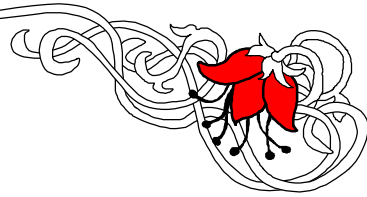


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 5, Issue 4

# ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

March 2003

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## From The President

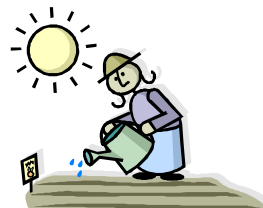
by Mary Shier

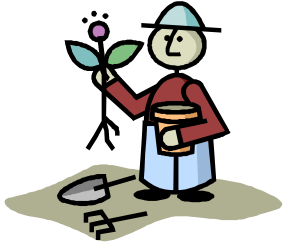
After perusing the seed catalogs today and going over my list, I have to decide what seeds to keep, which to toss, what to bring to the seed exchange and what new ones to order. I'm listening to the wind and watching the melting snow. February is supposed to be filled with the "seed starting itch" and the urge to order more seeds than necessary. With the present temperatures, I'm wondering if spring has passed us by - then I look at the calendar and know better. There are so many enticing pictures of new seeds on the market - on the front or in the front few pages of catalogs where you'll be sure to not miss them, and get hooked into the "I want" scenario. Yes, they always know how to capture your attention.

Our winter rest period is well on the way of running out - when we were glad for a reprieve from working ourselves silly in the garden. We've caught our breath and now feel a new lease on life for the gardening season coming up, totally forgetting how exhausted we were last fall. Isn't it wonderful what a few months of R&R can do? Never mind that our flats and pots may be covered over by the remaining snow or that we might not remember even where to look for them. Seed starting mix? Hmmm, I think that was stored in the garage, or maybe that was the year before. A few months of distraction have totally taken my memory from last fall and stored it without an index finding feature. That used to be not so critical!

With the longer days coming on and a bit more of Vitamin D exposure, I have a fleeting recollection of seedlings everywhere, spring bulbs popping up, direct seeding peas, carrots, etc. New ripe tomatoes in the greenhouse - how wonderful they smell and taste. I anticipate the time when a special granddaughter comes to visit and she's as excited as I am about indulging in the few first cherry tomatoes of the season together. Now that's what makes my new gardening year exciting and especially worthwhile.

You know, I should have her come to visit right away because she could track down my supplies in the blink of an eye. I can hear it now. 'Oh grammma..... They're right there!'





## Growing peony seeds

By Andrea Moore

[www.naturespromise.com/growingseeds.htm](http://www.naturespromise.com/growingseeds.htm)

Growing peonies by seed is time consuming but very rewarding. I think all in all, it is one of the most enjoyable parts of growing peonies. I enjoy seeing new peonies emerge, knowing someday if all goes well they will be large beautiful plants that literally can stop traffic!

The seeds of your plant are not ripe until the fall, so if you wish to get seeds from your own plants leave the pods on until the pod seam starts to open and then you can remove the seeds and allow them to dry several days before planting. The usual ripening time for most peony seeds is late summer to early autumn around August to October. You can choose to plant the seeds immediately if they ripen early enough (August) or wait to plant your seeds until the following spring after they are harvested from the plants, this gives the seeds a whole spring and summer before winter arrives and provides the cold that will break the dormancy of the shoot.

I start my seeds in plastic bags with about ten to twenty five seeds in moist vermiculite or peat moss, I always label and date the package and put it in warm temperatures about 70 - 72 degrees F, for about three to eight months, until the roots are about 1 1/2 long. Then I plant the young plants carefully in small pots with a light potting mix and put them in the refrigerator or in my cool greenhouse during the winter for approximately 3 months. After that they are placed in a warm high shaded location outside, or on a windowsill until the shoots appear. I leave them there for four months and in fall put them outside in a protected place in raised beds that are heavily mulched. Some will survive the following winter and a few will not. If the seeds are from a valuable species, I will protect them in a heated storage area with the heater set at just above freezing to allow them extra protection the first winter.

After the seedlings have survived their first winter, the small plants are lined out in the field with high shade provided and not allowed to dry out during hot weather. Good drainage during all phases of seedling growth is very important! Also, I would protect your seedlings from continuous long rains in the early spring by putting a row cover or mulch on if sudden early spring freezes are expected.

