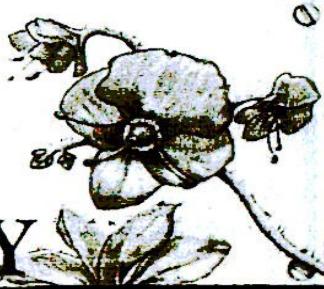


# ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



VOLUME 27, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER 2023

*ARGS Membership Meeting  
Saturday, October 21. 2023  
VIA ZOOM, 1:00 PM*

## Agenda

Welcome and Opening Comments  
Officer Reports; President, Secretary,  
Treasurer  
Committee Reports  
Old Business  
New Business  
October Program: You Did What!?  
Closing

## President's Corner, Jaime Rodriguez

October 13, 2023

I hope you all have found as much relief as I have by the Fall weather that has allowed us to get the most urgent pre-winter chores accomplished.

The September Plant Exchange was a lot of fun for those able to attend. So much so that I expect we will be planning on incorporating more social chat and garden or plant related discussions in future meetings.

With the road conditions becoming an issue, our October meeting will be a ZOOM meeting only instead of a hybrid meeting.

See you on ZOOM, next Saturday, October 23, at 1:00 PM.

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## You Did What ! ?

September was the first meeting of the season for the Alaska Rock Garden Society. We had a great time swapping plants and sharing our summer stories and projects. Making a large crevice trough, creating a rock garden from scratch, visiting the Italian Alps—you will love seeing what some members have accomplished. Tune in!

**Saturday, Oct. 21**

**1:00 p.m. (zoom only, link to follow)**

**Alaska Rock Garden Society**

### **Program Preview for November 18.**

David Charleton, of the U.K., visited U.S., Canadian, and Alaskan rock garden groups last summer to share his knowledge of European alpines. Along the way he visited some of the finest gardens and wild areas in the west and north. He will share highlights of those journeys with us. Details to follow.

### **Alaska Rock Garden Society September Meeting Minutes**

September's regular membership meeting was held in person at the Elk's Lodge in Eagle River. Twelve members and guests were present: Jaime Rodriguez, Madge Oswald, Gina Docherty, Debbie Hinckley, Julie Ginder, Diane Sheridan, Bonnie Hager, Marty Beckwich, Kathy Swick, Kristina Tornqvist, Marilyn Barker and Dorte Mobley.

Introductions and garden information was shared. Jaime quoted Graham Steward Thomas: "It takes 14 years to create a garden and 7 years to fix your mistakes" when we were talking about issues and problems we encountered in our rock gardens.

After a snack, it was time for our annual plant exchange. Over 50 plants were brought to exchange and/or share. We drew numbers out of a container and everyone got cool plants to bring home.



## The Making of My Trough Heaven

by Dorte Mobely

Many moons ago, when the Alaska Rock Garden Society got started, I was very excited about those cute little plants shown in the beautiful slide shows. I had gotten some plants from my husband since instead of bringing me tee shirts from his out-of-town work adventures, I asked him to bring me plants. I created a rock garden for them and heard about seed exchanges and the Society's seed gathering expedition to China. How exciting it could be to try and grow some of the beauties from seed! So in between his trips, I asked him to build me a bed that I could fill with dirt and start growing. Since bigger is almost always better, I had him make it 6 feet wide by 10 feet long and use 2-in by 8-in dimensional lumber for the sides.

I wheelbarrowed a lot of gravely dirt from my truck in the driveway back to my "alpine propagation bed". I bought some seeds from the exchanges and the expedition and planted them. Little white labels went into the dirt next to little areas of seeds. Well, the magpies decided that what came up should be a surprise and pulled all the labels out. My children's activities took up a bunch of my time, and weeds started to grow. The little weeds got bigger and bigger and soon I had a willow and a birch tree growing in between other opportunistic weeds in that nice raised-bed warm soil. I think the only two plants I got from the seeds were some allium and iris, neither of which were very exciting.

Fast forward to kids being out of the house and me looking out my kitchen window at this weed patch with two trees that I absolutely had no interest in. For several years I wanted to do something about it and then last year I decided to begin. I pulled the boards apart and started digging. But the roots I met were just too much for a shovel. Luckily, my oldest had rented a skid steer for a project that he was doing, so when he was done, I asked him to stop by before he returned it and give me a "hand". The strong machine lifted up clumps, roots and all so I had a chance of winning the battle.

