

Rock gardens, also called alpine gardens, can offer an intriguing change of pace from our typical Northwest beds and woodland gardens. They are characterized by low or compact plants, tidy spreading groundcovers, dwarf conifers, and often rocks and/or terracing.

To make a rock garden work, you need to pick a sunny spot in your yard with loose, gravelly, or sandy soil. Alpine plants prefer a well-drained, alkaline, often nutrient-poor soil. Clay soils or rich topsoils will not give the look you desire. They are often too wet or too rich, making the plants leggy and encouraging weeds. In particular, winter wet must be avoided.

After you have placed your rocks and planted your plants, it may be a good idea to “mulch” with an inch of sand or gravel over the exposed ground (not within the drip lines of plants). This will help to discourage weeds and will enhance the alpine look. Deadhead plants when they finish blooming to prevent legginess. Fertilize with a granular slow-release fertilizer such as Dr. Earth or E. B. Stone All-Purpose in spring and again in summer. Remember that although many of these plants are drought-tolerant, they will still require supplemental water while becoming established and during the dry summer months.

Following are some of the plants we recommend for alpine gardens. A “(T)” after the name indicates a trailing variety suitable for cascading over walls or rocks. An “(S)” indicates a variety suitable for shady rockeries.

BULBS & ANNUALS

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Anemone blanda	Windflower
Colchicum	Autumn Crocus
Crocus	Crocus
Delosperma	Ice Plant
Erythronium	Dogtooth Violet, Fawn Lily
Galanthus	Snowdrops
Ipheion uniflorum	Brodiaea
Leucojum	Snowflakes
Iris reticulata	Iris
Leucojum	Snowflakes
Muscari	Grape Hyacinth
Narcissus (Dwarf varieties)	Daffodil, Jonquil
Nerine	Naked Lady
Puschkinia	Striped Squills
Scilla	Squills, Bluebells

PERENNIALS

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Achillea tomentosa	Woolly Yarrow
Alchemilla ellenbeckii (S)	Creeping Lady's Mantle
Alchemilla erythropoda (S)	Lady's Mantle
Alyssum montanum (T)	Mountain Alyssum
Anacyclus	Atlas Daisy
Antennaria	Pussytoes
Aquilegia alpina	Alpine Columbine
Aquilegia flabellata	Japanese Fan Columbine
Arabis arendsii (T)	Rock Cress
Armeria	Sea Pinks
Artemisia 'Silver Brocade'	Silver Brocade Artemisia
Artemisia 'Silver Mound'	Silver Mound Artemisia
Aruncus aethusifolius	Dwarf Korean Goat's Beard
Aster alpinus	Alpine Aster
Aubrietia (T)	Rock Cress
Bergenia (S)	Bergenia
Campanula 'Birch Hybrid' (T)	Birch Hybrid Bellflower
Campanula carpatica	Carpathian Bellflower
Campanula cochlearifolia	Fairy Thimble
Campanula porsharskyana (T)	Serbian Bellflower
Campanula rotundifolia	Bluebell of Scotland
Delphinium nudicaule	Orange Larkspur
Dianthus X allwoodii	Border Pinks
Dianthus alpinus	Alpine Pinks
Dianthus deltoides	Maiden Pinks
Dianthus gratianopolitanus (T)	Cheddar Pinks
Erigeron 'Profusion'	Profusion Daisy
Euphorbia myrsinites (T)	Donkey-tail Spurge
Euphorbia polychroma	Cushion Spurge
Gentiana septemfida	Gentian
Geranium 'Biokovo'	Biokovo Alpine Cranesbill
Geranium cinereum 'Ballerina'	Ballerina Alpine Cranesbill
Geranium cinereum 'Splendens'	Splendens Alpine Cranesbill
Geranium dalmaticum	Dalmatian Cranesbill
Geranium renardii (S)	Renard Alpine Cranesbill
Geranium sanguineum	Bloody Cranesbill
Hebe 'Margret'	Margret Hebe
Hebe 'McKean'	McKean Hebe
Helianthemum (T)	Rock Rose
Helleborus (short varieties)	Hellebores
BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Heucherella (S)	Foamy Bells

Houstonia	Mountain Bluets
Iberis sempervirens (T)	Candytuft
Leontopodium	Edelweiss
Lewisia cotyledon	Lewisia
Lychnis alpina	Arctic Campion
Ophiopogon	Mondo Grass, Black Lily Turf
Papaver alpinum	Alpine Poppy
Papaver atlanticum	Atlas Poppy
Papaver nudicaule	Iceland Poppy
Potentilla fruticosa 'Yellow Gem'	Yellow Gem Cinquefoil
Potentilla neumanniana 'Nana'	Alpine Cinquefoil
Primula auricula	Auricula Primrose
Primula 'Wanda'	Wanda Primrose
Pulsatilla vulgaris	Pasque-flower
Saponaria ocymoides (T)	Rock Soapwort
Saxifraga umbrosa / urbium (S)	Saxifrage / London Pride
Sedum - dwarf varieties (T)	Stonecrop
Sempervivum	Hens-and-chicks
Silene schafta	Campion
Silene uniflora 'Druett's Variegated' (T)	Variegated Campion
Stachys byzantina	Lamb's-ears
Teucrium	Germander
Trifolium r. pentaphyllum (S)	Black-leafed Clover
Verbena 'Homestead Purple' (T)	Homestead Purple Verbena

GROUNDCOVERS

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Ajuga reptans 'Chocolate Chip' (S)	Bugleweed
Arenaria balearica	Corsican Sandwort
Asarum	Wild Ginger
Cotula	New Zealand Brass Buttons
Fragraria	Strawberry
Hypericum	Hypericum, St. John's Wort
Laurentia	Blue Star Creeper
Lithodora diffusa (T)	Lithodora
Mazus reptans	
Polygala	
Raoulia	Scab Plant
Sagina	Irish Moss, Scotch Moss
Thymus	Thyme