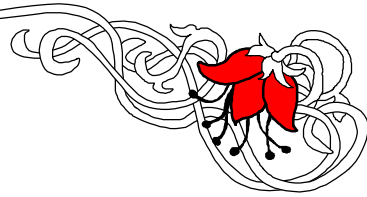


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 6, Issue 1

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER December 2003

From the President

by Mary Shier



Can you believe it? We're close to the end of another year, and have wrapped up and put our gardens to bed - hopefully. I know there are probably a few who still have some cutting back to do on that last batch of plants in the far corner of the garden. You keep telling yourself, 'yep, I'm going to get to them tomorrow' and tomorrow somehow never appears. How do I know? Been there, done that! I think all of us have at one time or another.

Fall was nice to us again this year but thankfully not as gracious as last year. Last year's weather was ridiculous. Maybe that's what made us slow to putting the garden to bed this year. It doesn't take much to change our mode of operandi, although we know better. Oh well, we can always chalk it up to leaving "winter interest" in the yard, right? It seems like I have more "winter interest" than normal this year.

And speaking of the end of the year, there are other things to consider besides getting the last of the gardens put away. I'm thinking of the fact that membership in the club runs out at the end of the year. The 2004 dues for next year need to be sent in to continue getting your newsletter without interruption, to be included in the directory, and to be kept apprised of what's going on in our local gardening world.

I'm sure that you don't want to let it slide and miss out on anything. The easiest thing to do is to get it in the mail prior to the end of the year, before things get more hectic. If you look on the last page of your Directory, you'll find a renewal form to tear out and fill in to send along with your check. There is also a printable renewal form on the AMGA web site. Yes, we try to make it easy for you. And, if you'll fill in the input section you can help us put together programs and field trips which will be of interest to you so that you may even attend.

This is a group which depends on group effort; group effort is dependent upon collective individual effort. We can not carry on with out you. Make a note on your calendar each year, either the end of December or first of January, that MG dues are due to be paid. I find it helpful to mark my new year calendar with our meeting dates and note the 'due by' dates as soon as I get my new calendar for the coming year. I would hate to miss out on anything!

Our gardens can stand being left to their own, but our club needs YOU!





What's wrong with my African violet?

By Dana Klinkhart

The Saintpaulia or better known to most of us as an African violet, was the focus of the meeting on Monday, November 17th. These plants have found a familiar place in many of our homes and can display gloriously beautiful blossoms and foliage. *Then why does mine look so pathetic?* Answers were revealed that evening.

Grower, Pat Addison who owns Plants on Purpose, gave our Master Gardeners tips and tricks. Pat shared ideas and myths associated with cultivating. *Don't let water get on the foliage. Always water them from the bottom.* And while it's true that leaving water in the crown of the foliage might produce crown rot, the African violet enjoys and appreciates an occasional shower. Pat reminds us to shake off the excess water and the myth, and then allow the plant to dry in a protective spot away from the sunshine. She also advised that they could be watered from the top or through a 'wicking' process. African violets require a moisture-retentive yet a fast draining potting mix. Pat suggests using two parts ProMix, two parts perlite and one part vermiculite. She also incorporates ½ cup horticultural charcoal and 4 teaspoons of dolomite lime into each gallon of potting mix. Her plants are fertilized with 12-36-14 at a rate of ¼ teaspoon to one gallon of water every couple of weeks and they are repotted each spring. To encourage bloom, she supplements with cool light for 12 hours each day. Add 2 more hours to that time if they do not produce buds within two months. Pat noted that darker plants require more light. Samples of African violets were displayed and tips were offered on dealing with mildew, pests, temperature and propagation.

As I searched my notes, I realized that I will touch only on the basics of what was covered that evening. I wish more master gardeners could attend the presentations and take full advantage of the unique resources from our community. If you did not attend, you missed another great Master Gardener program meeting. The abundance of information given and the techniques that are demonstrated at our presentations would fill a book that most gardeners would love to own.

How did my Garden Grow?

Contributed by JoAnna Littau

Well! My gardening experience JoAnna Littau this past summer was horrible. I lost a good customer because she was angry about her flowers. Most of her yard is in the shade, and shade plants don't like hot shade. The snaps all spun out, the petunias wilted with the heat, and slugs crawled up a wall to get to hanging baskets (I was amazed).

