



Anchorage Chapter



Volume 13, Issue 4

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER April 2011



Message from Jane Jane Baldwin

Warming daytime temperatures and increased daylight (over 12 ½ hours as I write) make it official: Spring is declared to be here. It's finally time to get serious with forward thinking about gardening season. Spring gardening events are happening, nursery stock is arriving, and plant sales will soon be upon us.



It's probably a downer on this sunny morn, but am also beginning to think about my slug control strategies. Some of you may be aware I did a presentation on Slugs at the recent ABG Spring Conference. I'm not exactly sure why I was tapped for this topic, but

let me tell you, did I ever learn a lot about slugs while putting together my program! Never again will I bypass a slug without dispatching it.

First and foremost, I'm wearing gloves when required to touch those slimy things. Slugs have been implicated in the transmission of many plant pathogens and bacteria that can cause human illnesses. Further, recent evidence indicates slugs are vectors of *Camplobacter* spp and *Escherichia coli* (e-coli) which causes food poisoning and may have been partially responsible for recent publicized massive recalls of contaminated spinach and other salad crops.

Secondly, slugs, depending upon the species, can lay from 10 to 100 eggs in a clutch - and may do this about three times a summer (late spring for us, early summer and again when the weather begins to cool in the fall). The following example does assume perfect survival and hatching conditions for slugs and eggs - which is highly unlikely - but it does make a POINT:

Assuming an average clutch of 30 eggs laid by a slug in the fall overwinters (yes, they can over winter here). Come spring, 30 sluglings hatch toward the end of May and reach reproductive maturity about the end of July.

Now if 30 slugs each lay 30 eggs, you will have 900 slug eggs hatching about the first of August. (gross thought) If each of these 900 slugs reach reproductive maturity about the first week in October and the weather is mild:



900 x 30 = 27,000 slug eggs that could overwinter. OMG! Even a single slug dispatched can make a difference!

There seems to be a lack of base data on slugs in the Anchorage area. I would be most interested in collecting any anecdotal information on when slugs were first noticed by gardeners in the area and when different appearing slugs were first noticed. I would be very interested if you spot any unusually different or bigger than usual slugs this summer - try to collect it or at least get a picture. I'm also going to focus on getting slug pictures this summer. If any of you want to do the same, I'd be most interested in adding copies of your pictures to my collection.

See you at April's meeting - I'm off to the Master Gardener Conference in Fairbanks - there's a session on their agenda on tomato grafting - how interesting does that sound? More later.



Treasurer's Report

Checking Acct. Balance 2/24/11	\$2123.99
Expenses	- 565.46
Dues deposit	880.00
To savings:	840.00

Checking Balance 3/24/11 \$1598.53

AMGAA March 21st Meeting Report: Foliage and Texture in the Garden With Robbie Frankevich

By Cheryl Chapman and Gina Docherty

Robbie Frankevich delighted a room full of master gardeners with his discussion and slide show of the plantings at Alyeska in Girdwood.

Robbie has been in Girdwood since 1983, and has been the plantsman for Alyeska since 2000. When Robbie came to Alyeska, the only landscape flowers there were trollius, and after June, they were done.

He decided that his goal would be to extend the seasons of interest from spring through late fall, and to do this, he turned to foliage plants.

Among the first were Tulip "Silverstream," which have variegated edges, followed by *Erythronium dens-canis*, which proved slow-growing and expensive.

From that, he turned to *Erythronium bethune*, which lasted only a month so he mixed it with *Pulmonaria*.

The *Ligularias* have been strong performers, especially *Ligularia "Britt Marie Crawford"*, and yellow-stemmed dogwood, *Cornus "Hedgerows Gold"*, is good even in winter.

For foliage, *Cimicifuga purpurea* looks good through October, but this *Cimicifuga* won't bloom here. Our summers aren't long enough.

Jacob's Ladder "Stairway to Heaven" has dainty blooms and long-lasting foliage, and *Lamiums* combine well with *veronicas*, *hostas* and *begonias*.

He hasn't done much with things that don't stick around, but he did have a fling with *Canna "Tropicana"*.

