Anchorage Chapter

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ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

February 2009

Message From the President
Beth Schlabaugh

The break in the weather this past month lulled me into believing that spring was just around the corner. While I enjoyed the sunshine and warm days I worried about the snow cover on my gardens and of course the ice had me very hesitant. Like all good things the warm days had to come to an end bringing with it colder weather, more snow, and the inevitable knowledge that True Spring was still several months away.

I know many of you are busy starting seeds or gearing up to do so. I generally don't start seeds, lacking time, space, and patience. That is one reason why I eagerly awaited the first in our Winter Lecture Series. The first lecture was a boost to my spring thinking and generally had me excited about the upcoming outdoor growing season.

We apologize for the delay in getting members the information about these lectures. After the holidays we had a bit of a scramble to put some of the pieces together. The first lecture was given by MG Amelia Walsh. It was a wonderful pictorial review of her recent trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. We had a very nice turnout, and everyone expresses compliments on the program.

There is still plenty of time to get discounted tickets for the February and March lectures. Brief descriptions of the talks are listed below. The lectures are held in the Public Conference room on the 1st floor of the Z.J. Loussac Library. The lectures start at 7p and the program runs until 9p. The parking is free and refreshments are served. The cost for MG members is $12 per lecture or $20 for the remaining series. Reserve tickets by email to: "tickets" at alaskadragonfly@hotmail.com . I hope that you are able to attend!

Saturday February 28
Drawing and Painting from the Garden: Understanding Plants & Flowers

Dr. Linda Ann Vorobik is a professional Botanist and Botanical Artist. Linda is the editor, and illustrator of numerous botanical publications. She holds a Ph. D from the University of Oregon, Eugene. She conducts field research and teaches in the Siskiyou Mountains of South Western OR, she also visits Berkeley on a regular basis, where she is a Research Associate at the University Herbarium, University of California.

Linda's lecture will draw on her 25+ years of experience as she looks at plants and flowers in the garden from the perspective of drawing and painting them. "As gardeners, we all celebrate the great diversity of form and color of plants." Using images of plants from her mother's garden, other gardens, and Alaskan wildflowers, Linda will discuss how to understand form and color. Linda will suggests what one might do to start sketching garden plants with a minimum of supplies, and in a way that is comfortable, enjoyable, and successful!
NOTE: This talk will be different than Linda's other presentations while in the Anchorage Area.

Saturday March 21
The Role of Organic Foods at Home

Dr. Bret Luick is Foods & Nutrition Specialist with the U of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service. He coordinates the Alaska Food Cost Survey & Extension's Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) that provides information to low income audiences on eating healthy & stretching family food dollars. Dr. Luick is also affiliated with UAF's Institute of Arctic Biology & the Center for Alaska Native Health Research where he has studied the causes of obesity.

Northwest Flower & Garden Show
Blooms One Last Time

Don't miss out. Organizers announced that this year's event will be the last.

This year's theme is "Sustainable Spaces. Beautiful Places." The date is Feb 18-22, 2009, at the Convention Center in Seattle.

For more info, visit: www.gardenshow.com .

Garden Tip:

Recycle return envelopes from junk mail and bills into envelopes for seeds. When collecting in the fall or sharing seeds with friends these envelopes make handy storage containers. The return address lines are perfect for writing descriptive information and the cellophane window makes for easy visual identification. Caution: the cellophane may cause static so be careful when pouring the seeds out!

AMGA January Meeting Report

Annual Meeting business:
President Beth Schlabaugh announced that the Board of Directors had voted to amend the bylaws to reflect a seven member (rather than eight member) Board of Directors. The vote was conducted in December 2008 and adopted with a 4/3 vote. The Board of Directors had been carrying one vacant Director position from a resignation effective in October. Directors with expiring terms were Gina Docherty, Sue Lincoln, and JoAnna Littau.

Beth Schlabaugh presented a slate of three nominees (C. J. Douglas, Mary Rydesky, and Mari Wood) for the three Board vacancies and called for additional nominations from the floor. There were no additional nominations from the floor. The three nominees were unanimously approved. Mari Wood was the only nominee present.

