

# International Rock Gardener

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Halfway through 2021 already – in spite of crazy weather and the corona virus pandemic, time seems to be passing as speedily as ever. This month's offerings in IRG are a review of the striking rockwork in the Czech garden of Martin Brejník, with comments by J. Ian Young, who has had the pleasure of seeing the garden in person on two visits and with photos by Jiří Papoušek, another of the superlative garden makers and growers of Czechia. Both Ian and Jiří agree that Martin

deserves the title "rock Master"!

Martin's many skills are available to others in his country, too, via his [website](#) where he lauds "...working with natural stone – the construction of rocks, dry walls .....to discover .... possibilities that this timeless material offers in combination with plants.

Also from Czechia this month (with contributions from other places too - many thanks to those kindly sharing their photographs!) is a memory of a stunning plant, *Potentilla lignosa*, which sadly seems not to be much in cultivation these days. Probably those visiting its native haunts stand the best chance of admiring it there in future. I hope for more probing cameras in that case!

Our final submission for this issue is an article on *Oxalis ranchillos*, a new species from Chile, officially described here by John M. Watson and Anita F. Watson. This species is also briefly introduced to readers in the print journal of SRGC, "The Rock Garden", issue 147, July 2021.

I, and my colleagues in the IRG Team, never cease to be grateful to all those contributors who so generously share their work with our readership, in the spirit of open communication and the furtherance of interest in the plants of the world and the fascinating places where they grow in nature, or in cultivation. Warm thanks to you all – and it is very cheering to hear the feedback from readers who are enjoying the IRG content.

Please remember that we are always happy to hear from you if you feel you too have an idea or article that deserves a wider audience. Text and photo submissions welcome by email to [the Editor, IRG](#), please!



Cover image: *Oxalis ranchillos* F.& W. 13412, photo 8 Dec 2020. JMW.



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## --- In a Czech Garden ---

Many visitors to the extremely successful Czech International Rock Garden conferences have been lucky enough to visit the garden of Martin Brejník. Martin has constructed this whole garden to his own design and by his own muscles! Ian has been to visit on a couple of occasions and comments here on Jiří's photos of the garden, made recently and showing just how much Martin has achieved already.

A Rock Master: Martin Brejník – text, J.Ian Young, most photos by Jiří Papoušek



Walking to the right as you enter Martin Brejník's garden you find a layout that should be familiar to most rock gardeners, consisting of low walls forming slightly raised beds that are planted up with small plants and alpines.

Steps lead down to a lower level against the house where carefully constructed walls and narrow beds offer more planting spaces.