The ornamental cabbages got too hot and wouldn't grow much, and the osteospermums just got leggy without enough blooms. Fortunately, this was a good year for geraniums even though I picked and picked off slugs. They are disgusting. However, some tall marigolds, Climax and Jubilee, did very well in an eastern location (sheltered) and bloomed until the second week of October. Also, begonias will survive well in warm shade. I don't think my dahlias liked getting too warm either (the blooms opened up just shot) however I didn't have enough season to get but one Calla to open up. Basically, I needed umbrellas and water simultaneously. Go figure.



Arbors

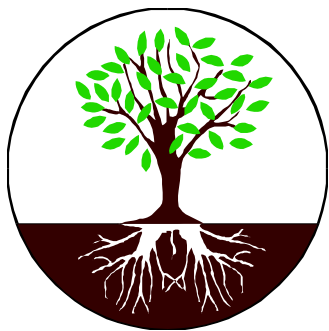
From Judy Christianson

Need structure in your garden? How about an arbor. In the Anchorage area I have not seen many, which might have to do with little light and snow loads. You could grow sweet peas, canary bird vine, clematis, and other flowering vines. And also beans, my favorite being scarlet runner beans. An arbor need not be permanent. It can be easily taken down and moved. An annual style arbor could be constructed with 2"x2" stakes and a simple lathe top. When the season is over, take it down and store. You just have to dig new holes each year and put it together or put it in the same place. For something more permanent it could be constructed with cedar 2"x4" boards. Something to think about during this looonnnng winter.



Trees

Nickel LaFleur – Alaska Community Tree Steward



It has been said that the right tree in the right place can increase property value up to twenty percent. It is true that trees and quality development go together, but who can place a price tag on the way a healthy well-kept tree welcomes us each time we see it?

Trees bring a sense of permanence and renewal to each new day. Life is just better when surrounded by trees: they replenish oxygen in the air we breathe; shield us and our homes from snow, wind, dust, and noise; house the song bird and create a welcoming canopy of shade in the summer. There are few things more valued on a warm summer day than a shady spot to park.

However, trees are losing the battle against man. The fact that trees are the oldest continuously living organisms on earth has not let them escape unscathed. "We have met the enemy," Pogo said, "and he is us." Yet, we have to believe, if man is the problem, man has to be the solution.

The answer is not to treat trees like people! They don't need their wounds dressed or painted. Their wounds do not heal. Trees wall off the injured tissue by compartmentalizing, or creating barriers around the decay to keep it from spreading throughout the tree. Pruning paint has been found to interfere with the tree's ability to seal off decay and grow over the wound. Healthy trees are more likely to have the resources to withstand injury, insects, and disease.

Trees are fragile systems of living tissue that, like all living organisms, changes as it ages. What might be appropriate for young, rapidly growing trees may not be appropriate for mature or chronically declining trees. Only a few urban trees planted in recent years will reach maturity without intervention to counter stress of bad planting, air pollution, poor soil, compaction, weather extremes and mechanical injuries. Though flowers and grass will show immediate signs when in trouble, trees often suffer in silence for years before dying.

Considering how much value a tree adds to your property, there are a couple simple preventative measures to keep them healthy (once you have the right tree planted in the right place). First and foremost is deep watering. Rain and occasional lawn watering is not enough to keep it healthy. When watering, you should soak the top 12 to 18 inches of soil. The use of soaker hoses left on a low drip for 24-hours works well. Avoid short frequent watering as it encourages roots to grow on the surface.

Next, apply mulch (recommended: decomposed leaf litter or wood chips, composted garden and yard materials, pine needles, and composted seaweed) two to four inches deep, and two to three feet out from the trunk. Unlike tree roots, the trunk does not like to be kept moist. Be sure keep the mulch four to five inches away from the trunk. Don't incorporate the mulch into the soil (if landscape material is on the ground, remove it and throw it away - it limits the benefits provided by decomposing mulch), let it happen naturally (it is a job for the worms). If you need to remove turf grass from around the tree, cut the grass very short, water and cover with six or seven pages of black/white newspaper (no colored sheets), cover with mulch and water again.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



BOOK REVIEW:

Praising *In Praise of Plants*

by Annie Nevaldine

Shortly after my niece was born, her parents and I placed bets on what her first word would be. Her mother wagered "Mama." "Dada" was her father's bet. And I— of course— knew that she would say "Auntie Annie" first. We were all humbled when we heard Sophie's undeniable first word "Betty"— the name of the family cat.

Though all three of us were miffed because she didn't address us first, that she named an animal would not surprise Francis Hallé, author of *Eloge de la plante, pour une Nouvelle Biologie* (1999), translated from the French by David Lee (Timber Press, 2002). He notes that the first words children often learn are the names of animals, especially of those living in the household. *In Praise of Plants* provides us English speakers and readers with a wonderful essay proclaiming the value of plants even though both children and adults prefer animals to plants.