Program: Primroses by Jane Baldwin
Jane presented a slide show of primroses growing in her yard. An avowed primula addict (or at the very least afflicted with a primula virus), Jane worked very hard to convince gardeners in attendance that EVERYONE should grow some primroses. Primula Study Group organizer, Mary Jo Burns also contributed good information about primula growing culture. Mary Jo is currently serving on the Board of Directors for the American Primrose Society.
The slide projector added a slightly blue hue to many of the pink and rosey colored flowers, so some of the WOW factor might have been missed. Primula are surprisingly hardy and will burst into bloom about the first of May – just when we are all so impatient for garden flowers. Some primroses bloom early in May and early June; others bloom a bit later in June and on into July. Still others may bloom almost until frost. They are generally vigorous growers and plants can usually be increased by plant division. Many primula varieties will also produce seed and self sow if they are happy.

Jane's slide show included many different kinds of primula – some that are woodland type growers, some that do well in very wet circumstances, some that do well in alpine and rock gardens and even in trough gardens. The record needs to be corrected with respect to pictures of native Alaska Primula. Jane thought she had only one native primula (P. borealis), but now knows she has TWO native primroses with the addition of P. stricta (thank you, Verna Pratt). And they are both growing well. The P. borealis clump is increasing by fine thread-like roots which pop up new plantlets at the end of the roots. P. stricta, Jane's smallest primula, is somewhat short-lived, but freely self sows, so there are always more coming.

Jane's handout included a list of more than 40 different primroses that are growing in her garden. Jane gardens in the area of Tudor and Lake Otis, but knows that primroses are being grown all over the Anchorage bowl, from Turnagain to Muldoon to South Anchorage to lower hillside and even the upper hillside area. Several local garden retailers will offer primroses come spring. Primroses are often found at some of the garden group plant sales. The basic elements for successfully growing primroses are partial or light shade, a rich but well draining soil, ample moisture during the summer and some mulching during the winter. If you can provide these, you too will soon suffer from primula addiction!

Master Gardener Focus: Allen Dietz
By Cheryl Chapman

When Master Gardener Allen Deitz pulled up stakes in Anchorage in 2000 and headed for a new job in Boise, Idaho, friends joked that the Realtor's ad for his home in East Anchorage should have read, "Garden for sale, with house."

"There probably was a time when I was under the age of 2 that I might not have been a gardener," says Deitz, "but it's been part of my nature to garden."

The Deitz family of Homer always had a big vegetable plot, but even then, Allen had a small area of his own, and later, in his first Anchorage apartment in 1983, took on a community garden and threw himself into almost every major gardening group in the state. His knowledge, enthusiasm and willingness to help and go the extra mile endeared him to those who worked with him on projects, and they spread the word about his plant savvy and his nimble ways with computers, pottery, furniture refinishing, languages (he speaks several), gourmet cooking, and handcrafts such as stained glass, crocheting, knitting, quilting and metalwork.

Municipal gardener Susan Miller told the Anchorage Daily News the year he left, "I can call him about any specialty field, any type of plant, and he will know about it or find out about it. He's research central."

Deitz was a member or officer of eight gardening groups, from alpines to Master Gardeners to the Alaska Botanical Garden, but was (and is) especially passionate about roses. He helped revive the Alaska Rose Society, published its newsletter by himself for a while, and established 60 hardy varieties among the lilies, poppies, bellflowers, columbines and veronicas at his East Sixth Avenue home, which he generously shared with other plant-lovers and garden club tours. He gardened organically, except for the pots, and resident ladybugs, lacewings and parasitic wasps kept pests in check.

He was asked to take charge of Alaska State Fair flower exhibits after two years of volunteering, and each year took part of his vacation from his federal job at the Bureau of Land Management to set up the displays, keep jars washed, answer questions, ply flower show judges with refreshments, update the exhibitors' guide and persuade fair managers to shift the flowers to their own building, where they would get more attention.

The Boise job with the Interagency Wildland Fire Center was too good to pass up, he says, though he grieved to leave his friends and garden.

