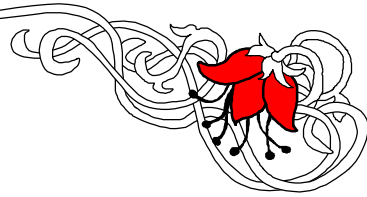


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 5, Issue 8

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER July 2003

FROM THE PRESIDENT BY MARY SHIER

Now that we're into the summer mode - with the soaring temperatures we've had recently, how can we not be? I was beginning to think we'd had a serious weather transformation with Phoenix. Thank goodness that's not true. I couldn't stand an Alaskan summer with such hot temperatures. I have become conditioned to a cooler working environment where I can accomplish some decent work in the gardens.

Getting back into summer form makes me reflect on our gardens and ALL the work it takes to maintain them. Sewing seeds, potting up, hardening off, planting, weeding, watering and debugging when necessary are all part of keeping our gardens in tip top shape. Many of us have this ultimate goal in mind of the 'perfect garden'. I think having a 'perfect garden' is a figment of our vast imagination with all that we have to battle against. I know there are always a few who manage to push through and come close to perfection. Good for them!

How about loosening up and expanding your horizon. A 'perfect garden' in your back yard is not always attainable. Forget that dandelion sneaking into your perennial bed, or the grass crawling under the fence. Gardening perfection is feeling good about what you do: helping new gardeners get started or lending a helping hand in keeping a garden looking good. Many older citizens may not have the strength or ability to garden themselves, as much as they would like to. The Pioneer Home comes to mind, which is one of my favorite gardening endeavors. Residents walk or roll by in their wheelchairs and comment on how they are enjoying the garden. That makes my day when I'm there working away in the beds. Some of these people have been avid gardeners in their days and truly appreciate our work and the beauty we provide for their benefit.

Answering phones at the Cooperative Extension is another form of broadening your horizons. Making contact with folks who are new at the game is a rewarding experience. So is helping out at Garden Clinics. People usually ask simple questions that can be answered with no problem. It gives them information, reassurance, and bolsters our own confidence in gardening knowledge. It may have a long lasting effect. I remember sitting in a garden clinic was one of the ways I first started out as a new Master Gardener. "Uh oh, someone asked a question and I don't know the answer. Yipes, what should I do?" Hey, it's ok to admit, "I'm not sure", and grab a book to look up an answer. I still do that on occasion. Yeah, even me.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2





AMGA July Garden Tour Information July 21, 7 p.m.

1. Linda Klinkhart's - 8622 Bell Place
Directions: From Lake Otis, go toward the mountains on 88th, take the first left on Bell place.

Starting from scratch (they left 2 sad-looking trees) 3 years ago on a small urban lot, Linda has lots of southern exposure. Hard-scaping came first- fence, retaining wall, edging, deck, then the grass surrounded by lots of garden beds. Linda goes for the cottage garden style - the more the merrier, anything goes. Plants have to be tough to live there - a dog, and little boy have free run. There's still lots to do, but come see the progress she's made so far.

2. Dana Klinkhart's - 1941 Meander Circle.
Directions: South on Lake Otis after leaving the garden tour at Linda's on Bell Place. Right on Huffman and left on Meander Drive in the Furrow Creek Subdivision.

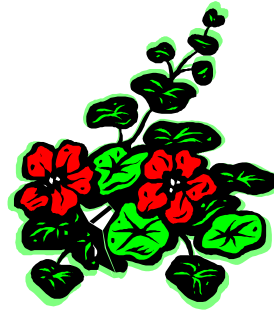
See a variety of perennials....lilies, peonies, delphiniums, climbing roses. Birds love the backyard pond and water feature and the living wreaths enjoy the protected climate on the fence. This garden is four years young and is always in the process of being 're-invented'.

"FROM THE PRESIDENT" CONT. FROM PAGE 1

Helping to maintain the entrance beds at the ABG is another way of sharing knowledge. It's also an opportunity to show off our wonderful state and city as well as our gardening skills. You would be amazed at the number of visitors we have there every day - locals and 'Outsiders' alike. Half the fun is striking up a conversation with them and sharing common gardening tales. It feels good.

