

ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Volume 29

Issue 6

October 2025

**This Saturday, October 18,
1:00 PM, In Person General
Membership Meeting at Eagle
River Elk's Lodge, 17111 N**

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Why is it that late autumn, with the darkening nights and changing colors, instead of signaling a welcome slowdown of activity, feels more like an oncoming freight train? In spite of daily bits of progress on winter preparation, I am more behind than ever. I still have eight tables of plants in the nursery to set on the ground for winter. At least the rain is keeping the temperatures above freezing.

My to-do list guilt has me looking forward to the distraction of our next club meeting this Saturday, October 18th. We will be meeting in person at 1:00 PM at the Eagle River Elk's Lodge to talk about growing plants from seed. It is my hope that this will inspire more people to participate in ordering seed from the NARGS seed exchange and try growing more plants from seed. Board members Florene Carney, Todd Bradley, Kathleen Swick and I will share our experiences and recommendations.

On a completely unrelated note, if you are a fan of Halloween, I recommend visiting the Alaska Botanical Garden. They have decorated the entire site with Halloween decorations.

**Jaime Rodriguez
ARGS President**

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GETTING STARTED WITH SEEDS advice for novices and old-timers

Saturday, Oct.18, 2025, 1:00 pm

Eagle River Elks Club, 17111 N. Eagle River Loop Rd.
Alaska Rock Garden Society (Hybrid) Monthly Meeting

Aspiring rock gardeners can't just go to the store and buy alpine plants. Anything unusual will have to be grown at home. How? When?

Four experienced members—Jaime Rodriguez, Florene Carney, Todd Bradley, and Kathy Swick— will lay the groundwork, show you where to find resources, and make brief presentations on different methods that work for them. There will be materials to look over, and a few seeds available if you want to get started.



Do you recognize this plant?

This plant was introduced to Alaska thanks to the persistent efforts of our current president, Jaime Rodriguez. The photo on the right was taken in early June at the Alaska Botanical Garden.



Welcome New or Renewing Members:

Herbert Braun
Meredith Buchman
Stephanie Cranford
Janet Maestas
Stephanie Nowers
Jo Overholt
Pamela Pope
Austen Whitney

Membership for the Alaska Rock Garden Society is for the calendar year. Renewal information can be obtained 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 by eliminating surcharges for using your credit card.





Garden in 2015

Notes From a Rock Gardener By Dorte Mobley

About 12 years ago my rock garden was totally overgrown with weeds such as birdvetch, *anemone syvestris* and the horrible grass that covered my whole yard. When the boys joined scouts and I became a leader, I didn't take time to weed like one should when one has a garden. I had both knees replaced around that time including follow up surgeries, after which I didn't garden at all because of the pain.

But the pain subsided, and I decided that if I were to have a rock garden, it couldn't look like that. I got all the plants that were worth saving dug up and potted up so they could get replanted after renovation. I then proceeded to dig up the whole top layer of plant material and roots, bagged it and took it to the dump. Since there were so many horrible weeds, I didn't want to try to compost it or "throw it into the woods". After dumping the load, the attendant asked me if I believed that her scale was right and that there really were around 800 pounds. I agreed with that!!!

I lifted all the rocks in the process and enjoyed the look after it all was put back together. Then came the fun part – replanting all the survivors. I have tried to keep up after that but in some areas the weeds have been more aggressive, so this summer I decided that I needed to do something. I got the west side cleaned up pretty good and was then looking for more room to plant some of the purchases from the spring. Well, trying to weed in the middle and around some *primulas*, I decided that it probably would be easier to just dig it all up and take the plants into the garage. There I could sit and clean out the weed roots in between the good plant roots without bending over while balancing on some rocks.

I actually impressed myself and put some of the rocks back in a little more horizontal position so I will have better places to step when I need to get to the top! Of course, some of the *auriculas* could use some dividing so I had plants for my own garden and also some to share. I just added some bulbs for spring blooms, and I am already looking forward to seeing how it will look in the spring.



