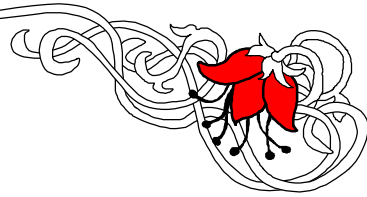


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 5, Issue 10

# ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER September 2003

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## From the President by Mary Shier

Summer and our growing season are almost over. How fast it's flown by. It seems plants were ready to give it up sooner this year than most. All the hot weather and winds took their toll. I had to rip out several annuals way before I do normally because they were 'all used up' - a wonderful expression from my mother-in-law.

I was concerned that I didn't water enough, fertilize enough or 'something' enough as I heard from other gardeners that their plants were performing exceptionally well. What did I not do properly? It seems that the longer I garden, the more I don't know. Sometimes I just want to scream: Aaaaaaaaah! This helps momentarily but doesn't correct the problem, darn it - it only provides mental relief. But sometimes a mental 'fix' helps, however brief.

Lately, we had the pleasure of visiting a couple more gardens that were outstanding, each in their own special way. All of our field trips over the summer have been stimulating as well as satisfying to our curiosity as to what others are or have been doing. Such a diverse overview of what master gardeners are creating and growing is a delight to see as well as inspiring.

We all grow some of the same plants, but how we display those plants is interesting. Everyone's yard and garden has a different setting, offering a new look to familiar plants and always showing us new ways to present those plants. While we're noticing the plants we know, all of a sudden the unfamiliar plant stands out. We gain knowledge of new plants to try in our own gardens by asking questions and chatting.

Our field trips are a wonderful way of learning and sharing. I know quite a few of you participated in attending this summer. Those of you who didn't surely missed out - Big Time! Get your act together and make an effort to attend next summer because your chance has run out for this year.

Those of us who did attend this year have dozens of ideas gleaned from what we've seen to incorporate into our gardens as we plan for next year during the coming winter. For some, what we've seen and learned has given inspiration to new ideas never considered, opening up a whole new world in our gardening area.

One of the many treasures of being a master gardener is our friendship with one another and sharing our knowledge. This is what makes our association so wonderful. We love what we do and we love helping others with our passion.....GARDENING.

*Sometimes we don't have to scream - just call a fellow master gardener and bend an ear.*



## Master Gardeners enjoy August Tours and Potluck

By Dana Klinkhart

Gardeners gathered on Monday, August 18 for the last tour of the season. The gardens of Amelia and John Walsh on Lilac Lane and Gina and Shane Docherty on DeArmoun Drive were featured. It was forecasted to rain but just as the tours began the sun appeared. The Walsh's garden included numerous water features; one in particular displayed a waterfall cascading into a large pond. Their rock gardens, hanging baskets and beds displayed primroses, fuchsias, dahlias and lovely geraniums. The Docherty's greeted gardeners and welcomed them into their home for a potluck to behold. They shared their large garden on a lovely wooded area that included beautifully established and unusual perennials, vines, and vegetables. Gardeners were once again hosted to a variety of gardening delights. Our thanks to all four hosts for graciously answering many questions and sharing their gardens.

## Master Gardener Mentors Needed

A Message from Sue Lincoln

A new Master Gardener course is upcoming October 14 - December 4, every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30p - 3:30p (excluding holidays). As such, brand new master gardeners will be added to our growing numbers.

I am interested in providing Mentors for all of the new master gardeners that wish one. If you are a certified master gardener (completed your 40-hour commitment) interested in serving as a mentor, call or email me. I will be scheduling a training session for all those interested in becoming a mentor. Interest or attendance at the training session does not commit you. If, after attending the training, you feel you are not up to the challenge at this time, you can, by all means, decline certification as a mentor.

Upon completion of the Master Gardener course, you will be matched with a new 'sprout' to nurture, encourage and support.

Please let me know if a day session or an evening session is better for you to attend.