I just want to remind you that while our own gardens may be our utmost priority, there are other gardening ventures which need our attention as well. We should always save a bit of energy and wherewithal to volunteer at local gardening events or maintenance projects. You will *always* be rewarded in one way or another for helping out.

Remember: It's never too late to volunteer!!



Nasturtiums—

A flower, an herb, a vegetable...
the most versatile plant
By Michele Hébert

The other day my neighbor Sue Evans asked me, "What can I plant in containers that will grow down to the ground off my 20-foot-tall deck?" I thought about all the climbing plants grown in Fairbanks: red scarlet runner bean, canary vine, and clematis. Then it came to me...one of my favorite nasturtiums, "*Tropaeolum majus*." I told her to look for one of the trailing types; nasturtiums come in many growth habits from compact dwarf to trailing. Best of all, nasturtiums are easy to start, grow with little care, and have many culinary uses. It is a good choice for beginner gardeners and for cooks looking for new ways to spice up the family menu.

Nasturtium is a good plant for Alaska because it grows well in cool weather and flowers all summer long. It is one of the most versatile plants for all areas of the garden- hanging baskets, trellises, window boxes, flowerbeds, patio containers, herb gardens, vegetable gardens, and as a ground cover vine. Nasturtium seeds are planted indoors in mid-April to get a jump on the season or direct seed outdoors in mid-May. Nick the seeds with a file and soak for 48 hours before planting. The seeds are large which make nasturtiums a good choice for children to plant. Nasturtiums bloom best in poor soils in full sun to partial shade. You can tell the soil is too rich if you get more leaves than flowers.

There are many choices to make when choosing a variety to grow. Nasturtiums come in dwarf compact, semi-trailing compact, and climbing varieties with flowers in red, chocolate, maroon, salmon, white, gold, orange, and all shades in between. The foliage is light to dark green solid or variegated. Flowers may be single, double or semi double with or without a long spur. You could fill your whole garden with just with different types of nasturtiums.

My favorite place to buy nasturtiums in town is B & J Plants on Farmers Loop. Owner Jean Crank grows more than 10 different types. It was here where I



From the "Kachemak Gardener"

May 8, 2003 Issue
by Rosemary Fitzpatrick
[Reprinted with permission]

So there I was, in the Bookstore, and in comes a woman whom I consider an avid gardener. Mind you, I have never been to her garden, but that matters not. What matters is that she was at her wit's end. She was sort of angry, definitely tired, and all because of her garden. I soon considered myself in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The problem, as she sees it, is that her garden is too much work. That she had to take time off from her paying job to tend this garden. She is thinking of attacking it with a rototiller. Just 'til' the whole thing under and be done with it. There you go. Just 'til' it in.

I doubt if she is the only one out there who feels this way, especially this time of year when it seems like everything may be happening at once, you know, the perennials and weeds all rise to meet the sun right around the same time. Wouldn't you?

On the other hand, I have a friend who works full time and has a garden that she treasures. She walks by it on her way to and from the car. It sees her off in the morning and welcomes her home. It is stuffed with treasures and offers blooms all season long.

The difference between these women is the size of their gardens. The first one has multiple beds and tons of containers. That's lots of edging and weeding and watering and deadheading and....the list goes on. The second woman has two raised beds in front of her house with steps leading to the entry between them. That's all. And they are gorgeous, all season. It takes her about an hour, total, per week to deal with them. She loves her garden and it shows.

So what does this tell you? That, perhaps, you need a garden that you can manage and still have time to do other things like brush your teeth? You need to ask yourself just what it is you want out of a garden. I cannot stress this point enough: start small. Add beds as you gain confidence and interest. Do not ever develop more garden area than you can manage. Why is it that seems so basic and obvious? Why do I hear from people every year that they have "too much garden"? Who is doing this to them? Not their garden. No garden ever asked to be planted. You have done this to yourself. The why of that is something only you can answer.

I love my garden. So much so that I have been known to weep when I walk through it. It brings me so much pleasure. It is living poetry, certainly not a living hell. It will never make it to a magazine cover. It won't win any awards. But it is mine and it gives me what I need. If yours isn't doing that something is wrong.