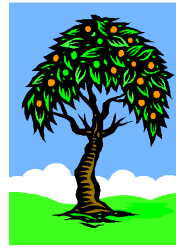
Hallé is bold and opinionated about plants, and does not fear stirring up controversy in his view of flora. While he understands the intrigue we have with animals, he staunchly defends and even promotes plants and their value. In so doing, he bolsters the reader's understanding of plants and their contributions to our world and our lives. His writing is at once scientific and plain, serious and playful. He compares and contrasts plants and animals in their mortality, mobility, evolution, and ecology in a compelling manner. He provides a truly refreshing slant on a subject dear to Master Gardeners' hearts.

Hallé offers insight into why gardens and gardening are so soothing, something we already know or we wouldn't be gardeners. "Plants also owe their power of attraction to the profound feeling of peace that they inspire. To watch an animal creates tension because we know the moment is fleeting. To observe a plant engenders serenity; it is time itself that becomes visible. The plant's growth is slow but perceptible with close attention. We renew our

connection with the peaceful rhythm of time that prevailed during our infancy."

Perhaps this explains one of the last entries my mother made in my baby book when I was 11 months old. Though we had a cat, under "Baby's First Words," Mom wrote in this order "Hot— Flower—

Mama— Daddy." Sophie's parents and I were eclipsed by an animal. A plant eclipsed my poor parents. I'm sure that would warm Francis Hallé's tender botanist heart.



TREES . . . CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Factors affecting fertilization needs vary. However, applying fertilizer at planting is generally not recommended. Fertilizers have been found to burn young trees or accelerate growth in the crown of the tree before the roots are established to handle it. Just remember, fertilizers don't add energy, and they don't feed the tree (a job for the leaves). Rather than buying fertilizer without knowing what your soil needs/lacks, bring a soil sample to the Cooperative Extension Office. For a small fee, you can get the soil tested and get help with any fertilizer recommendations.

Finally, proper pruning needs to be done when the tree is young to get the desired structure. Prune only dead, damaged and crossing branches at planting. Save the more extensive pruning, if needed, for the following year. When pruning, prune from the inside out, removing dead and damaged branches first. Since tree pruning is an art, and done incorrectly can easily damage your tree, it is best left to the professional. We have several excellent tree services to choose from in Anchorage. Pruning publications are also available from the Cooperative Extension Service.

It is true that "when trees are in trouble, man is in trouble". Your best defense is to be observant to any conditions or insects that may affect your tree and its surroundings; and after analyzing the whole picture, take the proper action.



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

By Rosemary Kimball

Early in November the thought was that no snow brings us one day closer to spring.

Since that time, we've had two nice dumps down here totaling 8 inches. That put a very comfortable insulating blanket over the soil temp thermometer which is hovering around 30°- still warm"- even when the temperature in Sterling dropped to -26°F.

We've had our Pad Thai lunch (meeting) in Kenai to plan out our speaker series for the spring. The general theme will be specialty gardens: water, rock, herbs, carnivorous plants and general garden design. We also decided we couldn't afford Dan Hinkley of Heronswood fame at the end of June because no one bothers with talks at that time with the press of gardens, fish and guests. Instead we will put together a van load and go to Homer to hear him speak to the Homer Garden Club about very cold-tolerant plants. He will be in the vicinity towards the end of June and will be a speaker for the North American Rock Garden Society in Anchorage so look for him. I once did a will-call order just so I could have an excuse to go to the nursery. Neat!

Thompson and Morgan was the first seed catalog to arrive and it took less than 24 hours for me to make up my (first) order. The seeds are here already! I inventoried and alphabetized all my seeds in a vegetable bin and a flower bin. I felt like Silas Marner counting his gold! T&M's cover photo of the sweetpea baskets was irresistible and I got two packets of seeds to copy it. I wonder how many others found the sweetpeas something that couldn't be lived without in 2004? A friend in Illinois (!) found 12-inch white wire baskets with the coir liners on closeout at a garden center for \$1.50 and got the

six of them. Then she spent \$24 and some change to air mail them up. They were made for sweetpeas.

