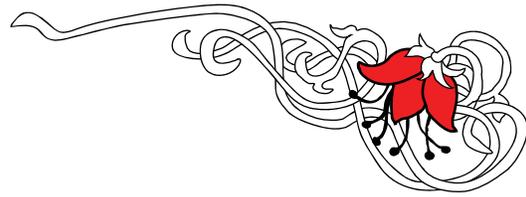


Anchorage



Volume 15, Issue 4

# ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ANCHORAGE NEWSLETTER April 2013



## A Nickel's worth from President LaFleur

Happy spring, dear Master Gardeners! Our 2013 Directory is out and isn't it beautiful? I am very proud of it and want to give a loud SHOUT OUT OF THANKS to Sandy Harrington for its easy to read flow and beautiful designs. I think it's the best directory yet!

More good news while I'm at it is Treasurer Cindy Walker and former President Jane Baldwin have spent numerous hours pounding out all the wording to get our organization's Bylaws updated for the first time in years. Judy Christiansen and I did some proof-reading of this complex document and I'm proud as a peach that it will soon be sent to the current Board members for further review and eventual passing. Once the Bylaws are recorded and whatever else deemed necessary is done, Cindy Walker will forge ahead and work on the documents required to make Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage a 501C3 group as recognized by the IRS. That is my dream come true. Thank you, Cindy Walker and Jane Baldwin, for following through on this important detail of our organization.

I don't know where you are on your planting schedule but I'm on overdrive in Muldoon. It is my hope that this year we can get some gardeners together and exchange seedlings with each other rather than all of us grow a few of every variety. First off, I don't have the will-power to not plant the whole packet. It's just doesn't seem right that I'm going on my 6th bale of ProMix trying to keep up with everything that wants to grow! I started four or five different kinds of sweet peas the beginning of February. As the plants grew, I snipped them back to encourage bushiness. This year, after I cut back the sweet pea, I removed the lower couple sets of leaves and stuck them back into the seed soil mix. Much to my surprise, quite a few of them germinated and I now have double the seedlings coming up in the 4" pots. Wow - it's like a Christmas bonus and I feel like a proud new mother with my success. I'm trying a new type of sweet pea called 'Electric Blue' from Renee's Gardens. Wow - seems that each one of the seeds germinated and then their cuttings had good success rerooting, too. I look forward to seeing how this container sweet pea blue flower will do.

I plan on sharing seedlings with all those that wore their name tag to our March presentation by the Ronse's. I brought along a flat of small shoo-fly plant- Nicandra physaloids- I thought I could share but not one

attendee chose to take one and opted to have me bring plants to them NEXT month - at our April 15th meeting. Here are my winners: Margaret Love and Carol Ross will get a couple Best Boy tomatoes; Dee Dee Van Vliet, Mike Baldwin, Alice Friend and Amy Olmstead chose Love Lies Bleeding plants - I have both lime green and red Amaranthus; and lastly, Della Barry, Pat Anderson, Marjorie Williams, Judy Christianson and Lynne Opstad will be taking home zebra mallow - *Malva sylvestris* 'Zebra'. Thank you to all of you for wearing your name tags. To Susan Miller and Sharon Schlicht, who didn't have name names to wear but read the email with my request to wear identification, I'm bringing you a plant or two, as well.



## AMGA Treasurer's Report

Balances 1/31/13	
Checking S-88	3069.84
Savings S-19	15144.95
CD-112.1 (ABG)	3357.35
CD-136 (Education)	3005.20
<u>Total</u>	\$24577.34

Revenue:	
Donation	45.00
Interest	2.90
Membership	690.00
Pioneer Home Donation	500.00
Education-Potato Bash	320.00
<u>Total</u>	\$1557.90
Expense:	
Education-Potato Bash	320.00
Hospitality (Dick Juelson)	100.00
Newsletter	345.67
<u>Total</u>	\$765.67

Balances 2/28/2013	
Checking S-88	3859.17
Savings S-19	15147.60
CD-112.1(ABG)	3357.35
CD-126(Education)	3005.20
<u>Total</u>	\$25369.57



## AMGA March 2013 Meeting Report: The Ronsee's Garden By Pat Anderson

56 Master Gardeners listened in rapt attention while Dennis and Annie Ronsee shared their family tradition of gardening. Dennis and Annie are recent graduates of the MG program, and Dennis has a Master's Degree in plant taxonomy. Both are in the process of retiring from teaching.

