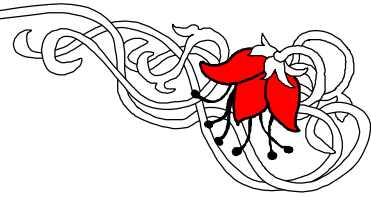


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 6, Issue 3

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

February 2004

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

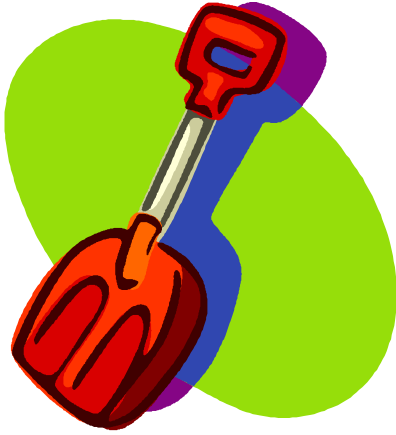
by Dana Klinkhart

It was a cold winter evening on January 19, 2004. While most Alaskans were longing for the warmth of summer and colorful images of gardens, Rita Jo Schulz came to the rescue. She served just what we needed at our association meeting. By providing beautiful slides and creative ideas for garden design, Rita brought us back from the doldrums of winter. A visit through the gardens of her program was a welcome experience. As most of you are already aware, Rita Jo owns Fritz Creek Gardens in Homer and has been generous in sharing her knowledge and ideas with our association.

Following the presentation, our January election of board members took place. Four of our member's terms ended. Those terms were served by Mary Shier, Michelle Campbell, Judy Christianson and Dana Klinkhart. Dana accepted a nomination for another term while Mary, Judy and Michelle moved on to bigger and brighter adventures. After eight years on the board and after FIVE years as our president, Mary leaves our association in a better place. She brought leadership to our Master Gardeners Association with her organization and style. Her shoes will be hard to fill. Somehow, a thank you seems inadequate but I hope she knows that we are grateful for her service. Thank you is sent to Judy and Michelle for their energy and service. The slate of nominees for 2004 was: Blythe Campbell, Anita Williams, Amelia Walsh, Eva Hancock, Camille Williams, Cathy Bromely and myself, Dana Klinkhart. The association elected Eva, Camille, Cathy and me to our board for two years. Special appreciation is sent to all who accepted a nomination. This willingness of members to participate was refreshing with so many of our association members active in other areas of life. While the association enjoyed visiting and refreshments, your board went right to work to elect officers. The result of that election is: PRESIDENT Dana Klinkhart, VICE PRESIDENT Linda Slack, SECRETARY Eva Hancock, TREASURER Camille Williams, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR Linda Klinkhart, and remaining MEMBERS AT LARGE Frank Pratt, and Marguerite Barnard.

Know that I'm excited and enthused about taking a leadership role for the association. I hope you'll send me your questions, ideas and suggestions as we move ahead. Your concerns are important. Please call me at 346-1631 or e-mail me at klinkhart@gci.net. This will be a short message...I will HAVE good use of both shoulders by next month as one wing went in for repair this week.

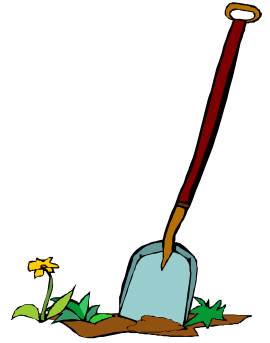
Until then **share those seeds of thought on gardening with others**, it'll feel good!



SHOVEL WITH AN ATTITUDE

By Charlene R. Lewis

Staring out the window with anticipation of the gardening season, I noticed my favorite old gardening shovel leaning against the shed waiting for me. Meanwhile, visions of poppies and columbines were lurking through my mind for this year's garden. This meant that little plot in the corner would have to be excavated and incorporated with nutrients— this meant a new shovel that digs deeper, wider and faster.