Variegated *pseudocoris*, with its lance-like leaves, makes a striking "destination" clump by the edge of the pool for the moose sculpture.

Stay away from *Petasites japonicus* -- it's invasive in water.

He loves "Flight of the Butterflies" iris, and also the native burnet.

The late emergence of *hosta* foliage is the perfect way to cover the dying foliage of *frittilaria Milagros* after they bloom.

These are just a few of the many foliage plants Robbie uses, and a few of the tips he had for using foliage to its full advantage in the garden.

New Gardening Publications

Three new gardening publications authored by Jeff Smeenk, CES Horticulture Specialist and Tony Nakazawa, Extension Economist are now available at the Extension office or on-line:

"Community Gardens in Alaska," highlights the many benefits of community gardens in both urban and rural settings and offers basic information on how to plan and manage a community garden project including a list of supplemental resources.
www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/detail/index.xml?id=456.

"Composting in Alaska," explains the difference between hot and cold composting, how to build and manage a compost pile, and how to properly use feedstocks and bulking agents. It contains a variety of compost recipes, ideas for composting structures, a list of useful tools and some FAQs.
www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/detail/index.xml?id=455.

"Hoop Houses in Rural Alaska: Twenty Questions and Answers to Get You Started," addresses common questions and gives information on the sizes and shapes of hoop houses, the cost of building and/or shipping, ease of construction, sunlight and heat requirements, advice on what kind of production to expect, and much more.
www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/detail/index.xml?id=459.

Urban Farming Classes Fridays, April 8 - May 20, 2011 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

April 8: Eat local: Container gardening, community gardens, farmers' markets, u-picks and starting a food co-op in Anchorage.

April 15: Grow Your Own: Vegetable gardening basics for our cold soils and cool summers. Includes information on organic seed sources and heirloom varieties.

April 22: Chickens in City: Learn what it takes to keep your chickens healthy and productive and your neighbors from complaining. Egg handling, storage, nutrition and cooking will be covered.

April 29: Composting Techniques: Turn your yard and kitchen waste into 'black gold'. Includes information on vermi-composting with red wigglers.

May 6: Preserving & Storing Your Harvest: Freezing, canning, drying the fruits of your labor.

May 20: Making Goat Cheese: Demonstration on how to make goat cheese using purchased milk. Includes information on Municipality of Anchorage regulations on raising goats in the city.

Location: UAF Outreach & Extension Center, 1675 C Street, #100, Anchorage (entrance off 16th Ave, between A Street and C Street)

Instructors: Julie Riley, Horticulturist & Leslie Shallcross, Home Economist, UAF Cooperative Extension Service. Special guest Steve Brown, Agriculture Agent, Palmer.

Cost: \$5 each or all 6 classes for \$25. Cash or checks payable to UAF Cooperative Extension Service. (Sorry, no credit cards.) Pre-registration recommended at the Anchorage CES office, 1675 C Street. Phone 786-6300 for more information or to register. Registration form available here.

Master Gardener Focus: Christine Bingham By Cheryl Chapman

To the three goals grass guru Christine Bingham had for her last garden on the lower Hillside - strong design, low maintenance, good-looking at all seasons - her family's new home on the upper Hillside adds a fourth: Keep it on the property. Some houses have yards. Others have terrain. This one, on a steep acre-plus, is in that second category.

"There'll be some corrections in drainage, but I haven't done any planning yet," she says of her house of three months. "There's lots of lawn. I'm sort of scared about that."

"Where am I going to put the plants in holding beds? Where can I put them so moose won't get them? I see a fence in our future."

A tall wooden fence at the previous home - "after 11 years, I'd finally gotten the garden just like I wanted it" - kept moose out of the back yard, and 10-foot-tall welded pinwheels out front kept them moving at a trot on down the road to others' less-protected ornamentals. The pinwheel idea came from Jane Baldwin, but Christine had more and bigger moose and needed more and bigger pinwheels. And with a little help from an artist and an engineer and a lot of rebar, she picked up a welding torch and made her own.

