

Summary of good sources for sand, gravel, and rock products useful for rock gardens.

For members of Calgary Rock & Alpine Garden Society

1. MATERIALS USED IN CALGARY ROCK GARDENS:

- **Soil Mixes**
 - Most rock gardens in Calgary use a mixture of various proportions of coarse sand, lean soil, and fine gravel. This ranges from all sand to a mix that is 1/3 of each. Good drainage is the goal.
 - Ask your supplier about delivery and mixing, though usually they do not custom mix.
- **Sand**
 - We usually use 5mm **washed** sand and prefer sand that is not limestone based. Our preferred sand includes tiny pebbles which aid in drainage. It is sold in bulk.
 - Burnco sand is not limestone based, compared to that from CLS which is grayer indicating more limestone content.
- **Gravel**
 - We often use “Gyra rock” – a local term for 7mm **washed** gravel, sold in bulk, for a soil mix and also top-dressing. Also called Pea Gravel.
 - Finer grit is available by the bag but that is too expensive for outdoor use except in a trough.
- **Other soils and sub-soils**
 - For building up a large mound which will be covered with rock features and your favourite Soil Mix, a very lean or high-clay/silt soil is used. Sometimes construction waste from an excavation can be scrounged. The crevice garden at Silver Springs is underlain by a mound of clay subsoil excavated for a swimming pool. It is covered by a layer of lean topsoil, then rock and sand.
- **Rock and Tufa**
 - **Sandstone:** Local **Paskapoo formation** is commonly available cheap or free, but for matching top-dressing, you must break up stones yourself. This tan-coloured rock is soft and prone to flaking and disintegrating. Approx \$199/ton.
 - **“Rundle Rock” or Rundlestone:** quarried in the Bow Valley, it is a dark gray or dark brownish-gray Triassic siltstone. Available in several sizes and grades, it is used in building and landscaping. Approx \$744/ton.
 - **Other limestones and siltstones: “Kendall Stone”** is available from local landscape dealers. It is similar to “Rundle Rock” but with brown and reddish weathering. Fractures easily. Approx \$999/ton.
 - **Tufa:** A soft, lightweight, porous sedimentary rock consisting of calcium carbonate and formed by the evaporation of water at a hot spring. Prized by rock gardeners. Slabs suitable for crevice gardens can be selected or ordered from the quarry.
 - **“Urbanite”:** this is broken-up concrete sidewalk material, used for pathways or crevice gardens. Google for local concrete recycling companies.
 - **River Rock or Fieldstone:** rounded cobbles and small boulders often seen in dry or wet stream features, but not often in alpine gardens...

2. SOURCES FOR MATERIALS:

Kamenka Quarry

- Rundlestone with warmer brownish tones
- <https://www.rmotoday.com/local-news/at-kamenka-quarry-every-stone-has-a-story-1568340>
- Harvie Hts, AB. 403-812-0449. Yellow pages has lots of photos. By appointment only.
- Used by Stephanie Ferguson for her front crevice garden

Thunderstone Quarries

- <http://www.thunderstonequarry.com/contact/index.php?optpurchase=alberta> –
- dark gray “Rundle Rock”. Variable quality, and some crumbles when used as flagstones.
- Quarry is near DeadmansFlats but many retailers in Calgary carry their products.

BURNCO: Carries most sands, gravels, and rock types except Tufa

BURNCO Landscape Centre - Balzac

262111 Range Road 10

Balzac, AB

403-252-1131 *phone*

780-274-2724 *fax*

www.burnco.com

BURNCO Landscape Centre - Calgary

6924 - 13 Street SE

Calgary, AB

403-252-1131 *phone*

403-640-9270 *fax*

www.burnco.com

Cochrane Landscape Supply: Carries most sands, gravels, and rock types except Tufa

CLS Landscape Supply - Cochrane

108 Railway Street East

Cochrane, AB T4C 2C3

403-851-0900 *phone*

403-851-0950 *fax*

CLS Landscape Supply - Calgary

Bearspaw Road & Hwy 1A

Calgary, AB T4C 2C3

403-239-0600 *phone*

www.cochranelandscapesupply.com

Ornamental Stone: Carries some gravels, and rock types as well as limited supply of boulders including : Tufa, Black and Red Lava, Pink Lichen, Rundle, Limestone, Gold Quartz, Dolomite, Canadian Rose, Meigs, Green Kootenay, Rustic Kootenay, Moon Rocks, Basalt Gurglers/Bubblers

79 Prairie Place SE

Calgary, AB

403-275-5550

www.ornamentalstone.ca

Co-op Feeds

- 1020 26 St NE, Calgary. 403-531-6656: ask for **#2 (medium) or #3 (large) Grit**, sold in 25 kg bags for about \$15 each

High River Landscape Products: Carries some gravels and rock types except Tufa

- 403-601-2134, 411b 24 St SE, High River, AB <http://highriverlandscapeproducts.com/>

Tufa:

- Quarry in Brisco, BC can supply tufa by appointment for you to transport, or arrangements for delivery may be possible.
- CRAGS obtained a limited supply in 2019 to sell to members. that was delivered and divided between several members with limited number of pieces still available.
- Brisco quarry: Bryce Wolfenden Cellphone 1-250-688-0060

Calgary-area Garden Centres with poor or incomplete selection of sand, gravel, and rocks:

Eagle Lake

Spruce it Up

Blue Grass

Greengate

Golden Acre

3. REFERENCES (most in CRAGS library or Calgary Public Library, or Amazon.ca for used copies).

Some landscapers or landscape material suppliers may be able to assist with estimates of how much material you need.

“...plan to have approximately 30% of the garden’s surface area in rock. Thus a 100 sq ft garden will require at least 30 sq ft of surface area devoted to rock. ...every 10 sq ft of garden with an elevation of 3 ft or less will require about 2 tons of heavier rocks of various sizes such as limestone or 800 lb of much light rock such as tufa.” From Donna Balzer, *The Prairie Rock Garden*.

Donna Balzer, *The Prairie Rock Garden*, 2000. ISBN 0-88995-195-0

North American Rock Garden Society, *A Rock Garden Handbook for Beginners*. May be available as a download for members of NARGS.

Rex Murfitt, *Creating and Planing Alpine Gardens*, 2009 (also available as a Kindle edition)