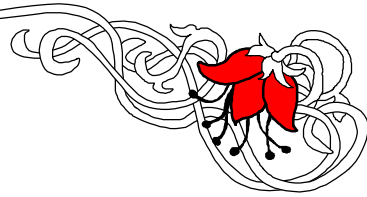


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 7, Issue 1

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER December 2004

From the President's Corner By Dana Klinkhart



The spirit of the holidays surrounds us. The songs, the lights, and the cards that greet us at the mailbox all bring memories of seasons past. Our calendar reminds us of the limited days of shopping left. What do you suppose is available to buy in our community for the gardener in our lives? After having contacted a variety of our local vendors, I was able to compile some ideas for shoppers. Here are a few gift ideas to think about. And while we are shopping for others, let us not forget our personal wish list for Santa, too.

????Annie Nevaldine's lovely Alaska Garden Flowers Calendar 2005 retails for \$12 but is sold by Annie for \$11. You can reach her via email at alzina@acsalaska.net or by phone at 277-7720 or 333-2100.

????Mary T from Alaska Mill and Feed told me about the Garden-In-A-Bag kit. It comes packaged in a leak proof bag to start your own window garden. Start this little garden to brighten those dark winter days! Also featured are seed-saving kits with airtight containers for seeds that will keep seeds from your favorite plants protected and labeled until you are ready to start them. New ergonomic hand tool sets with multiple position handles are available to help make garden work more comfortable besides fun! And for the little one on your Christmas list, what better way to share your love of the outdoors than a child's garden bench! This cute cast aluminum and wood bench has an animal theme back, scroll arms/legs, and wood seat to make a very special place for your little friends to enjoy their time in the garden.

????Bells Nursery on Specking is offering terrariums, table top fountains and bulbs. And for those who wish to try the art of bonsai... they have 'starts' for designing your very own bonsai.

????Dimond Greenhouse is featuring orchids, cacti, bonsai and succulents.

????The Garden Gate is featuring Foxglove gloves. Susan Miller says, "These are the perfect garden gloves that fit well and can be worn all day." For \$20 per pair, they are available in a rainbow of colors and sizes. Contact 345-4444 or susanmiller@alaska.com.

????Erma Macmillan tells me that The Green Connection has a good selection of orchids and containers as well as many large and small tropical plants and miniature topiary foliage such as Myrtle. A variety of Amaryllis and other bulbs for indoors are also featured during the holiday season.

????The Recluse Garden Center in the valley has ornaments made just for gardeners. They have an entire tree embellished with ornaments from a gardener's point of view. This sounds very inviting.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2





NOVEMBER AMGA MEETING NOTES:

SHARING GARDENING WITH A NURSERY

Lorri Abel shared some of her vast knowledge with nearly thirty AMGA members at November's meeting. Lorri and Sally Arant are owners of In the Garden Nursery, specializing in perennials for our area. She gave us a bit of their history and many helpful nursery pointers. She told of their best-sellers – sure bets for the novice gardener, and of the expense of shipping healthy plants to Alaska. It was interesting to note that the shipping cost often exceeds that of the item itself.

In The Garden gets many of its perennials from the Midwest and from Holland. They begin ordering as early as July and continue through April. Lorri says they will order specific plants at your request, to just let them know – and, for the beginning gardener, some of their best sellers include the following: nepeta (catmint), Solomon's seal, lady's-mantle, pulmonaria and, of course, primroses.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sharon Lovejoy's *Trowel and Error (Over 700 Tips, Remedies and Shortcuts for the Gardener)* collects all of her homespun garden advice into an inviting, environmentally friendly and whimsically illustrated book that will benefit every gardener, beginner or experienced. The paperback is under \$15 and available locally as well as on-line. **ISBN:** 0761126325 I have this book and have enjoyed sharing it with others. Many will remember Sharon from our 2001 Alaska Master Gardener Conference.

How about a gift of membership for your gardening friends to the Alaska Master Gardeners Association? Fifteen dollars will place them on the mailing list, the e-mail bulletin board and in the annual directory. Your gift will offer all the programs, tours, newsletters and announcements that are included with an AMGA membership. It is already time to re-new our own membership as 2005 us just around the corner.