"I never had a moose in my yard after that," she says. The pinwheels, stored at a relative's, will be spinning at the new place as soon as the ground thaws enough to pound them in.

Except for the sporadic six-pack of petunias, Christine's was not a gardening family. A summer job with an Anchorage landscaper and garden designer was the vector that infected her with a passion for planning and plants. "His was a caliber of gardening you didn't see much of here, 10 or 15 years ago," she says. Off at college, she added a botany minor to her biology major.

"But I'm a very lazy gardener," she says. "Early on at the last place, I started taking out the plants that needed attention and giving them away. Eighty delphiniums. All the peonies. I wanted workhorse plants, shrubs and trees. The time I don't have to spend maintaining plants, I can spend with my daughters."

She put in gravel paths. Rectangular raised beds with sharp corners for visual crispness even under snow. "Gravel is a neat surface," she says. "It increases the soil temperature earlier in the spring and keeps it later in the fall. Any degree of heat I can get, I'll take."

The gray house was on a corner lot, close - too close - to the street, and Christine discovered her first grass purchase, a small plug of *Calamagrostis* "Karl Foerster," or feathered reed grass, provided quick, no-care privacy. "It was a wonderful screen, and very well-behaved," she says. "I loved it. I didn't have to do one thing to it."

It was a perennial, even in Alaska, 5 to 7 feet tall, and hardy. "One moose took one bite, and we never had a moose touch it again," she says.

Moose don't seem to find cool-season ornamental grasses palatable at any season, Christine notes in her comprehensive article on the grasses in the Master Garden-

ers' newsletter (Google "Christine Bingham ornamental grass," or go to the Alaska Master Gardeners' home page at <http://www.alaskamastergardeners.org/> "Ornamental Grasses in Alaska" is in the list to the right on the screen).

She's learned a lot about the grasses by experimenting, and chronicles her garden and Alaska experiences on her garden blog, <http://lastfrontiergarden.blogspot.com>. She says her blog was among the first to deal with gardening in the state, and she's found that people all over the world are fascinated. "In Africa, China, Norway - it's been a great surprise to them that we grow anything here," she says. "Garden designers in England share what they're doing. We share. We learn."

"I wish more Alaska gardeners had garden blogs. It's not really that difficult."

(For those who'd like to set up a blog or learn 51 other ways to bring a computer to heel, go to <http://www.teachparentstech.org/watch>. The free videos are all you'll need to astonish your children, your grandchildren - yourself, even.)

After Karl Foerster, "I asked myself, 'why am I not planting more of this?'" Christine says. Hooked, she moved on. Another *Calamagrostis*, this one the green and white-striped "Overdam." A *Carex*, or leatherleaf sedge, "Red Rooster. Another *Carex hachijoensis* "Evergold." *Isolepis cernua*, the bristly, adorable fiber-optic grass. Borders. Accents. In the ground. In containers.

There haven't been many trials of ornamental grasses this far north, but all the ones Christine recommends in her MG article had been in the ground, and come back, for at least three years.

Depending on variety, the grasses spread either by clumping - their waistlines expand annually - or by runners, or stolons. These have to be watched. They're not fussy. With sun, good drainage and air circulation, a grass is happy. Almost no pests or diseases plague it, nor does it need congenial other grasses. Most of the commercially available ornamental grasses are sterile, says Christine, and for those that aren't, Alaska's brief growing season isn't long enough for them to set seeds.

Grasses can be picked up at local nurseries or from the Internet, she says. "I let my fingers do the walking," to buy and browse alike. One of her favorite sites, Blotantica, has thousands of garden blogs broken down by category, including one especially useful for Alaska, <http://www.coldclimategardening.com/garden-blog-directory/>. The mother ship can be accessed by Googling "garden blog directory."

"It's spring," says Christine. "Try new things. Start a garden blog."

"I'm selfish. I want to read more."

The View From Great Dixter: Christopher Lloyd's Garden Legacy

(Timber Press, hardcover, \$27.95)

A Book Review By Fran Durner



The View from Great Dixter
Christopher Lloyd's Garden Legacy

Foreword by Beth Chatto
Edited by Rosemary Alexander and Fergus Garrett



This is a lovely book.