The fairly steep slope in the back of their home is in full sunshine. They use the Lasagna Method of building the garden, by layering different types of compost such as leaves from neighbors, grass clippings, coffee grounds and office shredding, and putting it all on top of existing soil. They limit their purchase of soil by making their own. They use plastic to warm the soil surface in the spring, and till in the fall. Dennis shreds leaves with his lawn mower, bags it, adds some green matter and lets it "cook" on top of the veggie garden space all winter. Mulch is added to perennial beds in the summer after the soil warms and helps suppress weeds.

The calendar determines when to start seeds. Germination mats are utilized - they use electric blankets with heavy plastic protection, cheap fluorescent lights with full spectrum bulbs, fans, thermometers and rolling carts, which move plants in and out of the garage to harden them off. This is called "The Rolling Cart Dance"!

When ready, fast growing veggies such as beets and lettuce are planted early under clear row covers. The results of good soil care are huge carrots, parsnips, kohlrabi, kale, and other vegetables. An unexpected benefit of good soil was discovered by Dennis while harvesting his cabbage: he found black ground beetles in cabbages that had no slugs, and slugs where there were no beetles. He discovered the beetle to be *Pterostichus Melanarius*. It lives in the soil, the larvae eat worms and the adult beetle eats slugs! Yeah!! Cheers!! Don't kill those large black beetles in your yard!

Annie harvests and preserves continuously throughout the season. She freezes, pickles, dehydrates, dries herbs and makes jams. Carrots and parsnips are not washed before storing and kept in the unheated garage at 33 degrees, on the rolling carts. They trade some of their hard work results to friends for meat, and other needed items. They don't believe in wasting anything. They have taken 85# of rhubarb to Bean's Cafe, and help out other charitable organizations.

Dennis believes in keeping good records, and does that by sketching all his beds, then entering all things planted using "Filemaker Pro".

Their talk was enjoyed immensely! Keep track of the Ronsses on [www.facebook.com/pages/Pacific-view-gardens](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pacific-view-gardens). Many, many thanks to them for what they love to do, and sharing it all with us.

The MG meeting ended with some wonderful door prizes and Irish themed refreshments. Generous MGs provided wonderful door prizes. Mary Jo Burns delighted everyone by handing out a box of yellow/orange dahlia tubers. Our guest speakers, the Ronsees, contributed incredible carrots, herb blends, Fox Glove and artichokes! Wow, what an evening to remember!

## Pre-Sprouting Seeds By Jane Baldwin



Smart gardeners that we are, we know the seed germination process, right? With apologies for distilling part of a past course in Plant Physiology into less than 50 words: tucked inside each seed is pre-programmed genetic material destined to become a plant's roots, stems and leaves and enough nutrients to make that happen; the particular seed's germination process is triggered by its specific soil temperature, moisture, and/or light requirements.

Cabbage family veggies are cool weather growers, happily growing in our summers with night time temperatures sometimes in the 40s and daytime temperatures rarely hitting 70. Commonly held general seed starting protocol recommends optimal seed starting soil temperatures of about 68 to 75 degrees. Not gonna happen here. A dilemma we solve by starting early indoors. Obviously heat is needed to break dormancy for germination, but cabbage family veggies should grow at cooler temperatures.

Two summers ago I pre-sprouted kale seeds to a 1/4" radicle (first embryonic root that appears, growing downward to anchor the seed) in dampened paper towels on my kitchen counter. It took about 24-36 hours for the radicle to appear. The pre-sprouted seeds were planted in a sunny spot outdoors about April 23rd when soil was thawed only to depth of 2". Covered with a clear deli container, the cotyledon leaves broke ground in about 2 days. At regular planting out time, they were definitely smaller plants than those started indoors, but they were stockier and a much deeper green than the indoor starts. In about 4 weeks, they were all the same size.