So while all you gardeners are as busy as the elves of December, mail in your dues and check it off that list of reminders. You'll be happy you have that 'mission' accomplished. Enjoy the season with family and friends. I look forward to seeing you in 2005!

NEW COURSE ON PLANT BIOLOGY



"Leaves in Our Lives" is a new class being taught by Roseann Leiner on plant biology emphasizing food plants. Topics include plant anatomy, plant cells, the origins of agriculture, plants in human nutrition, energy in plants, feeding a hungry world, flowers, poisonous

and allergy plants. Roseann Leiner works with vegetable crops at UAF Palmer Research and Extension Center.

Through reading and discussion, students will 1) understand the basics of plant science, 2) appreciate the complexity and diversity of plants used by people and 3) see the forest and the trees.

The class will meet Wednesdays, Jan 12, 19 and Feb 2, 9, 16, 12:00 - 2 p.m. in the Cooperative Extension Service conference room, 2221 E. Northern Lights, Anchorage. The cost of the course is \$8.00. Those taking the course should contact CES Anchorage front desk to register by Jan 7. The suggested textbook is *Plants and Society* by Levetin and McMahon, 3th edition © 2003. The textbook is not required. Students may purchase this book from the publisher at http://books.mcgraw_hill.com for approximately \$85. plus shipping.

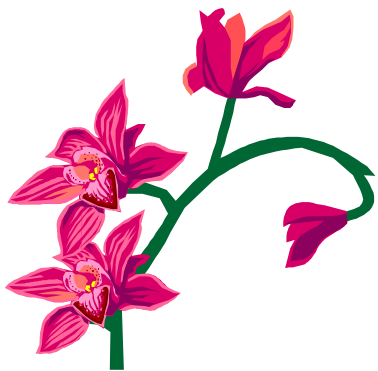
This class is based on a college course called NRM F107 *Leaves in Our Lives: Food*. One college credit is available. For credit, students attend additional class time from 2:15-3:30 PM each meeting day, write essays, and register with UAF. The website for course registration is <http://www.uaf.edu/reg/schedule/index.html>. The course for college credit is NRM F107P section FP2. For further information on college credit, contact CES Anchorage front desk or Roseann Leiner at Roseann.Leiner@uaa.alaska.edu or 907-746-9466.



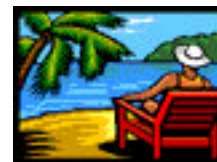


KAUAI – THE GARDEN ISLE

By Gina Docherty



Thinking of taking a vacation in sunny Hawaii? Consider visiting Kauai, The Garden Island. The atmosphere is laid back; it is more rural, there is less traffic, there are fewer tourists, cheaper accommodations, and best of all, a lot of gardens to inspect!



Of the many gardens available to the public on this island, I have visited and recommend checking out at least 3 of the major gardens: Allerton, Na`Āina Kai and McBryde Garden. Most tourist information centers have information on where they are located and how to get there.

McBryde Garden, a National Tropical Botanical Garden, offers Self Guided Tours among various tropical plants in a native environment. There is a Visitor Center where you purchase your tour tickets, hop on a bus & are driven to the start of the trail. (This is the place you also get tickets for the Allerton Estate Garden). They provide informational pamphlets that describe in detail the history and use of the plants in Hawaii, botanical information, and photos for identification. The areas featured are the Reading Palms, Spice of Life, Canoe Plants of Ancient Polynesia, and A Walk Among the Natives. This was a very relaxing, enjoyable garden to visit without a lot of commercialism. The bus arrives every so often, I've forgotten how often, but you can take your time exploring the various areas and ride back to your car at the Visitor's Center. Be sure to take your own water, and wear good hiking shoes. The terrain is easy to walk, but there is quite a bit to see.

