make good garden plants. *Primula borealis* grows on the coastal plain near Barrow and *P. cuneifolia* can be found on coastal mountains from Juneau to Anchorage and out to Adak. *Primula nutans* thrives on seasonally flooded river bottoms around Northway to saline flats at Kotzebue and *P. tschukchorum* is found in Denali on moist, gravelly slopes.

Luckily there is a great selection of different *Primula* species and varieties which do thrive in Southeast and Southcentral gardens and even into more severe climates like Fairbanks. Your yard may have wet, boggy and shady areas or sunny, rich, well-drained beds and there are primroses for you. Beginning in March and April in Ketchikan through June and July in Anchorage and into August and September in Kodiak and Juneau, primroses from two inches to two feet tall in all colors of the rainbow can brighten parts of our yards.

Those supermarket primroses were bred and unnaturally selected from other colorful but hardier plants that we can grow such as tiny *P. juliae* and the low growing Juliana hybrids such as "Dorothy" and "Wanda". These spread via rhizomes and should be divided with a sharp knife or trowel every few years as the center of the patch may die off after exhausting nutrients under it. After using *Primula vulgaris*, the true wild "Primrose" in England also contributed its genes to the wimpy grocery store plants but is a hardy, fragrant, yellow early spring bloomer. The lavender, red or white drumstick or pom pom *P. denticulata* is widespread and very successful in gardens, even seeding itself into my gravel driveway. For your rich sunny beds, the auricula group has many alpine members which are extremely winter hardy, surviving -60F and blooming in May and June with 4"-10" tall clusters of fragrant flowers.

Summer primroses bring more height, color and wonderful fragrance to gardens. *Primulas chungensis, japonica*, and *pulverulenta* hold their individual flowers candelabra style in several layers up to 24 inches tall in rich, moist soil. They also reseed themselves vigorously so you may wish to deadhead them before their seed ripens. These may be yellow to orange, and magenta to red and some white also. For even more moist to boggy soil and part shade, the Sikkimensis group has the most fragrant and even taller-up to 36 inches-flowering stems. Large clusters of spicy scented bells in various shades of yellow, rust to red, lavender and white may be found in *Primulas alpicola, florindae, sikkimensis* and *waltonii*. These too reseed well for you to share with friends.

One other species with many forms whose bloom begins in the spring and finishes in summer is *P. sieboldii* from Japan. There are societies in both the US and Japan dedicated solely to the many named forms which are grown and exhibited. White and pink snowflakes and flowers shading into lavender and blue grow on 12 inch plants which enjoy moist, rich, partially shaded conditions and quickly form impressive clumps in the garden.

Grow more primroses in your garden; visit Juneau whose Assembly voted Primroses as the Official City Flowers; or check out the website of the American Primrose Society at www.americanprimrosesoc.org.



Planting Fresh Primula Seeds

By Ed Buyarski

Following some recommendations to immediately plant the ripe seed of early bloomers, I have been very successful with those of *Primula denticulata* and *Primula rosea*. The biggest challenge with collecting *P. denticulata* seed is the tendency of their seed heads to rot with wet weather where those of *P. rosea* have a better chance to avoid rot with a more open seed head and capsules.

This spring I invited Patricia Hartman to see and photograph the process of collecting and sowing the seeds and following up with their germination and growth for a few weeks and months. We were maintaining our social distancing during this process of course! The first lavender and red *P. denticulata* plants to flower were on April 17 and 19 with *P. rosea* a few minutes later. Both begin with flowers very low and tight in the leaf rosettes but rapidly extend their scapes as weather warms until at seed ripeness the stalks may be 18-24" tall. Much easier to harvest at maturity!

The round capsules of *P. rosea* are easily seen to be ripe for planting when they split open at the tops and the seeds must be collected or they will be sown by Mother Nature shaking the seeds out on the ground. The seed heads of *P. denticulata* should be watched for the lower capsules swelling and maturing to brown even though the upper spent flowers may still be on top of the cluster. This is where wet weather may cause the whole cluster to rot or mildew. Both types of seeds may be green to brown when sown. This year seeds were planted on June 17th and sprouting began on June 29th

Before collecting ripe seeds, I prepare seed trays filled with potting soil and some slow release organic fertilizer-balanced flower or vegetable blend such as 4-4-4. This allows me to pick the ripe capsules and shake the seeds directly onto the prepared trays with the *P. rosea* seeds. I usually take the *P. denticulata* capsules and shake out their seeds onto a plate or sheet of paper before spreading on the seed trays since their seeds are much smaller. There will usually be hundreds of seeds in a 16" x 16" x 4" deep tray. I place the uncovered trays into the shade of my big cherry tree or next to my garage up off the ground so slugs cannot chew off the little seedlings. Within 7-10 days the first green seedlings appear and away they go. I'll give them a dilute feeding of liquid fertilizer or weed juice and let them grow. Some may get planted later in the first summer season but more often they will stay in the trays very thickly sprouting until the following spring or summer to be planted out in propagation beds.

