

Anchorage Chapter



Volume 7, Issue 3

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER February 2005

From the President's Corner
By Dana Klinkhart

In recognition of Cooperative Extension's 75th anniversary in Alaska this year, our Master Gardener newsletter is featuring some history and personal stories of the Cooperative Extension. Let me share my story:

As a young mom of a one year old, I joined Nika Pilila Extension Homemakers in 1965. Today our homemaker clubs are referred to as FCE or Family and Community Education organizations and they continue to be in partnership with the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) here in Anchorage. As in the past, instruction in food safety, canning, sewing, financing and child care are just a few of the programs offered. We met twice each month. Our first meeting would usually be held in one of our homes and the other was often held at CES or another designated place to learn a new skill or experience a cultural event. The emphasis was on basic family living skills. We learned and we also shared a fellowship that developed into long-lasting friendships. My respect for the skills developed and the friends that I found will be always treasured. Leadership skills and homemaking ideas were far reaching. Those skills developed into talents ... working together with children and adults, sewing sportswear, canning salmon and baking yeast bread were just of the few that I could list. The same skills learned in homemaker clubs were then shared with others in the community. We always started our business meeting with a collection taken from the time of Mary Queen of Scots and in that reading, I have always valued the message of service and good will, and particularly the last sentence which closed with: 'And, Oh Lord God, let us not forget to be kind.' It just kind of put the bow on the package. After an active membership of many years, I went to work outside the home. I reluctantly faded into the background. I again connected with CES after I retired and was eager to garden and learn new skills. Enter 'The Master Gardener Program'. When the horticultural training was offered in the fall of 1999, I applied. And by January 2000, I completed the forty hour course, attended my first AMGA meeting and BINGO, I was elected to the board of directors where I have served ever since. It is easy to pay testimony to the energy I discovered through the Alaska Master Gardeners Association. The AMGA and the educational branch of the Cooperative Extension Service once more opened the doors of opportunity and community service for me. This continuing education enriches us all in our community. Let me be one of many to sing the praises at the 75th Birthday Celebration of Cooperative Extension Service. Happy Birthday CES and thank you for the long, productive service in Alaska.



February AMGA Meeting



Garden Photography - Annie Nevaldine will discuss principles for making pleasing images of plants and flowers; a slide show will illustrate her talk. Annie is the photographer and publisher of the 2005 and 2006 Alaska Garden Flowers Calendars. Monday, February 21, 7:00 p.m. - Cooperative Extension Office, Conference Room 130, Carton Trust Bldg., 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd., Anchorage, AK. Door prizes & refreshments afterwards. See you there!



GARDENING IN THE WET

Part 3 – Vegetables, Berries, and Trees

By Jo Anne Banta



I love gardening in Anchorage. I love poking a seed in the ground and watching it mature. I love my container tomatoes on the deck, my own lettuce and herbs. In Cordova, vegetable gardening was a

challenge. Only cool climate vegetables survived, and root maggots loved the weather. Leaf lettuce became muddy and slug-riddled, peas seldom matured fully, and even zucchini often rotted on the vine. My vegetable plot got smaller and soon evolved into only green onions (from sets), edible pod peas, chives and parsley. I did, however, have rhubarb bread, cakes and pies all winter long.

Berries are wonderful "in the wet." Our four acres were filled with wild blueberries, salmonberries and black currants. I found that by semi-cultivating the blueberries, clearing the brush and salmonberries from around them and feeding them a little compost, I could improve my crop. I never could get the tame varieties to "take" and cross-pollinate, however. I had tame raspberries and a wonderful red currant bush that I started from a friend's rooted limb. I don't know what variety the raspberries were (They, too, came from a friend's patch.), but I let them go wild. All I ever did was to keep the salmonberries cleared away so they could spread, and they did beautifully – though some years much of the crop rained off.

Our home site was located on an old gravel river bottom so drainage was good. My best strawberry patch came about by accident. Too miserly to throw away my runners, I kept throwing them on the bare gravel that our new septic system had created.

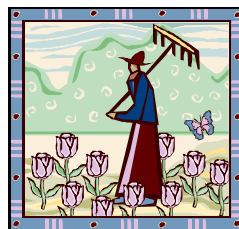
While the actual garden produced bigger berries, every second day I got a heaping colander-full from my wild spot. They were the sweetest berries ever, and I only wish I knew what variety they were.