Na`Āina Kai (which means "lands by the sea" in Hawaiian) Botanical Gardens is a very unique, beautiful place to visit. This is a non-profit organization with a vision: "*The founders of Na`Āina Kai developed their extraordinary artistic and horticultural vision based upon their strong love for the land and the people of the tropics.*" (from their web site www.naainakai.com.) They offer guided walking tours or riding tours several days of the week. I recommend the riding tours, since there are about 240 acres to get around! There are 12 different gardens, including a Children's Garden, a hardwood plantation which was fascinating, an International Desert Garden, Shower Tree Park & Ka'ula Lagoon with lots of koi and water lilies, a Poinciana Maze, a Wild Forest Garden, and much, much more. The gardens have at least 60 bronze sculptures situated throughout the gardens, and the tour guides will stop anywhere, anytime for a photo opportunity – and there are lots. There is a lot of money invested in this place! Our tour happened to be with Mr. Doty, who I believe is in his 60's and is one of the owners. He was very spry, informative and pleasant to listen to. His wife was the founder. It was a stunning garden with lots to look at and enjoy, and there was also the ever present gift shop.

And last, but certainly not least, was Allerton Garden. This place is also a National Tropical Botanical Garden. There is quite a history behind this area. The grounds were originally the mid-1800's summer cottage of Queen Emma, wife of King Kamehameha IV, and the former home of Robert & John Allerton. *In 1937 the Allertons purchased the property and continued the vision of a garden paradise by transforming the grounds into a masterpiece of landscape design. The Allerton Estate is managed by the adjoining National Tropical Botanical Garden, a non-profit organization that conducts guided tours of the estate.* (from: www.suite-paradise.com/kauai-activities/allerton-gardens.html) The gardens are divided into spectacular garden 'rooms', with many pieces of garden art, including imported statues, a reflecting pond, water features, and incredible unique, picturesque trees. There are definitely many photo opportunities, with rare tropical plants, natural fauna and colorful bougainvillea cliffs. The tour includes a walking tour of the fountains, sculptures, and meditation pools of the classic 1930s estate of Robert and John Gregg Allerton near the ocean. In 1964, Robert Allerton helped create the garden, and the estate has been a part of the national botanical garden since 1986. There are Moreton Bay Fig trees there, with massive prehistoric looking roots that were used in the filming of Jurassic Park - the area where the dinosaurs laid their eggs. They recommend good walking shoes, but I managed in my Birkenstock sandals just fine. There did seem to be a lot of little ants running around, but they didn't bite my toes. This was indeed my favorite garden to visit in Kauai; the cost was \$25 some years ago, but it was money well spent in my opinion. The scenery is so spectacular, you can't help but get good photos.

There is a lot to do in Kauai, but touring the gardens on this beautiful island may be by far your best adventure! Aloha!



Gardening in the Wet

(Part I, Flowers)

by Jo Anne Banta



In Cordova we spoke jokingly of growing water lilies. Most years, the rainfall was constant, the soil was sparse and acid, and often only rhubarb and strawberries grew successfully. The annual average precipitation is 87 inches of rainfall and 80 inches of snowfall.

When we moved to Anchorage, one of the first things I did was to take the Master Gardeners' course and learn to garden in 17" of annual precipitation. Nobody told me that the Oriental poppy I brought with me was going to become invasive in this climate. What produced two to five big flowers in a good year (and black, water-logged buds in a wet spring) suddenly exploded into 48 huge blossoms and began to take over. Nobody told me that rhubarb would grow so fast that it would become tough if not harvested

immediately and that horseradish would spread like wildfire.

Cordova was home for most of my lifetime. It is beautiful. Huge ferns are part of the natural habitat. I could step out my back door and pick a bowl of salmonberries for breakfast, or black currants for a batch of jelly. I had wild blueberries for muffins and pies. However, the climate here does much more to satisfy this gardener's creative urge. Here my transported ferns grow only on the north side of the house; nasturtiums and sweet peas can be started from seed, and the flower varieties are almost limitless.

To illustrate my ignorance, shortly after moving here I was doing a volunteer gardening project with Dana Klinkhart. While I was busily transplanting in mounds for drainage, I found Dana was carefully planting in depressions to conserve water. Live and learn.

Most of us who live in the wet coastal area spend years building up our soil. My rhododendrons, after seasons of babying, were gorgeous and thrived on worm-filled coffee grounds, but they definitely preferred southern exposure. The lilacs were another story; in spite of many feedings of lime and wood ashes, they produced only a few feeble blooms.