"I didn't bring a single cutting," he says. "I didn't know what I would be facing."

Boise and Anchorage, it turns out, had a lot in common, though big differences too.

Boise lies in a river valley that ribbons between sand and sagebrush deserts, backed by foothills of the Rocky Mountains. In altitude it's similar to Anchorage, but "the biggest changes are the alkaline soil, the milder temperatures and the fact that there are four distinct seasons."

"This year we've had snow, but I had petunias bloom all winter, one winter."

His Boise home on a half-acre is heavily forested – cottonwoods, willows, black locusts, and 50-60 other deciduous trees – "and it's an interesting challenge to find little pockets of sun to plant roses." He's found spots enough, though, to keep 40-45 of them happy.

With the summer temperature range from lows in the 50s to highs in the 80s, "I indulge in tomatoes and peppers more than anything else," he says. "I'm trying to get the gardening community to grow more heirloom tomatoes. I've got 300-400 starts every spring for the garden club sales, and now I'm getting return customers."

"The four seasons were the biggest shock. Now I have to plan over a long period of time to have color. In Anchorage, I didn't really have to plan because everything blooms at once. Here, spring bulbs bloom from February to June. In Anchorage, you could leave town on Mother's Day for a week and miss spring completely."

"There haven't been many garden problems new to me, but then, being a totally organic gardener buffers problems."

Except for the California quail. "They're like grouse, with a little feather topknot, and they come in swarms," Deitz says. "They love the tomatoes, cucumber blossoms, squash blossoms. A baby quail squeezed through chicken wire I had around the vegetables, panicked, and did more damage trampling the plants trying to get out than if it had just eaten what it wanted. Now I plant extra."

Except for the squirrels. "They'll crawl under or over anything you put in their way."

And except for the deer. "We don't have moose, but the deer come down the irrigation canal. They'll nibble the tulips, nibble the roses, and last spring just before the lilac bloomed, one bounced over the fence and nibbled the lilac as well. I was shouting and waving my arms but he broke off a big branch, hopped back over the fence and stood there safe on the other side, staring at me and chewing."

Deitz hasn't been back to Anchorage for seven years, but friends and family come calling regularly. "Every time I get ready to go back for a visit there, another group of people shows up here," he says.

"I certainly miss the gardening community in Alaska, but there's an active one here, so the feelings are mixed," he says. "You miss the one but enjoy the other at the same time.

"I don't travel much. You can sort of garden in your back yard your entire life and enjoy it as much as someone who travels around the world gardening a month in each place.

"Wherever you are, gardening is exploration. Wherever you are, gardening is a journey of change."

Heirloom Report 2008

By Allen Deitz

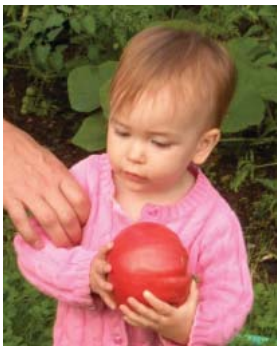
Each spring, along with many perennial seedlings, I grow heirloom tomato and pepper seedlings for garden club plant sales and to share with friends and co-workers. This year, 2008, seedlings were shared with friends in three states (Idaho, Oregon, and Washington) and with two local garden clubs.

Tomatoes delivered to the Idaho Horticulture Society spring plant sale, May 2008

Of more than 400 tomato seedlings and over 120 pepper seedlings, 230 tomato and 85 pepper plants were sold at the garden club sales.

Plant sale customers selecting heirloom tomato plants, May 2008

Most of the varieties are grown from seeds that I have collected from my own prior years' gardens. Some of the pepper varieties I have been growing and collecting for over 20 years. I also participate in several seed exchanges and seem to acquire another variety or two each year.



Satisfied gardener with 'Brandywine'

Clay Pots vs. Plastic Pots
Jane Baldwin, December 2008

Recently I read an old (late 1950s) article that related results from a study of clay pots vs. plastic pots. While some interesting results are presented that makes one think a bit, one should keep perspective with the time of the article – 1959 – a time when plastic garden pots were really just majorly hitting the gardening scene. Some traditional gardeners (like my Dad, who used clay pots) were a bit hesitant to commit to these new plastic things at that time.