Ah, leafy trees, lovely deciduous trees. One must live in a rain forest to truly appreciate foliage. I actually planted cottonwoods for leaves. I babied a couple Palmer birch trees only to see them winterkill after three years. I transplanted wild mountain ash from the Copper River area, but even they didn't do as well as the native shrubs. We finally settled for pruning and shaping the natural elderberry in our yard. Not only did it become beautiful, the robins loved the red berries. Our home site had been

logged in the early 1900's so we incorporated the huge mossy stumps into our landscaping, training wild dogwood to climb up the moss and planting creeping jenny on stump tops.

The rain forest presents many problems, not only for the gardener. Spruce roots abound – as do squirrels that build nests in the smoke house and chew on the clothesline to get the salt. One's entryway is always a mat of needles; cones fall and sprout everywhere. Plants and shrubs don't thrive beneath the spruce or hemlock, and one is forever clearing out young scraggly trees. On the brighter side, evergreen boughs make wonderful mulch, especially for peonies. I even used them on the tulip beds to protect the early shoots which sometimes surfaced in late February or March.

Here in Anchorage, I love being able to add deciduous trees to the landscape. I love the varied colorful choices. I love the yellows and reds of fall. From the native birch to the Canadian red cherry and Amur maple, our yard will soon become a leafy haven – more leaves to rake, and I love that, too.



Report from the Sisters of the Holy Cross for 1899

Part II

The following extracts were made by Lyn Sinnema from the library:

"Not a drop of rain fell since the snow disappeared until the 7th of July. Then we had long spells of cold rainy weather with very few bright warm days between. Nevertheless, our crops are very satisfactory. Besides the amount of vegetables our large community consumed during the summer, and the many presents given to our friends, we have 250 bushels of potatoes, 500 heads of cabbage, 80 bushels of turnips, and a few bushels of carrots. We planted 57 varieties of flowers, but only 40 had time to bloom before the frost came. The rhubarb did very well, but the strawberries have been entirely neglected, as no one here is acquainted with the proper way of treating them.

Our cabbage (the Early Jersey Wakefield) and cauliflowers (the Early Erfurt and Early Paris) were just splendid this year. We had over 1,400 plants and nearly all produced good solid heads. I am sorry to say that we had not a single package of seed from your Department this spring. But we are thankful for those you sent this summer. They shall have a fair trial next year."

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ARTICHOKE GROWING 101

By Mary Shier



Are you an artichoke fanatic? If so, do you realize they can be easily grown up here? That's right, they *can* be grown here. They require a bit of planning and care, but it can be done. I have grown artichokes for the past six years, and usually have about seven or eight in my garden. Each plant produces at least 4 nice 'chokes.

The type of Artichoke that can be grown in one season is the Globe variety, often called "Green Globe", [*Cynara scolymus*, *asteraceae* family] which is available in many gardening catalogs, as well as off the shelf in many of the local garden shops. Since they have to be treated as an annual here in Alaska, start the seeds the first week or so in February in the house on a warming pad for germinating, and then grow the seedlings under lights. (You can start them in March as well, but they won't be as big come 'planting out' time). When they have developed the second set of leaves, put them into 2"

pots. Transplant them again later into 4" pots when they are a little more developed. I keep them under lights until I start my greenhouse about mid March when they can go out into it. They usually are about 6-8 inches tall by then. There is at least one more transplanting up to an 8" or so pot, which will carry it through until it can be planted outside.

Somewhere about mid May thru the end of May, depending upon the year, they should be hardened off, acclimating them to outside conditions. (Set them in a shaded area protected from the wind). This takes about a week. After that process, transplant them directly into the garden spot that will be their home throughout the summer. I put them in a sunny spot, amending the soil with plenty of compost. They need at least a 3ft x 3ft area of space per plant. The stalks are sturdy & do not need staking.

Artichokes give a nice touch of structure to the garden as well as texture. They grow to about 5-6 ft tall and 3-4 foot in diameter. The deeply lobed leaves are grey-green on top and wooly-white underneath, have pointed segments and can grow up to 32 inches in length. Good companion plants include 4 foot sunflowers or baby's breath. You can grow other vegetables or herbs around them as well, such as Florence fennel or red lettuces. Both give nice contrasts in texture and color.

