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Friends of Reader Rock Garden Society



Summer Newsletter

2026 Issue 2

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President's Message

By: Diane M. Dalkin

This mild start to the season, with a good balance of rain and warmth, has the Reader Rock Garden looking particularly lush and verdant. Here's hoping for more of this, especially since Calgary's weather can be unpredictable and inclement. Keeping forest wildfires at bay is another new annual concern too. Let's just say, at this moment all is good. Easy, breezing summer ... here we come!

Our recent Plant Sale on June 6th was a resounding success too, noting higher attendance, more volunteers and record sales. We were thrilled to connect with our members and share these unique plants from the Garden. Mother Nature also cooperated with fine weather for event day. But really our Head Gardener, Ben, his staff and all our volunteers deserve the accolades. A visual tour can be seen below. The Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society has hosted a premier event, the North American Rock Garden Society conference and AGM, June 25-28, 2026. A highlight of this summer indeed!

Once again we will be participating in the annual Chinook Country Historical Society's 36th *Historic Calgary Week – July 24 through August 3, 2026*. There are over 90 events scheduled and no doubt there will be something of interest for everyone.

Registration information and detailed descriptions of all the walks, talks and presentations can be found on their website. Mark your calendars early. You don't want to miss this enriching week!

As mentioned in the Spring issue, we acknowledge this year as the 20th anniversary of the Grand Re-Opening of the Garden, following the major renovations/restorations.

Celebrating this milestone is important as the garden continues to mature and offers so many historical narratives. Additionally, during these two decades, we also had the pleasure and honor of connecting with Mr. Reader's extended family. All of these wonderful individuals have been very supportive of their roots, helping us get insights into their esteemed relatives and their legacies. The personal recollections they've shared with us are beyond valuable, bringing this historical garden to life, as well as deepening my appreciation for the Reader Family.

So it is with sadness that we announce the recent passing of one of Mr. Reader's lovely granddaughters, Irene Vereecken. I had the opportunity to meet beloved Irene in Calgary when she attended Reader Rock Garden's grand re-opening in 2006 and again in 2018 when the garden received its National Historic Site designation. I recall a delightful friendly lady and a vital link to Mr. Reader's legacy. I only wish I had known her better since she was indeed a remarkable woman. Her tribute paints a

picture of an amazing, long, and well-lived life. Additional information is included below.

All of our initiatives and plans are only achievable due to our many volunteers. Once again, it is our pleasure to introduce another rocking volunteer, with a spotlight on Maura in this issue.

Even though we currently have many helping hands, our Membership Director, Lena, will be heading off to study abroad. Consequently, we must fill her role with a keen, tech savvy individual. Optionally, if being a Treasurer appeals to you more, then our current Treasurer would assume the Membership role, facilitating the right person for the right task. We're flexible and look forward to welcoming YOU to our team. Please email us asap at info@ReaderRock.com and we'll provide further information and job descriptions.

Lastly, please check your calendars; our public garden tours are advertised via Eventbrite, as well as social media. We will also have "special garden tours" exclusively for our members too; this should be available soon. Follow us and stay tuned. See you at the garden this summer! Enjoy and stay safe.

Recap of June 6th Annual Plant Sale

By Diane M. Dalkin

We rolled out the green carpet and welcomed FoRRGS members and supporters. Attendance was high and the treasures were plentiful. Extra deals at the end rewarded patience in long line ups!





Bringing home a bit of Reader Rock Garden ... when we make our patrons smile, that's success!

If you have any feedback about your experience at the plant sale, please feel free to send an email to info@readerrock.com.

Volunteer Focus - Maura

In keeping with FoRRGS' spotlight on our fascinating volunteers that have contributed to all the successes along the way ... Let's highlight another special volunteer:

Maura Hamill - FoRRGS Board of Directors & Tour Guide

**Question: Your hometown?**

I was born in Seattle, WA and we moved to Eugene, Oregon when I was four, where my father could take his PhD at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Q: When did you arrive in Calgary?

We came to Calgary in 1963 because my father was hired as a professor at the University of Calgary, which was then two buildings on the edge of the prairie. As someone who came from the rain forest of Oregon, the lack of trees was a big adjustment, although there were a lot more trees in 1963 than in William Reader's time, thanks to his tree planting initiatives.