In an English horticulturist's studies, growing tests were conducted on clay and plastic pots. An equal number of similar sized petunia seedlings were planted in the same soil mix in clay and plastic pots. In the 2nd week, the plastic pot plants were bigger, looked healthier and had more side shoots than those in clay pots. The first flowers in plastic pots opened during the 4th week with another 2 weeks before clay pot petunias began flowering.

Evaporation tests using a system of wicks and jars of measured amounts of water were as one would expect: the clay pots lost more water. Comparative temperature test results were intriguing. Thermometers were put into pots at about 2/3 their depth; in hundreds of readings, soil in the plastic pots was warmer than in the clay pots. In fact, the soil temperature in the clay pots was always several degrees below the air temperature.

Multiple thermometers were placed in different positions (edges, center, etc.) and at different depths with results showing that soil temperature in the plastic pots was constant throughout. In the clay pots, however, the soil near the outside edge registered up to 3° lower than it did in the center of the pot.

Further test results indicated that when moved from higher temperatures to lower temperatures, soil in clay pots cooled off more quickly than soil in plastic pots. When clay and plastic pots were placed in a refrigerator for 3 hours and then moved to a 72° degree room, clay pots initially warmed more quickly until reaching temperatures that allowed for moisture evaporation. At that point, warming of clay pots lagged considerably behind plastic pots, due to cooling from the evaporation process. It seems to me that soil cooling more slowly and warming more rapidly in plastic pots might be a factor with our cool night time temperatures.

Clay pots constantly evaporate moisture, lowering the temperature of the soil especially near the outside edge of clay pots. Apparently because of the evaporation process, soil at the outside of clay pots stays more moist and colder while drying out the center of the pot (where possibly the main structure of the root system is) putting more stress on the root system.

Still with me?
The function of roots is to seek moisture. In this study clay pot roots grew horizontally outwards until they reached the sides of the pot. They don't turn inwards again since that would mean heading to drier soil, so they continued to wind around the soil ball seeking moisture. With this winding around the outside edge, they are thus unable to make much use of most of the soil in the pots.

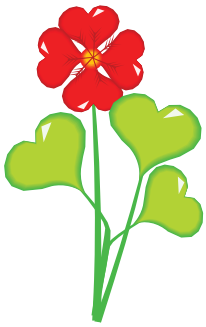
Stay with me!
According to this article, in both clay and plastic pots a flow of moisture upwards to the surface occurs. Moisture on the outside of soil particles ascends through capillary action to the soil surface where it evaporates. Thus the surface represents a "dry cold zone". (dry = water evaporated; cold = cooling process of evaporation) Water in the tiny spaces (interstices) between soil particles goes to the bottom through gravitational pull. Since roots tend to grow down, and with the more even moisture found in plastic pots, plant roots were directed downwards away from the dry cold zone. Thus root growth in plastic pots took place throughout the soil ball except near the upper surface – contrary to root growth in clay pots which followed the moisture evaporation path horizontally and wound around the edges as well as upwards following the capillary action of moisture into the cold dry zone.

Another factor noted in this article that seems to delay wilting in plastic pots is the dry layer on the surface. In plastic pots once this dry layer was established it prevented further evaporation from the soil at the surface and since not a lot of roots were formed in this area, minimal root damage occurred. In clay pots, however, root growth occurred in the surface layer and consequently roots suffered more severe damage during periods of drought.

Root growth patterns in clay and plastic pots have other consequences. Clay pot grown plants need repotting more frequently because of their root tendency to grow horizontally and wind around the edge; they also have less access to nutrients in the soil ball. Plants growing in plastic pots generally do not need repotting until they have exhausted the nutrients within the soil ball.