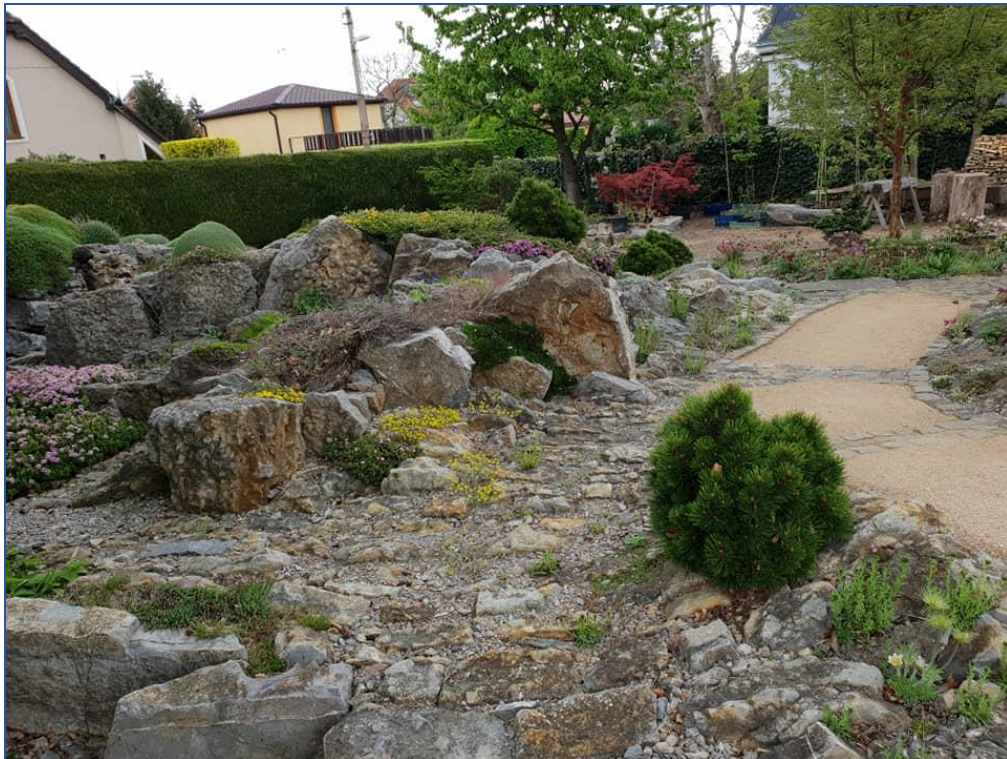


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Following the wall of the house you are introduced to a crevice style rock garden where many rocks are placed closely together on their edge and so they dominate this small bed leading up a slope to the side of the house.

Turning and looking in the opposite direction you are faced with a rock garden created from a monumental amount of rock.





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This type of crevice rock garden serves multiple purposes: firstly, the visual impact is impressive, mimicking scenes that you may come across in the mountains. More importantly the shaping of the ground and placement of the rock creates a range of habitats that can accommodate a wider range of plants than a simple flat area could.



Most gardeners are familiar with making raised beds by mounding up the soil but few dig a deep pit such as seen here.



Photo JIY 2017 – this shows just how deep the channel is!

Digging down serves multiple purposes most obviously it supplies the soil to build the mounds shaping what was a flat area into something much more interesting. Immediately it will be warmer and drier on the high points while the shaded lowest points of the pit will be cooler and moister.



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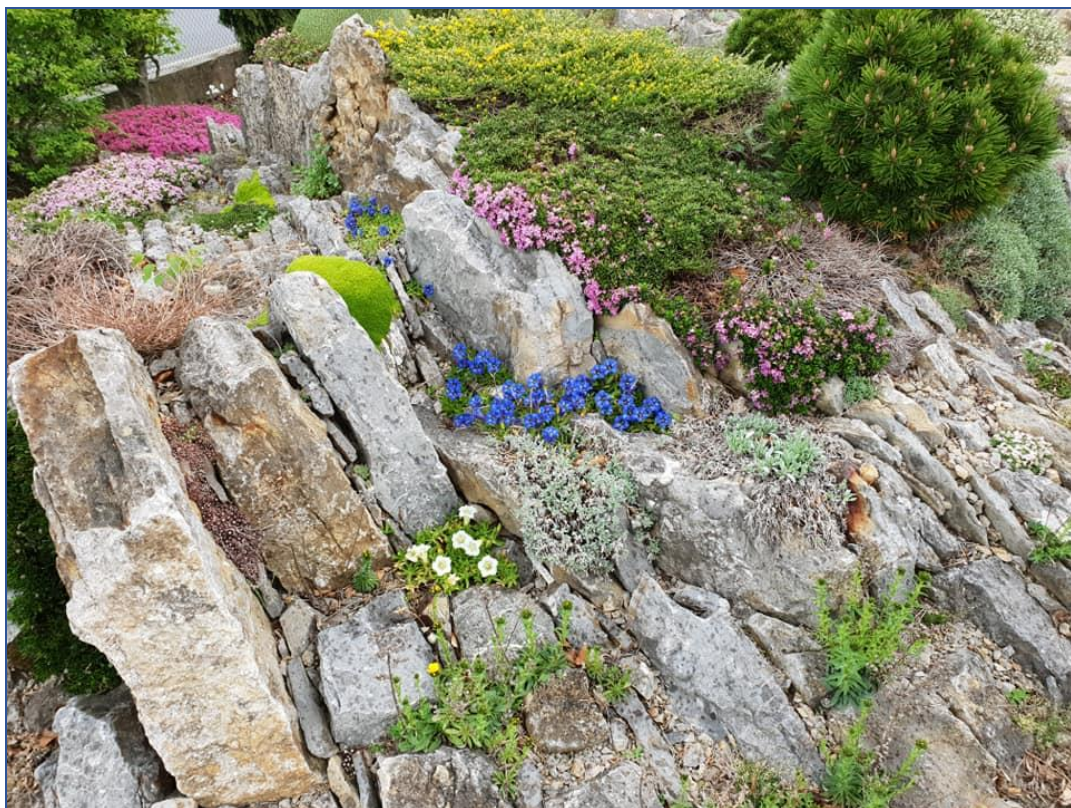
The placing of a single large rock provides different aspects offering varying degrees of shade at different times of the day from the full exposure to the sun on the south side to more shade on the north.