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Artichoke Heart Seviche

From "*Mediterranean Vegetables*" by Clifford Wright

8 small to medium artichokes (about 3 pounds)
1 lemon, cut in half
1 cup extra virgin olive oil, and more for drizzling
1 bay leaf
3 large cloves garlic, peeled
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon good-quality sherry vinegar, and more for drizzling
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Trim the artichokes and remove the hearts, rubbing each one all over with the cut lemon half. Place the artichokes in a bowl of water acidulated with the juice from the other half of the lemon so the prepared artichokes don't discolor while you continue working.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium to medium-high heat until nearly smoking, preheating the skillet for about 10 minutes. Cook the artichoke hearts with the bay leaf in the hot oil until the artichoke hearts are golden brown all over and a skewer will glide into the center of the artichoke heart without too much resistance, 5 to 6 minutes. Remove the artichokes from the oil with a slotted ladle and transfer them to a shallow serving platter or bowl. Reserve the oil.

Meanwhile, pound the garlic with the salt in a mortar. Stir 3 tablespoons of the oil you cooked the artichokes in into the garlic, 1/2 teaspoon at a time. Then stir in the vinegar, 1/2 teaspoon at a time, until you have a creamy-looking sauce. Spoon small amounts of this mixture over the artichokes. Drizzle the artichokes with olive oil and a splash of vinegar and set aside for 1 hour before serving. Season with salt and pepper if necessary.

Makes 4 servings



Cyclamen: Doing Double Duty

By Annie Nevaldine

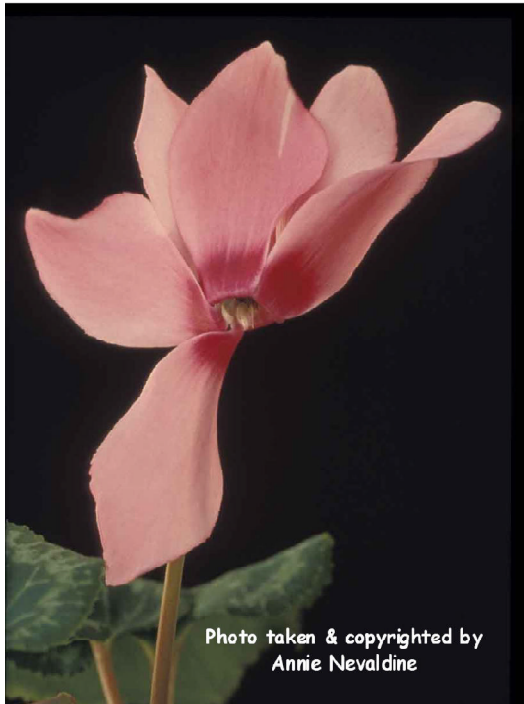


Photo taken & copyrighted by
Annie Nevaldine

What plant thrives on windowsills in cool Alaska homes, blooming its heart out all winter long without supplemental artificial light? What same plant, when used as an annual in the garden, withstands several frosts before dying back? And what same plant readily produces seeds that are easily harvestable and that germinate reliably? Sounds too good to be true? It is true. I'm talking cyclamens.

I have a very soft spot in my heart for *Cyclamen persicum*, known commonly as florist's cyclamen. I have raised them for years, enjoying how they grace both my home and my office throughout the year. When in bloom, these downward-facing (resupinate) shooting star relatives regale me with recurved, reflexed petals stretching and reaching heavenward above a needle-nosed pistil. See how they resemble our native shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*)? Rising several inches above the foliage, the nodding singular flowers seem to hover or float above the mound of leaves. Somewhere I once read cyclamen poetically described as butterflies stopped in motion above water lilies.

Cyclamen petals appear in nearly every color except blue: white, pink, rose, red, purple, violet, lavender, magenta, fuchsia, coral, apricot, and salmon. Some are bicolored. Some have darker eyes. Others have fringed, frilly, or ruffled petals. And, to top it all off, the flowers have a subtle sweet scent that is neither cloying nor overpowering.

Even when not in bloom, the mottled or marbled cordate (heart-shaped) leaves with serrate margins offer plenty of interest. The leaves range from bright to dark green, are often splotched with silver blotches, and have pinnate (feathered) venation. The variegation provides such decorative foliage that the plant is worthy of display even when not in flower. It is reported that no two leaves on a cyclamen plant are ever exactly the same, just as my ten fingerprints are all different from each other. The undersides of the leaves may be maroon, crimson, or purplish, adding even more interest to the foliage.

Native to the Mediterranean, cyclamen are members of the *Primulaceae* (primrose) family. Plants grow from corm-like tubers that are capable of storing considerable water and nutrients. Being dicots, their flower parts occur in multiples of five: five sepals, five petals, and five stamens.