I searched for the perfect shovel. Finally, I purchased a shovel with a red handle, and a longer and wider scoop. I brought it home and noticed this shovel lacked the characteristics of my favorite old shovel. The red handled shovel was sleazy and lacked sharpness. This red handled shovel was trying to tell me something! Whatever it was I was not listening.

Once May was cleared for digging, this red handled shovel, with an attitude, was reluctant about digging in the clay soil. I was exuberant about gardening and continued digging. After several scoops of soil I paused, and dropped the attitudinal shovel to the ground. I grabbed the hoe and started to dig, but this hoe did not dig deep or wide enough. I dropped it to the ground and I grabbed the smaller shovel. It seemed to work but at its own slow pace. All this and still I chose to ignore my favorite old gardening shovel. Frustration was sinking in. I picked up the red handled, attitudinal shovel and start digging once again. By now thirst was becoming a problem. I went to the kitchen with the red handled, attitudinal shovel in my hand.

It is unclear what transpired afterwards. When I woke up, there were these folks in these white garments and uniforms standing around. I rubbed my forehead and there was this strange combination of blood and dirt. My head felt funny. I am trying to figure out where am I and why am I here in this pain with blood and dirt all over my face. Confusion was plentiful when I was told I am being hospitalized, I nodded out. Next day I woke up and went to the mirror! There were these strange stitches on my forehead! I asked my daughter what happened. She mentioned something about blood on the shovel with the red handle. I thought that was odd. My favorite old garden shovel does not have a red handle.

Several days later, I am back to that plot with visions of poppies and columbines. I grabbed my favorite old gardening shovel and commenced to digging. I paused and rubbed the stitches on my forehead, observing the red handled, attitudinal shovel leaning against the shed. Pondering my mind trying to figure out what happened to me that day, I looked closely at the red handled, attitudinal shovel and suddenly felt a chill. I knew this shovel with an attitude needed some evaluation before I use it again. I immediately tossed the red handled, attitudinal shovel in the shed, where it remained for the summer— still waiting for an evaluation!





Perennial Plant of the Year, 2004

By Julie Riley



A cultivar of Japanese painted fern, *Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum' has been named Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association (PPA). Alaskan gardeners are apparently on the leading edge of new trends. Last season many Master Gardeners planted non-native ferns thanks to AMGA member Susan Miller who brought in specialty ferns for sale to gardeners. The Anchorage Daily News even featured ferns in a summer article.

It's easy to understand how the Japanese painted fern received its name. Each frond looks as if it has been meticulously painted in shades of green, gray and burgundy. 'Pictum' has wine-red stems that bleed over into the silvery-green fronds. The 12-18 inch fronds supposedly grow more beautiful as the season progresses. The old leaves stay a dark silver color while newly unfurling fronds reveal a striking metallic gray. And a bonus for us— colors are more intense in cooler climates.

Japanese painted fern is native to China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. It has established itself in North American gardens as one of the most versatile ferns for the shade garden. Now it needs to prove itself in Alaska. The fern is considered hardy in zone 3, *except in the northern most areas*. Now how's that for wiggle-room on a hardiness

designation! Perennial Plants of the Year are not brand new to the nursery industry. They have been voted on by members of the Perennial Plant Association from around the country as outstanding plants that are easy to grow. Unfortunately, last year's selection Shasta daisy 'Becky' was also in the same Southcentral Alaska hardiness category of not-sure-but-worth-a-try. Spring will tell if 'Becky' was up to the Alaska challenge and maybe even a few Japanese painted fern 'Pictum' are currently nestled under the snow.

[Photo used with permission from Steven Still, Executive Director, Perennial Plant Association; www.perennialplant.org]

Note from Annie Nevaldine

Julie Riley is the photographer of an article written by Les Brake and recently published in Horticulture magazine (January, 2004, issue). The article is about Jerry Conrad's rustic furniture making, and Julie broke from tradition and photographed subjects that are NOT flowers, plants, or gardens. The photos are beautiful and very professionally done. Julie deserves high marks for her work on this commission by Horticulture Magazine.