Sue can be contacted at the Cooperative Extension Office: 786-6300, or by email: fnsml@uaf.edu

## September is the Ideal Time to Plant Spring Bulbs

By James R. Feucht and James Klett,  
Colorado State University

*Cooperative Extension Specialists, Landscape Plants*

If you want a rainbow of color in your garden next spring, start by planting bulbs now.

Bulbs purchased and planted in September will yield healthier blossoms in the spring. Bulbs purchased late in the season may have endured damaging storage conditions in garden centers and supermarkets. These bulbs usually will not perform as well as those purchased and planted early in the season.

### Bulb Selection

When buying bulbs, look for the largest size within the type or variety under consideration. Sizes vary among varieties. Crocus, classified as a corm, but sold as a bulb, are small compared to the narcissus and many tulip bulbs. Some early flowering and species tulips are smaller than the hybrid cottage and Darwin types. Beware of differences between the metric and U.S. systems of measurements. Most imported Holland bulbs are sized by centimeters. Two-and-one-half centimeters equal an inch. Thus, a 5-centimeter bulb will be 2 1/2 inches in diameter – a big difference.

Bulbs can be purchased from bulb catalogs, open bins and convenience pre-packs. Check the bulb's quality. This is easier to do when purchasing bulbs from an open bin rather than in packages. Check bulbs for bruising and mechanical damage and signs of mold or mildew. Don't consider bulbs that have produced green tips, an indication that growth already has started. One caution about buying bulbs from an open bin: They easily can be mixed together, and you could end up with bulbs you don't want. When selecting from an open bin, purchase bulbs that look like the others in the bin. Some slight color and shape differences exist among varieties. These clues will help you select correctly.

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## Planting Bulbs

Decide where the bulbs will be planted and prepare the soil. Tuck bulbs into little spots here and there to add a splash of color in the spring.

Crocus creates a natural appearance around trees or in a rock garden. Species tulips bloom very early; they can be planted in with shrubs. You also can plant bulbs within a ground cover such as creeping juniper, but you may want to avoid most daffodils, because their foliage lasts so long through the season. You can cut the foliage of tulips, hyacinths and crocus sooner after the blooms have died down.

Bulbs do well in both sun and shade, but you may want to avoid hot, south exposures, particularly along the foundation of your home. Here the soil can warm up too early in the Spring, and the bulbs may emerge only to be killed back by freezing weather. South exposures also tend to dry over the winter resulting in poor bulb performance. A loose mulch, such as wood chips applied several inches deep after planting, will help. You can delay bulb emergence by mulching after the ground has frozen. Mulches insulate and keep the ground from warming up too quickly in the spring. Mulches also conserve moisture and prevent excessive weed growth.

Bulbs require a well-drained soil. Heavy clay soils usually are not suitable unless they have been amended with organic matter. Bulbs planted in poorly-drained soil are likely to rot or develop botrytis blight. Bulbs can be planted until late October, but September is best for good establishment. Plant bulbs deeper than seed, usually three to four times the diameter of the bulb. Be sure to plant them about 2 inches deeper in sandy soil.

Prepare the bulb bed by digging all of the soil from the area to be planted. Dig several inches deeper than necessary. (Planting guides, usually available from your garden center, suggest the ideal depth for each type of bulb.)

After soil is removed, add approximately one-third volume of compost or well-aged barnyard manure. Thoroughly mix these materials together, place the bulbs in the bottom of the pit according directions and backfill with prepared soil. It is not necessary to fertilize, as bulbs are storage organs that contain all the nutrients necessary for good root

growth and shoot development. Fertilizers will not improve flowering ability, because the flower bud already is present in the bulb. If you've ever had bulbs that failed to flower, it was not due to lack of fertilizer, but rather that the bulb wasn't old enough or, for some reason, lacked a flower bud to begin with.

Water the area well and within a few weeks, the bulbs will begin to root. Keep the soil moist, but not soaking wet during this time. Then sit back and wait for a showy display of flowers next spring.