Not only is it a touching memoir about one of Britain's contemporary garden giants, it is also an armchair traveler's guide to one of the great English gardens and historic homes open to the public today.

Christopher Lloyd - known as Christo to his friends - was a renowned plantsman, garden writer, opera lover, accomplished cook, connoisseur of wine and whiskey, a plain speaker,

wit, provocateur and a collector of many, many friends who were often invited to lunch or to spend a week-end at Great Dixter, the 15th century historic home and garden where he was born in 1921. Christo wrote 26 garden books and was a regular weekly garden columnist for over 39 years, even up to his death in 2006.

He encouraged the use of bold plant combinations as well as pragmatism in the garden. No sentimentalist, he was famous for ripping out a walled rose garden planted by his mother, and replacing it with exotic plants. This was partly because he felt the roses just did not do well in the site and part rebellion against established ways and habits. If he thought a certain plant would look good in a certain place, it got planted there, even if it meant going against every garden tenet known to exist. He was a proponent of experimentation and constant change in the garden.

Christo was a man who suffered no fools yet made friends constantly. The book is written by dozens of gardeners, (including former Alaskan Jim Fox, whom some of you might remember) musicians, relatives and neighbors, detailing their visits to the Great Dixter house and garden and paying tribute to their friendship with Christo. Not known for holding back on his opinions, or temper on occasion, Christo was also known for his generosity, warmth and for his love of dachshunds, of which two were always in residence. With names like Dahlia, Canna and (unfortunately) Yucca, the dogs were a holy nipping terror to everyone except their master.

Visiting Great Dixter was more than visiting the man, the house or the garden: It was connecting to a way of life without TV or radio, of evenings around a dinner table enjoying good conversation, nights by a great fire reading aloud or listening to someone play the piano, of long walks through the garden or champagne lunches by the horse pond.

I started this book before I left for the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in Seattle and finished it on the three-hour flight home. It was hard to put down and by the end, not only did I want to start planning a trip to East Sussex to visit Great Dixter, it made me feel like one of Christo's extended family members as well.

Potato Late Blight Quarantine

Before springtime planting, the Division of Agriculture would like to remind gardeners of the Potato Late Blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) quarantine that is currently in effect within the State of Alaska. Potatoes and tomato seedlings purchased from Outside sources should not be brought into the state except under the following conditions.

- Seed potatoes or potato plants are produced as certified seed potatoes in the state or country of origin and are certified; and are inspected in storage and no late blight is found in the lot; and are inspected at the shipping point and no late blight is found.
- Tomato plants are grown in a nursery or greenhouse officially inspected and found free of late blight; and are inspected at the shipping point and no late blight is found; and are treated prior to shipment with a registered fungicide for late blight disease control. (Tomato seeds are not part of this quarantine.)

In order to verify the above requirements, each shipment of seed potatoes, potato and tomato plants that are shipped to Alaska shall be accompanied by an official certificate issued by the government regulatory agency in the state or county of origin assuring that the conditions of this quarantine have been met. Tomato plants and seedlings that have been grown from seed in Alaskan greenhouses and nurseries are not subject to the above requirements.

Also, under Alaska Administrative Code, all seed potatoes sold, offered or displayed for sale must have attached to each container or the display, the applicable seed certification tag issued by the official seed certifying agency of the state or country of origin, including those produced in Alaska. Watch for this tag when you shop.

Do your part to preserve the integrity of Alaska's seed potato industry and purchase locally grown and certified seed. Last year Late Blight was found in the Mat-Su Valley towards the end of the season. The pathogen only overwinters on live tissue but can wipe out an entire field of potatoes within a short period of time during the growing season. It can also infect potatoes in storage.

P.S. This is the ONLY quarantine on shipping plants from other states to Alaska.

Information for this article was taken from the Alaska Division of Agriculture's March newsletter available online at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/>.

"Ask a Master Gardener" Needs Volunteers

Do you garden? Are you a Master Gardener? If so, here's an easy way to volunteer!

If you are interested in answering gardening questions submitted via email through the AMGAA's website, please contact the webmaster at AMGA@alaska.net.