Last year I pre-sprouted beet seeds to 1/4" radicle root and planted them out at normal planting time. Cotyledon leaves broke soil in about 3-4 days. The recommended optimal soil temperature for beet seed germination is 75 degrees for a 7-14 days germination period and cooler temperatures can mean a longer time to germinate. I will do the pre-sprouting of beet seed again.

I'm thinking this year that carrots are a good candidate for pre-sprouting. As with any root vegetable they are sometimes difficult to start early with roots inadvertently damaged in transplanting. Optimal soil temperature is about 75 degrees for germination in about 6 days. With a soil temperature of 50 degrees, germination may take 14-17 days. Pre-sprouting to the 1/4" radicle root and then planting out could speed the process.

Perhaps others might enjoy trying some comparison seed starting, planting pre-sprouted seeds and even early outside planting - and share their results. Don't abandon your traditional methods, but share your results if you try new methods for comparison purposes.

## Lights! Camera! Action! Well, Patience... By Mary Tilly

Just when I've had enough of the snow, and the wind and the cold (you know the winter doldrums), I get inspired! Sometimes, it's a book, or a movie, or in this case, a conversation with a long time Alaskan gardener. We were having dinner one evening and she said something very surprising. "I love living in Alaska, especially in the winter, and the darkness, because it gives me such an appreciation for the light!" Talk about a startling change in perspective!

Last winter, needing a challenge, I decided to start my garden from seeds. Despite two bay windows, and a solarium, I quickly realized I would need a lot more light. Truth be told, the solarium is solar heated, and my indoor house plant garden takes up much of the space at the windows. Hence, I decided to convert my spare bedroom into a nursery. That was only the first of multiple subsequent decisions.

First, I pondered, how to maximize the limited space I have for planting. While I cherish the ongoing fantasy of covering my back yard with hoop houses, I had to consider the feasibility during an Alaskan winter. So, I compromised, and scaled down just a bit.



I found a small pop up greenhouse at Lowe's and best of all, it was on sale at the end of the season. What a handy and economical concept. Assembly was fairly simple. I use drip pans, like the ones mechanics put under cars, to protect my carpet. However, I quickly realized

that, except for the top shelf, very little natural light would be available for seedlings to sprout.



Next stop, the library for information on lights, watts, K values, bulb sizes and configurations, I learned a lot, and fortunately a friendly electrician gave great advice and assistance. I delved into my Master Gardener notebook of many projects and found information about a light box. Ok, I thought. I just need to expand the concept.

Talking with other gardeners, I quickly ruled out very expensive multi-spectrum grow lights under which equally expensive tropical plants (lemon tree) had perished. I prefer the KISS method, and an economical alternative. My precious electrical wizard came up with a marvelous solution; using regular fluorescent fixtures and bulbs, with a particular "K" value. We used 2ft single bulb fixtures with 6500K color band T12 bulbs. The bulbs have a brightness of 1025 lumens, using 20 watts each. Two fixtures per shelf overlapping in the mid-section.

Attaching the fixtures to the shelves requires adaptability. The fixtures need to accommodate the growth of the seedlings. Here is our solution: Each fixture is suspended at each end by chain. This allows for easy height adjustment. They are hard-wired, "daisy-chained", together and plugged into a simple 24 hour timer.



Last year, I used the tiny seed trays, available at most garden departments, with overall reasonably good results. The best results and most resilient seedlings for transplant were the tomatoes and squash. This year, because my focus is mainly on flowers, I used 3 - 4 inch pots, most of which were recycled from plant starts I've bought in years past. In either case, the chain light supports, work well and are easily adaptable for height. The plastic cover fits over the entire assembly, and

the heat and moisture retained makes it truly a greenhouse.

I even had room for additional open shelves, for the pots of bulbs that are coming up. Soon, I will have tulips, hyacinths, crocus, and paperwhites and spring will truly have sprung at my house!

According to an ancient Greek proverb, "The beginning is the half of every action." So, happy gardeners, commence to begin to start...and enjoy!