2004 All American Selections- Vegetables & Bedding Plants

Horticulture News for January 19, 2004

by Sarah Browning, Horticulture Extension Educator

<http://www.saunders.unl.edu/newsitems/hort>

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension and the National Garden Bureau at <http://www.ngb.org/>.

The final All American vegetable and bedding plant selections for 2004 include 'Amy' melon, 'Sunshine' winter squash, and 'Sweet Beauty' watermelon. Petunia 'Limbo Violet' is one of this year's bedding plant award winners. When purchasing an AAS winner, you are purchasing a plant that has been rated superior by almost 200 independent trial gardens across the United States. AAS Award winners are tested for several years before selection, resulting in 'tried and true' plants with a history of excellent performance under a multitude of growing conditions.

Petunia F1 'Limbo Violet' differs from all other single grandiflora petunias as a unique combination of large flowers on a compact plant. The habit is restricted. 'Limbo Violet' plants become mounds which, at times, are completely covered with blossoms. The ultimate plant size is only 6 to 7 inches tall, spreading 10 to 12 inches. 'Limbo Violet' is designed for small space gardens such as urban residences or formal gardens requiring neat, tidy plants. The dark violet blooms are perfect for gardeners who know "larger is better." At 3 inches or larger, 'Limbo Violet' blooms are huge but recover quickly from severe weather. Plants are virtually maintenance-free, no pinching needed.

Melon F1 'Amy' Vegetable Award Winner- There is a trend for gardeners to grow the most flavorful, exotic vegetables from around the world. 'Amy' is one of these new improved vegetables and an AAS Winner. 'Amy' exhibited improved qualities such as earliness and higher yield when grown next to similar "canary" type melons. 'Amy' melons are eye-catching. They are bright golden yellow with smooth skin; without netting or sutures. The radiant color indicates when the melon is ready for harvest. Cutting open the mature melon will release the distinctive melon aroma. There is a small seed cavity surrounded by moist, white flesh noted for its sweet flavor and firm texture. 'Amy' plants will produce melons in 70 to 80 days from transplanting. The vigorous spreading vines need 6 feet of garden space or they can be trained up a trellis.

Squash, Winter F1 'Sunshine' Vegetable Award Winner- Consumer media have recently given coverage to winter squash because of its flavor, high vitamin content and ability to be stored. 'Sunshine' is a new squash that outshined other varieties in side-by-side trials across North America. The vibrant orange-red skin is distinctive, similar to sunshine, hence the name. The 3- to 4-pound fruit is a flattened globe shape. The bright orange flesh is sweet, nutty, creamy smooth and completely stringless when baked, steamed or microwaved. 'Sunshine' plants are adaptable to any growing location as long as the growing season is 80 to 95 days. Expect mature squash in about 95 to 100 days from sowing seed or 80 days from transplants. Harvest ripe fruit in the fall prior to or protect from frost. The short vines need 6 to 8 feet in the full-sun garden.

Watermelon F1 'Sweet Beauty' Vegetable Award Winner- Nothing says summer like watermelon and everybody wants a sweet slice. 'Sweet Beauty' offers consistently sweet flavor and crisp texture. It was praised by AAS Judges for its superior eating qualities. 'Sweet Beauty' melons are 5 to 7 pounds, an oblong shape with dark green skin and medium green stripes. Described as an "ice box" type, it means 'Sweet Beauty' is a single-serving size. Improved for earliness, 'Sweet Beauty' melons can be harvested in about 77 to 80 days from sowing seed directly into the garden. The vigorous plant spreads vines about 8 to 10 feet.

Why not try one of these great plants this year?

Sarah Browning is a Horticulture Extension Educator with the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Dodge and Saunders Counties. 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



South Peninsula Master Gardener News

By Rosemary Kimball

Why does our experiencing a true, normal northern winter make us fuss so just because it really is cold? No whining. We live in Alaska and finally after several years, have had a real northern winter. The nice thing is that we've got a goodly snow cover to go with the cold and the soil is staying warm"at 28°F so far, and this is just wonderful if you are a perennial or a strawberry plant!