You don't need to be an 'expert' to answer common gardening questions submitted by the public. You can do it!

Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball



March started out with a woodpecker drumming somewhere in the 'hood. I don't know if he got discouraged with no response, but he didn't repeat his information during the month. We used to have an active population of Northern, Hairy and Downies but something has changed in the 'hood that I can't see and a woodpecker is something to talk about. The flickers are history.

The most active MG down here has been Kathy Wartinbee who went out to the Western Winter Study Weekend of the North American Rock Garden Society which was held in Victoria B.C. It was nasty cold down there, with high winds and snow which cancelled the tours of the private gardens which is always the feature that makes other rock gardeners drool. Then, later in the month, she taught a class on seed starting for the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program that the CES puts on down here. The turnout (including me and a bunch of other MGs) was really impressive. It's nice to see that so many are interested in beginning to garden. Kathy's a busy woman. She also spearheaded the seed exchange for the Rock Garden Society.

MG Margaret Simon's (in Nikiski) answer to what's happening was a real shocker. She has a fig tree! With 10 figlets on it. I'm fig-leaf green with envy! And she wrote, "In spite of me, my leeks, tomatoes, and fennel are coming along nicely. Also have a new viola 'Bowles Black' coming up in abundance."

We get Alan Bradshaw down here the day after you do in ANC and he's worth going to hear. Kathy Wartinbee considers her rock garden as a "lawn abatement" project so she gets to put him up for the night. You need to go to his Alplains.com web site for seeds we can do up here. "Small seed lists in the early 1990s were followed by his first color catalog in 1994. From then his business steadily grew until widespread drought in the early 2000s nearly forced him into bankruptcy. By 2005, the business had recovered enough to allow Alan to again issue color catalogs. Growth has been steady ever since and his 2009 catalog contains seed of over 1000 different rare and unusual plant species, including a large selection of cactus seed from the collection of Jeff Thompson." That from Marion, Gardon Club Prez. Now, don't you wish you went to hear him???

I didn't follow Jane's admonition to label things and now I'm wondering what's going to come up in a recycled planter...

My rule of thumb has been to pay taxes and then start seeds for cauliflower and broccoli, etc. It's not working so well this year but it still remains the standard. You need 5 true leaves on a plant for a good transplant.

The green house is not somewhere one wants to go barefooted these days with those *#\$\$% birds wandering around. And to boot, the potting soil is thawing enough that they can dig it up and dust. I'm going to need to take a hose in there when I kick them out to who knows where at this time. Everything is covered with a fine coating of dirt.

And interestingly is that my cousin in Huntley Montana

has a neighbor who took the AK MG class! Someday I may get back there and meet him!

And from our web site discoverer Wartinbee...
<http://www.jpwflowers.com/> for Siberian iris.

Sage Advice From Rosemary

Heat a little butter almost to browning then fry a sage leaf for 30 seconds on one side, 20 seconds on the other and use it as a garnish. You'd think it would be strong but it is mild and absolutely delicious.



Sage is a Mediterranean plant, a biennial that needs very little care. So many of our culinary herbs started from road-side weeds and this is one.

The Latin name of the plant is from *salvere*, meaning to be saved and because it was thought to assuage grief. A medieval treatise says that it is to render man immortal. But just fry it, dry it, and use it.

High Tunnel Funding Sign-up period for 2012 EQIP funding is now through June 15th, 2011

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) sign-up period for fiscal year 2012 funding is now through June 15, 2011. These funds have been used to fund installation of seasonal high-tunnels at many locations in Alaska.

By capturing solar energy, seasonal high tunnels create favorable conditions enabling farmers to grow vegetables, berries and other specialty crops in climates and at times of the year in which it would otherwise be difficult. Farmers who sell their high tunnel produce locally benefit from the extra income, and the community benefits from the availability of fresh, locally grown food.