## April 15th AMGA Program Change

### Wildflowers: The Beauty of Hatcher Pass with Jaime Rodriguez

Due to scheduling difficulties, Bill Campbell will not be our featured speaker as noted in the Directory. Bill will instead be our May speaker, and Jaime Rodriguez, a noted Rock Garden expert, ARGs Board member and owner of Alpine Nursery Garden Nursery in Wasilla, will move up his talk to accommodate our need.

April 15th is not only tax day but it will be the next chance we will have to meet to talk gardening. Jaime Rodriguez will excite our eyes with wonders of the flowers that grow in the Hatcher Pass area. We all have eyes that are begging for spring to appear. No matter what Mother Nature will have in store for us - it will be spring at the Cooperative Extension Building on Monday, April 15th. So please get your taxes done and join us! See you there.

## MAKE TIME ... FUN MATTERS!

By Kathy Liska



A good reminder for all of us, and also this year's theme for the last blast of summer at the Alaska State Fair which runs August 22 thru September 2. Be sure to mark your calendars and make a trip to Palmer during this time.

With the growing season quickly coming upon us, we MAKE TIME to thumb through catalogs, visit garden centers, sow seed and make room for all the beautiful, new, green seedlings growing in our dining rooms, kitchens, etc. Before long we'll be outside enjoying and working our gardens - planting, watering, weeding and sharing our success and failures with others ... FUN MATTERS!

As Superintendent of the Crops Department, this time of year also finds me making time to organize one of the state's greatest events displaying vegetables. A renowned showcase for Alaska growers/gardeners and their summer bounty, the Alaska State Fair Crops Exhibit is visited by over 300,000 people from all over the world each year. Last year the ASF was voted #2 Best State Fair by Country Living Magazine for the Giant Vegetables which generate a lot of national buzz and worldwide media recognition for the Guinness World Records that have been made at this show.

There are 7 current Guinness Records tied to the Fair - pretty impressive with the short growing season we have. The newest being the World Record Cabbage grown last year by Scott Robb of Palmer. It weighed in at a whopping 138.25 pounds!

Another sight not to be missed is the giant Pumpkins. It's amazing to see these gigantic squash, and a great picture opportunity. The Alaska State Record is 1287 pounds ('Lucy Lu') ... yes they name them, grown in Nikiski by J.D. Megchelsen. However, the largest entered at the Fair was 1723 pounds ('Patrick'), by Dale Marshall of Anchorage in 2011. This weight made it the 4th largest ever grown in the world at the time, but had to be disqualified from the competition due to a small hole that went through to the cavity. In order to be a World recognized weigh-off site we must follow both Guinness and the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth rules and guidelines. We take our GIANTS seriously!

2013 will be the 77th year of this gathering at the end of a busy summer. It all started in 1936 and hasn't changed much. Today's Fair still centers on the things the original Colonist started with - agriculture, lots of food, friends & family, and an old fashion good time! Maybe you'll enter some of your own garden goods. The Crops Department averages between 1200-1500 entries in 18 Divisions and 280+ Classes over the 2 week period. It's your love of gardening that makes this show the 'cream of the crop'. So plan a harvest time to fall within this time frame, which may mean some later planting, and be part of Alaska's biggest garden event. And now that the Crop and Flower Exhibits share the same building it makes entering easier. Thanks to all of you who participate. This is your display and we are very proud of the 'Alaska Garden Exhibit' - growing bigger and better every year!

If you've ever wondered what happens to the produce

after the fair, most is donated to the Food Bank of Alaska and to the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center.

Having a show like this takes lots of help from many people taking on roles of Intake Entry Clerks, Judges & Judges Clerks. If you are interested in being part of the team please give me a call. Volunteers make it happen!

Important dates to remember:

May 1, 2013 - Exhibitor Guide online at [www.alaskastatefair.org](http://www.alaskastatefair.org)

August 21, 2013 - 12 Noon to 9 pm - 1st Entry for Crops & Flowers

August 28, 2013 - 12 Noon to 9 pm - 2nd Entry for Crops & Flowers

Last but not least, MAKE TIME to stroll through the Alaska State Fair's numerous gardens. Speciality plantings of herbs, annuals and perennials are found throughout the grounds. FUN MATTERS!