Something I picked up Outside and then found here in a hard-to-find shelf location was Ball's Fruit Jell Freezer Jam Pectin. Normally, freezer jams are cloyingly sweet but this uses 1-1/2 cup of sugar to 4 cups of crushed fruit and it is divinely fruity. The friend that introduced me to it said it seemed to work better with berries than with other fruits. She has a wild blackberry along her Oregon fence that is particularly productive and yielded 48 pints of jam. I didn't leave much in the jar and oinked politely when I left the table. We scooted down to Walmart and I got 12 packages just in case.

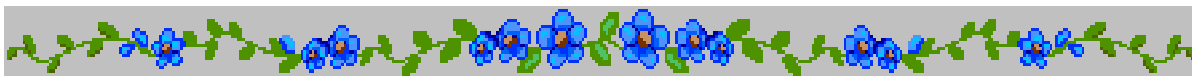
And speaking about food...here's a recipe for Red Pond Scum. Actually the German name is Rote Grutze and the originally-from-Germany woman who made it here this summer after wondering what I was going to do with all my red currants, said another translation of Grutze is pond scum. Start with a couple cups of red currants. Add more-or-less equal amounts of any other berries you've got in the freezer like black currants, strawberries, red or yellow raspberries, blue berries. Add a bit of water for a starter and then bring to a simmer until the berries have lost their shape. Sweeten to taste with sugar or Splenda. Thicken somewhat with cornstarch. I've found that the two other women of German extraction waxed nostalgic about it...Oma used to make it. It can also be served with a vanilla sauce on the top.



SEARCHING FOR CONTAINER IDEAS

Julie Riley is putting together a presentation on hanging basket and container garden ideas. If you have old magazines with container gardening articles in them, or a favorite book on container gardening, please let her know:

afjar@uaa.alaska.edu or 230-7339.



Bird Chatter

- The AMGA Board of Directors decided that the best place for the 2004 statewide Alaska Master Gardener Conference was in Kenai/Soldotna. Was anyone from the Kenai Peninsula at the meeting to defend themselves? If not, there's always the Southeast Alaska Gardening Conference in Juneau, May 14 & 15.
- Was it Rudolph? Or Bambi? It had to be a small version of what I know but certainly not a moose! It had to be a Sitka black-tailed deer looking ever so graceful if not a bit bewildered at the intersection of Brayton Access Road and the Dimond underpass. This sighting occurred on Wednesday, November 12 at noon by an excited gardener. Excited to see one but hesitant to invite them home for dinner.
- Have you finished your 2003 Gardener's Journal? Get busy and add those photos and finish your comments for the year. Be sure to add the drawings of where you planted those new bulbs this fall. Also add the drawings of the perennials that have been added. Draw up the planting arrangement for the vegetable garden 2004 so that the crops are rotated.
- Has everyone noticed our "Prez" is off the crutches and making good on her own two feet again?
- Go to the MG site in the picture section to see how to wrap trees against moose ...
- Take note: in Jeff L's column recently was a mention that the Orchid Lady has moved to Dimond Greenhouse.
- Julie Riley's favorite holiday plant is fresh cut holly in a vase.
- Linda Slack brought in an 'in need of help' violet at the last meeting. Our guest speaker Pat Addison demonstrated how to separate and remove unwanted plants and leaves. You should have seen this ruthless gardener at work! After removing many leaves and roots, Pat gave Linda 5 smaller plants.
- Martha Galbreath won a 12 week Internet "Container Gardening" course worth \$70 at the International Master Gardener Conference in St. Louis last summer.
- Black mondo grass, Phalenopsis orchid, and mother-in-laws tongue are not toxic to bunnies, at least the bunny belonging to Camille Riley. He also loves rabbit's foot fern but will be living outside again shortly.
- The Perennial Plant Association has selected the Japanese painted fern, *Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum'* as Perennial Plant of the Year for 2004. Has anyone tried to grow this here?
- The 2004 Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference will be held January 28 & 29 in Anchorage at the Millennium Hotel.

- Not only an AMGA member, Bonnie Landis is also a noted photographer. A show of her Mono Lake photographs just closed at Grant Hall Gallery.
- Gina Docherty's 1½ year old granddaughter Allison would have nothing to do with her "Flower" costume on Halloween. She finally settled on a tiara and her brother's underpants.



Horticulture Education

The following courses would be excellent for the master gardener who wants to know more detailed information about gardening, growing and landscaping. Great refresher for the 'seasoned' master gardener, too!

*Offered through the Community & Technical College
Chugiak-Eagle River Campus, (907) 694-3313*

AGRI A136 Introduction to Horticulture 3.0 CR

Reviews plant structure and growth; soils; plant nutrition; plant propagation; potting media; fertilizers; indoor plant care; light management; container gardening; interior landscaping; greenhouse growing and plant forcing.

