

Summary of local 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 (now SiteOne) sand is not limestone based, compared to that from CLS or High River 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 (“poultry grit”) is available by the bag but that is too expensive for outdoor use except in a trough. Often used in seed starting mixes.
- **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. Other trade names are Creston and Bronze.
 - **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. Much less expensive than Rundle Rock and easier to work with.
 - **“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
- [Article from Rocky Mountain Outlook about the quarry](#)
- Harvie Heights, AB. 403-812-0449. [Yellowpages](#) has photos. By appointment only.
- Used by Fergusons for front crevice garden

Thunderstone Quarries

- <http://www.thunderstonequarry.com>
- dark gray “Rundle Rock”. Variable quality, and some crumbles when used as flagstones.
- Quarry is near Deadmans Flats, AB but many retailers in Calgary carry their products.

BURNCO (as of 2022, SiteOne): Carries most sands, gravels, and rock types except Tufa

[SiteOne \(formerly BURNCO\) Landscape Supply](#)

Balzac

262111 Range Road 10
Balzac, AB
403-252-1131

Calgary South

6924 - 13 Street SE
Calgary, AB
403-252-1131

[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

CLS Landscape Supply - Calgary

Bearspaw Road & Hwy 1A
Calgary, AB T4C 2C3
403-239-0600

[Ornamental Stone](#): Carries some gravels, and rock types as well as limited supply of boulders.

79 Prairie Place SE
Calgary, AB
403-275-5550

[New Riverbend Hardware](#)

- 330-8338 18 St SE, Calgary. 403-279-6700: pre-order **#2 (medium) or #3 (coarse) Silica Grit or Poultry Grit**, sold in 25 kg bags for about \$19 each.
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[Target Products Ltd](#) in the SE industrial area (403-279-8189) also sells Silica Grit for about \$12 per bag and may have other rock products of interest.

[High River Landscape Products](#): Carries some gravels and rock types except Tufa

403-601-2134,
411b 24 St SE, High River, AB

Tufa:

- Quarry in Brisco, BC can supply tufa by appointment for you to transport, or arrangements for delivery may be possible. Contact Bryce Wolfenden cell 1-250-688-0060.

Other sources:

- Search the Calgary Kijiji website for landscaping rock, stone, sandstone and similar search terms. Usually you will have to transport items yourself. Be cautious.

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 Planting Alpine Gardens*, 2009 (also available as a Kindle edition)