### Garden Tips From Sandy Harrington

I was looking through a book recently, Small and Container Gardening by Peter McHoy and Stephanie Donaldson. It's a wonderful book and every page has a Gardener's Tip. The one for ferns is: strange as it may seem, finely chopped banana skins are a favorite food of ferns. Simply sprinkle around the base of the stems and watch the ferns flourish.

The other tip is from (no less) Martha Stewart. She recommends putting a cotton ball in the hollow base of the stem of a cut Amaryllis blossom, which will help the blossom to last longer and keep the base of the stem from splitting and curling back. This might also work for other hollow stem flowers, like delphiniums. It's an experiment.

I read all the time and will start writing these hints down. Other members might get into the spirit of the hints too. These are just tips, they are not scientifically based. I've tried the cotton ball and anecdotally it works. I am now trying the banana peel in the fern pot.



## Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball

What an ugly month this was for temperatures! Out in Sterling we had quite a few below zero temperatures and three of them were minus ten. I usually figure on the Ides of March bringing a breeze that seems balmy even though the daytime temperatures remain the same. But when I went to the new [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) site and checked on what was average for the month, the average low was 21 degrees lower and the daytime temperature was 8 degrees below average. "We were not amused," said the queen.

Barbara Jewell added this when I asked her what was going on: "Not much. Putting up the plant racks this week for even fewer plants this year. I'm in a depression because of all the snow. WHEN is spring coming?????"

Kathy Wartinbee said: "I have started a few snapdragons, stock, cabbages, and tomatoes. My calendar says I should start some nasturtium, thyme, lovage, and tomatillos at the end of this week. Poo ... now it's snowing."

Janice Chumley, our resident bug scout, added: "Little seedlings of the shallot seeds I planted are starting to show their green selves, and an early crop of basil is looking good while I am making room for more seeds starts. This year I have some new Kale varieties from Territorial Seed to try. My garden boxes have feet of snow on them still, but my bees are ordered and hope springs eternal!"

Some of the 1995 Master Gardener class got together for lunch at Donna Franzmann's for lunch and talk and talk and talk. I took the class again that year because there was a different teacher, Tom Jahns. That's where I've met so many of my local friends. Merle Dean Feldman was there and she studies plants and botany on an intellectual level and that made for three hours of really interesting talk, much of it beyond starting petunia seeds. This went on for three hours. The only time there wasn't talk was when we were eating our chili.

Neighbor Mark asked me if I'd seen his banana tree and no I hadn't. I went upstairs to take a look and the plant was at least 7 feet tall. As a former banana grower on Guam I evaluated it for growth and health. It was very healthy and the growth made me hope it was a Chinese Dwarf if it is a fruiting plant. Bananas take a lot of fertilizer and water. One time on Guam I shoveled straight hot chicken manure on my row of trees and got 525 pounds of bananas that month! The street ate well. You pick the whole bunch when one banana barely shows a pale yellow because if you leave the bunch on the plant you get starchy not sweet bananas so don't worry when you see green bananas in the grocery store. You will know they were picked at the right time and just need to sit on the counter until they are at their maximum ripeness when they start showing black spots. Remember they are delicious baked with brown sugar and butter...and a bit of rum if you have it on hand. I also checked on his fig tree. It had two big leaves, two small leaves and three wee figs. Went home and talked to my tree but I don't think it likes me. My calabash uncle in Honolulu had a fig tree that was big enough to climb in to eat. Margaret Simon said that she has a number of figs coming on. Margaret also has pineapple tomatillos

that are looking good and blooming.

I'm also using Mark's idea of planting paper whites on gravel in the bottom of a quart jar which holds them upright as they grow.

Lydia Clayton, our new CES head, came over for dinner and ended up organizing my seeds for which I was very grateful. Now to get Merle Dean a list of what I have. I don't have lights and Mark hasn't set up his second stand--nor has he started anything--so I'm not starting anything.