The author concludes that with respect to temperature tests, the practical advantage is given to growing in plastic pots since the higher and more constant temperature readings promote speedier growth. This author also notes this factor may have fuel saving consequences as it may be possible to grow in plastic pots in greenhouses at slightly lower heat settings.
Reference: "Is The Clay Pot On The Way Out", A. H. Knowles, Primrose, American Primrose Society, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Fall 1959, pp 132-135 (article reprinted in APS quarterly with permission from The Northern Gardener, Vol.XIII, No. 1, Jan 1959).

The Power of Petals
(from Country Home Magazine Jan/Feb 2009)
Submitted by Linda McCarthy



Gardeners have known it all along: flowers are natural mood lifters. Now scientists are praising the power of petals. A Harvard University study found that placing small bouquets of flowers around your home strengthens feelings of compassion and decreases anxiety and worry. You could say: "A flower a day keeps the anti-depressants away."

Central Peninsula Master Gardener News
By Rosemary Kimball

Winter attrition continues. I've killed my neighbor Mark's three really nice pots of mints (Why don't I keep them in the sun room for the winter for you? never mind that the temp in there dropped to zero during "that time") I forgot about a little nothing cactus and it is mush. My pretty little miniature rose is history but Mark's rose lived! I pruned it, fertilized it, and got it back to his light fixture as fast as possible. I decided to try to grow something that could withstand my TLC and potted up a red onion that had stood so long in the refrigerator that it had sprouts 7-inches long. It greened up and I forgot about it and even it is iffy now. It's a looong winter this year.

I looked at the rest of the cabbages stored in the refrigerator and they looked too miserable to foist on someone else and my friends have their own cabbage glut, so I made more sauerkraut. I now am the proud owner of 40 pounds of sauerkraut and friends that like my sauerkraut better then my failing cabbages.

The two weeks of cold weather were brutal to our ducks. They were confined to quarters with a flood light on them to give what heat it could. They got hot meals 3-4 times a day but quit laying and went into survival mode as it got colder. They got very skinny and didn't groom so their feathers really looked bad. The coldest morning down here was -40°F and I have a picture of the thermometer to prove it. When the weather finally broke and they went outside, the first bucket of water went down their gullets and they drank as if they had just crossed the Sahara. The next bucket went into baths and feather grooming. They started laying a couple days later and the eggs are once again piling up and we're eating cakes and custard.

The dustings of snow we've had lately are lots of fun because we can see who's around and who's going where. I left the gate to the garden open one night and a hare got trapped within. Now, does one open the door again, walk off and perhaps get more animals instead of fewer or does one keep the gate shut and keep it trapped. I opted for the trapped path and it was interesting to see what was eaten: apple whips. Period. No raspberries, black or red currants, sea buckthorn, service berry, autumn olive or honeyberries were eaten. The hare had a regular path back and forth along the fence but in the snow, after I had protected the apples, there was no trail again...

We've picked up a new "yard ornament", a weasel. Now that we've seen the cheeky little Mustela erminea we find his tracks all over the place: around and on the front and back decks, down in the duck pen, in the brush pile along the walk. One place I'm curious about now is the vole hole I've been taking care not to disturb. The vole was very neat...peed and pooped at the end of the tunnel entrances. The vole tunnel is now weasel-sized. Who is using it? The lynx of October didn't stick around even though we had lots of vole-y and hare-y food so I wonder if the weasel will at least take care of the voles. I've not forgiven them since they ate my lily bulbs one fall. It's time for another inch of snow for nosey Rosie.

From the AMGA Email:
Summer Job for a Gardener

Hello AMGA,

I am the Personnel Director at Camp Denali, an upscale lodge in Denali National Park. We have a job opening for a Greenhouse and Grounds Coordinator for the summer. You may know someone who has the skills and desire to apply for this job. You also may know a better place to advertise for someone with subarctic production greenhouse skills. If so please let me know.