Other later flowering and ripening *Primula* seeds are also planted as they ripen as late as October and November but seldom germinate the first year. They sprout the following spring when they are ready or may be brought indoors under lights to push them to grow larger plants more quickly. I have gathered *Primula vialii* seeds from stalks deliberately left until February and when planted on potting soil indoors the seeds germinate in 5-7 days in the warmth.

Weed juice you ask? I throw buttercups, dandelions, horsetail, chickweed and a handful of seaweed into a 5 gallon bucket, fill with water, cover and ferment for two weeks or more into a brown, smelly, slimy solution. I then strain it and dilute about 1:4 with rain water to provide new seedlings and transplants the nutrients they need from their competition. This gets used during the summer for the young plants including my vegetable transplants.





*Alaska Rock Garden Society
Board Meeting*

January 27, 2022

10:00 A.M. ZOOM

MINUTES

January 27, 2022 Alaska Rock Garden Society - Executive Board Meeting

President:	Florene Carney	Present
Vice President:	Dorte Mobley	Present
Secretary:	Jamie Smith	Present
Treasurer:	Madge Oswald	Absent
Program Chair:	Dorte Mobley	Present
Newsletter & Crevice Editor:	Charles Utermohle	Present
	Bonnie Friedman	Present
Website Coordinators:	Gina Docherty	Present
Membership Chair:	Gina Docherty	Present
Seed Exchange Chair:	Debbie Hinchey	Present
Palmer Visitor Ctr Chair:	Jaime Rodriguez	Absent
ABG Rock Garden Chair:	Kathy Swick	Present
Aline Strutz Award Chair	Jerry McEwen	Absent

WELCOME! Florene Carney opened the meeting at 10:10am. Florene thanked everyone for attending, then reported Jaime Rodriguez and Madge Oswald were traveling and may not be able to attend depending on internet service availability.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Jamie Smith

Coming Events: Dorte Mobley is working to finalize our 2022 Programs List and will have it completed soon. Be sure to watch your email and our website for additional information.

Election of Officers: Just a reminder Election of Officers will be held in Fall 2022. New Officers will be installed January 2023. NOTE: Charles Utermohle has decided to step down from his position of Editor of our Newsletter and The Crevice. Charles will be mentoring Bonnie Friedman to take over these positions. THANK YOU, BONNIE, for agreeing to take on the position of Editor!

Discussion will continue regarding how to amend the Rock Garden at ABG. Various ideas were put forth, but further discussion was needed.

Secretary's Report was ACCEPTED AS READ.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Florene Carney gave the Report in Madge Oswald's absence.

No change from previous report.

It was suggested that Treasurer's Report information should be added to Secretary's Report before emailing Secretary's Report to Executive Board Members.

Treasurer's Report including suggestion was ACCEPTED AS READ.

BUDGET - 2022-2023:

Rock Garden at the Alaska Botanical Garden - Kathy Swick, Chair. Initial estimate was only \$50-\$60.00, as Kathy Swick said she had extra supplies she wouldn't be using for her own garden, including additional plants. After some discussion, it was agreed to budget \$200.00 for the Rock Garden at ABG.

Kathy also brought up the subject of trimming or removing some of the trees at ABG that were shading the Rock Garden. Will Criner, ABG Gardens and Facilities Manager, is the contact person for this, as he already has someone who does that type of work for ABG.



Charles Utermohle suggested this be a SEPARATE LINE ITEM in our Budget. Dollar amount can be decided after Kathy checks with Will Criner. ALL AGREED.

Rock Gardens at Palmer Visitor Center - Jaime Rodriguez, Chair. In Jaime's absence, Florene Carney recommended \$200.00 be budgeted for additional topdressing for garden and pathways. ALL AGREED.

ARGS Website - Gina Docherty, Chair. Gina will check with Madge Oswald, Treasurer, regarding cost of adding things to website, etc., as Madge receives the bills. An estimate of \$500.00 was suggested for the budget until Gina can talk to Madge about the 2021 actual expenditure figure. ALL AGREED.

Programs (Speakers, Hikes, Demonstrations, etc.) - Dorte Mobley, Chair. Kathy Swick suggested additional funds should be included for out-of-country speakers. Debbie Hinchey suggested we contact NARGS about using their past speaker packages of taped presentations. Florene Carney will check with NARGS on availability and costs. For Budget purposes, the figure of \$1000.00 was AGREED upon.