But imagine my irritation today when I went to water my plants in the sunroom and found aphids on the rosemary and my Easter cactus (*rhipsalidopsis*) which is just starting to bud out. Where they came from, I know not. There have been no new plants and in there and there haven't been aphids for as long as I can remember! I've isolated both plants and have given the rosemary a bath. On the cactus I am using my thumb and forefinger for an insecticide.

The nice thing about living down here (have I said that before?) is that Kathy Wartinbee and I can head south to Homer to go to Brenda Adam's Garden Design classes in early April.

I have inherited Camille Williams cat Mofeta (which means skunk in Spanish). Kathy W is bringing him down on Friday.

And one last note of my visit to southern Arizona was the lack of solar panels on roofs. It seems so strange with the heating and cooling needs of the area and the price of electricity. Honolulu has written in their building code that all new construction must have a solar panel for the water heater.

### Making Seed Tapes From Margaret Simon

It was a snowy, wintery day. The seed catalogs had pictures that made you drool. I wanted to garden. I looked out the window. Three feet of snow. I don't think it will happen today. Then, I thought, why not? I've got time on my hands--I'll make some seed tapes. Since I have a hard time pulling any seedling out of the ground (known as thinning) that has taken the energy to come up and turn green, I thought maybe I can do some proper spacing on a seed tape. Although a meticulous job, I'm hoping it will pay off come harvest time. I have parsnips, beets, collards, and carrots ready to roll out when Mother Nature cooperates.

Here's what to do. Get a biodegradable roll of paper towels, a bottle of non-toxic Elmer's glue, and your seeds. Since I have raised beds which are 4' or 8', I cut strips of paper towels that length. One inch wide strips will do. Using the tip of the glue bottle, dab 'dots' at the proper space on your strips. Using a tweezers, drop one seed per drop of glue. Place another strip of paper on top. Carefully press the two strips together. Let dry. When dry roll up, and store in a cool, dark, moisture-free place until you're ready to plant in May or June. With that last snowfall we had you may have a day or five to make your own seed tapes!



## Bird Chatter

- MG 04/05 Nancy Larsen had a tip for dividing hostas published in the Readers' Tips section of the April 2013 issue #110 of Garden Gate magazine. She used Saran wrap to hold the leaves together in order to see the crown & make dividing easier. Way to go Nancy!

- Greg Kalal has 17 varieties of seed potatoes available this year; contact him at gkalal@gci.net if you want the list.

-- Sally Arant (formerly of In the Garden Nursery and other horticultural fames) announced she is leaving Alaska again. Daughters and cheaper housing prices are pulling her to Texas.

-- Sherry Weaver was tickled to meet a gardener from Nunivak Island who was growing bulbs right up next to her house. You never know who you'll meet at a Fur Rendezvous display.

-- Anyone up for making VEGHeads? Original vegetable art is needed to promote the Anchorage District's let's-talk-vegetable-gardening-on-the-internet class. People heads wearing vegetables would also be acceptable.

-- The University of Alaska Press will soon be releasing There's a Moose in My Garden written by Brenda Adams, award winning landscape designer and Master Gardener from Homer.

-- Check out the make-your-own Fairy Garden station at Green Connection. If fairies are not your thing, think mini gardens. Vote for your favorite on Green Connection's Facebook page.

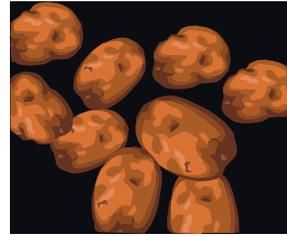
-- Thoughts of agritourism got Judy See excited at the CES Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Fairbanks last month. Considering bringing tourists to your farm? Judy is ready to talk business.

-- Carol Ross wants to try GRAFTED tomatoes in her greenhouse this season. Let her know if you find a local source.

-- MG Laura Minski moved to Fairbanks last month and started work at The Plant Kingdom and the newly opened Co-op Market.

-- Tryck Gardening School starts Monday, April 29, 11 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.. Eight hands-on sessions in Doug's marvelous microclimate. Garden design, soils, plant propagation and more, 345-2507 or trynurs@alaska.net. Limited to 10 students, \$250.

-- With earthworms still snuggled under the snow last month, a flock of robins had to feed on Bohemian waxwing left-overs.



