

# ALASKA ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 2

April, 2001

## Calendar

**Mark Your Calendars Now! The next issue comes in June.**

Mon. April 2, 2001. 7:30 PM **Alaska Native Plant Society Monthly Meeting.**  
Campbell Creek Science Center.

Sat. Apr 14, 2001. **Garden Week** display at Sears Mall. 10 AM to 7 PM. Call Verna (333-8212) if you can help man our booth. Set-up starts at 9 AM. If you have plants to sell, bring them. 25% to ARGS, 75% to the grower.

Thurs.—Sat. Apr 19-21, 2001. **Celebration of Spring. Alaska Garden Conference & Garden Fair** presented by Mat-Su Master Gardeners Association. Raven Hall, Alaska State Fairgrounds. Registration: Dorte Mobley (907) 376-4002, e-mail: danishdream@matnet.com.

Sat. Apr 21, 2001. 2 PM **“What is an Annual Meeting and How can you help?”**  
with Verna Pratt and Botanical Photography with Frank Pratt and Annie

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From Our  
President,  
Florene  
Carney

Many changes are afoot in the world of rock gardening in Alaska. A new year has brought a new Editor of the Alaska Rock Garden Society Newsletter. I'd like to welcome Charles Utermohle as Editor. We are pleased to have him on board and know that he will do an outstanding job, although following in the footsteps of Jaime Rodriguez will not be easy. In the two years Jaime was Editor he continued to do what The Alaskan Rock Garden Society has made a tradition from the first day we organized - he "raised the bar". Jaime changed the format to a crisper and more professional layout and searched out material that was contemporary and timely, serving to inform the membership as well as entice them to try more and bigger projects. Jaime is not leaving us, but has a full plate with being Chair-

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person of the 2002 Annual/General Meeting and wrapping up the China Seed Trip. Welcome to Charles and Thank You to Jaime for a job well done.

Getting ready for 2002 is going to be the main thrust this year. I'd like to encourage any members who have a rock garden to sign up on the NARGS web site to open your garden to visitors. I have had my garden on the list for the past couple of years and it has been delightful.

People who are traveling in Alaska to visit relatives, or on a tour have called and said they would be passing through, could they visit and we set a time. My experience has always been very positive and I've made new friends all over the country. Give it a try! (It also gave me a push to get my rock garden up to speed every spring. Sometimes a little boost is a good thing.) It will be a great way to let the rest of the country know that we are active and ready for visitors. We would also like to get photos of Alaskan gardens up on the ARGS web site. If you have the capability perhaps you could help out there. This is an exciting time in Alaskan Gardening – we are growing a variety of things our forebears would never believe and right now the sky is the limit. You'll find the North American Rock Garden web site at: [www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org).

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### The World of Plants Plant Explorers to the Rescue By Verna Pratt

Some of you may have attended the "Standing Room Only" presentation on Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, at the Anchorage Museum. Jaime Rodriguez, one of the nine participants of the Alaska Rock Garden Society's seed collecting trip to China in 2000, gave a slide presentation showing where they traveled and what they saw.

Inspiration for planning this trip came from a presentation 2 years ago by Dan Hinkley of Heronswood Nursery in Seattle, Washington. Dan is an avid plant explorer --- always looking for new garden worthy plant species. He does, however, concentrate on plants to serve Zones 5 to 9. It became evident that, if we colder climate gardeners wanted new species suitable to Alaska, we would have to plan our own trip and explore

higher elevations. With age and asthma against me, I decided not to accompany them but, instead, to support them with a seed share purchase. With many such purchases and a grant from the North American Rock Garden Society, the trip became a reality.

I am looking forward to the results of growing some of the wonderful seeds that they acquired. With over 900 different collections there are bound to be some good ones, but we also need to be aware of troublesome or invasive species. I plan to start a special China garden on my property where these plants can easily be grown under supervision. Often times it takes several years to determine the value or worth of some species.

In the past, many garden worthy plants have come from China, and have become well known and cherished by gardeners. On the other hand, some very desirable plants were once considered impossible to grow. Sometimes, merely because they were attempted in the wrong climate. A perfect example of this is *Meconopsis*, the Himalayan Blue Poppy. It absolutely loathes hot or dry climates. Then a brave soul tried it in Alaska. Now it is considered a most desirable plant. The following comment was made (with a big grin) by Panayoti Kelaidis, now Director of the Denver Botanic Garden, while visiting Alaska, "You can grow *Meconopsis*? Stop your whining about your terrible climate!" There could be more such species out there. Many Primroses, Ligularias, Cimicifugas, etc. from this area have already proved to be nice showy garden plants. I wonder what wonderful new gems this group of people have brought back to us. All gardeners realize that, because of our climate, the number of species that we can grow is very limited and more experimentation needs to be done. With these seeds available, we can explore these possibilities without a large expense.