Article reprinted with permission from Colorado Master Gardener, Denver, Colorado, USA  
<http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/4DMG/>

[photograph: *Tulips at Sitka Pioneer Home* courtesy of Gina Docherty and was not part of the original article; photo from the website was not transferrable.]





## Flowering alliums: Diverse, Lovely

By James Karo, master gardener,  
and Carl Wilson, extension agent,  
Denver County office of Colorado State University  
Cooperative Extension

Planting onions for flowers?

Welcome to the diverse world of flowering alliums, a plant family of perhaps 400 species that includes the familiar onion, garlic, and chives.

Countless peoples have loved alliums since the earliest civilizations. In the Middle Ages, onions were thought to improve vision, enhance sexual prowess and counter baldness. By Elizabethan times, the giant purple allium giganteum was featured as an ornamental garden centerpiece.

Ornamental alliums bloom in colors including yellow, white, beige, purple, pink and blue. Bloom times vary from spring to fall, depending on the species. Foliage shapes range from round to straplike to broad.

Two of the largest and most spectacular alliums bloom in June and make excellent fresh and dried cut flowers, Star of Persia (*A. christophii*) is perhaps the most spectacular. Up to 80 star-shaped florets are carried in an open, 6 to 8-inch flower head. In bloom, the flowers resemble a lavender-to lilac-colored fireworks burst.

*A. Karataviense*, the Turkestan allium, is notable for dense 3 to 5-inch round flower clusters in colors varying from beige to pink to reddish-lilac. The large flowers on dumpy stems contrast well against broad bluish-green leaves.

For the rock garden, try *A. ostrowskianum*, Ostrowsky onion. Up to five stems of bright, carmine-pink flowers are produced in June only four inches above the ground.

More subtle is *A. moly*, commonly called golden garlic or lily leek. Bright yellow flowers in open clusters on 10-inch stems add a delicate note to June gardens.

For Colorado mountain gardeners in Zones 2 or 3, try June-blooming *A. caeruleum*. The "blue globe"

onion produces cornflower-blue flowers in 2-inch round clusters on 1-foot stems.

*A. sphaerocephalon*, drumsticks allium, produces flattened globular heads on 24-inch stems in May or June. This allium spreads freely, producing clumps of reddish-purple flowers suitable for the perennial border.

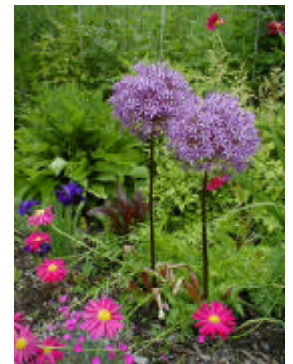
If a 1 to 1 1/2-foot pink flower fits your color scheme, try one-leaved onion, *A. unifolium*. Native to coastal California, the sugar pink blooms and irislike leaves look as good in the June garden as the do in a pot.

Of course, there is always rose-purple chives, *A. schenoprasum*, equally at home in the kitchen garden and the perennial border.

For blooms next year, fall is the time to buy and plant the bulbs or rhizomes of these versatile ornamental plants. Many local nurseries will stock a selection, or check mail-order suppliers in time to order for planting.



**A. 'Mount Everest'**



**A. 'Globe Master'**

Article reprinted with permission from Colorado Master Gardener, Denver, Colorado, USA  
<http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/4DMG/>

[*Mount Everest* photograph courtesy of Judy Sedbrook, Colorado; *Globe Master* photograph courtesy of Gina Docherty and was not part of the original article; other photos from the website were not transferrable.]



## Central Peninsula Master Garden News by Rosemary Kimball

**T**hreaten me with global warming; just go ahead. The tomatoes were wonderfully early, the broccoli is gone, and there will be enough cabbage for sauerkraut after all. What was interesting was that after a decade of using predatory nematodes for root maggot control, I didn't this year and have had no apparent damage. There should have been some signs of wilting with the 80+° days (three in a row!) we had in early August (or was it late July?) but there was none. I will inspect the roots closely when I dig up the plants to see if anyone was home.