## Potato Bash 2013 By Greg Kalal, DDS

I have been asked over and over as to which potato won the taste testing. There was no one spud that came out on top. It is a matter of individual taste (pun intended). There are also a number of different ways of preparing potatoes in addition to baking and boiling. Peeling of potatoes is common in preparation and most eat potatoes with butter, salt and such which were not allowed in this test. As to which potatoes lost the tasting, several of the experimental cultivars have already been sent to the compost heap. The winners of the experimental types have many more years of testing to undergo before one might see them in the commercial market. Jeff Smeenk has asked that none of the experimental cultivars be included in the results.

Despite there being no winners, some interesting observations can be obtained from the results. The "Campbell girls" did very well. Magic Molly (named after Bill Campbell's daughter) and Magic Myrna (named after Bill Campbell's wife) each achieved many accolades. The Magic Myrna lived up to my billing as a Sweet Potato "wannabe" with comments such as "tastes like a sweet potato/squash", "creamy and sweet", "can it be served as a potato?", and "best of show". After talking to the guest chefs I have tried roasting them and decided that is my favorite method of preparation for Magic Myrna's. The Magic Molly had comments such as "flesh color amazing" and "beautiful color, but not my kind of flavor". The Magic Molly scored very well both as a boiled and baked potato.

Some of the other interesting results were a tie between German Butterball and Yukon Gold for boiled preparation. Ask Julie Riley about her preference. My experience gives the lead to German Butterball due to higher yields in Alaska soils. There were very close results between many of the other commercial varieties. Thus, it boils down to what grows best in your soils and your particular tastes. Thoughts are underway to do more testing with scientific standards and controls.

The tasting at the Master Gardener meeting was designed to provide more definable results. However, as might be expected with all the potatoes being commercially available, the results were very close coming down to individual tastes. The three top scorers were the Shepody, Purple Viking (my favorite), and the Cal White. The non-local russet scored high in the favorite category but was also hurt by having the highest least favorite vote. The King Edward and White Rural New Yorker scored well even though they are not considered bakers. Many thanks go to all the taste testers and the volunteer cooks. I will be happy to discuss individual variety differences and growing experiences.

## Alaska Geographic Botany Field Courses

There will be two exciting botany field seminars in Denali National Park this summer, as well as a wildflower course in the Chugach National Forest. Consider getting out in Alaska's wilderness this year to learn about and enjoy nature with the experts:

### Mosses and Lichens: A World Underfoot

May 31 - June 2, 2013

Interior Alaska is truly a land of mosses and lichens. With a combined total of over 800 species, they are one of the most diverse species groups in Denali National Park and Preserve. Join Denali botanist Sarah Stehn for an introduction to the smallest, yet ever-present members of Alaska's vegetation. This course is based out of the Murie Science and Learning Center Field Camp, located 29 miles inside the park along the Teklanika River. Please visit [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org) or call 907-683-6432 for more information or to register.

### Edible and Medicinal Plants

July 5 - 7, 2013

Join herbal author Janice Schofield for a weekend of discovery and creation as we explore different habitats of the Denali region to learn about wild plants of Alaska. Our group will craft delectable wild meals and prepare herbal products for first aid and body care. This class is a lively, hands-on interaction with the plants. Please visit [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org) or call 907-683-6432 for more information or to register.

### Wildflowers of the Chugach

July 13 & 14, 2013

Meander through the Chugach National Forest with wildflower expert and author Verna Pratt. Explore the diverse adaptations of flora rooted in the valleys, slopes, bog and rainforest. Observe plant characteristics, classification, and adaptations when wildflowers are at their peak in the Chugach Mountains - including locations such as Bryon Glacier, Girdwood, and Turnagain Arm Pass. Please visit [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org) or call 907-683-6432 for more information or to register. (The July 6 & 7 course is full.)