Garden in 2025



Dates for events 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 or zoom or hybrid

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	TBA	Elks Club, if driving conditions permit	in person or zoom depending on weather
Dec. TBA	Social Gathering	TBA, likely Madge's house	in person
Jan. 17, 2026	The Plants of Southern Alberta Todd Boland, president NARGS	zoom	zoom
Feb. 21	TBA	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	2025 Hikes Recap, '26 Preview, Todd Bradley Garden Troughs Jaime Rodriguez	Elks Club	in person, hybrid
May 9	ARGS Plant Sale	Botanical Garden, ABG near rock gardens, Anch.	in person
May 25	Saturday of Memorial Day weekend ARGS Plant Sale	Wasilla	in person
June, date TBA	Trough Building Workshop	Madge's workshop	in person, materials fee
date TBA	Trough Planting Workshop	TBA	TBA
various dates	Multiple and repeated garden visits	TBA	TBA
May 30 or June 6 TBA	Plant Sale, Wildflower Garden Club with ARGS participants	old DMV Bldg, near Spenard and Benson	in person
Aug. 8 or 15 TBA	Plant Sale, Master Gardeners Group with ARGS participants	parking lot of AK Botanical Garden	in person





Did you guess this plant?

Profile **RANUNCULUS PARNASSIFOLIUS** by Todd Boland (NARGS)



From a rosette of dark green, fleshy, rounded leaves, arise stems 4-6 inches tall topped with a loose cluster of brilliant white, five-petaled flowers. It typically blooms from late spring to early summer. It hails from alpine regions of the Pyrennes and Alps.

This buttercup requires full sun or part shade and a well-drained but moisture-retentive soil. It is not fussy about soil pH.

If you are lucky and your plant is thriving, it may be dug and divided after blooming. Plants are relatively slow to increase and any drought can prove deadly. Seed is the most popular way of raising more plants. Seeds need to be fresh and require a cold stratification period.

Comments by local growers

Kathy Swick: This plant is thriving in the tufa bed at the AK Botanical Garden, usually blooming by early June. It has self-seeded successfully there and also in and around its large pot in my garden, but not in an invasive way. It's shiny waxy leaves are very attractive even when it is not in bloom. I am very grateful to Jaime for introducing this plant to Alaska.

Jaime Rodriguez: I first grew this plant from NARGS seed about 20 years ago. I got the seed, sowed it, gave the pot outdoor treatment, and then waited year after year with no germination. The fifth year of waiting, I told myself that if nothing happens, I'll recycle the soil. This is my standard practice for rare alpine seeds. That particular season, one plant germinated. I let it grow in that pot all summer, and was delighted to see it come back after surviving a winter. I carefully planted it in one of my hypertufa troughs. It took three more years before I saw the first blooms, and another couple years before I started getting germination on offspring. The tiny rosette of attractive leaves has remarkably large, white flowers. It has been a well behaved Ranunculus. I have slowly expanded the number of plants in my troughs and garden, and usually have some available for sale at various stages from plants that have survived their first winter to older, blooming sized plants. I never want to be without it. I particularly desire getting seeds of the Iberian Peninsula form, which has pink flowers. The form I grow is white.



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, with a first group of videos available to watch now. This page has not been updated since last month. Please check back in the coming weeks to view new entries.

ARGS President, Jaime Rodriguez has created a YouTube page for our club and has begun to upload videos of our meeting programs. Below are the links for videos that have been uploaded to YouTube so far. Each video has its own link. Jaime will continue to update tags and descriptions for each video, but the links will not change. The videos have been posted as "unlisted", which means that they can be watched by anyone who has the link, but they are not avail-

March 15, 2025 Jaime Rodriguez, The Genus Saxifraga <https://youtu.be/OOptTrxR9uY>

February 15, 2025 Todd Boland, Alpines Along the Beartooth Highway <https://youtu.be/QvbAOR1CU-4>

January 18, 2025 Paul Spriggs, Gardening on the Dry Side of Vancouver Island https://youtu.be/N_8xhKn6mrY

October 19, 2024 Todd Bradley, Creating a Crevice Garden <https://youtu.be/t4x8WESnsgc>

January 2021 <https://youtu.be/il4PSWTqUmE>

April 2021 <https://youtu.be/htlcqD9Hlew>



POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

President: Jaime Rodriguez

Vice-President: Vacant

Secretary : Dorte Mobley

Treasurer: Charles Utermohle

Past President: Florene Carney

Membership: Charles Utermohle

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 \$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 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/>