My suggestion to the first woman would be to have a plant sale. That's right. Just dig up all the plants in the beds that are the farthest away from the water source and sell the plants. Either replant the now empty beds with rugosa roses or let the elders and alders take over. There you have it, problem solved.

That said, let's get on with gardening.

I am delighted to report that my billion dollar clematis viticella, Virgins Bower, is alive and well. I will forever refer to it as the "billion dollar clematis" because it cost more to ship it than the plant cost. And I did it anyway. A viticella is a "Group 3" clematis in that it must be pruned hard in the spring. To quote Chalk Hill Clematis where I bought it: "These varieties bloom on current year's growth and generally flower from early summer to fall. Prune in early spring when buds begin to swell and danger of severe frost has passed. Starting from the base of the plant, move up 12-18 inches and prune, leaving 2 pairs of bud on each stem. If the plant is herbaceous, it will die back to the ground."



"KACHEMAK GARDENER" CONT. FROM PAGE 3

Clematis are getting more and more popular as our weather changes and we become bolder in what we are trying to grow, and how much we are willing to spend. Whatever one of these really lovely climbers you choose be sure to read the label so you know how to prune it.

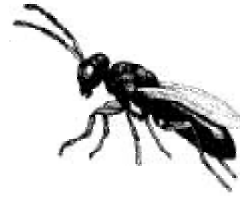
The Dropmore honeysuckle that I have had for four years is really amazing. I thought that this last cold snap would do it in for sure but there it is, leafing out and looking most excellent. So excellent in fact that I need to put up more trellis for it to climb on. It is a really huge plant. Who would have thought that it would have reached its potential here?

The P.J.M. rhododendron has fat pink buds. It was planted just last year and it looks to be a success. I have it tucked into a deciduous border of caragana and spirea with spring bulbs and pink violets. Usually I stuff that border with poppies because it has looked so sparsely populated but this year the plants are reaching size and look like they can be left on their own.

At last weeks Garden Club meeting Chuck Decker told us (and this is not the first time I have heard this) to feed our roses with a handful of lime and a tablespoon of Epsom Salts. This is to promote blooms and there just can't be too many blooms on a rose.

If you are worried about the weather, you should be. Weather is never ever to be trusted. Spring's arrival three weeks early is unheard of. I do have some things planted from seed doing well, lettuce, radish, peas and spinach are up and doing well. Even if it should turn cold, these plants will handle that just fine. I am hardening off the cole crops (broccoli, cabbage, 3 kinds of cauliflower). They are spending their first night outside. When you do plant out seedlings be sure that you pick an overcast day. A bright sunny day is just too hard on their tender little beings. Offer protection by way of floating row cover and cross your fingers, after all, this is the Far North.

Rosemary has been gardening in Alaska, and only Alaska, for thirty one years. Twenty of those years were at elevation 1466', fifteen miles east of Homer. Four years ago she moved into "town" and enjoys elevation 396'. Per Rosemary: "I have been writing the garden column, Kachemak Gardener, for the Homer News for over 13 years and have yet to be stumped for a topic". This article was from the May, 2003 issue.



BENEFICIAL WASPS LEAD UNAPPRECIATED LIVES

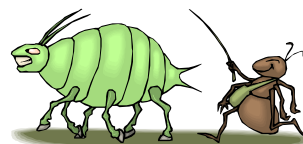
*By Cathy Randall,
Integrated Pest Management
Technician, Fairbanks CES*

One pleasant sunny day in your berry patch, a caterpillar lazily munches away at the leaves of your otherwise perfect raspberry bushes. Suddenly, out of the sky comes a tiny non-descript "bug" that lands onto the caterpillar's back. Without hesitation, this little brown bug inserts a fearfully long needle-like ovipositor into the flesh of the plump, green caterpillar. You wonder to yourself what just happened, if anything, as the bug flies away and the caterpillar continues its lazy activities. You have just born witness to the beneficial acts of a parasitic wasp.