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

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AMGA Web Site: [www.alaskamastergardeners.org](http://www.alaskamastergardeners.org)  
(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

To send concerns or information to the AMGA directly, mail to:  
AMGA  
P.O. Box 221403  
Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE IS THE 23RD OF THE MONTH.**

If you have questions or want to make address or email corrections, please contact Jane Baldwin at:  
[jbaldwin@alaska.net](mailto:jbaldwin@alaska.net)

## Garden Event Calendar

### Saturday, April 6

Alaska Master Gardeners Conference - 8am - 5pm, Palmer Community Center (The Depot) 610 S. Valley Way, Palmer, AK 99645

### Saturday, April 6

Annual Spring Garden Show at the Sears Mall - 600 E. Northern Lights Blvd., Anchorage - 9am - 5pm

### Saturday, April 6th

Dahlias, Dahlias, Dahlias! Join Alaska State Fair winners, The Mornings, to learn about growing dahlias in Alaska: how to divide, plant, grow and store beautiful tubers. Classes FREE; but space limited; call 276-6016 to register. 10 am, Alaska Mill & Feed, 1501 E 1st Ave., Anchorage

### April 8th, 10th

Hanging Baskets & Patio Planters - How to plant baskets and containers; suggestions for which plants to use for different locations. Classes are FREE; but space limited; need to RSVP: 349-2552; 7-9pm, Dimond Greenhouses

### Wednesday, April 10

Alaska Community Action on Toxics - Detox Gardening - A workshop with Saskia Esslinger and Birgit Lenger; 7-9 pm at Central Lutheran Church, 15th and Cordova in Anchorage

### Thursday, April 11 - Saturday, April 13

Alaska Garden Clubs State Convention - Chena Hot Springs

### Saturday, April 13th

Worm Composting 101 - With local expert, Joan Dimond. Classes FREE; but space limited; call 276-6016 to register. 10am, Alaska Mill & Feed, 1501 E 1st Ave., Anchorage

### Saturday, April 13

Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association (APFGA) - Annual Grafting Workshop; 1:00 pm, Dimond Greenhouses

### Monday, April 15th (NOTE: THIS IS A CHANGE)

AMGA Meeting: The Flowers of Hatcher Pass - Speaker: Jaime Rodriguez; 7:00 pm, CES - 1675 C Street, Anchorage

### April 15th, 17th, 18th

Vegetable Gardening - How to start seeds indoors, garden prep for outdoors and what vegetables do best in Alaska. Classes are FREE; but space limited; need to RSVP: 349-2552; 7- 9pm, Dimond Greenhouses

### Saturday, April 20th

Peonies in Alaska - Julie Riley from CES will talk about growing peonies in Alaska. Classes FREE; but space limited; call 276-6016 to register. 10 am, Alaska Mill & Feed, 1501 E 1st Ave., Anchorage

### Saturday, April 27th

Unique Perennials in Alaska with Ayse Gilbert. Classes FREE; but space limited; call 276-6016 to register. 10:00 am, Alaska Mill & Feed, 1501 E 1st Ave., Anchorage

### April 29th, May 1st

Lawn Care & Landscaping Tips - Classes are FREE; but space limited; need to RSVP: 349-2552 - 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm, Dimond Greenhouses

### May 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th

Local Wildflowers Class - \$110 per person, limited space, and registration required; 10am - 1pm or 6pm to 9pm Alaska Botanical Garden

### Thursday, May 2nd

Anchorage Garden Club - Container Gardening with Edibles presented by Verna Pratt; 7pm, Pioneer Schoolhouse 437 E 3rd Avenue, Anch.

### Saturday, May 4th

Rain Gardens - The Municipality of Anchorage has a Rain Garden program that gives home owners money to create a rain garden. Learn about rain gardens and plan your summer project for 2013! Classes FREE; but space limited; call 276-6016 to register. 10am, Alaska Mill & Feed, 1501 E 1st Ave., Anchorage

### Monday, May 6

Alaska Native Plant Society, Program: Kodiak Flora Summary of 2012 Field Trip presented by Beth Baker; 7pm, Campbell Creek Science Center

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:  
Cooperative Extension Office  
1675 C St, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Phone: 786-6300  
Fax: 786-6312



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Spring: this is how it's done in Alaska.

Nickel LaFleur's busy greenhouse in March.  
Photo by Nickel LaFleur

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