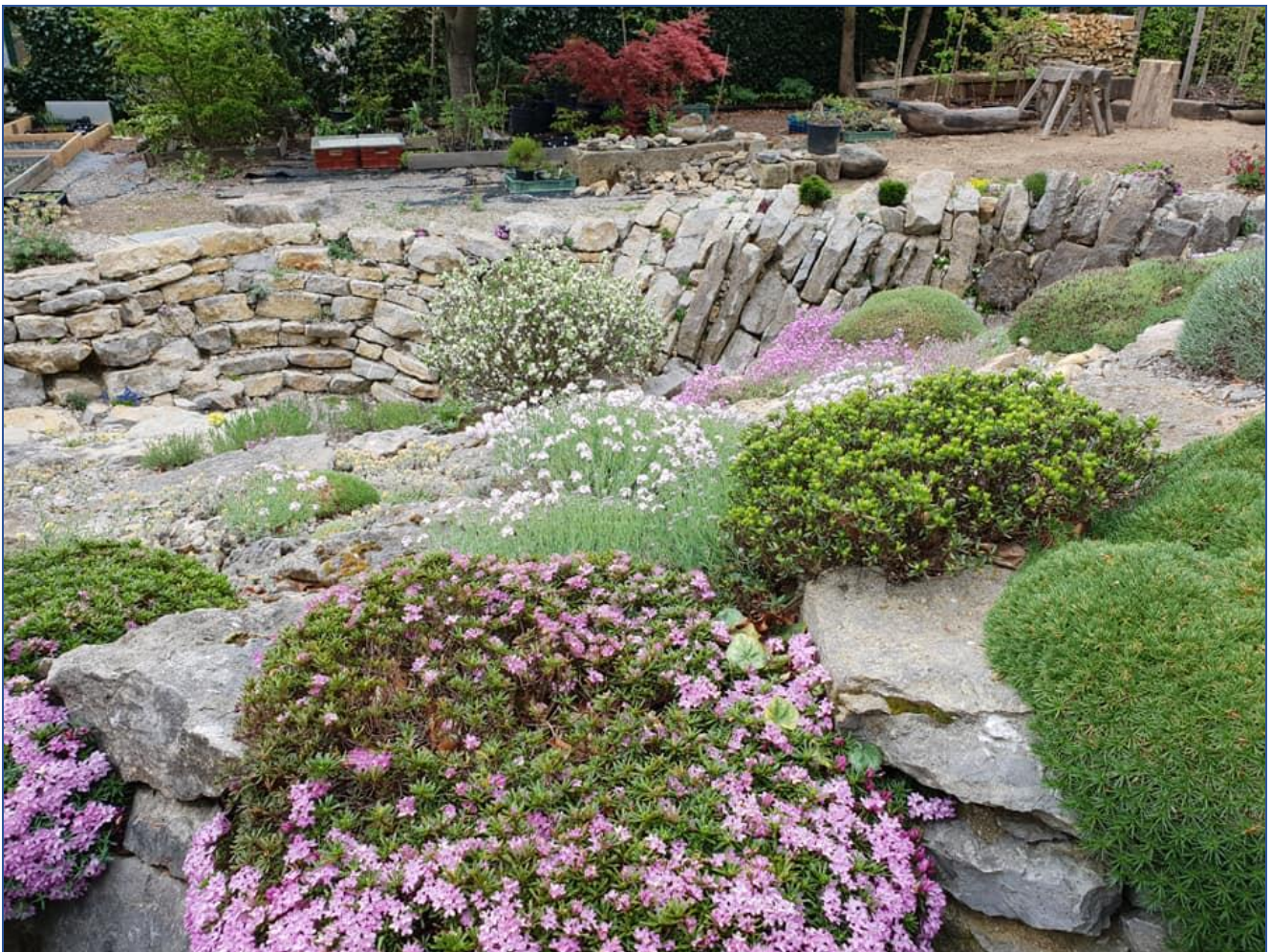
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With narrow crevices between the rocks, it could appear like there are fewer planting opportunities, however the complete opposite is the case. These alpine and rock garden plants much prefer to grow in narrow gaps where their roots are encouraged to plunge deep down to the cooler soils below while at the same time their growth can spread out over the rocks and ripen in the heat of the sun in the way they would in their natural mountain habitats. Plants that are not such sun worshippers can be planted in the shaded gaps to the north side of a rock.