Seasonal high tunnels are manufactured kits made of metal pipe and covered with UV resistant 6 mil plastic. Easy to build, maintain and move, they provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season. Unlike greenhouses, they require no energy, relying on natural sunlight to modify the climate inside to create favorable conditions for growing vegetables and other specialty crops.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing financial assistance for seasonal high tunnels as part of a three-year trial to determine their effectiveness in reducing pesticide use, maintaining vital soil nutrients, and increasing crop yields.

For information on how to apply for EQIP funding, visit:

NRCS Mat-Su Service
Center 1700 E. Bogard Rd.
Suite 203, Building A
Wasilla, AK 99654
Or call (907)373-6492 ext. 101



Bird Chatter

-- For all the time she put into the show, Christina Sexton has been dubbed 'Queen of the MG Rony Display'. How many of the 1,236 people assisted did Christine talk to? A lot, given she did 8 shifts!

-- Last month Susan Opalka wrote from Hawaii saying she wished she could hear Robbie's talk but was busy trying to get the salt out of her soil after the tsunami. 8-(

-- Ellen Cordes's scrabble team came in 5th place at the Alaska Literacy Programs's annual Scrabblers Scramble for Literacy. (Julie Riley and Jill Shepherd's team was 21 out of 42.)

-- Forty-five people turned up to hear new author Stacy Studebaker talk about the flora of the Kodiak Archipelago and the Kodiak Late Glacial Refugium on Super Bowl Sunday.

-- Check out MG Christine Bingham's gardening blog, Last Frontier Gardening, <http://lastfrontiergarden.blogspot.com>. It includes an up-to-date calendar of events and pictures of Running with the Reindeer from Fur Rony.

-- AMGAA members present at the Fairbanks MG Conference included Jane Baldwin, Jill Shepherd, Debbie Hinchey, Lynn Opstad, Julie Riley and Paul Marmora. Paul even wore his 'official' Master Gardener nametag while teaching his 3-hour bonsai class.

-- 'SAVE the GEORGESON BOTANICAL GARDEN' was one of the displays at the March MG Conference. Tips on writing a letter to your Alaska legislator and ideas on what to include were distributed along with talking points on the issue. If you'd like to see copies, contact any of the MGs who attended the conference.

-- Thanks to Lori and Troy Zaumseil for contributing beaucoup door prizes to the statewide Alaska Master Gardener Conference which was quite generous given they weren't able to attend.

-- The USDA classifies worms as 'livestock' for Specialty Crop grant purposes. This makes anyone trying to start a red wiggler business ineligible to receive the money.

-- Farmer/Rancher Ruby Hollembaek is circulating a web petition to create an Alaska Department of Agriculture with its own commissioner who would sit at the cabinet level. Right now the Division of Agriculture is part of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Ruby makes a strong point for the change on her blog, <http://akrhubarb.blogspot.com/>.

-- The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is slated to lose 10 scientists in Alaska and is scheduled to close the germplasm repository in Palmer in October. MGs interested in contacting their congressional delegates are advised to ask for more funding for ARS nationwide. Senator Murkowski has said she will not vote for anything that can be construed as an earmark for Alaska. More information may be available on the Alaska Community Agriculture website at www.alaskacommunityag.org/.

-- What's the most unlikely vacation spot for a Master Gardener? For excitement, Cheryl Shroyer went to Libya with a group of astronomers.

Looking for a Job this Summer?

Master Gardener wanted for well-established landscape, lawn & garden business. Master gardener certification or comparable college education, and 2-3 years experience. Must be physically fit for demanding job, and have a valid driver's license with clean record. Must have a thorough knowledge of shrubs, perennials, annuals; and knowledge of fertilizers & weed/pest control products. Part-time or full-time, hours negotiable, seasonal position. Includes pruning, new plantings, transplanting and ongoing maintenance, weed & pest control, working with hand and power tools.

Send inquiries or resume to sungsl@alaska.net, or fax 345-3362

MG Volunteer Help Needed

Sears Mall Spring Garden Show, April 16
MGs are needed to set up and staff a display during this grand event that includes most of Anchorage's garden clubs. Shifts are 10 a.m. - 12 noon; 12 - 2 p.m.; 2 - 4 p.m. and 4 - 6 p.m. with take-down. Shifts are short so you can have time to check out the other displays. Morning and early afternoon is very busy and 3 MGs are needed for each time slot; 2 MGs will work fine for the last two. Two people are needed for set-up at 9 a.m. This hour gets hectic because shoppers tend to get in to the mall before it opens. Please contact Julie if you can help, afjar@uaa.alaska.edu or 786-6300.