Sunshine. Oh, what a difference it makes! Experimentation taught me what flowers I could depend on "in the wet." Monkey flowers (*mimulus*) did well in hanging baskets. Fuchsias? Only *Swingtime* seemed to thrive in the wind and rain, though *Lena* and *Indian Maid* sometimes showed well. Petunias were slug bait. Delphiniums, marigolds, and dwarf dahlias grew well but were never as showy as in Anchorage. That goes for hanging begonias, as well. Lilies of the Valley thrived, as did drumstick primroses. I loved the basket of Livingston daisies I planted one year, but we only saw their faces for about one week of the entire summer.

Here in Anchorage, I am amazed at the thick stalks of my delphiniums, the exploding masses of lemon gem marigolds, and the varieties of fuchsias that flourish on the porch. Forget the monkey flowers; they take too much deadheading. I'm even thinking of dispensing with fuchsias and replacing them with hanging begonias that become a solid mass of color in this climate. Dinner plate dahlias have replaced the dwarf variety; and for color in the semi-shade, there are glorious splashes of impatiens. I'm still saving coffee grounds for the rhododendron I planted this fall, hoping it will thrive here. Is it possible to have the best of both worlds?

(Next month, "Slugs, Bugs and Other Problems.")



Central Peninsula MG News

By Rosemary Kimball

It can't be December already. Stop the world!

As usual the Thompson and Morgan catalog was the first to arrive. I used to look forward to its being first in January. This year it has arrived at the end of October. My resistance isn't as low as it would be in January but that doesn't stop me from spending some \$\$ there. It is so easy to do!

I became an international smuggler when I brought back some garden seeds from Switzerland. The town of Herisau has a branch of a neat farm and garden supply store, Landi, which is analogous to Alaska Mill and Feed but exotic because it is not in Alaska. So I make my pilgrimage and whip out the plastic. I got a neat pair of waterproof gloves, a BIG piece of netting to keep the birds from the service berries... and some seeds: some flowers, mostly vegetables. I also got a real neat radish that has purple skin. My husband, Phil, topped my seeds with his seeds from China. He asked the flower seed vendor where vegetable seeds were and spent less than \$5US to buy enough radish seeds (there was a problem with translation from the girls who were his guides and carrots were given in translation, not radish) to serve the whole state. There are white radishes with green shoulders and green-skinned radishes with red flesh. Some of the radishes may be turnips - who knows at this time? There is also a variety of Chinese cabbage whose leaves are greener and not as tightly packed as the Napa cabbage we find in the grocery store, as well as some other varieties that are familiar from the Park's Seeds Catalog Oriental vegetable section. And then there are the cherry tomatoes. Tune in next fall for a report on those.

This is a community garden in the Alps. The soil has probably been cultivated for 500 years as some of the houses in this village were 800 years old. One way it got so good was because there was a man



loading basket after basket of cow manure onto his back to take to dress his patch. Much of the garden soil in NE Switzerland is just plain limestone clay muck. Fortunately for the gardeners, cow manure is easy to find!

And coming back from Switzerland I stopped in Anchorage for the Noxious Weed Workshop. Contact Julie Riley for a copy of the *Alaska Statewide List of Invasive Garden Flowers*. Also appearing as a possible noxious weed is our lovely May Day Tree which is starting to pop up in places far from habitation and probably "planted" by a low-flying bird.

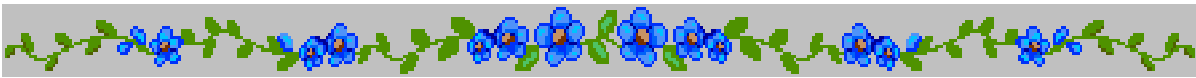
A Long, Hot Summer

*Article from the Native Plant Society Newsletter
Submitted by Frank Pratt*

It was a summer for the record books - day after day of warm, dry, sunny weather throughout the state. We humans adapted well to this unusual weather and some commented that if this was global warming, bring it on! But other creatures may not adapt quite as quickly and we're starting to notice a number of plant disasters and irregularities.