Q: Favorite Book[s]/movie[s]?

I like any book that has a good story, preferably a twisty narrative that makes me want to solve the riddle before I get to the end. I don't have a favourite movie – I just watched Conclave, which was really good and I saw Project Hail Mary, which I also really enjoyed, but both are very different movies. I watch more TV series on streaming networks than I do movies.

Q: Have a favorite saying or perspective?

My perspective on the world is reflected in the way I garden – do as little harm as possible (I don't use chemicals or kill anything that lives in the yard); enhance the space to support pollinators, birds and other creatures that live there; and hope I leave the space in a better state than when I found it.

Q: Hobbies or non-work-related interests?

The thing I like most in the world is to be outside whenever possible, whether that's through gardening, birdwatching, hiking or just going for a walk. I also like to read, I travel a lot (wild places and wild animals are my usual focus), and I also sew. I am also very interested in native bees, and I have participated in a bumble bee monitoring project at the Glenbow Ranch operated by Wildlife Preservation Canada for several years. I have several volunteer positions, including my volunteer work at

the Reader Rock Garden. I am also an editor for the Calgary Horticultural Society, and I am helping out at Frank Lake on a bumble bee monitoring project initiated by Nature Calgary. [Note: Maura is among a select group of citizen scientists counting and monitoring different bee species and promotes bee-friendly initiatives. Also, she has authored "Gardening tips to attract hummingbirds" - Calgary Herald July 19, 2025]

Q: Where & what did you study as an adult?

I started my adult academic life at the University of Victoria where I took Creative Writing. After the first year, I determined that I didn't have the great Canadian novel in me, so I took a year off to think about my future. I then applied to the University of Alberta and completed a BSc in Home Economics in Clothing & Textiles (I was always interested in clothing and fabrics). Once I graduated, I taught Fashion Design at Olds College and at the Niagara College of Arts and Technology in Ontario. I returned to Alberta when the program at Niagara was closed and I took a program at the Banff Centre in Costume Cutting, which involves taking the costume design a designer creates and turning it into a garment for an actor. I went back to school at the age of 35 and took a 2-year Diploma in Public Relations at Mount Royal College. I worked in communications after that for several non-profits and spent the last 10 years of my working life at the City of Calgary. I retired in 2017.

Q: Professional affiliations or publications?

Although I do not have a Master Gardener designation, I have been gardening for many years. I have gained the gardening and plant knowledge I have through trial and error, talking to other gardeners, doing a lot of research, and taking courses at the Calgary Horticultural Society. I also enjoy identifying the native plants I see when I am out hiking.

Q: What do you do at Reader Rock Garden & how long have you volunteered?

I am a tour guide at the Garden, and I started doing tours in 2025. This year, I joined the Board as a Director-at-Large.

Q: Best thing[s] about the garden?

The history of William Reader and his family, and the wonderful garden Reader left for us to enjoy.

Q: Most challenging thing about the garden?

The paving stones.

Q: What have you discovered at the garden, learnings, surprises, etc.?

Every time I take a walk in the garden with Diane Dalkin, the President of the Friends of Reader Rock Garden Society (FORRGs), I learn something new about William Reader and his family.

Q: What would you like the public to know about this unique place?

That it is here! Also, the garden changes constantly throughout the growing season, so every time you visit, you will see something new. Plus, if you become a member of the FORRGS, you can attend the best plant sale in the city. I think it is also wonderful to learn about William Reader because what he did in his private life with his garden and what he did as a Superintendent of Parks had a huge impact on the quality of life we enjoy here in Calgary.

Q: Must-see highlight[s] onsite?

The Veitchii peonies – they grow in clay soil and shade!