Photo provided by &
Copyright by Annie
Nevaldine

From bud, the petals unfurl from their convolute (longitudinally rolled) arrangement, making for a fascinating dance as the cyclamen flower opens. The corolla (the cluster of petals) is backed by a persistent calyx (the sepals, collectively) which remains on the developing seed capsule after the corolla falls off. When the seeds are fully ripened, the capsule splits open into small triangular teeth, which then recurve to release the dark brown seeds.

Because seed production competes with flowering, it's wise to deadhead spent cyclamen blooms. By oversight a few years ago, I overlooked a passé flower stalk, which soon produced seeds. I planted them and—voila!—baby cyclamen. Since then I purposely let just a few seed pods ripen on each plant.

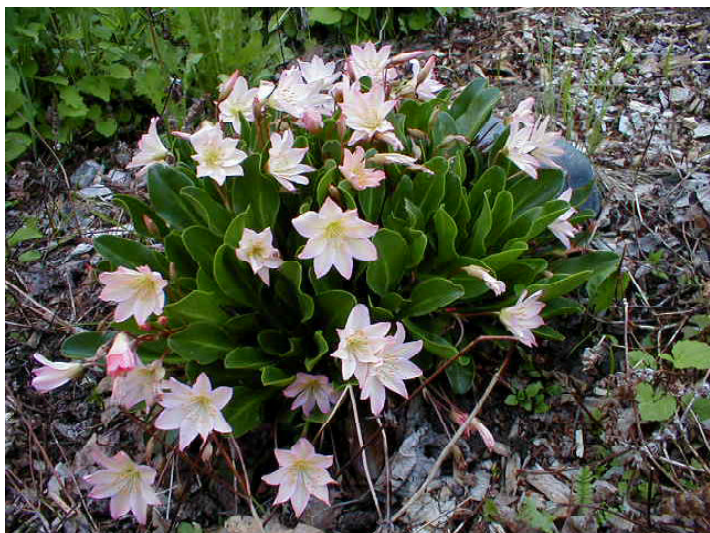
The stalks supporting the ripening pods twist downward, placing the seeds near the soil surface, just where they need to be. Two or three seed capsules provide 20-30 seeds, enough for more than a few houseplants with several extras to be used as annuals in the outdoor summer garden. Seeds should be sown when they are pretty fresh. I have had cyclamen bloom from seed within as few as nine months, although it can take up to 18 months to flower.

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Lewis and Clark: *Lewisia* and *Clarkia*

by Rosemary Kimball



Lewisia Tweedii
photo by Gina Docherty

For many years I've grown perennial *Lewisias* (and killed most of them) and *Clarkia*, which mercifully is an annual and saves me trouble of inadvertently doing it in.

Thomas Jefferson doubled the size of the United States in 1803 with the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, the land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Jefferson, being rather nosy, wondered just what the area was like and if there were a route to the Pacific Ocean that was feasible. He gave his private secretary, Meriwether Lewis the task of finding out. Lewis then selected as his co-leader, his friend William Clark. They, and the others in their Corps of Discovery, set off on their journey in August of 1803: southwest, northwest and finally just west. They reached the Pacific ocean in December of 1805.

While on the way Lewis, a botanist of sorts, gathered plants, seeds, flowers of many of the new plants that he

saw, describing them in his journals and pressing them, or packing them up for shipment back to Jefferson.

When Lewis returned with his copious journals, Frederick Pursh, a German born and trained botanist, was hired to help draw the plants and give them proper descriptions for the publication of the journals. It was he that did the naming of my two "pets": *Lewisia* and *Clarkia*.

Perennial *Lewisia rediviva*, the bitterroot, is the state flower of Montana whose west boundary is formed by the Bitterroot Mountains. The *rediviva* part of the name means being brought back to life as it leafs out in the very early spring and when the flowers appear, the leaves die back and then the plant goes dormant during the hot part of the summer, only to reappear the next spring. The roots are edible but without a great deal of preparation are— surprise!— bitter. *Lewisia* is a member of the *Portulacaceae* or purslane family.