Verna Pratt shared these observations: "Because of this unusual weather I observed some plant disasters and irregularities. Some evergreen got baked and probably won't recover. Some *Saxifraga tricuspidata* (Bird Ridge) and *Loiseleuria procumbens* (Glen Alps) leaves turned completely brown."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Bird Chatter

Decorate A Christmas Tree For Backyard Birds

From *Horticulture News*, December 24, 2003
by Sarah Browning

- Diazinon products labeled for indoor use will not be lawful or be available for retail sale after December 31, 2004. Mushroom houses are excluded.
- Alaska's first Extension Service field office opened in Palmer in April of 1936 and was staffed with an agricultural agent and a home demonstration agent. These agents worked closely with the 200 Matanuska Valley colonists who started to arrive in 1935 and with approximately 100 families who had homesteaded in the Valley previous to the establishment of the colony.
- According to CES Forest Specialist, Bob Wheeler, needle retention of live Christmas trees shipped to Alaska is affected by the nitrogen the tree received back on the farm.
- A new brochure on the invasiveness of orange hawkweed is available by calling CES at 786-6300. It is also available on the USDA Forest Service website. Click on Forest **Insects, Diseases and Invasive Plants Leaflets** at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/>.
- In a first-of-its-kind move, California recently approved a temporary ban on hand weeding and hand thinning in most commercial crops. These physically demanding practices were deemed to place workers at "substantial risk of back injuries."
- Soak wine corks in LAMP oil (not explosive) and then use one for a fire starter!

Lingonberry Sauce

Submitted by Rosemary Kimball

Boil for 5 minutes:

2 cups water

2 cups sugar

Add and bring to a boil for 5 minutes:

4 cups of lingonberries

Good inclusions to the water/sugar mix:

Orange zest

finely diced candied ginger

a cinnamon stick

Use like you would Cranberry sauce

There's one good thing about snow, it makes your lawn look as nice as your neighbor's. ~Clyde Moore

Where does the white go when the snow melts?

~Author Unknown

A lot of people like snow. I find it to be an unnecessary freezing of water. ~Carl Reiner

Before taking your Christmas tree to the recycling center this year, consider creating a backyard habitat for birds. To attract birds to your backyard, you must provide their three basic needs- food, water, and cover or shelter. Your old Christmas tree will provide excellent shelter for birds, providing protection from wind and predators. It can also serve as a feeding station, where you provide a buffet of food that our native birds love.

Before taking the tree outside, remove all decorations and lights, including tinsel. To provide the most shelter possible for the birds, place the tree on the south or east side of the house, sheltered from winter's harsh north and west winds. Anchor the tree securely by setting the stump into the ground or a large bucket of damp sand, and securing the top of the tree with twine to nearby buildings or trees.

Decorate your tree with strings of popcorn, cranberries or raisins. Apples, oranges, leftover breads and pine cones covered with peanut butter then dipped in birdseed can also be added. For best results, push the edible ornaments well into the tree. Popcorn will be attractive to cardinals, finches and grosbeaks. Cranberries and raisins should attract cedar waxwings, finches and any robins wintering in the area.

Press suet into the branches or hang it in mesh bags such as those that contain onions and fruit in the supermarket. It is best to keep suet balls in the shade so they don't melt. Also, keep them high enough in the tree that dogs can't reach them. Pre-made suet mixtures, which include suet, bird seed and a variety of dried fruits, are available at most nurseries, garden centers, pet stores, or bird supply stores. To make your own suet seed balls, purchase suet from the meat department of your local grocery store. Mix birdseed and a small amount of peanut butter with suet while the suet is warm enough to be molded. One seed combination that is attractive to a wide range of desirable songbirds is: 50% sunflower seeds, 35% white proso millet and 15% finely cracked corn. Mold the mixture around a wire hook that can be used to attach the suet seed ball to the tree, or fill empty orange rind halves with the suet mixture and attach them to the tree.

Suet is especially attractive to insect-eaters such as woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches and is a good winter energy source. Suet seed balls will attract juncos, chickadees, finches and native sparrows.



If you decide to start feeding the birds, be consistent with your feeding. Feeding birds in the winter results in their reliance on you for part of their diet, lack of this food during a severe cold period or storm could result in the birds starving to death before they can find another food source.

Even in winter birds need water to drink and to keep their feathers clean. A birdbath with clean water will attract many birds if the water is not frozen. Commercial immersion heaters will keep the water in birdbaths from freezing. They are available from many nurseries or bird supply stores. Providing for the winter needs of birds can result in many hours of entertainment, spent watching these beautiful creatures.