Another way to grow seeds for those in temperate (northern) areas is to let nature do the job and I have heard this works very well, and is the way most people germinate their seeds. A good time to plant your peony seeds is in the spring and early summer this gives the seeds time to grow their first root, then the fall and winter comes and breaks the shoots dormancy and allows the plants to form their first shoots.

Place seeds for outdoor germination in clay pots (good porosity) and then sink in the soil so the rims are covered with soil. Make sure the potting medium is very well drained for the seeds. Dig the pot up and check the seeds in the late fall for root germination (many dump the slightly moist pot over and the seeds and soil just fall out). Many of the seeds will have grown roots, take these seeds and plant the seeds about 2 inches below the surface of the soil in clay pots, then sink in the soil again and mulch heavily for the winter. The following spring if all goes well the seeds should send up their first shoots. During the first year I would move the pots to a location with high shade or half day more or shade and keep evenly moist. Seedlings are not as tolerant of heat and drought as adult peonies and need protection from harsh weather. It may take 5 or more years before your seedlings flower and so they are a long-term investment of time and effort, but if you are successful you are the only person in the world with that one particular plant you have grown. Please email me with any additional questions you may have.

Basically, peony seeds are double dormant, they require one period of warmth to grow the root and a period of 2-3 months of temperatures below 35 to break the shoot dormancy. After the shoot is growing the plant will grow slowly the first year and start growing faster as it matures.



## Aromatherapy for Lacewings

### Using Plant-Produced Odors to Attract Predators and Aid Biological Control

*Dr. David G. James and Tanya Price, Entomologists, WSU*



Green lacewing, *Chrysopa nigricornis*

#### *The Subtle Aroma of a Damaged Plant*

During the last decade scientists have come to realize that plants have developed a subtle line of defense against plant-feeding organisms. When a plant is attacked by a herbivore such as a caterpillar, an aphid, or a mite, it responds by releasing a bouquet of chemicals, undetectable by the human nose but a veritable aromatic cocktail to odor-sensitive insects and mites.

#### *Plant Signals for Bodyguards*

In some instances these odors or "infochemicals" simply repel other plant pests but an increasing body of scientific evidence shows that some of these chemicals play a role as "signalling compounds." These subtle smells actively recruit plant "bodyguards" to help fend off herbivore attackers. Bodyguards, that is predators and parasitoids of pest insects and mites, use herbivore-induced plant volatiles (HIPVs) to cue in on their prey.



MS-baited Universal trap with drowned lacewings.

#### *HIPV Research at WSU*

Much of our knowledge of HIPVs and the responses of natural enemies has been obtained during the last decade from laboratory studies using bean plants, spider mites, and predatory mites as the model organisms. However, field evidence for the system is now beginning to accumulate, with studies demonstrating increases in predator populations when plants are artificially stimulated to produce HIPVs. Research currently underway in WSU Department of Entomology at Prosser is adding to our knowledge of HIPVs, particularly their potential use in integrated pest management.

#### *Oil of Wintergreen: Toothpaste Ingredient and HIPV*

Methyl salicylate (MS), also known as oil of wintergreen, is an inexpensive and commercially available compound. It is used in many products like linaments, ointments, aromatherapy oils, toothpaste, hair care products, and food flavorings. It is also an HIPV shown to be attractive in the laboratory to predatory mites and predatory bugs. MS has been identified in the HIPV blends from at least eight plant species including lima bean, cabbage, pear, hops, tobacco, and some weed species. It is also repellent to some species of aphids. Surprisingly, despite the availability of MS, no studies have been conducted on the potential use of this HIPV in crops to increase predator populations and biological control. This was rectified in 2002 when we commenced trapping studies in an unsprayed WSU Prosser hop yard with MS and three other HIPVs: hexenyl acetate (HA), dimethyl-octatriene (DO), and dimethyl-nonatriene (DN). We are still collecting and analyzing data but will report here the most significant results to date.

Continued on page 4...

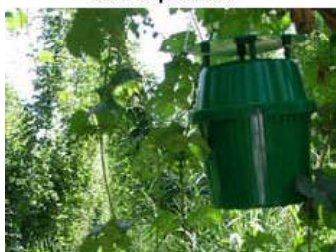


## "Aroma Therapy" Continued from page 3

### Better Bug Trapping



Yellow sticky trap used in hop yard HIPV experiment.