As a Master Gardener, you know that hornets and wasps are beneficial. They pollinate flowers, prey on caterpillars, and even clean up dead animals and waste. But you may not have been aware that certain wasp species are also parasites of caterpillars, sawflies and other garden pests. Most species of parasitic wasps are highly specific to a certain host species. They are commonly used commercially in greenhouses for biological control of pests. Greenhouse managers identify pests to target and release wasps that parasitize those specific species.

To the untrained eye, these parasitic wasps are either dreadfully scary or quite boring and unnoticeable. They use their "stinger" to insert eggs either into or on top of larvae of other insects. Once hatched, these parasitic wasp larvae develop and later pupate inside the body of their host, eating them from the inside out. Some will kill their host before they have a chance to pupate. Others will pupate at the same time as their host, in which case a parasitic wasp, rather than a butterfly, is later found emerging from the host cocoon.

Back in the berry patch, among the buzzing of the bumblebees and flurry of flies, the fate of our lazy plump caterpillar is already determined!





PENINSULA MASTER GARDENER NEWS

By ROSEMARY KIMBALL

Today was the solstice at 11:10 AM according to the Anchorage Daily News. Does that mean gardeners can relax a bit and enjoy the summer or does that mean that the weeds have taken note and figure they really have to *push* because the season is ending? I think it is the latter.

Pioneer Park in Soldotna is really looking good. The grass is green and the weeds aren't readily apparent. The lilies are beginning to bloom; the clumps of silene are vivid enough to be easily seen from the highway. It's too bad that more people don't park at either end and do a walk-about.

Let me tell you what a neat bunch of people Master Gardeners are! I met one from Wisconsin several years ago in the Las Vegas Airport when our plane was late, and since we were sitting next to each other, we got to talking. She was my kind of woman. Her roll-on carry-on was full of cacti.

I've since been the recipient of cacti and euphorbias from her collection. And being *hors de combat* this summer (I have a green cast now, should have stuck with purple) it's taken the combined efforts of three MG's from the peninsula to give me a garden. One is a Florida MG who came, with her husband, to the peninsula a few years back and while he fished, she went to the CES office and asked if there were any MG projects that she could work on. Tom called me and the rest is history. She put in hours and HOURS weeding. They have since bought land up here and arrive with the robins. Salmon fishing sure beats a Florida summer. Master gardeners get around. Then there are the fun people I've met in Anchorage. I love to see the progression of Gina's garden and hear about the cabbage-eating Ambrosia.

The first night of Mark's and my plant sale is over and it feels like a weight has been lifted! What amazes me is what sells out fast...the plain old orange trollius that's as common as chickweed. Never mind that the T. pumila disappeared too. The edelweiss I knew was going to go fast, but trollius?

And last but not least, mourning for plants that finally didn't come back. We lost 95% of our strawberries; a friend up the hill didn't lose any. The lovely cream-colored lily is history. Rejoice in the plants that still came back. They like it where they are in spite of the Alaskan winter past.

Now go pull weeds.



KEEPING MOSQUITOES FROM PESTERING YOUR PETS

Shannon Uzzell, Integrated Pest Technician
Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service

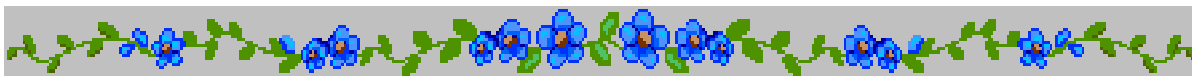
During the summer months your family pet will be exposed to mosquitoes. Mosquito bites cause irritation and itching for your pet just as they do for humans. As a pet owner you can do many things to reduce the likelihood that your pet will be bit, and reduce the effects of mosquito bites.

For insect bite prevention, estimate how much time your pet will be exposed to mosquitoes during the day, and how thick the mosquito swarms will be when your pet is outside. Match this information with the best product or prevention method. Always read and follow labels. Consult your veterinarian if you are unsure about using any product.

For dogs, which are outside a lot, or are outside when mosquitoes are swarming, K9Advantix, a waterproof flea, tick and mosquito control, is available from local animal hospitals. It provides 24-hour protection. This is a new product on the market that must be reapplied monthly. Consult your veterinarian regarding use, purchase and application.

