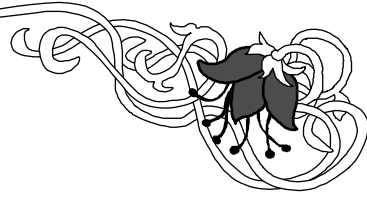


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 6, Issue 9

# ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER August 2004

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## From the President's Corner

A wonderful thing happened on one of those sizzling hot summer days last month. After the silver was polished and the china cups and saucers arranged on trays, the cars pulled into our driveway. Out stepped a troupe of Alaska's finest residents from Chester Park Retirement Cooperative. The ladies had donned their colorful purple outfits and on their heads, they proudly wore their red hats. You must have guessed! The "Red Hat Society" had arrived at Meander Circle for a Garden Tea Party. The afternoon had blossomed into the finest weather summer had to offer and the garden was at its peak. The iced tea and lemonade quenched the thirst while the delicious array of cookies tempted the palate. Their joy of being on an outing together in a garden atmosphere was heartening. Their excitement was contagious. They visited and shared memories of gardens in their past. They revealed their "Red Hat" names. Glorious titles revealed were Queen Mum Rosebud, Tulip, Princess Lily, Lady Rose, Princess Daisy, Lady Delphinium, Laurel, and Peony. When asked what flower brought to mind their fondest memories they responded that roses were at the top of the list. The chocolate lily, pinks, lilacs, gladiola and hollyhocks were included as plants that brought back memories, too. More than 200 years of gardening experience gathered in the garden on that afternoon. Before they departed, they made toasts to one another and a promise to schedule more garden parties in the future. Their smiles went with them as they waved good by and headed back home but their energy, humor and drama left a lasting memory with me. What a special afternoon.

Story has it that the Red Hat Society began with a few women deciding to greet middle age with verve, humor and energy. Their agenda? Good humor and laughter. They believed that silliness was the relief of life, and that they might as well go for the gusto together. Underneath the frivolity, they shared a bond of affection, forged by common life experiences and a genuine enthusiasm for wherever life takes them. The main responsibility at this stage in their lives was to have fun. Members would wear a red hat and a clashing purple ensemble at all meetings to keep up the spirit and purpose of the (dis)organization. Women under 50 would stick to the pink hat and lavender attire until their fiftieth birthday.

So... to put this all into a 'nutshell', I have made a note to take myself a bit less serious. I am going to stop all this weeding and just smell the roses. Last, but not least, I am going to buy one of those sassy, red hats along with a bold, purple outfit and then ladies, wait for me. I'll be joining you for all that laughter!

Dana





## Summer Tours in East Anchorage

By Jo Anne Banta

Nearly fifty charmed master gardeners attended the July tours in the Scenic Park School area. The gardens were spectacular; the potluck, delicious; and the weather and company, delightful.

Bands of bright red petunias and gleaming hostas greeted us from the rock borders of Pat Anderson's front yard. In the sun, colorful Livingston daisies opened wide their blooms. On the shady walk to the back, tall false spirea hid the fence, preparing us for the scene awaiting. Pat retired in April 2003 and has put her energy into her backyard garden; one can scarcely believe the "before" and "after" views. What was once lawn and trees is now covered with paths leading through beds made of broken concrete that enclose a diversity of vegetation: blue oat grass, ligularia and variegated-leaf coral bells. There is a three-year-old purple rhododendron and Alaska wild dogwood. One of the neatest things is the gray lattice-work trellis, hand-made by Pat's husband, which hides the tall cyclone fence running the length of the backyard. In the center stands a graceful arbor, and tall lavatera and delphiniums grow against the lattice-covered fence. Pat still has two more beds in progress and we can hardly wait to see her garden in its completion.