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## ---International Rock Gardener---

The different angles between parts of the construction give the impression the rocks are flowing like waves, opening up all sorts of creative possibilities.





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Mat-forming plants spread out across a flat pavement imitating a dry river-bed while others flow down the crevices spilling into the flatter areas. The best plants are often those that choose where to grow by self-seeding into the cracks and crevices.



Over time some plants will spread eventually covering some of the rocks completely then the gardener has to decide whether to cut them back or remove them to restore some balance between the rocks and plants.



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Photo JIY 2017

It is interesting to compare the picture above taken in 2017 with the one below from 2020 where the rocks have weathered and the plants are settling in.



While this is a monumental construction you can create this type of garden on any scale even in troughs and containers.



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Rock Master, Martin Brejník in his garden.





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Plants thriving in Martin's garden. Cushions of *Ptilotrichum spinosum* have been planted for all season effect.



A tiny trough by Martin's front door.



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Not everyone can produce work on the scale that Martin has, but the technique can be just as successful in small containers.

When someone with as beautiful a garden as Jiří Papoušek calls Martin Brejník “a Rock Master” – you know there’s a special talent at work to make a wonderful home for plants!



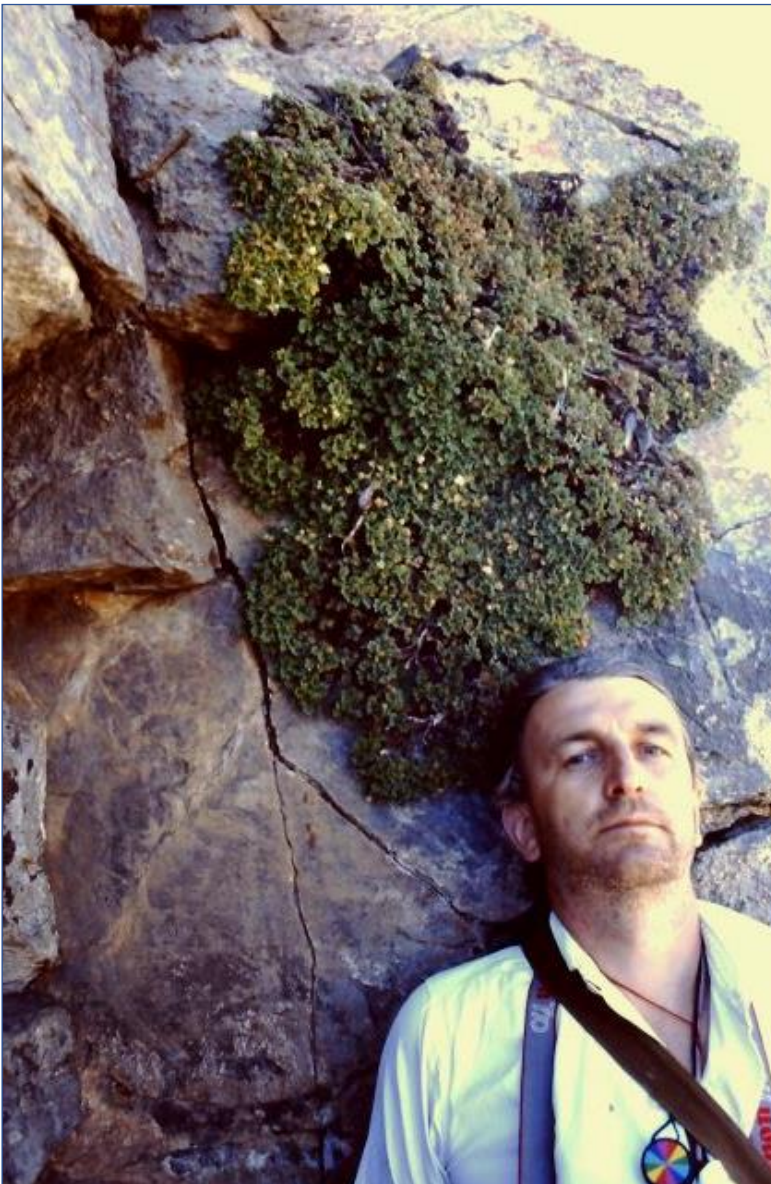
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## --- Plant Portrait ---