I hated the thought of leaving my fiber optic plant to die during the winter so I dug it up and potted it and it has made a rather nice house plant. Now if I don't forget to water it (again) it will be ready to go next June.

We had our first in our series of community presentations with landscape architect Nancy Casey speaking. People started coming and then more came and then even more! We had 57 interested bodies which is double or triple what we usually have so she played to SRO! She had a very nice handout to accompany her talk. The local MG's bring homemade cookies for refreshments to go with the coffee and tea at these affairs and afterwards, if there are leftovers, we do a cookie swap so we don't have to take home what we brought. Nice.

Seeds are arriving thick and fast. I got my seed order from the North American Rock Garden Society and have the labels for them made so I'm feeling obnoxiously virtuous. (Used my fine-tipped Deco paint pen, a Christmas gift from my neighbor and it is wonderful) Of course, this doesn't mean that they are in 4-inch pots and outside to start...That is a whole different ball game. I hit the Stokes catalog running and ordered everything that looked interesting. I didn't even gulp at the total. I figure after last summer's trouble, I owe myself. What gardeners will give for excuses! They are here too and I have them alphabetized and filed. Some of the packets I swear I know nothing about; but, I know ordered them. I hope to find out why. Burpee has become a rather disappointing catalog with its emphasis on started plants. I find, for the price I can do it myself...unless they were to have something truly exotic. I wish the Parks"catalog would get here.

It's so nice having a random inch or so of snow every so often. It erases the old tracks and I can start over seeing what is around as I go out to get the paper in the morning. There is only one rabbit crossing way out by the newspaper box (no threat to the pines) and there are three widely-separated squirrel crossings so the critter count is way down. It's hard to find vole tracks. I'm glad I'm not an owl, goshawk or lynx - this is a lean year.

Ramrod Janice and I are going to the Greenhouse Conference at the end of January especially to hear the speaker from Alberta talk about growing fruit trees and specifically sour cherries. I have the best recipe for a sour cherry cake somewhere... I hope I will have to look for it in a couple years.



Bird Chatter

- Wonder what Mary Shier will be doing with all her free time now that she is not on the AMGA board. She happened to mention at the meeting that her tomatoes are already a couple inches high. Bird chatter heard she will again be designing the gardens at Pioneer Home with Judy Christianson and planting the seeds, plus doing office work at the AMGA extension office, plus being a mentor for a new master gardener. Gee, wonder where all that free time went?
- Our new president is recovering from shoulder surgery; and from her husband taking out the stitches! He was experienced though - he once took out stitches in their cat.
- WOW!!! Eight people were nominated for the AMGA board. Four were elected. Congratulations to all. This is the best election we have ever had. Thanks to all.
- Blythe Campbell has kept her pen hot writing articles for well known magazines: An article on the teacups at the Ann Stevens Room at Loussac Library was published in the December issue of Alaska Magazine. She also has an article coming out in the May/June issue of Fine Gardening on perennial seed beds - it will be in the Regional Roundup section.
- Here's a twist on the "take two aspirins" from the January 2004 Avant Gardener (PO Box 489 New York NY 10028 \$24/year): Aspirin contains salicylic acid which plants produce but slowly and which triggers the plants' natural defenses against bacteria, fungi, viruses and perhaps some non-microbial pests like aphids and root-knot nematodes. The aspirin is applied as a spray of 3 adult aspirins to 4 gallons of water, or 1:10,000. The beneficial effects are supposed to last for several months which is our growing season. *Try it and then send in an evaluation for the October news letter - this is your call for what works and what doesn't.....*
- A question that must be asked: Johnny's Selected Seeds has come out with an orange cauliflower. Stokes has maroon, green and white cauliflowers. Picture yourself serving crudités this summer. What color should your dip be?