The homes were close enough to stroll between, so we walked on down to Marge Olson's front yard filled with lush plants, tall ligularia, and variegated Siberian Brunnera. We stopped to admire her pond and the fat pottery frog that guards it; then on to her terraced back gardens. Here Marge has truly turned lemons into lemonade. A steep, shaded downward slope has become a series of beautiful garden levels enclosed in broken concrete, connected by paths and steps, and filled with greenery of all types. She has huge hostas, lysimachia, rose mallow, golden filipendula and ornamental Tibetan rhubarb. Her use of native plants like watermelon berries adds to the novelty. A couple levels down, at the side of all this beauty stands a 10 x 12 playhouse, complete with huge black scare "crow" reclining in a rocking chair on the porch, a tribute to her 11-year-old granddaughter. There are stately maples: a

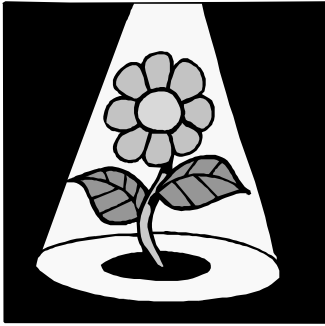
variegated Norway and a crimson king. Marge loves to stand at the bottom of her slope and gaze up at the splendor that she has created in the 10 years she has been working at it. She regularly teaches a class on "lawn alternatives," and we noticed that she truly has no lawn to mow.

Camille Williams is one busy lady. She has a bridal shop, does the bookwork for her husband's construction business, holds and caters weddings in her one acre back yard. She tends the gardens, and opens this relaxing atmosphere for all sorts of meetings, everything from book clubs to special events. Camille hosted the annual potluck so there were tables set up throughout, complete with white tablecloths, much like her wedding settings. The front of Camille's home is adorned with hanging baskets of glorious begonias and petunias, and an appetizing strawberry patch leads the way to the back. Here we found 13 cottage-type theme gardens connected with paths of fine bark. There are a multitude of interesting plants: a deep purple Trachelium, yellow Lysimachia punctata, purple ninebark and cherry bell campanula. There are golden flame spirea and Amaranthus caudatus, love-lies-bleeding. There is blue oat grass, bearing oats, and there are Osteospermum daisies. Some of the gardens are bordered with Brooks Range rocks. Garden art, tastefully arranged, is scattered throughout. There is a pond with goldfish, and a three-tiered waterfall, complete with life-like herons. Camille says she starts about 8,000 plugs and seeds each spring. She has a greenhouse and a garden gift shop as well. Camille holds one wedding a week in this lovely setting. For catering, her open deck serves as a buffet setup. There are two pavilion-type tents, and she sets up 10 to 13 tables. Yes, one busy lady.

August MG Garden Tour  
Monday, August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm

Location: UAA west campus  
Directions: From Lake Otis, go East on Providence, North on Seawolf Drive. Meet in front of the Wells Fargo Sports Complex. Parking is free in the summer.

UAA does such a wonderful job with their grounds, but a lot of us "older students" don't get a chance to visit the campus. Come and spend the evening on a walking, guided tour of gardens 1974 to present. Including: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary garden, annual and perennial gardens, ornamental trees and shrubs, herb garden and geological rock garden. Meet in front of the Sports complex at 7:00 pm



## MGs IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Oregon State University is producing a gardening series for National Public Television titled "Smart Gardening". A crew was in Anchorage in late July filming topics for the show. They not only were in search of beautiful gardens—we have plenty of those—they had specific topics in mind. Gardeners who will be featured when the show airs next year include Mel Monsen (warm season vegetables), Amelia & John Walsh (water features/rock garden), Annie Nevaldine (lilies), Carmel Tysver (hypertufa troughs), Julie Riley (herbs at ABG), Les Brake & Jerry Conrad (alder furniture) and Don Dinkel (giant cabbages). The crew also flew to Juneau where Master Gardener Ed Buyarski will do a segment on collecting wildflower seeds and primroses. "Smart Gardening" episodes are a half hour long. The Alaska garden segments will be 2-5 minutes each. The show first showed in Anchorage last April and May.

## EXTENSION AGENTS RECEIVE AWARDS

Julie Riley was honored by her professional association, the National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) in Orlando last month. The work she did with the Anchorage Horticulture Coalition was selected as the winning entry in the PRIDE program which promotes the use of public relations to increase the awareness of agriculture. She also received an award as national finalist for an article on growing fruit that she wrote for the Anchorage Daily News in May, 2003.