My neighbor planted green beans outdoors and the plants were lovely. If we can be guaranteed a summer like this next year, I think I'll move mine out of the greenhouse and into the lower garden. If, like me, you have some beans that escape picking until their seeds are almost viable, try this: Fry some onion and some form of pork, toss in the snapped beans and diced potatoes and some water or chicken broth and cook until dead. Season with salt and pepper. That recipe was given to me by a woman from West Virginia and I can make a meal of it.

Signs of boron deficiency are showing in my new strawberry rows – snubbed nose berries. But the up side to that is that those berries are much sweeter than the general run and get eaten right then and there...after checking for hornets of course. It's that time of year and the hornets love the berries. They chew out a hole to the inside and can be hidden from view when I go to pick. We have a ground nest just off the deck and I found that the hard (or easy?) way.



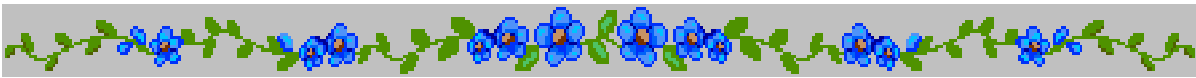
I had to laugh! One of the visitor's this summer was a friend's "Garden-of-the-Week" winning Uncle Tony from Pittsburgh on his first visit to Alaska. She took him to peoples' gardens (never mind that she has a beautiful yard herself) and up to the Anchorage Garden Tour. When he left he said that we, in Alaska, had the most beautiful flowers he'd ever seen and he'd never be able to brag about his flowers again. Oh, and he said the mountains were beautiful too.

Pioneer Park is missing its fall color provided by the achillea varieties. The gardener must not like the plants. The silene, which was rank I will have to admit, is also gone and that was our early spring color. What I do like though is being able to see some bare dirt around the plants as it shows them off to advantage.

We had our first light frost right on schedule in Sterling on August 17. The feel of the air had changed during the day and it felt like fall...sunny, very comfortable, and not hot at all. The frost knocked the potatoes to half mast and scorched the zucchini noticeably. This is truly a time of plenty in the vegetable garden. It is said that you should plant enough for yourself, the neighbors and the bugs. We're eating as fast as we can, the neighbors have their own gardens, the bugs are minimal at best, and moose don't count. Happiness is finding someone without a garden that you can "dump" on. Zucchini anyone? Lettuce?

I am looking forward to the ceremonial visit at the first meeting in September. This time, I won't come alone. Our Ramrod, Janice, and our ex-park Ramrod, Barb, and Margaret Simon will be coming also. En garde!





## Bird Chatter

Mary Shier once again organized a tour of local gardens for an out of state Master Gardener. Nancy, an Ohio Master Gardener who holds a position similar to Sue Lincoln's, had contacted Mary via the web site earlier in the year and set this up. She thoroughly enjoyed her garden visits.

Speaking of our dear president, she unfortunately fractured her ankle & is sporting a new pink cast. Rosemary now has someone to commiserate with. Nursing staff at the hospital had a good laugh over their antique wooden crutches that Glen had saved over the years. She did get some new crutches.

Two local master gardeners will be enjoying the flora and fauna in Denali Park this month from the comfort of their own cars - on the same day. Among the lucky "Drive Denali" lottery winners were Gina Docherty & Annie Nevaldine.

## WEED VOLUNTEERS

By Annie Nevaldine

I received Susan Miller's advice about five years too late. In a May, 2003, newsletter she recommended removing the top inch or so of soil from soil-grown plants before planting them in your garden. She offered this tip as a way to reduce the introduction of weed seeds and seeds of other unwelcome plants into your garden.