If any of you have been fortunate enough to receive any of the seeds from this expedition, please sow and grow them with care. Keep records and report your findings. Who knows, as industry expands in China, and devastation of forests and wild species progresses, we may, also, be saving some plants from extinction.

Without a doubt, we all will have learned a lot and, hopefully, provided Alaska's horticulture world with some new desirable species. The right plant in the right place can make a world of difference.



Seed Propagation with Rhonda Williams, Recluse Gardens  
By Verna Pratt

Rhonda did a great job of demonstrating how to have success germinating seeds, with special emphasis on seeds from the China Expedition.

Sterile soil mixes are always a must for seed starting as soil diseases can easily wipe out new little seedlings. Sterile containers are also needed for the same reason. Wash containers well with soap & water, rinse, and then soak for 5 to 10 minutes in a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts of water. Give your room good ventilation while you are doing this as the fumes can cause headaches.

Rhonda recommends that, when in doubt, you should stratify your seeds. Many seeds will germinate without it, but some really need it. Because this means putting them outside, she recommends covering the top of the pot with about ¼” of chicken grit or gravel. This keeps the top of the soil moist and keeps seeds from blowing away. Cover the tray with snow and let nature take its course (30-45 days is sufficient). Covering with Landscape Cloth will prevent Birch seeds from blowing in. Then, bring into a warm, light area and see what grows.

Rhonda then gave a slide presentation on the China Trip. We now have a group of over 100 slides that members of the expedition can borrow and show to various groups. These are duplicates of photos taken by members of the Team. Rhonda also answered many questions about various species on the seed list. Each time I watch a presentation on the China trip, I learn something new.

[Groups interested in having presentations of the ARGS Expedition to China slide show should contact President Florene Carney for arrangements.]

Remember to redeem your coupon from the “Seed Collecting in Yunnan, China” lecture for a free seed packet at Recluse Gardens, McAllister and the Parks Highway just past Church Road, Wasilla. 373-0925

China Expedition-Seed Germination Results  
By Verna Pratt

I decided that since I already had several trays of seeds out-of-doors that definitely required stratification, that I would try to start most of my expedition seeds indoors.

I also wanted these seedlings to be of good size by June for transplanting out-of-doors. I plan to make a China Garden where I can really watch development / success / failures, etc., and eliminate any problems (weeds) before they become a real problem. None of us know, for sure, what will survive in our climate or how they will react to our soil. Please keep good records. Record the number on your seed package with the name and report your results (especially after the first winter) to Rhonda at Recluse Gardens in Wasilla. That will be our first real test.

I soaked all Iris and Pea family seeds overnight. Some were up in just a few days! It has been 3 weeks now and those that have not germinated will be put in a cool place, probably the garage (45°F) to chill them for a bit. All members of the Pea family, *Iris colletti*, *Incarvillia*, *Clematis*, *Asters*, *Compositae* family, *Rheums*, *Spireae*, herbaceous *Potentillas*, *Silenes*, *Salvias*, or *Mentha* species, *Impatiens*, *Rhodiola*, *Leontopodium* species, and some unknown species sprouted within 2 weeks. *Pedicularis* sprouts, although very few, were up in less than a week. Primroses and Gentians were fast germinators, but I lost some to damp off (I believe). I soon found that they should be removed from the warm laundry room immediately upon germination. About ½ of the *Alliums* and *Umbeliferae* species are up. I stratified all Lilies, Anemones, *Ranunculaceae* family, and Roses. In fact, most trees and shrubs.