Michele Hébert, Land Resources Agent in Fairbanks, received the Distinguished Service Award for her exemplary service of over 10 years with Cooperative Extension Service. She was also elected to serve as NACAA Vice-chair for the Western Region.

## The Year of the Junco

by Gina Docherty

Mary Shier had a bear in her yard this summer - he meandered down DeArmoun & took out my bird feeder. I promptly took it down. Bears scare me, being on the top of the food chain. I would watch the birds from afar this year, I thought.

The day after that July thunder storm, I went out to inspect the garden and found 2 baby juncos in the perennial bed, crying in the rain. They were squawking to each other, with their little yellow beaks, all wet and bedraggled under dripping foliage. I got them to hop onto my hand & took them for a little ride. They were able to fly, so I left them to dry out under the cushion spurge.

A week or so later, while watering my hanging baskets on the deck with the hose, I discovered a junco had built a nest in my Million Bells basket. "Mother" junco had flown out of the nest trying to lure me away with the injured wing routine - I didn't fall for it. Several days later, when the parents weren't around, I got on a chair & looked down inside to find 4 baby juncos peering out at me! I took their picture.

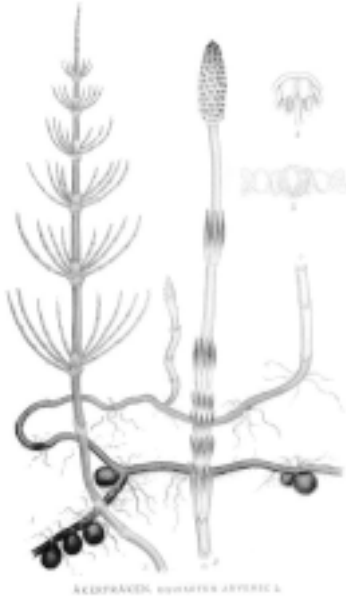
The day after the photo, we woke up to find the nest empty - not even a little feather remained. The babies were too small to fly yet, so something obviously took them away for some nefarious purpose. Something higher on the food chain got them. But at least I got the photo.





# Some Useful Advice on Getting Rid of Horsetail

By Gina Docherty



*Equisetum* species are vascular plants which reproduce sexually by means of spores which are borne on cones. All *Equisetum* species are herbaceous perennials. The plants consist of jointed upright aerial stems which arise from a very extensive jointed underground rhizome system. Two botanists, Golub and Whetmore, excavated the rhizome system of a colony of *Equisetum arvense* to a depth of 2 m and found five successive horizontal layers of rhizomes connected by vertical rhizomes. This rhizome system extended below 2 m, but the investigators did not excavate further. *Equisetum* range in height from 1 inch to 24 feet. It has a history stretching back to the Cretaceous and possibly as far back as the Triassic (that's 248 to 206 million years ago!). As a result, *Equisetum* may perhaps be the oldest living genus of vascular plants.

Suffice it to say, that these plants are difficult to get rid of in your garden. The April, 2004, issue of *Gardens West*, a Canadian magazine, featured an article titled "Horsetails" by Carol Hall. The article had a lot of sound advice on dealing with this nuisance plant. I thought I'd share with you what I learned:

## What not to do:

1. Pull Stems - this causes a new plant to appear at the scar
2. Dig Out Roots - tiny pieces of root will resprout; digging invigorates them
3. Cover with Black Plastic - Horsetails thrive in warm, moist, anaerobic conditions
4. Cover with Landscape Fabric - it will poke right through
5. Cover with Bark Mulch - they will appear stronger than ever, as they thrive in moist, airless, acidic 'wet blanket' areas with no nutritional value.
6. Spray with Weed Killers - it kills only the top growth & will regrow.

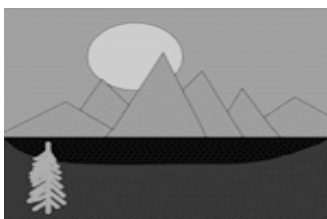
To permanently get rid of horsetails, one must improve the drainage, raise the pH, and increase the soil's fertility. Horsetails flourish in acidic soil, low oxygen, and low nutrients. Moist or boggy soil provides all three conditions, but dry compacted lean soil can also encourage horsetails.