I wish I'd had that suggestion five years ago when I accepted from someone's garden a plant I'd lusted after. (I leave the donor nameless to protect the generous.) Unbeknownst to me as I was happily planting this treasure, I was also sowing the seeds of an invasive weed I had never before seen in my garden or anywhere else, but with which I'd become much more intimate in just a few short seasons.

Within a year I began to find many, many small plants with basal leaves and short spikes of tiny white flowers. The gone-by flowers are soon replaced by needle-like pods of maturing seeds which explode when ripe, shooting their tiny seed-projectiles up to a few feet away.

This unintended and unwelcome crop grew exponentially very quickly. Part of their success in propagating prolifically lies in the fact that they require very little real estate to grow, finding their way to root in between even the most densely spaced plants. In addition, I have grown leery of the violent seed propulsion. As a hard contact lens wearer, I resent the corneal abrasion when seeds lodge in my eyes. These two problems have motivated me to pull them as soon as I see them, *before* they go to seed.

Last year, a friend visiting my gardens from the Seattle area observed, "Oh, you have popweed here, too." Known botanically as *Fucus gardneri*, this intruder is a member of the mustard family, reputedly tasting like cress (not that I've tasted it myself, though soon it could be growing hydroponically from my eyeballs, making for efficient harvesting).

Much as I appreciate the plant in whose soil the popweed seeds were hidden, I wish I'd had Susan Miller's suggestion before planting it. I'd have scraped the topsoil from the pot and saved myself hours and hours of weeding with my swim goggles on.

August, 2003



*"Weeding is a delightful occupation, especially after summer rain, when the roots come up clear and clean. One gets to know how many and various are the ways of weeds - as many almost as the moods of human creatures. How easy and pleasant to pull up are the soft annuals like Chickweed and Groundsel, and how one looks with respect at deep-rooted things like Docks, that make one go and fetch a spade."*

Gertrude Jekyll

## Composted Horse Manure Available FREE

Gardeners / Composters - we have a stockpile of horse manure that has been "cooking" for about two years. This would be a great amendment to add your soil or compost pile this fall. For more information, please call Helen Roberts at **345-7064** or email [btcarls@hotmail.com](mailto:btcarls@hotmail.com)



# Gardening Calendar

## FAIR PHOTOS

Photos by Mary Shier



**First place  
Broccoli**  
(weight not available)



**First place  
Cantelope**  
(weight not available)



**First place  
Cauliflower:**  
35.8 lb



**First place  
Sunflower**  
(weight not available)



**First place  
Turnip:**  
19.77 lb

### Sept 4

Anchorage Garden Club: "Potentially Invasive Garden Plants to Handle With Care" presented by Julie Riley; Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30 p.m. Programs are free and open to everyone.

### Sept 10

United Way "Day of Caring" Cleanup day at the ABG - 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Volunteers needed. 770-3692

### Sept 11

Wildflower Garden Club meeting - Gardening for Wildlife - Julie Riley, CES, will speak on how to encourage "wanted" wildlife into your garden. Central Lutheran Church, 277-7150

### Sept 15

Alaska Master Gardener Association meeting: "The Orchid Patch" with Jane Bibee.

### Oct 2

Anchorage Garden Club: "Swags and Wreaths" Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30 p.m. Programs are free and open to everyone.

### Oct 9

Wildflower Garden Club Workshop, "Forcing Bulbs for Indoor Winter Use" - Debbie Hinchey will lead a hands-on workshop on potting bulbs for winter pleasure. Meet at 10 a.m., Central Lutheran Church, 15th Ave. & Cordova. 277-7150

### Oct 14 - Dec. 4

Anchorage Master Gardener Course - 12:30 - 3:30 p.m., Cooperative Extension Service; Requires 40 hours of volunteer service after 40 hours of training. Call now to be placed on the interest list to receive registration materials in the fall: 786-6300

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

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

**Phone: 786-6300**

**Fax: 786-6312**

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

Mail: 4006 DeArmoun Road  
Anchorage, AK 99516

Phone: 345-4099

Email: gardener@corecom.net

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



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