Question: SHANNON, DOES K9 GET APPLIED ONLY ONCE A MONTH? HOW?

After short hikes or outdoor play with your pet, follow the activity with a cool, soothing bath to help stop the irritation



Bird Chatter

- The Anchorage Daily News has moved its gardening feature stories to the Thursday edition this year. Look for articles by MG's Blythe Campbell and Katherine Froehlich.
- In case you haven't noticed, Julie Riley is off-contract with the Cooperative Extension Service this summer. During this time, Sue Lincoln's hours step up to full-time.
- New Master Gardener Anita Williams is working as Horticulture Assistant at the Alaska Botanical Garden this summer.
- Debbie Carlson from Cooper Landing has written a neat *Herbal Pocket Primer*. It can be purchased from her at PO Box 702 Cooper Landing 99572. I don't remember how much, but whatever it costs, it's worth it.
- People are raving about the Hound Dog Dandelion Digger. You can stand upright and dig them out. Available from *Plow and Hearth Catalog*.

Last month's quotes were unreadable; so here they are again:

There is, nevertheless, a certain respect and a general duty of humanity that ties us, not only to beasts that have life and sense, but even to trees and plants.

-Michel de Montaigne, essayist (1533-1592)

"Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too." -Cowper

"Who loves a garden still his Eden keeps." -A.B.Alcott



"Mosquitos..." cont. from page 5

of mosquito bites. If mosquito activity is intense, using a flea and tick spray formulated for your pet will help repel mosquitoes. After the activity, bathe your pet in cool water to remove the spray and to soothe any bites that occur. To relieve itch from mosquito bites, topical ointments such as Cortisone 10 or Benadryl spray may be used. Read the labels of any product you use. Be careful to use products that are specifically labeled for the pet you intend to use it on. For example, flea and tick sprays that are formulated for dogs may be toxic or deadly to cats. Children should never be allowed to apply insect control sprays or collars. They should wash thoroughly after playing with a pet that has been treated with repellent.

For dogs kenneled or tethered outside for large parts of the day, the following list of ideas will help keep your dog comfortable.

- Make sure that your dog is kenneled on dry land, away from marshy areas where mosquitoes breed.

- If your dog has a doghouse, staple two overlapping flaps of carpet over the door that your dog can push in or out. The carpeting provides a physical barrier to mosquitoes.
- DO NOT use mosquito repellents designed for human use. If your dog licks their fur, or is sprayed in the face, they may become ill from ingesting the active ingredient of the repellent. If you decide to apply repellent, use products specifically made for dogs such as flea and tick sprays or collars.
- Replace the water in your dog's water bowl every few days. This prevents the water bowl from becoming a mosquito breeding ground.
- Important to know: Citronella candles and essential oils, which are popular for home use as 'natural' mosquito repellents are considered hazardous to dogs and cats by the ASPCA Poison Control Center. Do not burn citronella candles or use citronella oil based repellents around or on your pet.



Special thanks to Dr. DeLeon from Mt. McKinley Animal Hospital.

Experience is a hard teacher: She gives the test first, the lessons afterward.
Unknown



"NASTURTIUMS" CONT. FROM PAGE 2

found "Gleam mix," a trailing variety that just about took over my driveway. Vines grew to 12 feet by fall. Another popular variety is "Alaska" with variegated foliage and orange, scarlet, yellow, apricot, rose, pink, cream, and mahogany flowers all on the same compact dwarf plant. For hanging baskets look for a semi trailing form. I asked Crank why she grew so many varieties and she said, "It is a popular plant because it does so well here and I just like growing them."

As with most plants, the nasturtium has an interesting history, which starts with its name. All plants have a common name and a scientific name. A plant can have more than one common name, but only one scientific name usually derived from a Greek or Latin word that describes the plant. The scientific name "*Tropaeolum*" means "trophy" in Greek. It refers to the round shape of the leaves that looks like a shield and the flowers that resemble a Greek helmet. The common name "Nasturtium" is derived from two Latin words: "*nasus*" for "nose" and "*tortus*" for "twisted." It refers to what the nose does when it smells the peppery odor given off by leaves and flowers.