Universal moth trap used in hop yard HIPV experiment

We conducted two hop yard experiments. In the first, we attached sticky, yellow, nine-by-five-inch cards to hop poles; the cards were either unbaited or baited with MS, HA, DO, or DN. In the second experiment, we hung Universal moth traps (small green buckets with an entry cone) from hop plants. Each Universal trap was filled to a depth of a few inches with water (to drown captured insects) and baited with MS or methyl eugenol (ME) [reported as a lacewing

attractant in the literature] or left unbaited. Baits were supplied in 2-ml glass vials taped to the bottom of sticky traps or the inside wall of Universal traps. Sticky cards and traps were checked weekly and trapped insects identified and counted.

### Wooing the Lacewings

The green lacewing, *Chrysopa nigricornis*, is an important predator of aphids and mites in the Pacific Northwest, occurring in many tree crop systems and hops. It is one species in the "army" of beneficial insects and mites that we are trying to encourage to enter hop yards in spring to provide a good base for biological control (see "[Natural Enemies: A New Weapon in the War on Hop Pests,](#)" *AENews* Issue No. 194, June 2002). *C. nigricornis* is particularly valuable as an aphid and mite predator in hop yards because unlike many other lacewing species, adults as well as larvae feed on aphids and mites. A single *C. nigricornis* may consume up to 1000 aphids in its lifetime.

Significantly greater numbers of *C. nigricornis* were trapped on MS-baited sticky cards than on the other HIPV-baited or unbaited cards (Figure 1). A mean of 2.8 ( $\pm 0.4$ ) *C. nigricornis* per card per week was captured during from June 13 to September 5 on the MS- baited cards compared to 0.45 ( $\pm 0.15$ )

on the unbaited cards. Only one *C. nigricornis* was captured in the unbaited Universal traps and three in the ME-baited traps. In contrast, 67 were captured in the MS-baited traps (Figure 2).

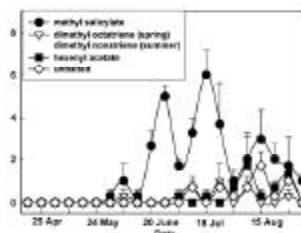


Figure 1  
Weekly mean ( $\pm$  SE) number of adult green lacewings, *Chrysopa nigricornis* trapped on yellow sticky cards baited with methyl salicylate, dimethyl octatriene, dimethyl nonatriene or hexenyl acetate or left unbaited during 11 Apr – 5 Sep 02 in a Washington hop yard.

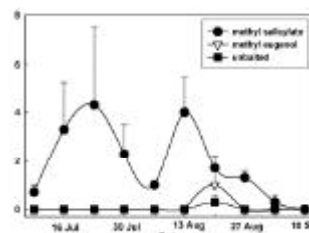


Figure 2  
Weekly mean ( $\pm$  SE) number of adult green lacewings, *Chrysopa nigricornis*, captured in Universal traps baited with methyl salicylate or methyl eugenol or left unbaited, during 2 Jul – 10 September in a Washington Hop Yard.

### Oil of Wintergreen: A Future Pest Management Tool?

These data are good evidence for the attraction of a lacewing species to MS under field conditions. This is the first time a lacewing species has been demonstrated to respond to MS. Additional data (not presented here) show positive responses to MS in some other beneficial insect species as well. These preliminary findings are sufficient to encourage further exploration of using synthetic HIPVs as pest management tools.

### Double-Action Bonus?

MS may have dual benefits for pest management in hops. Earlier research in Europe showed MS is repellent to hop aphids, reducing spring colonization of hop yards in some instances. Thus MS may have potential for increasing populations of beneficial insects AND decreasing populations of pests! Much research remains to be done on the practical use and benefits to be gained by using MS, but it appears to be an area rich with potential. We hope



to begin trials next season monitoring the recruitment and residence of natural enemies in hop yards using MS dispensers and comparing numbers to hop yards without the “aromatherapy” enticement.

*Dr. David James and Tanya Price are with WSU's Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center (IAREC) in Prosser. Dr. James can be reached at [djames@tricity.wsu.edu](mailto:djames@tricity.wsu.edu) or (509) 786-9280.*



## Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

by Rosemary Kimball

This is the month we really move. We will have (had?) Blythe Campbell down at the end of February to talk about what grows in Southcentral. This is written before her arrival so you know it was a good presentation. There will be (was?) a chocolate-beet cake to celebrate her birthday on the last day of February.