Charles Utermohle suggested that monies set aside for a speaker who decides they do not need to be paid be donated to the ENDOWMENT FUND in the name of that speaker to show appreciation of that particular Speaker's time. Dorte Mobley suggested we allocate leftover Speaker funds be donated to the ENDOWMENT FUND in one lump sum.

Jamie Smith: It should be done right after the Speaker has done their presentation, as it's a 'THANK YOU' in appreciation of the specific speaker's time and sharing of their knowledge.

Debbie Hinchey didn't like the idea at all.

Discussion continued until the subject of donating unaccepted speaker fees to the Endowment Fund in appreciation of the specific speaker was TABLED UNTIL THE NEXT EXEC BOARD MEETING.

ENTIRE Budget Discussion was TABLED UNTIL THE NEXT EXEC BOARD MEETING.

PAYPAL: Gina Docherty reported most members pay dues by PayPal. PayPal adds a fee of \$1.00 or \$1.50 for processing credit card payments. She suggested we increase Membership Dues to cover this added cost, and we could inform members/potential members by adding a note to the Membership Form. After a short discussion, Dorte Mobley moved that we keep dues at their current costs, and ARGS will absorb any fee processing charges made by PayPal. Charles Utermohle seconded the motion. UNANIMOUSLY AGREED.

MEMBERSHIP: Gina Docherty, Chair, reported we currently have 66 members, 30 of which still need to renew/pay their dues. Eleven members have Lifetime Memberships, and there are two Complimentary Memberships. Gina will update the Membership List and send it to all Exec Board Members.

CALENDAR for 2022: Dorte Mobley will confirm dates and topics with Speakers, then finalize the Calendar.

AWARDS: Florene Carney will check with Jerry McEwen regarding the Award.

NEWSLETTER: Charles Utermohle will work with Bonnie Friedman to get the next Newsletter out before the next Membership Meeting on Saturday, February 19, 2022.

NEW BUSINESS: Debbie Hinchey asked about leftover NARGS Seeds. Florene recommended this be held for March meeting.



NATIONAL ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ALPINE VISIONS: EXPLORATION AND INSPIRATION

JUNE 14-16, 2022

THE ADIRONDACK CHAPTER, ITHACA, NY

Adirondack Chapter, along with its co-host Cornell Botanic Gardens, is planning a rich three-day experience filled with the opportunities to visit gardens and natural areas, to hear knowledgeable speakers, to reconnect with friends, and to buy plants from choice nurseries. We hope you'll be more than pleased with our program line-up designed to stimulate you to cultivate your own alpine vision through exploration and inspiration.

For more information about the program and gardens, [click here](#) for a pdf download. For FAQ about the meeting [click here](#) for a pdf download.





POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- President:** Florene Carney
- Vice-President/Program Chair:** Dorte Mobley
- Secretary :** Jaimie Smith
- Treasurer:** Madge Oswald
- Past President:** Carmel Tysver
- Membership:** Gina Docherty
- Newsletter Editor:** Bonnie Friedman
- Seed Exchange:** Debbie Hinchey
- Librarian:** Kathy Swick
- Palmer Visitors Center Garden:** Jaime Rodriguez
- ABG Rock Garden:** Madge Oswald
- Sunshine Committee:** Dorte Mobley

JOIN NARGS

If you are not already a member, considering joining the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS). You can enjoy the Rock Garden Quarterly, featured plants and books of the month, photo galleries, blogs of interest to rock gardeners, and information about upcoming events. Go to www.args.org/join and give yourself the gift of national membership this holiday season.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

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 at 12001 Audubon Dr., Anchorage, AK 97516 or on the web at <https://www.akrockgardensociety.org/membership.html>

- Individual Membership \$15.00
- Family Membership \$20.00
- Canada Membership: \$20.00 US
- Overseas Membership \$20.00 US

Membership is for the calendar year and includes all issues of the newsletter for that year. The ARGS Newsletter is published 6 times per year. We invite your contributions. Please contact Charles Utermohle, or Bonnie Friedman, ARGS Editors, at thule@alaska.net or Bonnief@gci.net

CURRENTLY A MEMBER?

YOU WILL NEED TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2022!

ARGS Newsletter Dates

	<u>Submission date</u>	<u>Distribution Date</u>
Feb/Mar issue	January 15	February 1
April/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

WWW.AKROCKGARDENSOCIETY.ORG

Webmasters: Carmel Tysver, Florene Carney, and Gina Docherty

ARGS is on FACEBOOK at:

<https://www.facebook.com/alaskarockgardensociety/>