Sarah Browning is an Extension Educator with the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension. She can be contacted by phone at 727-2775; by mail at 1206 W. 23rd Street, Fremont, NE 68025; or by e-mail at sbrowning2@unl.edu

"Long Hot Summer" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

"On a trip to Glen Alps in mid-August I diverted from the Blueberry Loop Trail and ascended Blueberry Hill (the mound in the middle). Often in early September, as *Arctostaphylos alpina* turns red, we see a few spring flowers making an attempt at blooming, but this was mid-August. Many patches of *Diapensia lapponicum* were in full bloom, with practically no leaves visible. *Dryas octopetala*, *Silene acaulis*, and *Oxytropis nigrescens* were also just beginning to bloom again. I believe the most astounding thing was *Salix arctica* that had already dropped this year's leaves, had new leaves opening up, and covered with new "spring" catkins. I can only wonder what will happen to these plants next spring, as those buds that opened in August should have been next spring's blooms. Perhaps this long warm fall will produce more buds for spring."

University of Alaska ecologist Sydonia "Donie" BretHarte, has spent the past 10 summers studying Arctic plants at a research site in Toolik Lake near the North Slope. This summer she found *Eriophorum* blooming twice. "It's a bad strategy for them because they'll lose their seeds to the frost," she said. "Flowers only make one set of buds each year so if they spend next year's buds now, they'll be out of luck next spring." She worries that if the warming trend continues, the flowers may go extinct.

What did you notice? Let us know, and we'll let you know.

Gardening Calendar

January 17

AMGA meeting: "Growing Your Own Tomatoes", with Mary Shier. 7 p.m., CES, Conf. Room 130, Carlton Trust Bldg., 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

January 26 & 27, (Wednesday and Thursday)

Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference, Lake Lucille Lodge, Wasilla. Registration: \$90; trade show space \$120/\$150. For details contact CES in Anchorage, 786-6300 or Palmer 745-4469.

February 21

AMGA meeting: "Garden Photography", with Annie Nevaldine. 7 p.m., CES, Conf. Room 130, Carlton Trust Bldg., 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

February 21-25

CES 75th Anniversary brownbag lunch programs, 12-1:30 p.m., CES conference room.

March 25

AMGA meeting: "Landscaping for Small Spaces and Tract Homes", with Erika Keinlen. 7 p.m., CES, Conf. Room 130, Carlton Trust Bldg., 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

April 7

Hazard Trees, presented by Dr. Bob Wheeler, CES Forestry Specialist, 6:30-8:30 p.m. CES conference room. Free, but call to register, 786-6300.

April 16

Sears Mall Garden Show, 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

A Big Thank You!!

The editor would like to thank everyone who has submitted articles and Bird Chatter for the newsletter this past year. Your contributions make my job easier, and make the newsletter enjoyable for all.

Best Wishes for a Happy Holiday
and a Great Gardening Year!
Gina

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: amga@gci.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



Inside this issue....

From the President's Corner
November Meeting Notes
New Course on Plant Biology
Kauai: The Garden Isle
Gardening in the Wet
Central Peninsula MG News
A Long Hot Summer
Bird Chatter
Decorate a Christmas Tree for Backyard Birds
Gardening Calendar
AMGA Renewal Form

Seasons Greetings

**Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Inc.
Anchorage Chapter
University of Alaska Cooperative Extension
P.O. Box 221403
Anchorage, Alaska 99522-1403**

Non Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Permit #107
Anchorage, Alaska

**Alaska Master Gardeners Membership
Renewal Form
Due January 31st**

_____ Renewal _____ New _____ Changes to Directory

_____ \$15.00 voting (completed MG Course in _____ (year))

_____ \$15.00 non-voting

Please provide the following information as you want it to appear in our Annual Directory: (PLEASE PRINT)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone # Day _____ Evening _____

Fax # _____ Dedicated fax line? Y N

Email Address _____

Your input is needed! Please help us plan next year's programs and summer field trips by listing any ideas you have for speakers, topics and field trip locations. Please include contact numbers for suggested resources if possible.

Return this form along with your dues to:

Alaska Master Gardeners Association
Anchorage Chapter
P.O. Box 221403
Anchorage, Alaska 99522-1403

IN ORDER TO HAVE YOUR NAME APPEAR IN THE ANNUAL DIRECTORY, PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 31ST.