Summer Reflections



It is the month of June,
The month of leaves and roses,
When pleasant sights salute the eyes
- Nathaniel Parker Willis [1806-1867]

“What is one to say about June, the time of
perfect young summer, the fulfilment of the
promise of the earlier months, and with as
yet no sign to remind one that its fresh
young beauty will ever fade.”
- Gertrude Jekyll [1843-1932]

“Now summer is in flower, and nature’s hum
Is never silent round her sultry bloom”.
- John Clare [1793-1864]

In Memory
Irene Rose Vereecken [nec Reader]
October 7, 1929 – June 3, 2026

Irene was an avid long-time supporter of Reader Rock Garden, this fabulous National Historic Site named after her grandfather. We were honored by her legacy and caring connection. This special lady will be remembered fondly, and our heartfelt condolences are extended to her family and friends.

For more info about this amazing woman, please see the full obituary online at:

<https://nunes-pottinger.com/obituary/irene-vereecken/>

“Where there is sadness, love plants a garden of memories”



Volunteer Opportunity



Join our energetic team!

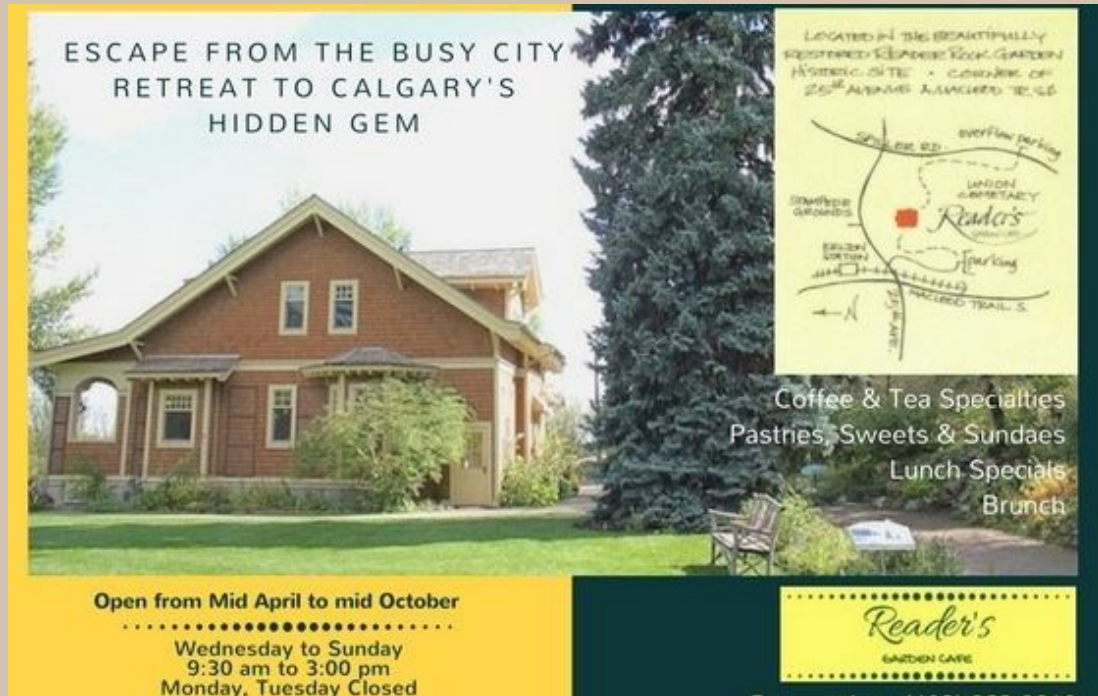
***Membership Director
Or
Treasurer Needed***

Job descriptions available upon request.
Training will be provided.
Contact us at ***info@ReaderRock.com***



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Reader's
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Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)



Hybrid Monthly Meetings hosted 2nd Thursday of each month

Online via Zoom, or in-person at:

Lakeview Community Association Hall

6110 34th Street SW

[Visit CRAGS website for upcoming events](#)

FoRRGS Team

President - Diane Dalkin

Vice-President - Colleen McCracken

Treasurer - Victoria Arling

Membership - *Vacant* (Lena Cordell - temporary)

Secretary - Catherine Leyshon

Directors - Susan Brims, Rosemary Griebel, Sue Gryzenhout, Maura Hamill,

Vita Leung, John Percic

Social Media - Janis Isaman

Webmaster - Lorna Hightower

Interested in volunteering with FoRRGS?

Send us an email at info@readerrock.com or visit our website to learn more!

Send us an email

Visit our website



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