Our Ramrod, Janice, got word from Rita Jo at Fritz Creek Gardens that Stephanie Cohen would be speaking in Homer; would we like to have her stop by? We've never had a national speaker so we're giving it a shot. She was awarded the 2002 Perennial Plant Assoc. "Award of Honor for Design" and has many other awards, as well as being a contributor to many plant / horticulture magazines. She is the director of the Landscape Arboretum at Temple University, Pennsylvania, Ambler Campus. While most of her extensive time in this field is on the east coast, the American Rock Garden Society will be hosting her in both Anchorage and Homer. She will be here on Monday the 17th of March. Her chosen topic is "The Vertically Challenged Garden - Shorter is Better". Try to see her in Anchorage if you have the chance- maybe even join the Rock

Garden group that your master gardener, Carmel Tysver, is head of now.

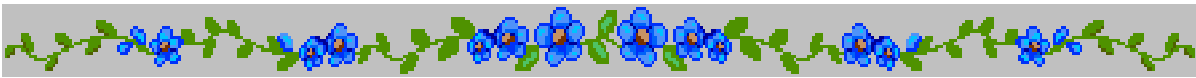
March is the month of our composting series. The first of the three, March 6th, will feature Cheryl Paige talking on "Composting with worms". As an incentive to going to hear her, check out the price of a small bag of worm castings (horse castings? chicken castings?) at your local garden section. The Cooperative Extension Service also has a good video of worm bin critters, ancillary life to the composting worms. The next week, March 13th, will be Derec Marcocelle talking about home composting. The last talk in the series, March 20th, will be John Evens from the valley talking about "Great Growing with Compost Tea". All talks will be at the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Building from 7-9 PM, with coffee, tea and real cookies. There will be a small admission charge for the local presenters and a slightly larger admission charge for Ms. Cohen.

The lecture series will end on April 5th with a talk on "Garden Art" by Master Gardener and Master Photographer Annie Nevaldine. That program will be on Saturday from 1-3 because Annie hasn't given up her day job yet. We'll take Annie any way we can get her. After Annie, we are all on our own in our gardens.

The soil temperature at root level remains above normal by several degrees through the end of January which means, barring spring heaving if we don't get some snow, that everything, weeds included, will be back with bells on.

I was finally reading my Nov/Dec 2002 Horticulture magazine and there was a whole-page picture of a nursery owner in North Carolina that had the wonderful marking pen, DecoColor, my neighbor gave me for Christmas which has paint delivered through a fine point and won't fade. The source given is [www.artsuppliesonline.com](http://www.artsuppliesonline.com) or 1-800-967-7367. They are \$3.19 each. I've started making tags with my first one and they do work wonderfully well. When you get the the DecoColor pen it should read: "They are \$3.19 each and come in a variety of colors if you want to get rambunctious".

Pay your taxes April 15 and start your seeds for sure!



## Bird Chatter

OOPS! February AMGA Newsletter Correction:  
Linda Slack is the 2003 AMGA Vice President -

Now here's an interesting job...new Master Gardener Gail Charles works for the Municipality of Anchorage's Bioterrorism Department as nurse epidemiologist

Master Gardeners seen at the Alaska State Master Gardener Conference and the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference in balmy Fairbanks included Nicklette LeFleur and Carol Ross.

The 2003 City of Flowers theme is "Wild About Flowers...Crazy about Colors". It's not just about wildflowers - remember that most wildflower mixes don't usually contain true Alaskan wildflowers.

Overheard being said by AMGA member Debbie Hinchey, "Gardening is a competitive sport."

Talk about taking advantage of the late fall/winter seasons.... Forsythia 'Northern Sun' was finally planted in Doug Tryck's upper garden on Dec. 7th after hanging around for a couple of years in pots.

## NARCISSUS

According to the language of flowers, Narcissus is a symbol of Self-Love.

These flowers were named after Narcissus of the Greek legend, who fell in love with his own reflection in a stream. He stayed by the stream in a hypnotic trance. The gods thought he would die of starvation so they changed him into the flower to stay there forever.

Narcissus are considered toxic plants and should not be eaten, but in many European countries parts of the Narcissus are used in the treatment of epilepsy and in some countries they are experimenting with Narcissus to aid in a cure for Alzheimers Disease.

If Narcissus are forced to bloom in the beginning of January (New year), those who follow Feng Shui believe that it will bring good luck for the next twelve months.