**ARGS Newsletter Dates**

	<u>Submission date</u>	<u>Mailing Date</u>
Feb/Mar issue	January 15	February 1
Apr/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



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## Calendar

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*(Continued from page 1)*

**Nevaldine, RM 103 Fred & Sarah Machetanz Building, Rm. at MatSu College**

**Sat. May 19, 2001. 2 PM Building Hypertufa Troughs with Carmel Tysver, at the Alaska Botanical Garden, Anchorage. Bring boxes of different sizes: 14" x 20" to 18" x 36" and at least 10" deep.**

**Sun. May 20, 2001. 9 AM to 4 PM. ARGS Plant Sale. Sally Karabelnikoff' 7435 Old Harbor Road, 333-8237. Plants may be brought over after 7 AM on the previous day. Please pick up unsold plants right at 4 PM.**

**Tues. May 22, 2001. 7 PM—9 PM. Alaska Botanical Garden Volunteer Orientation. ABG Nursery. Information: 770-3692. [Learn how to help maintain the ARGS rock garden and other work in the garden.]**

**Early June. Tour guide training for 2002 NARGS Annual General Meeting. If you have not attended a pre-training session and want to help, contact Verna at 333-8212. Schedule to be mailed later.**

**Sun. June 16, 2001. 2 PM Field trip and photo shoot, location TBA**

**Sun. June 30, 2001. 10 AM—6 PM. 4th Annual Garden Fair. Alaska Botanical Garden. Information: 770-3692. [ARGs Plant Sale]**

**April 25—28, 2001, NARGS Annual Meeting "Wildflower Gems of the Allegheny Region", Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Registration: 1-724-935-1867, e-mail: nargs2001@aol.com.**

**June 28 -July 2, 2001, International Alpine Garden Conference, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, EH14 4AS, Scotland.**

**August 2001. ARGS Seed Collection Trip. Past year's locations for seed collecting trips have been to Hatcher's Pass, Arctic Valley, and Bison Gulch/Mt. Healy. Ideas for this year include the Glenn Highway and Sheep Mountain Area. Submit your ideas and preferences to Verna Pratt (907) 333-8212 or akkrafts@alaskakrafts.com.**

**June 11-14, 2002, NARGS Annual General Meeting, Sheraton Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska.  
<http://www.alaskakrafts.com/NARGS/index.html>**

### **Educational Opportunities about Wildflowers this Summer from UAA (1 credit each):**

**Local Flora** (Biology 075), Verna Pratt. Tuesday mornings 9 AM—12:30 PM OR evenings 6-9:30 PM, May 8-15-22-29. First class indoors. Others mostly outdoors. Field trip to Bird Ridge.

**Discovering Wild Plants**, Verna Pratt. Alaska Outdoor Experimental Education. Wednesday evenings, 6-9:30 PM, May 30—June 13. First and last Wednesday class indoors. Saturday and Sunday, June 9 & 10, 9 AM—6 PM.

**Recreational Botany**, Dr. Marilyn Barker. Tuesdays and Thursdays, June 5—21, 6—10 PM. Saturday, June 16, 9 AM—6 PM. All out of doors.



## China Seed Germination Results

By Jack Muzatko

This year I decided to start with sort of a modified "Deno" procedure with all seeds stored in wet paper towels for 15 days at 70 degrees F. When a species started to germinate I transferred them to a 2" sq, 3" deep pots containing my own starting mix. I keep them under full spectrum fluorescent lights (14 hr) with an occasional sun bath. I plan to transfer them to an outdoor temporary garden site after about 6 to eight weeks.

After 15 days the towels that showed no signs of germination were transferred to the refrigerator (35 to 40 F) where I plan to keep them for probably 2 months. They have been in this cold cycle now for about a week (no further germination has been observed at 40). After the cold cycle I will start another 15 days at 70 F.

After that I may try Gibberellic Acid, freezing, long-term storage or other ideas based on any experience that other people have had with specific species of the China seeds. I am still pretty much a neophyte at this (my third year) so I am always learning.

The following lists show the seeds that have germinated within 15 days at 70F and the seeds that have not germinated and are in the cold cycle.

Seeds that have germinated at 70F:

ARGS-

- 0260 *Pterocephalus hookeri*
- 0285 *Corydalis aff. nobilis*
- 0393 *Lilium sp.*
- 0408 *Rheum delavayi*
- 0435 *Meconopsis pseudointegrifolia*
- 0508 *Primula sinopurpurea brevicula*
- 0512 *Rhododendron sp.*
- 0637 *Rhodiola sp.*
- 0680 *Adenophora sp.*
- 0682 *Arisaema elephas*
- 0727 *Origanum sp.*
- 0728 *Polygonum sp.*
- 0758 *Cyananthus sp.*
- 0759 *Draba sp.*
- 0762 *Lloydia delavayi*