Here is information about the job:

Greenhouse and Grounds Coordinator
Denali National Park, Alaska

We need a summer (May to mid-September) Greenhouse and Grounds Coordinator. The Coordinator is responsible for producing organic vegetables and flowers (in a 20ft x 40ft greenhouse, cold frames, and outdoor gardens) that are incorporated into the meals at Camp Denali & North Face Lodge. Maintaining production of vegetables and flowers, maintaining a composting system, overseeing maintenance of grounds and decorative flower boxes and hanging baskets at both lodges, providing direction and supervision of one part-time assistant, and interacting with occasional guests to explain the greenhouse operation are responsibilities of the Coordinator. For more information: http://www.coolworks.com/profile/camp-denali/summer-jobs. For directions about how to apply: http://www.campdenali.com/employment/index.php.

Camp Denali & North Face Lodge are two separate lodges one mile apart, each on private land (inholdings) deep in the interior of Denali National Park, Alaska. They are family-owned and operated. Over the course of a week staff members will work at both lodges. The program for both guests and staff provides active learning experiences and fosters stewardship of the natural world through a tradition of excellence, community and place. (www.campdenali.com)

Thank you,
Martha McPheeters
Personnel Coordinator
Camp Denali
907.683.2290
www.campdenali.com

Herbs Relieve Stuffy Noses
From Tidbits Newsletter of South Central AK the Garden Bug column

Bring several cups of filtered water to a boil in a pot, remove from heat and add the following herbs: lemon verbena, thyme and sage. Stir several times. Place your face close to the pot and over the rising steam with a towel over your head and the pot. Breathe in this steam for several minutes to relieve congestion and mild sinus headaches.

Bird Chatter

-- AMGA president Beth Schlabaugh's spruce boughs adorned the award-winning "Celebrating Alaska" float in the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Year's day.

-- Jane Baldwin placed her old Christmas tree boughs on top of her berginia to hide it from the moose.

-- Futurefamers does not refer to highschoolers participating in FFA (Future Farmers of America). This multidisciplinary group of designers created the "Transpolar Catapult Feedback Loop" that was part of the Anchorage FREEZE project on Delaney Park Strip last month.

-- Free Soil (http://www.free-soil.org/about.php) is a collaboration of artists, activists, researchers and gardeners who believe art can be a catalyst for social awareness and positive change. Art projects include Gardening Superfund Sites, http://www.futurefarmers.com/superfund/.

-- Gardening in January? Why not when the weather warms up to 40°F? Verna Pratt took primrose cuttings and Anne Butcher finished planting her tulip bulbs. (She had dug a trench before the ground froze and backfilled with sand while she planted).

-- Amelia Walsh's presentation on Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands included pictures of a salt tolerant indiginous tomato, impatiens growing in their natural environment and a poisonous apple tree.

-- Swedish scientists claim to have discovered a spruce on Fulu Mountain in Scandinavia to be 9,950 years old.

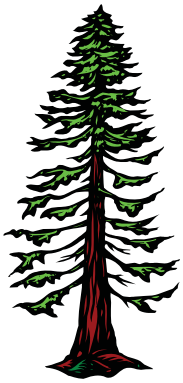
-- MG Sally Koppenberg's restaurant in Palmer, The Red Beet, offered free inauguration cookies on Jan 20 made from one of Michelle Obama's recipes.

Plant Trivia: Shamrocks
From Linda McCarthy

An 18th century writer said "the vulgar superstitious wear shamrocks, 3 leaved grass" on the Feast of St. Patrick in March. As for St. Patrick, although his provenance is uncertain, he was not an Irishman. He was taken to Ireland as a slave as a young boy, escaped, and later returned to rescue the Irish (against their will) from the Druids and to free the island of snakes, the symbol of all evil. The shamrock also stands for faith, hope and charity and like other Christian symbols was inherited from the Greeks. Three leaf or four (the form of a cross) it is supposed to protect the wearer and brings them luck. There are several contenders to the title of shamrock: white clover (Trifolium repens), red clover (T. pratense), black medic (Medicago lupulina), wood sorrel (Oxalis Acetosella), and water cress. The name is commonly applied to the lesser yellow trefoil (Trifolium minnus) which is the plant most frequently worn on St. Patrick's Day. (From Through The Garden Gate by Elizabeth Lawrence)

5 REASONS TO STOP TOPPING TREES

By Cass Turnbull fearless leader and founder of PlantAmnesty (started: October 22, 1987) whose mission is to end the senseless torture and mutilation of trees and shrubs.