## Master Gardener Volunteer Opportunities

Happy "Spring" Everyone!

I have three terraces of planted stone retaining wall all exposed - yikes! Hope you have all managed to stay covered through this warm spell!

I have several volunteer needs:

### Talking Plant:

Local school would like the Talking Plant presented to two groups, sometime between now and the end of the month.

**Fur Rondy** - Northway Mall - Still need:

Wednesday, Feb 19: 10a-2p and 2p-6p and 6p-9p

Thursday, Feb 20: 10a-2p and 2p-6p and 6p-9p

Friday, Feb 21: 10a-2p and 2p-6p DESPERATE! and 6p-9p DESPERATE!!

Saturday, Feb 22: DESPERATE! 10a-2p and 2p-6p DESPERATE!

Sunday, Feb 23: DESPERATE! Noon-3p and 3p-6p DESPERATE!

### Sears Garden Show

Need two master gardeners per shift

April 19, 2003 - NOTE THE DATE CORRECTION!

Saturday, April 19: 10a-2:30p and 2:30p-7p

Need talented person to design booth space; Donations for use of flowering plants or large house plants will be welcome!

### Women's Show - Sullivan Arena

Need two master gardeners per shift.

April 24-27, 2003

Friday, April 25: 11a-3p and 3p-6p

Saturday, April 26: 11a-3p and 3p-6p

Sunday, April 27: 11a-3p and 3p-6p

NOTE: Need presentations!! Subjects appropriate to the season! Suggested topics: Designing with Annuals, Composting, Designing the cut flower garden, Seed starting, Common garden visitors, Plant Names...

Remember: DON'T FORGET THE KIDS!  
Presentations for Kids are always welcome!



## Gardening Calendar

### **Mother's Day Garden Show** - Northway Mall

Still need two more master gardeners!

Sunday, May 11: 10a-2p and 2p-6p

Need help with take down at 6p on Sunday.

### **Office help:**

I could use some help around the office. We are still getting situated in this new area and need help organizing and creating lists, charts, display materials, etc.

Call me! This is a wonderful way to get your hours in and still LEARN ALOT!

Sue Lincoln  
786 6315

### **POTATO TRIVIA**

Potatoes are grown in every US State and Canadian Province, as well as in over 100 countries around the world.

Potatoes first became popular when Marie Antoinette wore a crown of potatoes in France.

Potatoes were first imported by Europeans on Spanish ships returning from Peru.

"The Potato War" of 1770 was coined when a crop failure forced soldiers to steal their enemy's potatoes because of a lack of food.

In October 1995, the potato became the first vegetable to be grown in space. NASA and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, created the technology with the goal of feeding astronauts on long space voyages, and eventually, feeding future space colonies.

Mr. Potato Head was the first toy to be advertised on TV.



### **March 6**

Anchorage Garden Club: "New Perennial Introductions From Around the World" presented by Rhonda Williams; Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30pm Programs are free and open to everyone.

### **March 15**

Alaska Rock Garden Society: "Stepanie Cohen Rocks Alaska" - 2pm at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art; there will be a \$10.00 donation at the door. Stepanie is from Penn. and a frequent writer for Hort and other magazines. She is a hort professor at the U.

### **March 17**

Alaska Master Gardener Meeting: "Living Wreaths" speaker Dana Klinkhart; 7 p.m., Cooperative Extension Service, Conference Room 130, Carlton Trust Bldg., 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Call Mary Shier, Chapter president, for info: 345-1562.

### **April 3**

Anchorage Garden Club: "Recycling is Working" presented by Mary Fisher from ALPAR; Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30pm Programs are free and open to everyone.

### **April 5 and April 12**

UAA Class- "Introduction to Organic Gardening - Organic Garden Methods" -

HME A001 -1 to 6 PM - Chugiak- Eagle River Campus, 10928 Eagle River Road, Room 228-G . Non-credit, \$99 - Course reference number is 38779

To register, call 907-694-3313 or on line at <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/eagle>

### **April 19**

Alaska Rock Garden Society Meeting - 2pm at Recluse Nursery, Wasilla - Rhonda Williams will be the speaker.

### **May 1**

Anchorage Garden Club: "Growing Maples in Anchorage" presented by George Lyle; Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30pm Programs are free and open to everyone.



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

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Phone: 345-4099

Email: [gardener@corecom.net](mailto:gardener@corecom.net)

AMGA Web Site: [www.corecom.net/~gardener](http://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

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