

ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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Issue 5

September 2025

**This Saturday, September 20,
1:00 PM, In Person General
Membership Meeting at Eagle
River Elk's Lodge, 17111 N
Eagle River Loop Road**

Happy September, fellow rock gardeners!

A time of transition is upon us. As days shorten, temps lower, and greenery goes golden, it is time again to gather monthly to share and learn. Our tradition of swapping plants and seeds will continue this coming Saturday at 1:00pm at the Eagle River Elks Lodge, 17111 N Eagle River Loop Rd.

Here is how the plant swap works:

Bring a plant, take a plant. We ask people to bring up to four plants. Some growers will bring extras to give away, so everyone who wants can take home something. As you arrive and sign in, you get a number. When the swap begins, numbers are drawn. When your number is called, you choose a plant, and then draw the next number. This continues until every number has been called, then all numbers are put back in the basket and another round begins until the plants are gone, or four rounds have occurred. After that, leftover plants are up for grabs. No one is required to bring plants to participate. We do ask the growers bringing plants to NOT bring the common stuff you want to discard. Be reasonable. This is about sharing desirable stuff, not the ordinary things.

The seed exchange is much more casual. If you have a surplus of seeds that you are willing to share, envelopes will be provided so people can take a pinch for themselves to try.

Homemade treats are welcome if you feel inspired. We will be sharing our successes and failures from the past summer, and talk about what we would like to see in the next year. I hope to see you there.

Jaime Rodriguez,
ARGS President

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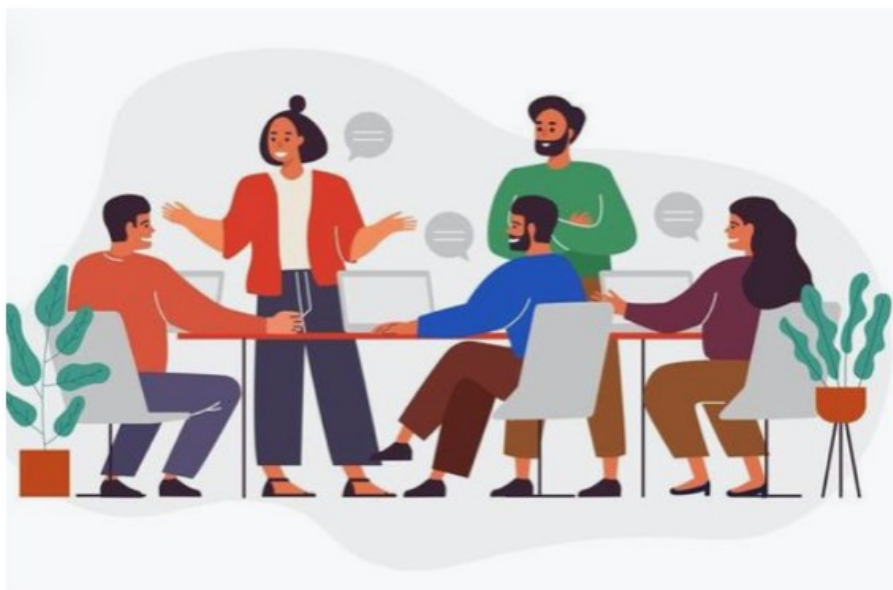
SO MANY SEEDLINGS! WHICH ONES TO BRING?

SOCIAL GATHERING AND ANNUAL PLANT/SEED SWAP

Saturday September 20, 1:00 p.m.

Eagle River Elks Club, 17111 North Eagle River Loop Road

At this event, members generally bring 4 plants to share. After we catch up with each other's summer activities, we draw names and take turns picking a plant until all of them find homes. If you don't have plants or seeds to share, please come anyway—you will be included in the plant share because there are always lots of extras.



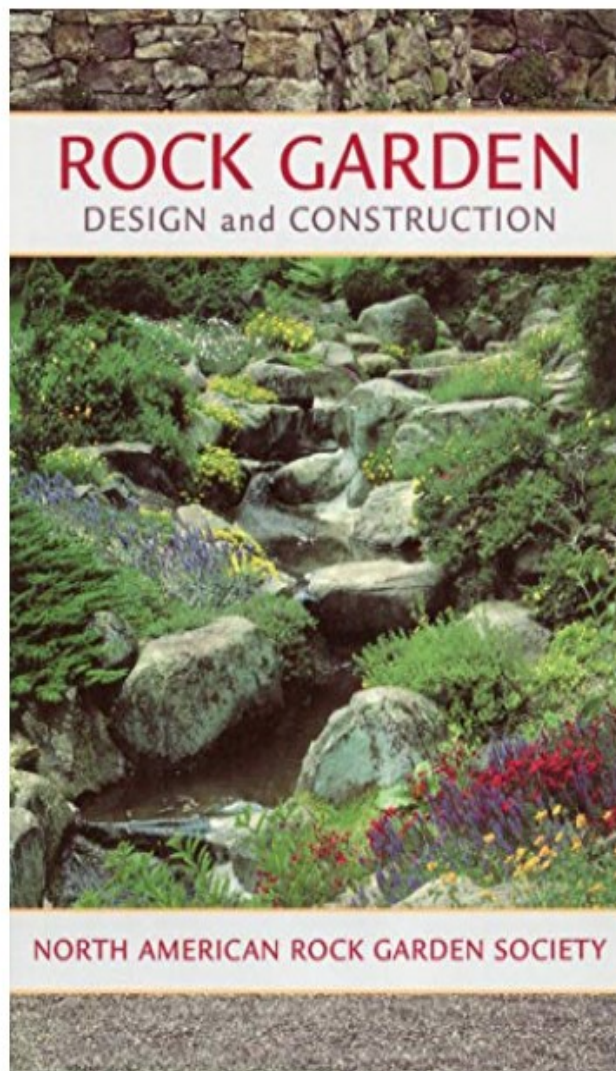
If you are a new member, this is a good opportunity to meet the group informally and take home your first plant. The lending library will also be available. Don't be shy—spend an afternoon with plant nerds—we always have a great time when we gather!