30674 191 W 06:30P-09:20P CHHS 72 Terry? 01/12-05/02

AGRI A138 Organic Gardening 3.0 CR

Grade Mode: Pass/No Pass

Introduces organic methods and materials for ecological agriculture covering soil management, crop rotations, weed control, pest management, garden planning, planting, harvesting, storage, French intensive methods, and compost.

30672 191 R 06:30P-09:20P CHHS 72 TBA 01/12-05/02

AGRI A227 Landscape Design: A Home Owner's Approach 1.0 CR

Registration Restrictions: AGRI A136 or AGRI A139 recommended.

Grade Mode: Pass/No Pass

Designed for the beginning home landscaper. Covers the first phases of landscape design including site inventory, site analysis, conceptual design, and preliminary design. Construction phasing, final design components, and additional resources will be discussed briefly.

30588 191 T 06:30P-09:20P CHHS 72 Hedges, B 04/01-04/29



NRM F107 Leaves in Our Lives: Food 1.0 CR

Learn to appreciate the plants in your life. This is an elective course with friendly format for gardeners or anyone who eats plants. Plant biology will be introduced from the ground up and related to plant use by human civilization, especially as food.

This section graded by A-F

36735 FP1 6:30-9:20p CHHS 70 Leiner 01/13/-2/10

This section graded by P/F NRM F107P

36750 FP1 6:30p-9:20p CHHS 70 Leiner 01/13-02/10

The following courses are offered at UAA

BBIOL A075 Local Flora 1.0 CR

Grade Mode: Pass/No Pass

Special Note: May include preparation of pressed plant specimens and field trips.

Study of wild flowers and plants in the surrounding locale with emphasis on use and identification.

32031 001 R 09:00A-12:45P BMB 105

Barker, M 05/06-05/27

32032 002 W 06:00P-09:45P BMB 105

Barker, M 05/05-05/26

BIOL A334 Biology of Vascular Plants 4.0 CR

Prerequisite: BIOL A333.

Comparative study of morphology, developmental anatomy, phylogenetic trends, and life histories of the major groups of vascular plants.

32098 001 MW 11:30A-12:45P ENGR 332 Davies, G

01/12-05/02

R 02:30P-05:15P SCI 121 Davies, G 01/12-05/02

The following courses are held at Matanuska-Susitna college in Palmer. 907-745-9774

AGRI A138 Organic Gardening 1.0 CR

Introduces organic methods and materials.

PM1 F 0600p - 0945p SNOD 117 Vande Visse E 16-Feb-04-27-Feb-04

AGRI A240 Greenhouse Op & Mgmt 3.0 CR

This course will cover operations and management of crop production in a greenhouse. Topics include greenhouse construction, heating, cooling, growing methods, watering, fertilization, carbon dioxide fertilization.

P11 R 0700p-0945p SNOD 117 Lincoln S 01/12-05/02

NRM F107 Leaves in Our Lives: Food 1.0 CR

Learn to appreciate the plants in your life. This is an elective course with friendly format for gardeners or anyone who eats plants. Plant biology will be introduced from the ground up and related to plant use by human civilization, especially as food.

This section graded by A-F (NRM 107)

FP1 S 01:00P-03:45P SNOD 108 Leiner 01/17-02/14

This section graded by P/F (NRM F107P)

FP1 S 01:00P-03:45P SNOD 108 Leiner 01/17-02/14

Gardening Calendar

January 19

AMGA Annual Meeting & Elections: "Art and Design in the Garden" with Rita Jo Shoultz from Homer. Meets 7 p.m. @ the CES, Conference Rm. 130, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Call 345-1562 for info.

February 23

AMGA Meeting, Seed Exchange and Potluck: "AMGA Member Slides and Garden Photographs" - Meets 7 p.m. @ the CES, Conference Rm. 130, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Call 345-1562 for info.

March 15

AMGA Meeting: "Shade Gardening" with Sally Arant - Meets 7 p.m. @ the CES, Conference Rm. 130, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Call 345-1562 for info.

DON'T FORGET!!!

Please send in 2004 Gardening calendar items so they can be posted in the newsletter and on the MG Web page. This is not limited to the Anchorage area. Thanks!

Season's Greetings!



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

Mail: 4006 DeArmour Road
Anchorage, AK 99516

Phone: 345-4099

Email: gardener@corecom.net

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

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

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

Phone 786-6300

Fax Line 786-6312

Beat the Rush -
Send in your 2004 AMGA Dues NOW!



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