

ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Volume 30

Issue 1

January 2026

This Saturday, January 17, 1:00 PM, Membership Meeting via Zoom. Program by North American Rock Garden Society President, Todd Boland

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

January Program: The Flora of Southern Alberta by Todd Boland

2

Do you recognize this plant? Membership

3

"Having Our Say", ARGS Member's Submissions

4

ARGS 2025-2026 Educational Program and Activities

5

Plant Profile by Kathy Swick

6, 7 and 8

Past ARGS Programs and Highlights From the ARGS Library

9

ARGS Positions of Responsibility, NARGS, ARGS Web Address

10

From the President

Happy New Year Rock Gardeners!

Does anyone else find it ironic that December ended with monstrous wind storms and no snow and January started with brutal negative temps? I am writing this on the 12th of January, looking out my window at nearly two feet of fluffy white snow finally insulating the ground and garden three weeks too late. I'm curious to learn what survived. The only way to find out is to endure the rest of winter, one day at a time. Some of the things that help me endure include conversations with gardening friends, browsing seed and nursery catalogues, and online zoom presentations.

If you have not done so already, please renew your ARGS membership for calendar year 2026. In addition, so that members can stay in touch, member contact information will soon be sent out by email.

I hope the winter and new year are treating you kindly, and that you will join us on zoom for our January meeting. See you there.

Jaime Rodriguez

© Alaska Rock Garden Society 2026

Unless otherwise specified, contents may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes by crediting the author and ARGS.



You won't want to miss this Saturday's program by current NARGS President, Todd Boland.



The Flora of Southern Alberta

by Todd Boland

Alaska Rock Garden Soc.
zoom program

**Saturday, Jan. 17
1:00 pm**

The southern Alberta Rocky Mountains are home to the greatest variety of alpine plants that Canada has to offer. This talk will feature the profuse diversity of alpiners growing in Jasper, Banff, and Waterton National Parks along with the Columbian Ice Fields.

Todd lives in St. John's, Newfoundland, where he is the chief horticulturist at the Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden. He is the current president of NARGS, the author of the NARGS "Plant of the Month" feature, and their administrator of the image gallery. In 2023, he became the tour manager for NARGS, is a regular contributor to The Rock Garden Quarterly, and has spoken to gardening groups in North America, the U.K., and New Zealand. He has authored six photographic field guides on the flora of Atlantic Canada, as well as three gardening books, ***Favourite Perennials for Atlantic Canada***, ***Shrubs and Vines for Atlantic Canada*** and most recently ***Gardening for Acidic Soils***, co-written with Jamie Ellison of Nova Scotia. **ARGS is VERY fortunate to have him as our February speaker.**





Do you recognize this plant?

Welcome New or Renewing Members:

David and Cynthia Schraer

January is time to renew if you haven't already since membership for the Alaska Rock Garden Society is for the calendar year. Renewal information can be found on the ARGS website at:

<https://www.akrockgardensociety.org/membership.html>

Annual memberships are just \$15 for individuals and \$20 for families. ARGS strongly encourages use of on-line renewals.





“Having Our Say”

We are using this page to encourage contributions from our members and will try to include all entries. Here are some photos from Dorte Mobley's rock garden under a cover of frost.





Dates listed below are approximate and when available, additional information will be sent to members.

Educational Programs and Activities—ARGS 2025/26

Programs are 3rd Saturday of the Month, 1:00 p.m. In person , hybrid, or zoom

WHEN	WHAT AND WHO	WHERE	METHOD
Sept. 20, 2025	Plant and Seed Swap	Elks Club	In person
Oct. 18	Getting Started With Seeds Jaime, Florene, Todd, Kathy	Elks Club	In person, hybrid
Nov. 15	Hardy Plants for the Alaska Rock Garden—Florene	Elks Club	in person, hybrid
Dec. 13	Social Gathering, 2:00 p.m.	Todd & Zoes house, potluck	in person
Jan. 17, 2026	Alpine Plants of Southern Alberta Todd Boland, president NARGS	zoom	zoom
Feb. 21	(1) Bonnie Friedman, Plants of Lofoten Island, Norway—Friends, Cousins, and Strangers (2) Kathy Swick, Penstemons Briefly	zoom	zoom
March 21	Native Primula of Alaska Marilyn Barker	Elks Club if driving conditions permit	In person or zoom depending on weather
April 18	(1) 2025 Hikes Recap, '26 Preview, Todd Bradley (2) Alpine Troughs, Jaime Rodriguez	Elks Club	in person, hybrid
May 9	ARGS Plant Sale	Botanical Garden, ABG near rock garden, Anch.	in person
May 25	Saturday of Memorial Day weekend ARGS Plant Sale	Wasilla	in person
June, date TBA	Trough Building Workshop	Madge's barn	in person, materials fee
date TBA	Trough Planting Workshop	TBA	TBA
various dates	Multiple and repeated garden visits	TBA	TBA
May 30	Plant Sale, Wildflower Garden Club includes ARGS growers	old DMV Bldg, near Spenard and Benson	in person
Aug. 8 or 15 TBA	Plant Sale, Master Gardeners Group, includes ARGS growers	parking lot of AK Botanical Garden	in person



Did you guess this plant?