Meanwhile I had gotten three metal rings – sold as fire pits – that I had the idea to use for small vegetable gardens. Looking at the piles of dirt and the rings all winter, a new plan started to form. I have these hypertufa troughs that I can't lift myself, and that needed a permanent place. I knew the piles of dirt would not be ideal for vegetables as it was very rocky, so maybe I could find a different use for it. I had a lot of scree material and rocks in different colors that also needed a place. So, I figured that I could move the piles, set the rings down, fill them up with the dirt and then top dress with the smaller rocks and scree material and set my troughs on them. After numerous days of digging and moving the dirt around, I finally have something that looks way better than weeds and trees. I made enough room for a chair and I have already sat out there several quiet evenings after my husband has gone to bed just to enjoy the beauty. I am already looking forward to spring when I will be able to look out my window and see little patches of color – just like the plan was in the beginning.



## The Making of My Trough Heaven continued...



**Pulling up the trees and weeds, digging up clumps and roots.**



**Fire pit “rings” to be repurposed and empty planter.**



**Full box and “rings”, both with troughs on top. Chair installed to enjoy trough heaven!**



## ALASKA NATIVE PLANT PROFILE—CASSIOPE MERTENSIANA

**Cassiope mertensiana** is native to sub-alpine tundra of western North America, from Alaska to California. It forms a low sub-shrub with dark green, evergreen, scaly leaves. Plants reach 4-8 inches tall but can form mats a foot or more across. Flowers are solitary in the upper leaf axils, usually appearing in the wild from June through July. In Alaska it is usually found on the north side of mountain slopes. It has narrower stems and leaves and smaller flowers than *C. tetragona*. *C. mertensiana* leaves do not have a groove on the back, unlike its kin according to Verna Pratt.



This species requires acidic, organic-rich soil that is well-draining. The growing site should be cool but in full sun if possible. It dislikes hot, humid weather and performs best with even snow-cover throughout the winter.

Propagation is by tip cuttings taken in late summer to early fall, rooted in a shaded area or under mist. Seeds may be directly sown on a peat-sand mix but germination may be prolonged and the growth of seedlings is quite slow.

(Sources: Todd Boland, Eric Hulten, Verna Pratt  
Photos: K. Swick & Patrick Alexander





## ARGS Calendar of Activities and Meeting Dates for 2024

**Everything is subject to change, but here is some of what is being planned:**

**Saturday, October 21 - 1:00 PM General Membership Meeting YOU Did What !?**

**Saturday, November 18 - 1:00 PM General Membership Meeting David Charleton**

**No Meeting is Held in December**

**2024**

**Saturday, January 20—TBD General Membership Meeting**

**Saturday, February 17—TBD General Membership Meeting**

**Saturday, March 16 –TBD General Membership Meeting**

**Saturday, April 20 –TBD General Membership Meeting**

**May Activities:**      **Clean-up at ABG Rock Garden in Anchorage**  
                                 **Clean-up at Palmer Visitor Center Rock Garden**  
                                 **ABG/ARGS Plant Sale**  
                                 **ARGS Valley Plant Sale**

### **Membership:**

With GCI leaving the email business, many members will have to get new email addresses. Please let us know your updated address so we can stay in touch!

### **Welcome New Members!**

**Martha Beckwith**

**Todd Bradley**

**Susan Cave**

**Mary Ziele**



**If you know someone who may enjoy our club, please share with them the information on the last page of the newsletter or invite them as your guest to a club event.**



## POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

**President: Jaime Rodriguez**

**Vice-President: Vacant**

**Secretary : Dorte Mobley**

**Treasurer: Madge Oswald**

**Past President: Florene Carney**

**Membership: Charles Utermohle**

**Programs: Kathy Swick**

**Newsletter Editor: Bonnie Friedman**

**Palmer Visitors Center Garden: Jaime Rodriguez**

**Librarian/ABG Rock Garden: Kathy Swick**

**Technology Upgrader: Charles Utermohle**

**Sunshine Committee: Dorte Mobley**

## JOIN NARGS

ARGS is a chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. There are many benefits to membership that are listed on their web page. If you are not already a member, consider joining NARGS. Go to [www.args.org/join](http://www.args.org/join).

ENJOY OUR FACEBOOK PAGE ?  
ENJOYED A WORKSHOP OR FIELD TRIP?  
Then Become an ARGS Member!

We have about six meetings per year, plus plant sales, field trips and workshops. Our meetings are generally on the third Saturday of the month, Fall, Winter, and Spring, and may be via ZOOM or a Hybrid format with an in person at the Elk's Club in Eagle River and ZOOM. To join, please send your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and a check payable to ARGS at 12001 Audubon Dr., Anchorage, AK 97516 or join 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 \$25.00 US

Membership is for the calendar year and includes all issues of the newsletter and Crevice Bulletins for that year. The ARGS Newsletter is published 4-6 times per year. We invite your suggestions and contributions to the newsletter,. Please contact Bonnie Friedman, email [Bonnief@gci.net](mailto:Bonnief@gci.net)

## 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](http://WWW.AKROCKGARDENSOCIETY.ORG)

Webmasters: Open  
ARGS is on FACEBOOK at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/alaskarockgardensociety/>