- 0789 *Silene sp.*
  - 0795 *Corallodiscus flabellatus*
  - 0818 *Indigofera pendula*
  - 0843 *Primula forrestii*
  - 0884 *Saxifraga sp.*
  - 0890 *Delphinium sp.*
  - 0896 *Corallodiscus sp.*
  - 0897 *Cyberaea tomentosa*
  - 0899 *Draba sp.*
  - 0900 *Incarvillea sp.*
  - 0905 *Primula forrestii*
  - 0912 *Leycesteria sp.*
  - 0927 *Meconopsis horridula*
  - 0944 *Heraculum sp.*
- Seeds that have not germinated:
- 0151 *Pedicularis sp.*
  - 0206 *Impatiens sp.*
  - 0349 *Paris polyphylla*
  - 0441 *Aquilegia rockii*
  - 0496 *Lonicera sp.*
  - 0505 *Potentilla sp.*
  - 0620 *Piptanthus nepalensis*
  - 0661 *Aconitum sp.*
  - 0677 *Nomocharis sp.*
  - 0683 *Beesia calthafolia*
  - 0832 *Clematis sp.*
  - 0834 *Clematis sp.*
  - 0841 *Salvia companulata*
  - 0855 *Meconopsis sp.*
  - 0861 *Rhodiola sp.*
  - 0862 *Saxifraga sp.*
  - 0868 *Saxifraga sp.*
  - 0903 *Lysimachia lichiangensis*
  - 0951 *Smilacina pupurea*

## China Expedition Updates Soon to Be on the Web

ARGS will be maintaining careful notes on the propagation and identification of seeds collected in China. You can assist by sharing your results with Charles Utermohle (thule@alaska.net) or Rhonda Williams (recluse@mtaonline.net). Rhonda, who is maintaining the type collection of the China Expedition at Recluse Gardens, reports many seeds of the seeds sown in 14 flats in November/December and wintered over have spouted. Individuals can stop by to view the progress. Get some valuable hands-on experience (and more) helping transfer the seedlings.



## A Way to Grow Money

**Here's a list of good Alaska Native plants to propagate for sale at the June-2002 Annual Meeting of NARGS.**

### By Seed:

**Anemones, Saxifrages, Potentillas, Arnica (low) (frigid or Lessing's), Moss Campion, Violets (not Adunca), Low Jacob's Ladder, Poppies (Pale Pink, Lapland, Alaska), Any Primulas, *Douglasia gormanii*, Alp Lily, *Campanula lasiocarpa*, *Senecio resedifolius*, *Geum Rossii*,**

**Any low Oxytrope,**

### Cuttings with Rooting Hormone:

**Dwarf Willows, Mt. Avens, Alpine Azalea, *Diapensia*, Moss Campion, *Luetkea* (Alpine Spireae), *Androsace chamaejasme*,**

***Douglasia gormanii*,**

***Cornus canadensis*,**

***Cornus suecica*,**

***Linnaea borealis*,**

**Alpine Bear Berry**

### By Division:

**Aleutian Speedwell,**

**Nagoon berry,**

**Brook Saxifrage,**

**Orchids, Small, non-spreading Ferns,**

**Anemones, Mountain**

**Marigold (white),**

**Ground Dogwoods,**

**Dwarf Roseroot**

## Thoughts on the Upcoming Chinese Invasion of Alaska. By Jaime Rodriguez

Burn your roses – the Garden Police are coming! Horticultural flag waving is on the rise in South Central Alaska. It has been sparked by the recent Alaska Rock Garden Society Seed Collecting Expedition to China. Voices are being raised suggesting that in a few years some alpine Kudzu from China will have wiped out whole ecosystems of plants and animals in Alaska. Protecting our fragile, arctic environment means that all non-Alaskan native species are enemies to be destroyed.

Political speech making notwithstanding, a dialogue about invasive species is probably a good idea. Should one of these well meaning zealots approach you, and put you on the spot as a member of the Alaska Rock Garden Society, it may help to keep the following information in mind.

The committee that worked on the expedition, and the team members who went, were all concerned about not bringing the next Kudzu to Alaska. That is why we involved someone as experienced as Dan Hinkley to lead our team. More than once, a plant was passed over or a collection was discarded because we were informed of the invasive nature of that particular plant. Some unknowns were collected, but they have not been distributed. These collections are being grown by a select few individuals for observation.