Booth Memorial Home garden

The Salvation Army Booth Memorial Home would like to have a garden and incorporate the vegetables into the meals at the facility. Booth serves emotionally and behaviorally disordered adolescent girls, age 12-18 by providing pregnancy and parenting education support and life skills development. The nearby Serendipity Adult Daycare plans to collaborate in Booth's gardening efforts. Serendipity has a greenhouse. If you think you might like to work with this group, please get in touch with Julie.

ASD Whaley School gardening

Whaley School is a Special Education Center providing Learner Assistance for male students with significant physical and developmental disabilities. The plan for their garden project is to have a horticultural activity each week and plant some things that can be harvested in fall (potatoes, raspberries, etc.). The time set-aside for Whaley School gardening is Monday from 12:30 - 2 p.m. Contact Julie Riley if you can help. If another time during the day might work better for you, we can try to make arrangements.

Garden Tip Submitted by Kathy Wartinbee

From an article in Gardengate magazine recently:

To prevent peony botrytis, put a 1 inch thick layer of crushed 'pea sized' limestone, (calcium carbonate, not the powder that is frequently used on lawns) around the base of your peony. The limestone neutralizes the acid and helps kill the botrytis which resides in the soil & affects peony shoots as they emerge. It will also help release nutrients in an acid soil by 'unlocking' chemical nutrients. Cut peonies to the soil and remove debris in the fall, and replenish crushed limestone if needed.

**Alaska State Fair: Time to Celebrate
75 Years & Still Growin'
By Nickel LaFleur
National Garden Club Flower Show Judge**



Garden Event Calendar

April 4

Alaska Native Plant Society; "Aleutian Plant Life", Leah Kenny; 7:30p; Campbell Creek Science Center <http://www.aknps.org/>

April 4

Mat-Su Master Gardeners, 7pm, MTA Conference Room, 480 Commercial Drive, Palmer <http://matsumastergardeners.org/>

April 7

Anchorage Garden Club; Rock Garden Construction; Carmel Tysver; 7pm; Pioneer Schoolhouse, 437 E. 3rd Ave AGC Hotline: 566-0539 www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchoragegardenclub

April 7, 25

Mat-Su UAF CES "Introduction to Gardening in Alaska", MG Marier Domer (Domer Family Farms); free but registration required. MTA Conference Room, 480 Commercial Dr., Palmer 907-745-3360

April 8 through May 20, Fridays, 11 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

'Urban Farming', Series includes Container Vegetable Gardening, Eating Local, Vegetable Gardening Basics, Composting, Chickens, Food Preservation, Making Goat Cheese. Classes \$5 each or six for \$25. Registration form available at CES in Anchorage or online at www.uaf.edu/ces/anchorage.

April 9

Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers "Grafting Workshop"; New location: Anchorage Korean Assembly of God Church, 1781 Academy Dr. Anchorage; EVERYONE WELCOME <http://www.apfga.org/>

April 14

Wildflower Garden Club, monthly meeting; Program Bookmarks with Dried Flowers, Verna Pratt. 10 am, Central Lutheran Church 15th & Cordova www.wildflowergardenclub.org

April 16

Sears Mall "Annual Spring Garden Show"; 600 E. Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage

April 18

AMGAA meeting; "Soil amendments & Summer Mulching"; 7pm, CES, 1675 C Street; amga@alaska.net; 786-6300 www.alaskamastergardeners.org

April 25, Monday, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

'Alaska State Fair Entries ... How to Win', Kathy Liska, Crops Superintendent, Nickel LaFleur, Master Gardener and Julie Riley, Herb Judge, UAF Cooperative Extension Service. Location: CES office Anchorage