What's wrong with topping?
The misguided practice of tree topping (also referred to as stubbing, dehorning, pollarding, heading, and by several other euphemisms) has risen to crisis proportions nationally over the last decade. Topping has become the urban forest's major threat, dramatically shortening the lifespan of trees and creating hazardous trees in high-traffic areas. The importance of trees to the urban and global ecology is only now becoming fully known and appreciated. This dawning has not yet been accompanied by adequate public education and sound public policy to ensure tree survival and our own safety. DON'T TURN YOUR VALUABLE COMMUNITY ASSETS INTO LEGAL, AESTHETIC AND ECONOMIC LIABILITIES! PLEASE READ AND CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

1. IT WON'T WORK.
Topping won't work to keep trees small. After a deciduous tree is topped, its growth rate increases. It grows back rapidly in an attempt to replace its missing leaf area. It needs all of its leaves so that it can manufacture food for the trunk and roots. It won't slow down until it reaches about the same size it was before it was topped. It takes at maximum a few years before your tree returns to near its original size. An exception to the grow-back-to-size rule comes if you damage a tree's health so it hasn't the strength to re-establish itself. It is, in effect, dying and will continue on a downward spiral for years. Topping can't make a significant size difference-not for long. The species or type of tree you have determines its size. A dogwood or Japanese maple may grow from 10 to 30 feet in its life, an oak or an ash from 10 to 90 feet. You can't "stop" trees with topping. If you succeed, you have killed them.

2. IT'S EXPENSIVE.
A topped tree must be done and re-done every few years-and eventually must be removed when it dies or the owner gives up. Each time a branch is cut, numerous long, skinny young shoots (called suckers or watersprouts) grow rapidly back to replace it. They must be cut and recut, but they always regrow the next year making the job exponentially more difficult. Much like the many-headed Hydra snake that Hercules battled, people create maintenance monsters in their back yards. A properly pruned tree stays "done" longer, since the work does not stimulate an upsurge of regrowth. Proper pruning actually improves the health and beauty of a tree, costing you less in the long run. Topping also reduces the appraised value of your tree. A tree, like any landscape amenity, adds to the value of your property. Appraisers subtract hundreds of dollars from the value of a tree when it's been topped (using the International Society of Arboriculture's guidelines for evaluation). You can even sue a tree company for wrongfully topping a tree.

3. IT'S UGLY.
The sight of a topped tree is offensive to many people. The freshly sawed-off tree limbs are reminiscent of arm or leg amputations. And the freshly-sawed look is just the beginning of the eyesore; the worst is yet to come, as the tree regrows a witch's broom of ugly, straight suckers and sprouts. The natural beauty of the tree's crown is a function of the uninterrupted taper from the trunk to ever finer and more delicate branches, and the regular division of the branches. Arborists consider the topping of some trees a criminal act, since a tree's 90-year achievement of natural beauty can be destroyed in a couple of hours. Topping destroys the winter silhouette of a tree. The regrowth of suckers or shoots will bloom poorly, if at all. Some trees will reestablish themselves after many years-but by then they will be the same size as before. Many topped trees are considered a total loss.

4. IT'S DANGEROUS.
According to Dr. Alex Shigo, world renowned scientist and author on the subject of arboriculture (trees), topping is the most serious injury you can inflict upon your tree. Severe topping and repeat topping can set up internal columns of rotten wood, the ill effect of which may show up years later in conjunction with a drought or other stress. Ironically, many people top their trees because they think it will make them safer. Topping creates hazardous trees. In many cities, topping is banned because of the public safety factor and the potential for lawsuits. Topping creates a hazardous tree in four ways:
*IT ROTS. Topping opens the tree up to an invasion of rotting organisms. A tree can defend itself from rot when side branches are removed, but it has a hard time walling off the pervasive rot to which a topping cut subjects it. Rotted individual limbs or the entire tree-may fail as a result, often years later.
*IT STARVES. Very simply, a tree's leaves manufacture its food. Repeated removal of the tree's leaves - its food source - literally starves the tree. This makes it susceptible to secondary diseases such as root rot---a common cause of failing trees.
*WEAK LIMBS. New limbs made from the sucker or shoot regrowth are weakly attached and break easily in wind or snow storms-even many years later when they are large and heavy. A regrown limb never has the structural integrity of the original.
*INCREASED WIND RESISTANCE. The thick regrowth of suckers or sprouts resulting from topping make the tree top-heavy and more likely to catch the wind. This increases the chance of blow-down in a storm. Selectively-thinned trees allow the wind to pass through the branches. It's called "taking the sail out" of a tree.