### An ancient subshrub: by Zdenek Zvolanek

The Genus *Potentilla* from the Rosaceae Family is huge. There are many shrubs included in the family but only a few in the Genus *Potentilla* and existence of a subshrub there is very rare. One, which is very desirable for rock gardeners, was described 200 years ago as *Potentilla lignosa* Willd. It so botanically distinct that many authors described it with different names of the genus: *Tylosperma lignosa* (Willd.) Botsch. and *Argentina lignosa* (D.F.K. Schltdl.) Soják are two of them.

The late Dr. Jiří Soják was a Czech expert for *Potentillas* and his opinion to add this lovely small woodie into strange genus *Argentina* surely had a smart reason. He correctly described the places of their natural habitat as Turkey, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Recently it was found in the Qandil Mts. in Northern Iraq (close to boundary with Turkey). The scientific description of this plant's appearance is of a perennial dwarf suffrutescent with thick woody branches.



My first meeting with this woody *Potentilla* (*Tylosperma* or *Argentina*) was in Kavushahap Mts. in Eastern Anatolia in 1987. Here at 3000 metres elevation above popular bulb collector's Karabet pass were dolomitic limestone cliffs with northern exposure decorated with very old specimens of this ancient plant. I believe this species is remnant of the age before last glacier period. My partner Rudi Weiss from Waiblingen, Germany, photographed me under one bonsai-like semi-tree 150 cm across (hundreds years old) appressed to the sheer rock.

ZZ and *Potentilla lignosa*, 1987, scanned photo by Rudi Weiss.



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Rudi Weiss supplied scans of his 1987 photos, as mentioned by ZZ and writes: "I still think with great pleasure about the nice time we enjoyed in the exciting region where we found this plant. It is a pity that this fine *Potentilla* is not available anymore, but I am glad, that I saw it in its wild home."



Kavushahap Mts., Eastern Anatolia, and *P. lignosa*, below - scanned photos from 1987 by Rudi Weiss.

Seven years later in September I was among Czech-Canadian party with Josef Jurasek, Vojtech Holubec and Joyce Carruthers exploring in one day the slopes and cliffs under the Karabet pass (hidden from the police and army).



This *Potentilla lignosa* was in seed but I was absolutely confused collecting fluffy centurms of flowers and not to see a seed. Now I know that the dry hairy fruit is called an achene (only about size of 2 mm) pilose-pubescent and the seed jailed inside is miniature, just 1 mm across. In the end I threw it away as chaff. The achenes probably need to be sown nearly without covering to get a light for germination. The third visited habitat was a cool narrow limestone canyon (1700 metres above sea level) which was under 3 km high massif called Artos Dag. It is close to the Lake Van and here is the locality where Czech prospector Mojmír Pavelka took its spring portrait.





*Potentilla lignosa*, Artos Dag, Turkey - photo by [Mojmír Pavelka](#)



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I must stress the fact that the grey-green palmately compound leaves short petiolate with 5 leaflets (both basal and the cauline ones) are deciduous and only 5 -15 mm in size.

White flowers decorated with reddish style and yellow anthers are terminal and usually solitary, 10 mm in diameter.

I suppose that for happy cultivation the best are seasonally moist crevices or holes in tufa at the places shaded in hot summer days.

Z.Z.

References to the plant are as rare on the internet as the plant is in nature: [this link](#) from the site of Dr. Peter Llewellyn about seeing it by the Karabet pass, Eastern Turkey in 2019 is one of the few.

[A New Record of \*Potentilla lignosa\* Willd. \(Rosaceae\) in Iraq-Short Communication](#): Abdullah Sardar, Jordan Journal of Biological Science (JJBS) Vol. 10, No. 1, March 2017 ISSN 1995-6673



A photo of *Potentilla lignosa*, in the wild near Lake Van, from © Başak Gardner.

This close-up of *Potentilla lignosa* is also by Başak Gardner and taken on an earlier [Greentours](#) trip.

[Authors](#) Başak and her husband Chris Gardner have run [Viranatura](#) holidays and photographic tours for many years.

