

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)