Androsace Suitable for Alaska Rock Gardens by Kathy Swick



Androsace carnea rosea, pictured above, is sometimes called just *Androsace carnea*. Although there are forms with white flowers, the ones labeled 'rosea' refer to the pink-flowered form, for clarity. They can eventually grow to form apparent mats, as above, or grow in clumps, like the "Do You Recognize" picture. Actually, the "mat" is really just a collection of individual plants growing close together. Even in bloom they are only about two inches high, with rosettes of narrow pointed leaves. Multiple flowers open up on each stem very early in the season shortly after snow melt. If sited well, they seed readily around the parent plant unless dead-headed.

Androsace are in the primula family but unlike some of their kin, they want very well-drained soil with lots of sand and gravel. If they are planted in ordinary garden soil they will rot. Although they like rocky soil, they do not want it to become completely dry. They can thrive in troughs or the rock garden given a sufficiently airy soil mix. In nature they grow in scree in a variety of European mountain ranges, where they get steady moisture from melting snow fields. The scree provides lots of air space for the roots, so they are never soggy. This species prefers acid soil, and can take full sun with sufficient moisture. Because of Alaska's long summer days it can also thrive with some midday shade. It is the easiest *Androsace* to grow and suitable for beginners.



Androsace sempervivoides, at first glance, may look just like *Androsace carnea rosea*. But its rosettes are somewhat flatter, its leaves rounded instead of pointed, and it forms little red runners (like strawberries do) which grow a new rosette at the end. It slowly forms thick mats in this way with many flowers on each stem. Flowers appear about two weeks after *Androsace carnea* blooms, in the last days of May or in early June. It also likes well drained soil, airy and moist, in full sun or with midday shade, and is relatively easy to grow



Androsace chamaejasme is native to Alaska in several mountainous areas and on tundra in the northern part of the state. Its rosettes are somewhat looser than the previous two, with narrow leaves that are variably hairy. The flowers are larger with a yellow eye. It also blooms toward the end of May or early June in Anchorage. It self-seeds at a lower rate than *Androsace carnea rosea*. With suitably good drainage, moisture, and light the colony will maintain itself without much intervention from the gardener.



Two plants native to Alaska which grow well together—**Androsace chamaejasme** with **Arnica lessingii**. A *Draba* species has also seeded itself in this area (the small yellow buds between the two native plants).

Note: All plants in these photos are in the Swick garden in Anchorage, growing on a former road shoulder built in 1950. The sandy gravelly soil has been mellowed over decades by the slow decomposition of spruce needles, until the trees were beetle-killed in 2019.





Did you miss an ARGS program? Is there a program you would like to view again? ARGS presentations are currently being loaded onto our YouTube page. When this process is completed, we will notify you of the available programs and provide instructions through this newsletter.

CURIOUS?

WANT TO GROW SOME WONDERFUL PLANTS?



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ARGS LIBRARY

Outstanding books on many topics have been donated to our lending library. *Alpines Without a Rock Garden* resembles a pamphlet more than a book at just forty pages. It would be especially relevant to those who do not have a rock garden but would love to grow some alpine plants anyway. The book gives good advice about trough gardens, growing in tufa rock, in dry walls (unmortared), in raised beds, using peat blocks, in alpine houses, and cold frames. The publisher is a British horticultural society. Even though the climate there is quite different than ours, they have some excellent advice to offer. If you are interested in borrowing this or other ARGS library books, please contact Kathy Swick using the phone number or email listed on our member roster. (A current member roster will be emailed soon to all members.)



POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

President: Jaime Rodriguez

Vice-President: Todd Bradley

Secretary : Dorte Mobley

Treasurer: Charles Utermohle

Past President: Florene Carney

Membership: Todd Bradley

Programs: Kathy Swick

Newsletter Editor: Bonnie Friedman

Palmer Visitors Center: Jaime Rodriguez

Librarian/ABG Rock Garden: Kathy Swick

Technology Upgrader: Charles Utermohle

Sunshine Committee: Dorte Mobley

Hike Committee: Todd Bradley

ENJOY OUR FACEBOOK PAGE, 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 portion at the Elk's Club in Eagle River and ZOOM. 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 \$20.00 US

Membership is for the calendar year and includes all issues of the newsletter and Crevise Bulletins for that year. The ARGS Newsletter is published 4-6 times per year and our bulletin, CREVICE is published to announce special news or events. We invite your suggestions and contributions to the newsletter. Please contact Bonnie Friedman, email Bonnief@gci.net

Seeking your input: If there are any program topics or activities you would like to see in the next year, please contact Kathy Swick, our program coordinator.



**NORTH AMERICAN
ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY**

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.

WWW.AKROCKGARDENSOCIETY.ORG

Webmasters: Open

ARGS is on FACEBOOK at:

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