Improve drainage by filling in depressions that hold water, digging a perimeter ditch to divert water, or lay drainpipe.

Remove any mulch from soil & apply dolomite lime at the recommended rate, and water it into the soil. Wait 2 weeks, and then apply fertilizer. (Lime & fertilizer tend to cancel each other out if applied at the same time). A 2-3 inch layer of fish compost, homegrown compost, or aged steer or horse manure can be used as fertilizer, as well as improving the soil structure of your garden.

The author states that you should see a considerable improvement in one year. The weed may reappear, and you may need to reapply the lime & fertilizer. If you see the shorter, leafless stems of fertile horsetail plant in the spring, avoid walking through them, try cutting the tips off & depositing them in zip lock bags & trash them.

For severely infested areas, it may take up to 5 years to be horsetail free. By improving the soil conditions, you have everything to gain, and nothing to lose but Horsetail!



## Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

By Rosemary Kimball

Is there a psychological term for a woman who is moving to Anchorage from Soldotna and who has a yard full of perennials that she has to leave behind? She's going through MAJOR separation anxiety. Her new house was previously occupied by non-gardeners she opined scornfully, and then removed in a burst of bursitis 32 overgrown evergreens from the front terraces. Hell hath no fury like a woman without space for her perennials!!!

From the "does your pesto taste different this year?" department: The easiest way to get rid of aphids on the basil in the greenhouse is to pick the leaves and make pesto. Any aphids that didn't get washed off went into the mix. Made three quarts of the stuff! Earlier in the summer I checked the freezer and found a half-dozen, carefully husbanded jars. Then I looked at the 27 basil plants growing in the greenhouse. Then I started dumping on friends. They were happy and my freezer had space.

Now that there is finally time to contemplate the weed patch inside the fenced garden, I find that my lily tags have become the voles' munch wrappers. I pull handfuls of weeds and find the tags, and generally small holes in the ground...and no plant in sight. At least I know what they had for dinner. There is all-out war now since my LA cross lily wasn't even left a pip from which to return. My martagon lilies have disappeared without a trace. My neighbor's survived and are stunning! The lilies that weren't lunch are starting to bloom and it is impossible to make a awkward flower arrangement with them. Lilies are such wonderfully designed flowers for arranging.

Serendipitous discovery—Weed control has reached the 2-4-D stage in my summer and I over-sprayed onto some horsetail. In a few days it began to droop, in a week the tops were sere and dead. Now, I'm watching the patch to see if more fronds will sprout from the base or whether they are truly *hors de combat* for the summer. If it works to kill them during the summer, maybe, just maybe, I can weaken the food-storage capacity of the plants' roots. Since it is illegal to use the herbicide for anything but the stated purpose, I was spraying dandelions, not horsetail.

The zucchini are blooming but my yield is not too good. I always forget my resolve of the previous summers to keep one plant "hungry" in order to have the male flowers to pollinate the "well fed" plants which produce a surfeit of female flowers. Oh well, next week-month-year. The unfertilized fruit does make a good stir fry.

And lastly, from the neat idea department: plant potatoes through Typar. MG Margaret Simon hosted some of us around her yard in Nikiski and undeniably she has the most beautiful garden and most productive garden of us all.

The size, variety, and appearance of her veggies were remarkable. She showed us her potato patch planted through holes in Typar. After the vines are dead, it's simply a matter of lifting the material off the bed and gathering up the potatoes from the top of the ground. She waters from overhead and has incorporated fertilizer in the soil before planting. I could get used to the ease of harvest!



## Bird Chatter

—Judy Wilmarth (aka, the peony lady) says that she tried planting by the moon phases according to the Farmer's Almanac & had surprising success with some Fox Gloves. She wants to know if anyone else has had this happen or was it a fluke?

—[www.ocfp.on.ca](http://www.ocfp.on.ca) is a Canadian site to make you aware of the hazards of agricultural chemicals and make you glad that you live in Alaska, not in the tropics!