Quick Glimpse: The ARGS Lending Library

by Kathy Swick

ARGS members have donated many wonderful books on rock gardening and alpine plants. They are all available to lend to current members.



One excellent example is *Rock Garden Design and Construction*, published by the North American Rock Garden Society (of which ARGS is an affiliate). Even the introduction to this book is extremely interesting! Each chapter is authored by a different expert, covering topics as diverse as design principles, different types of rock gardens from scree to sand to woodland, plus chapters on regional styles and techniques. Our own president, Jaime Rodriguez, contributed a chapter entitled “Alaska and the Far North.”

I reread this book last winter and found it amazingly relevant no matter what your experience level might be. Come to the meeting to browse more great titles!



Membership

This year, ARGS experienced a growth in membership due in part, to our new and exciting summer botany program. Hikes were offered every two weeks by hike committee chair Todd Bradley or ARGS President Jaime Rodriguez to visit rock garden plants where they naturally occur. For many, this was a chance to learn about new species of plants, or learn about the habitats of plants we may already have growing in our gardens.

ARGS' mission is to spread excitement and knowledge about rock gardening. There are many things each of us as members can do. Bring a friend to meetings or field events, and especially encourage young people to join. New members bring fresh ideas and new energy to our organization.



Welcome New or Renewing Members:

Sharon Powder
Carol Ann Lovejoy
Dorte Mobley
Lisa Oakley
Pat Tremaine
Florene and Doug Carney
Gina Docherty
Charlie Kempton
Celia Rosen
Leesa Wingo

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.



Yak Dung for Alaska Gardens

By Janice Berry

Alaska residents have a unique source of enrichment for their gardens by way of the Alaska Zoo on O'Malley Road. Yak dung! Most gardeners are familiar with animal manures from chickens, goats, horses, and cows. They are some of the best ways to help our gardens grow amazing plants, in combination with other fertilizers and compost.

The zoo has several Tibetan yaks (including one adorable baby), animals whose native habitats are the Himalayan mountains of Tibet and Nepal. The Tibetan people have used the dung for fuel as well as their gardens for millennia.

The Alaska Botanical Garden has been adding yak dung from the zoo to their compost piles for years. They like it because it has fewer weed seeds than other animal manures. Another reason ABG likes yak dung is because it's the perfect fertilizer for their Himalayan poppy collection. Since both "transplants" originated from the same region, using properly aged yak manure on their poppies makes them thrive better than other fertilizers. When I learned about the yak dung from the zoo a couple of years ago I began using it on my blue poppies: They've never looked better.

Lately I almost always see blue bags of yak dung outside free for the taking. Perhaps this article will encourage more gardeners to take advantage of this unique garden enhancement. The dung bags are placed outside the zoo in the parking lot next to the greenhouse. The zoo wins because it doesn't have to find a way to dispose of the manure, and Alaska residents get free fertilizer.

As with all animal manures, yak dung should be aged or composted before use. However, if you don't want to wait to compost it, you can also create a nutrient-rich "tea" by steeping yak dung in water and using the diluted solution to water plants that will not be used for food. Be careful not to make it too potent as it can burn the roots and foliage of your plants, especially seedlings and young plants.



**Baby Tibetan Yak
born at the Alaska
Zoo, March 2025
Photo credit: Alaska
News Source**



ARGS members visited some of the most spectacular wildflower areas of Southcentral Alaska this summer through a series of botany hikes coordinated by member Todd Bradley.





ARGS Calendar of Activities and Meeting Dates for 2025

***Society meetings are the third Saturday of the month and are held at 1:00 PM via ZOOM unless otherwise indicated. Dates for events and field trips are approximate and when available, additional information will be sent to members.**

**Saturday, January 18— General Membership Meeting, Paul Spriggs —
My Rock Garden: Gardening on the Dry Side of Victoria Island**

**Saturday, February 15 —General Membership Meeting, Todd Boland—
Plants of the Beartooth Mountains**

**Saturday, March 15 – General Membership Meeting, Jaime Rodriguez—
Overview of the Saxifrage Family Including European Treasures**

**Saturday, April 19 – General Membership Meeting, Forrest Baldwin—A
Talk on the Genera *Saxifraga* and *Micranthes* in Alaska**

**May Activities - Clean-up at ABG Rock Garden in Anchorage
- Clean-up at Palmer Visitor Center Rock Garden
May 10 - ARGS Plant Sale at Alaska Botanical Garden
May 25 - ARGS Valley Plant Sale at Snowfire Gardens**

June, July, August Field Trips, Pop Up Garden Visits - Time and Locations will be sent through our Crevice bulletin

**Saturday, September 20 - General Membership Meeting, In Person -
Plant Exchange and Social, Elks Hall, Eagle River**

Saturday October 18 - General Membership Meeting

Saturday November 15 - Last General Membership Meeting of 2025

No General Membership Meetings are held in December



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. 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 available to the public or searchable.

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>

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

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



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



**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.

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.

WWW.AKROCKGARDENSOCIETY.ORG

Webmasters: Open

ARGS is on FACEBOOK at:

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