European Garden Tour Offered

Keukenhof Flower Show, Holland & Nice, France
Tour including the MONACO
FLOWER SHOW April 25 - May 5th, 2004

Amsterdam, Holland - a city that will fill you with wonder..with its rich cultural and historical heritage, Amsterdam effortlessly balances its past with its present and Nice, France - from spring bulbs to the FRENCH RIVIERA. This is indeed a unique tour. We have given you free evenings to enjoy the local sights and hospitality as well on this tour.

You will enjoy:

Sightseeing tour of Amsterdam
Hortus Botanicus Botanical Gardens
The Rijksmuseum
Keukenhof - Once is not enough!
Dinner Cruise in Amsterdam
First Class Rail Amsterdam to Nice
Sightseeing tour of Nice
Visit to the perched village of Eze
Fragonard perfumery
Panoramic tour of Monte Carlo
Princess Grace Rose Garden
Monaco Flower Show
Renoir Museum
Gourdon Castle
Villa Les Cedres, a very exclusive private botanical garden!
Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild
Lunch at Villa Ephrussi
Breakfast daily
Free days in both Amsterdam and Nice
Welcome dinner in Amsterdam
Farewell dinner in Nice
Motorcoach transportation on tour days
Local guides on tour days
Tips/gratuities to guides and drivers only
4 nights in 4 star Die Port Van Cleve in Amsterdam
6 nights in First Class Grand Hotel Aston in Nice

Not included, airfare, and meals unless noted.

Tour is priced in Euros

Price 2717 Euros (\$3,364.73 USD)

Single Supplement 589 Euros (\$729.42 US)



Gardening Calendar

Please call Alison at Farlie Worldwide Travel 1-800-459-6634 to book this tour. 450.00 CDN required at time of booking with balance to be paid by February 25th, 2004. Very few Single Supplements on this tour!

Complete information can be found at <http://www.icangarden.com/icantravel/>



Volunteer Opportunities

Fur Rhondy Garden Clinic, Feb 25-29 - Northway Mall:
Times available are:

Wednesday, Feb 25, 2p-6p and 6p-9p
Thursday, Feb 26, 10a-2p and 2p-6p and 6p-9p
Friday, Feb 27, 6p-9p
Saturday, Feb 28, 10a-2p and 2p-6p
Sunday, Feb 29, noon-3

The Municipality of Anchorage Therapeutic Recreation program still needs a master gardener leader for their spring program. Contact Sue Lincoln for more details!

I once had a rose named after me and I was very flattered. But I was not pleased to read the description in the catalogue: "No good in a bed, but fine up against a wall".

Eleanor Roosevelt

February 16th

AMGA meeting: Marianne Kerr, a 4-H Agent: "How to share the things you love with others (without dying of fright)"; designed to spear-head creative ideas for gardeners and promises to bring to light innovative ways to develop programs as a volunteer. Bring seeds for the seed exchange, slides or photos of your garden to share, and something yummy for the potluck. 7:00 pm. @ CES Conference Room, Carlton Trust Bldg., 2211 Northern Lights Blvd. Contact Dana Klinkhart for info: 346-1631.

February 19

*South Peninsula Master Gardeners presentation by Kearlee Wright on water gardening. Call Rosemary Kimball for info: 907-262-6187

*Anchorage Garden Club: "Designing Cards with Dried Materials" presented by Marge Olson; 7:30 pm @ Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle

February 25 - 29

Fur Rhondy Garden Clinic @ the Northway Mall. Contact Sue Lincoln to volunteer: 762-6317

March 4

Anchorage Garden Club: "Apple Trees" presented by River Bean, 7:30 pm @ Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle

March 15

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

April 1

Anchorage Garden Club: "New Plants for 2004" presented by Margaret Donatello. 7:30 pm Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle

April 17

Sears Mall Spring Garden Show - Most garden clubs participate in setting up booths.

April 24

Baxter Community School Home and Garden Saturday - contact Sharron Harris if you'd like to teach: 907-742-1781, harris_sharron@asdk12.org



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
(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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