5. IT MAKES YOU LOOK BAD.
Topping makes you appear to be a cruel or foolish person. Your friends know you better. But the more your neighbors come to understand topping for what it is, the lower you will fall in their esteem. You may top a tree to create a water view, but you should know that you have some friends and neighbors -who probably won't say so because they are being tactful- who see a view of a butchered tree with water in the background.

Garden Event Calendar

Wednesday, February 5
Tree Identification Snowshoe Tour, 1 pm– 3pm. Free for ABG members, $5 pp for nonmembers.

Monday, February 16
Alaska Master Gardener Meeting: "Making Do: Gardening on a Budget" with MG Herb Spencer. 7 p.m. Held at the CES,2221 E. Northern Lights, Room 130

Feb 20, 27, and March 6, 20, 27, Fridays
March 28, Saturday
Organic Gardening Class with with Ellen Vande Visse, Good Earth Garden School, www.goodearthgardenschool.com Mat-Su College: Five Friday evenings, 6—8:30pm, plus one Saturday field trip; 1 credit, pass/no pass. Call 745-9746 for information or register on line at www.uaa.alaska.edu and follow Wolf Link for Agri 138, Organic Gardening.

February 21, Saturday
Alaska Rock Garden Society meeting: "Douglasia and Drabas", held at the MTA Meeting Room in the Valley.

Saturday, February 28
Winter Lecture Series: Drawing & Painting From the Garden: Understanding Plants & Flowers presented by Linda Ann Vorobik; 1st floor of the Z.J. Loussac Library near the Anchorage Assembly Chambers. $12 for MG members/$15 general public, tickets available at the door.

Monday, March 2
Native Plant Society Meeting, Campbell Creek Science Center, 7:30 p.m. Open to the public. Visit www.AKNPS.ORG for meeting details

Saturday, March 21
Winter Lecture Series: The Role of Organic Foods at Home. Dr. Bret Luick; 7pm in the public conference room on the 1st floor of the Z.J. Loussac Library near the Anchorage Assembly Chambers. $12 for MG members/$15 general public, tickets available at the door.

Saturday, May 2
Co-sponsored by the AMG, the Alaska Botanical Garden will host a lecture on, by well-known garden writer Tracy DiSabato-Aust. Author of The Well-Tended Perennial Garden, DiSabato-Aust will speak on The Well-Designed Mixed Garden: Building Borders with Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, Annuals & Bulbs. Tickets are $15 for ABG members, $20 for non-members. This lecture will take place at the Alaska Wild Berry Theatre, 5225 Juneau St. More details to come on DiSabato-Aust's visit as we get closer to that date.

The Anchorage Chapter of the Alaska Master Gardeners Association welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. Contact the editor, Gina Docherty, at:
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(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:
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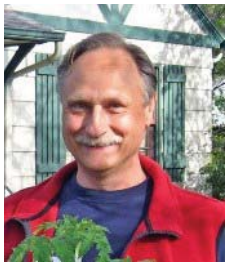

Inside this issue....

MG Allen Deitz, current AMGA member and former Board member living in Idaho: "Wherever you are, gardening is exploration. Wherever you are, gardening is a journey of change."

See Cheryl Chapman's article on page 2:
Master Gardener Focus: Allen Deitz

Don't forget to send in your dues to continue receiving this newsletter!
Dues must be received by February 28th in order to be included in the 2009 AMGA Directory.

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