—Also from the *Avant Gardener*, August 2004:

The Agricultural Research Service has found that red- and purple-fleshed potatoes contain up to three times the amounts of antioxidants as white-fleshed potatoes. Same source: Tests in England of ten repellents or barriers to slugs show that a 2.5% to 5% solution of garlic was the most effective product to keep the little dears at bay and worked even better than copper foil. How many cloves to a gallon of water is your guess.

—The gardens on the AMGA July field trip were fabulous! We got to see the "Garden of Eden" (Camille Williams), "A Little Bit of Heaven" (Pat Anderson) and "Up the Down Staircase" (Marge Olson).

— The yellow headed spruce sawfly larvae has been seen feeding on the needles of drought stressed urban trees.

— CJ Douglas provided the IPM office with a new pet, a 4-inch long leopard slug that is as fat as a finger. In addition to feeding on plant material, the leopard slug also eats other slugs!

— This is not a good year to plan combinations of perennials that look good together in bloom. The season has gotten so compressed that delphinium and monkshood are flowering at the same time.

— Thanks to Master Gardeners Kathy Madej and Pat Ryan for opening their gardens to public viewing during the Anchorage Garden Club's tour of gardens the last Sunday of July. And a round of applause to Marge Olson for orchestrating the tour again this year.

— If you're interested in herbs, join Mary Shier, Margaret Love, Elaine Wardell, Ski Olsonoski, Jill Shepherd and Julie Riley in the ABG herb garden on Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. for maintenance.

— The price of a standard soil test from the UAF Experiment station lab has doubled, from \$20 to \$40! It's time to use your skills to determine nutrient deficiency problems without doing a soil test.

## Marinated Everything Recipe

2 pounds of sugar snaps, slivered carrots, cauliflower, green beans or anything else that hold still and might be interesting

2 quarts of water

2 T salt

\*\*\*\*\*

Blanche the veggies for 3 minutes in the boiling water, drain and chill.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bring to a boil:

2 cups water

2 cups white vinegar

2/3 cup sugar or Splenda

1 Tablespoon salt

\*\*\*\*\*

and add:

2 teaspoons mustard seed

2 teaspoons dill weed

1 teaspoon dill seed

1 teaspoon dried hot peppers

4 generous cloves of garlic, split

\*\*\*\*\*

Put everything in a glass jar and let meditate for a few days before you start to eat. **Yield: 2 quarts**

It will stay good all winter so I make a gallon of it for the back of the fridge by just doubling the amounts.

## A New Competition for Gardeners

Enter *Horticulture's* new Garden Design Awards and you could see your garden featured in the pages of *Horticulture*—and win a \$1,000 gift certificate to a prestigious nursery.

In honor of *Horticulture's* centennial, a new gardening competition is underway. Simply snap a high-quality photo or slide of your garden at its best, and submit it along with your entry form and judging fee. The best entries in each division—Home Gardener and Professional will be featured in the January/February 2005 issue of *Horticulture* magazine.

Get the details about categories, prizes, and how to enter at: [www.hortmag.com](http://www.hortmag.com)

hibernaculum (hi-buhr-NAK-yuh-luhm) noun, also hibernacle

1. Winter quarters of a hibernating animal.

2. The protective covering of an animal or plant bud that protects it during its dormant stage in the winter.



## MG CLINIC HELP NEEDED

### Alaska State Fair Palmer

The Alaska State Fair in Palmer is August 26—September 6th and Master Gardeners are needed to help staff the Cooperative Extension Service display. The display will be set up in Raven Hall, space #88 and we have 66 volunteer/staff slots to fill.

If you can help, you'll receive a free ticket to the Fair and a parking pass. (The yellow lot is closest to Raven Hall.) Shifts are 3 or 4 hours each. Weekdays: 12-3 p.m., 3-7 p.m. and 7-10 p.m. Weekends: 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 2-6 p.m. and 6-10 p.m. Our hope is to have 2 volunteers per shift and will include Master Gardeners and Extension staff from the Mat-Su Valley.

Please contact DeShana York in the Anchorage CES office to schedule a time. Her number is 786-6333 and e-mail [fndd@uaf.edu](mailto:fndd@uaf.edu).