Gardening Calendar



The plant originally came from Peru and Mexico, where it was grown to spice up food. It was brought to Europe by the Spanish conquistadors. Dr. Nicholas Monarde listed the nasturtium and its many uses in an herbal book by the 16th Century.

Leaves, flowers, and seeds are edible. Young tender leaves can be used as a green to spice up a salad. Flowers can be used in salads, jellies, and drinks or just as decoration. Seeds can be an inexpensive substitute for capers. Seeds are cured for three weeks with hot boiled vinegar containing a little sugar and salt.

Books, articles, and Web sites are full of recipes and medicinal uses for nasturtiums. This plant is reported to cure everything from the common cold to athlete's foot. I have never tried using this plant for any medicinal purposes nor am I trained to give medical advice. I do find it interesting, however, that the plant contains a sulfur compound with anti-fungal properties and lots of vitamin C.

The flowers are common additions to salads at my home, but I have never tried other parts of the plant. I hope to try some new recipes and home remedies this year.

Michele's nasturtium pick

April 15th is the week to start nasturtiums and my pick is the "*Empress of India*". I especially like the dark, almost purplish, foliage that contrasts with the bright orange blooms. These colors contrast well on a light colored home. This compact trailing plant does well in hanging baskets or in flower beds.



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

July 8

*Alaska Rose Society plant sale, 7 p.m., 7435 Old Harbor Avenue. Contact Lonnie Chace, 345-5725, or president@alaskarosesociety.org

July 10

*Wildflower Garden Club progressive garden tour, "Garden Tours in the Valley." Meet at 10 a.m., Recluse Gardens. Contact Rhonda Williams, 1-907-373-0925

July 12

*Alaska Botanical Garden Second Saturday- gift shop open, Master Gardener/IPM Clinic, special presentation, Alaska Ikebana Society @ 1 p.m. - 770-3692

*Blue Poppy Garden Tour fund-raiser for ABG - 10 p.m. - 6 p.m., home of Stan Ashmore, Mile 9, Wolverine Rd., Palmer, \$10 person - 770-3692

July 18

*AMGA July garden tour: Linda Klinkhart's garden, Dana Klinkhart's garden. 7 p.m. [see article page 2]

July 19-20

*Coyote Garden Tour - 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Saturday, noon-6 p.m. Sunday, home of Les Brake, Mile 7, Willow-Fishhook Rd., Willow. Tour benefits the ABG & the Willow Garden Club. Donations requested. 770-3692

July 24

*Herb Study Group meeting- 7:30 p.m. - meet @ the ABG herb garden. Contact Mary Shier, 345-1562

July 25

*Lighthouse Garden Tea fund-raiser for the ABG - Susan & Don Brusehaber, 16117 Poppy Lane, Eagle River, 3-7 p.m. - \$25 per person, reservations required. Call 770-3692

July 26

*Monsen Garden Tour fund-raiser for the ABG - noon - 5 p.m., home of Mel & Lisa Monsen, 12801 Wellsford Circle, Anchorage. \$5 per person. 770-3692

July 27

*Anchorage Garden Club: Annual City Garden Tour - Tour 6-8 gardens around Anchorage, Free - Gardens will be listed in the Anchorage Daily News Friday July 25 and the Free Press

July 28 - 29

*Alaska Rock Garden Society: Flower Show and Plant Sale at Alaska Botanical Garden "Garden Faire"

July 31

*City of Flowers 2003 contest entries postmark due. Contact Parks & Recreation 343-4387

August 2-3

*Anchorage Garden Club: 60th Annual Flower Show- Free - noon-9 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sunday, ABG. Public is welcome to place entries. Call 566-0539

August 7

*Anchorage Garden Club: "Pests and Beneficial Organisms of the Anchorage Community Forest" presented by Corlene Rose; Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30 p.m. Programs are free and open to everyone.

August 9

*Alaska Botanical Garden Second Saturday - gift shop open, Master Gardener/IPM Clinic, special presentation, Alaska Ikebana Society @ 1 p.m. - 770-3692

[On the Internet: www.corecom.net/~gardener
click on "Calendar" for more events]



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