April 30

North Root Big Lake Gardeners, Spring Gardening Symposium, Big Lake; proceeds benefitting the Mid-Valley Senior Center and Houston Middle School. Details soon to follow. 892-8119 <http://www.northroot.net/>

May 2

Alaska Native Plant Society, "Ordering the Chaos: A Historic Perspective on the Life and Legacy of Carl Linnaeus" by Beth Baker, 7:30p; Campbell Creek Science Center; <http://www.aknps.org/>

May 2

Mat-Su Master Gardeners, Growing and Preparing Plants for entry to the Alaska State Fair, Pat Tremaine. 7pm, MTA Conference Room, 480 Commercial Drive, Palmer; <http://matsumastergardeners.org/>

May 5

Anchorage Garden Club, Gardeners vs Moose; Jane Baldwin; 7pm; Pioneer Schoolhouse, 437 E. 3rd Ave. AGC Hotline: 566-0539 www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchoragegardenclub

May 23, Monday, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Rhodiola: A Medicinal Herb for Alaska Growers, Dr. Petra Illig, Alaska Rhodiola Project, UAF Cooperative Extension Service. Location: CES office Anchorage

May 26, Thursday, 5 - 6:30 p.m.

MG hosted potluck at CES for Garden Tour attendees at Neighborhoods USA Conference. Please come and provide a dish to welcome participants from around the country who are interested in building stronger community through neighborhoods and gardening. Location: CES office Anchorage

This year, the Alaska State Fair will be celebrating its 75th year in existence! The Fair started in 1936, not long after the Colonist's arrived in the Mat-Su Valley as a way to celebrate farming in the Valley. It just so happened that its opening date of Sept 4 -7, coincided with the opening of the Knik River Bridge - making it the first time people from Anchorage were able to drive to the Valley.

The Giant Vegetable contest started in 1941 when the manager of the Alaska Railroad offered a \$25 prize for the largest cabbage (Max Sherrod won the prize with his 23 pounder).

Alaskans embraced the celebration and in 1956, the fair board petitioned the Legislature to certify this fair in the Mat-Su Valley as "The Alaska State Fair".

In 1967, the Fair moved from its downtown Palmer location to its present site on the Old Glenn Highway. Through purchases and trades in early 2000's, our Fair encompasses approximately 345 acres today.

Following with the idea of 'cooperation' & 'cooperative', I'd like to welcome all the Master Gardeners to enter something into the crops and/or flower department this year.

On Monday, April 25th (one week after our regularly scheduled meeting) @ 7pm at the CES we will discuss the rules, the "how-to", the "what-for" and whatever other questions participants might have to be able to successfully enter something into the Fair this year.

Entry dates for the Fair are Wednesdays, August 24th and August 31st with the Fair running from August 25th through September 5th. Each participant must have an entry number. If you have entered something in the Fair before, you have an entry number. (I was able to locate mine through an email address I found on their website www.alaskastatefair.org)

In the past, entries for both crops and flowers needed to be transported to Palmer on Wednesdays which dissuaded Anchorage gardeners from entering. Perhaps we can do some 'ride sharing' by contributing some cash with our entry to help pay for the gas and careful accommodations to get it there. Something else to discuss at our meeting.

On April 25th, I plan on bringing some seedlings to share and challenge others to enter something in the Fair this year. If you have extra seedlings, bring them to share with others for some friendly competition.

Please join me to celebrate our 75th anniversary. Let others around the state come to the State Fair and see that Alaska Master Gardeners are a force to be reckoned with.



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

AMGA

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Inside this issue....

Message From Jane
AMGAA March Meeting: Foliage and Texture
New Gardening Publications
Urban Farming Classes
Master Gardener Focus: Christine Bingham
The View From Great Dixter - A Book Review
Potato Late Blight Quarantine
Central Peninsula MG News
High Tunnel Funding
Bird Chatter
MG Volunteer Help Needed
AK State Fair: Time to Celebrate 75 years and Still Growin'
Garden Event Calendar



Master Gardener Christine Bingham took out plants in her garden that needed attention to spend time with her two daughters. See Cheryl Chapman's Master Gardener Focus article on page 3.

Photo by Laurel Hogge

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