Many of the plants collected have been collected before, but have been difficult or impossible to grow in more temperate climates. Perhaps these plants will thrive in Alaska, because our climate is more similar to their native environment. Even in their native environment these plants are scarce. Conservation and preservation is part of the commitment of ARGS and the China Expedition. These plants are unlikely to become pests here, but still bear careful watching until this is certain. The most likely outcome is that these plants will not survive without the regular care and attention of a gardener. Much like many of the common non-native plants grown in Alaskan gardens today. Even invasive garden species like *Campanula rapunculoides*, affectionately known as “The Purple Monster” have not invaded and taken over the tundra.

Truth be told, most of the invasive species that are problematic weeds in Alaska come from a limited number of sources. Several have been brought in as part of governmental and University sponsored revegetation experiments. Some come in from the farming industry, and most are the unfortunate byproduct of mud splashed motor-homes, recreational vehicles or burrs caught the clothing and pet hair from tourists.

Concern for protecting our environment is a good thing. Let us remember that the environment is not a static system. Our manipulation of it to make a garden in the first place is a drastic devastation of one environment, replacing it with an artificial construct of our own choosing. This is one of the more benign human impacts on environments. Grow plants from China and anywhere else you can get them. Be prepared to destroy them if they get out of hand. What ever you do, don't let fear of one thing or the other overcome your reasoning. Fear won't save an endangered species or design a more beautiful flower bed. Love just might do both.



## Positions of Responsibility

**President:** Florene Carney, HC 31 Box 5212, Wasilla, AK, 99654. (907) 376-5390; e-mail: snowfire@ak.net

**Vice-President:** Carmel Tysver, 2030 Patriot Cir., Anchorage, AK, 99515. (907) 522-3490; email: garden@corecom.net

**Secretary :** Kate Gordon, 7500 Beacon Hill Drive, Anchorage, AK, 99516. (907) 346-1603; email: kgordon@gci.net

**Treasurer:** Mary Moline, 9601 Copper Dr., Anchorage, AK, 99507 (907) 333-4419; email: moline@alaskalife.net

**Membership:** Thais Thomas, P.O. Box 93003, Anchorage, AK 99509. (907) 243-1666; e-mail: Thomas\_Thais@mssmail.asd.k12.ak.us

**Program Chair:** Annie Nevaldine, 4960 E. 5th, Anchorage, AK, 99508, (907) 333-2100; e-mail: anealdine@corecom.net

**Newsletter Editor:** Charles Utermohle, 5021 Southampton Dr., Anchorage, AK, 99503, (907) 561-1662 email: thule@alaska.net

**Seed Exchange:** Rhonda Williams, PO Box 872592, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 373-0925; e-mail: recluse@mtaonline.net

**Archives:** Marcia Hamilton, P.O. Box 870344, Wasilla, AK, 99687. (907) 746-3296; e-mail: mlh@matnet.com

**2002 Committee:** Chair- Jaime Rodriguez (907) 357-2747, Florene Carney (907) 376-5390, Harry Deuber (907) 276-5571, Kate Gordon (907) 346-1603, Debbie Hinchey (907) 278-2814, Sally Karabelnikoff (907) 333-8237, Frank Pratt/Verna Pratt (907) 333-8212, Rhonda Williams (907) 373-0925

## Welcome New Members!

Lorri Abel  
Jo Antonson  
Marylou Cacy  
Jo Dagon  
Irene Jemison  
Mims Jemison  
Stuart Jensen  
Warren Kitchens  
Karen Leis  
Gary Schneider  
Kris Snider  
Roy Smith  
Louise York

## 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 to :

Individual Membership \$15.00 US

Family Membership \$20.00 US

Canada Membership: \$20.00 US

Overseas Membership \$25.00 US

Membership is for the calendar year and includes all issues of the newsletter for that year. Back issues are available at \$1 each. The ARGS Newsletter is published 5 times per year. We invite your contributions. Please contact Charles Utermohle, editor, 5021 Southampton Dr., Anchorage, AK, 99503, (907) 561-1662 email: thule@alaska.net



ARGS Membership: - New - Renewal: - W/O Changes or - W/Changes  
Dues: \$15 US - Individual, \$20 US - Family/Canada, \$25 US - Foreign

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+ 4: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

ARGS may share its membership list with like-minded, non-profit organizations. If you DO NOT want to receive these notifications, please check the box -

Send form and payment to:  
Alaska Rock Garden Society  
P.O. Box 24-4136  
Anchorage, Alaska 99524-4136

Membership is for the calendar year. If the year after your address is not 2001 or later, your membership has expired!

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