### Home Decorating & Remodeling Show

This event takes place at the Sullivan Arena the weekend before the Fair in Palmer. Master Gardeners are needed to set up August 19 sometime between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. and take down August 22 at 6:00 p.m. Shifts are: Friday, August 20, 1-4:30 p.m. and 4:30-8 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 1-4:30 p.m. and 4:30-8 p.m. Sunday 10 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 1-4:00 p.m. and 4:00-6:00 with take down. Please call or e-mail Julie Riley if you can help, 786-6300, [afjar@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:afjar@uaa.alaska.edu). THANK YOU!



For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

Cooperative Extension Office  
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.  
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone 786-6300  
Fax Line 786-6312

The Anchorage Chapter of the Alaska Master Gardeners Association welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. Contact the editor, Gina Docherty, at:

Mail: 4006 DeArmour Road  
Anchorage, AK 99516

Phone: 345-4099

Email: [amga@gci.net](mailto:amga@gci.net)

AMGA Web Site: [www.corecom.net/~gardener](http://www.corecom.net/~gardener)  
(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

## Gardening Calendar

### August 2, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association, Alyeska Resort Tour of Grounds, 7:00 p.m. Girdwood, 783-2382.

### August 5, Thursday

\*City of Flowers 2004 contest entries postmark due.

Photographs must be mailed to City of Flowers Contest, P.O. Box 196650, Anchorage 99519. Categories include 1) City of Flowers theme "The Aurora - A Bright Northern Blast of Color", 2) Garden beds, 3) Best before and after, 4) Use of containers, 5) Garden settings/environment. Contact MOA Parks and Recreation, Kathy Anderson, 343-4387.

\*Anchorage Garden Club meeting, "Designing Your Garden", a public education program open to all. Virginia Rush will speak on garden design. Pioneer schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle, 7:30 pm - 9 pm, 566-0539.

### August 7 & 8, Saturday and Sunday

Anchorage Garden Club 61st Annual Flower Show, "Salute to Broadway", Saturday, 10 am - 8 pm, Sunday, 12 pm - 6 pm. Alaska Botanical Gardens. Public is welcome to place entries; booklet with rules and categories available by calling 566-0539.

### August 7, Saturday

Wild Ponding, Stonehill Gardens and Conservatory, 16751 E. Huntley Rd, Palmer. Learn how to design and build a wild/natural pond, 907-745-7071.

### August 16, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association, UAA Campus Tour of Grounds, 7:00 p.m. call for meeting location, 346-1631.

### August 20-21, Friday and Saturday

Stonehill Tree and Shrub Fair, Stonehill Gardens and Conservatory, 16751 E. Huntley Rd, Palmer. Devoted to the wonder of trees and shrubs. There will be ongoing FREE classes in subjects like pruning, planting, pleaching, propagation, tree/shrub identification, tree medicinals and nature walks, 907-745-7071.

### August 26 - September 6

Alaska State Fair, Palmer, "Garden Hearty Party", Flower and crop entries due Wednesday August 25 & Wednesday September 1, noon - 10 pm, Cabbage Contest will be Friday, September 3. Call Pamella 907-746-7159 for more info.

### September 2, Thursday

Anchorage Garden Club meeting, "Decorative Ways to Attract Birds", a public education program open to all. Julie Riley will give tips and ideas on how to attract birds. Pioneer schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle, 7:30 pm - 9 pm. 566-0539.

### September 8, Wednesday

Alaska Botanical Garden Day of Caring, 9 am - 4 pm. Volunteers needed for special garden projects, 770-3692.

### September 9, Thursday

Wildflower Garden Club: "Incorporating Bulbs in the Landscape" with Annie Nevaldine; 10 a.m., Central Luthern Church, 15th & Cordova; Contact: Kathy Zins - 243-7216

### September 20, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association, Inspiration in the Garden: Painted Flowers, Katy Gilmore, 7:00 pm, Cooperative Extension Service, 2221 E. Northern Lights, 786-6300.

### September 24 & 25, Friday and Saturday

Fall Clean up days at the Alaska Botanical Garden. Volunteers needed to help organize the nursery area and tool shed, inventory plants, trim perennials, and mulch flowerbeds, 9 am - 4 pm, 770-3692.



# August

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