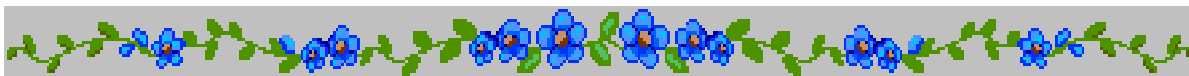
Annual *Clarkia pulchella* was called "Ragged Robin". The *pulchella* part of the name simply means pretty and pretty is as pretty does. It, and its cousin *godetia*, are very easy to grow and are very forgiving garden plants here. The nice thing is the stems can be picked just before they get zapped by frost and packed in a pitcher of water in the refrigerator to bring out as wanted for long-lasting flower arrangements. *Clarkia* is a member of the *Onagraceae* or evening primrose family. A distant cousin is the fireweed.

Other plants, or their first cousins, common in Alaska, found in the Journey of Discovery: service berry, kinnikinnick, mimulus, and wood lily. Other cultivated relatives do quite well too, *Lewisias* in particular.

Many of the dried specimens are at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. (www.acnatsci.org/lewisclark/herbarium) which is a neat web site to visit— or you can Google in Lewis and Clark Herbarium and come up with about 11,600 references!



Lewisia nevadensis
photo by Gina Docherty



Bird Chatter

- According to MG Carol Ross, Anchorage had 45 days last summer above 70°F. Julie Riley claims the first summer she moved to Anchorage the average number of days above 70°F was seven. Is anyone ready to make a bumper sticker that says Alaskans for Global Warming?
- One of the favorite flowers of the new Palmer/Wasilla MG class was dahlia. When told dahlia had never made the Anchorage MG's favorite flowers list, they said it was thanks to Evelyn Bush's seed dahlias sold at such a reasonable price by Bushes Bunches.
- MG Margaret Love was surprised that primroses didn't make the Anchorage "Top Ten Favorite Garden Flower" list.
- The Anchorage CES office has only had three horticulture agents: Reg Yapple in 1976, (who now owns Denali Seeds), Wayne Vandre from 1977-1984 and Julie Riley who came in '84 and is still kicking. (Wayne Vandre's job title became Horticulture Specialist in '84. He retired in 1998.)
- Information on the International MG Conference in Saskatoon, July 24-27, 2005 is available on the web at <http://www.mastergardener2005.usask.ca/index.html>.
- Who wants to report on the number of Alaskans seen at the Northwest Flower & Garden Show in Seattle?
- Three cheers for the Alaska Botanical Garden! They received a big chunk of grant funding this winter.
- The Cooperative Extension Service in Anchorage will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary with a series of brown bag lunches the week of February 21. "Milestones in Alaska Gardening" is scheduled for Thursday, February 24 at noon in the CES conference room.
- **Ed Hume Seeds** will once again be available to non-profit groups and schools. Contact Judy Christianson at: 344-6617 or judymel@gci.net
- Our *Linnaea borealis* or twin flower was named for the Swedish botanist Carl von Linné who gave us the plant classifications. It is a member of the Caprifoliaceae or honeysuckle family.

Holy Cross Mission CONT. FROM PAGE 3

The Sisters of St. Ann at Holy Cross Mission maintain a separate institution for native girls and they also have their own gardens, which are more particularly under the special care of one of their number. They raise all the vegetables required by the school and their products have the reputation of being the finest that skill and patience can produce. They are equally successful with flowers. All the leading hardy annuals may be found in their garden every summer. All this, of course, means careful work and some hard work and constant unrelenting vigilance. As in the boys' school, the girls likewise help in the garden and thus learn the art from experience. As an example of the infinite trouble they take with their gardens it may be mentioned that they gather large quantities of leaf mold from the woods every fall. This is kept in readiness for use in early spring. From the river they carry home sand to mix with the leaf mold. Last spring it was noticed that this leaf mold was full of the larvae of beetles and other insects destructive to plants. From experience it was known that it would be worse than useless to plant seeds in this mold, and yet the mold was needed. The problem therefore was to kill the larvae and the eggs it contained. It was solved by heating it in pans in the stove and in the oven, a stupendous task- there were 18 barrels of it- but it was done. No worms lived to destroy the seedling cabbages, cauliflower, radishes and other things. I mention this to show the infinite pains which sometimes is the price of success when gardening under difficulties.

This prepared earth is put in boxes, 33 by 22 inches and 9 1/2 inches deep, and seeds of plants which are to be transplanted sown therein about the middle of April. When seeded they are carried to a sunny, sheltered spot out of doors and covered with double windows. Toward evening, when the sun sinks low they are wrapped in parkies, old comforters, blankets, and the like, to protect them from night frost. The seeding is made so that there will be about 300 to 320 plants of cabbage, cauliflower, etc., to each box. Last spring they made their first seeding of radishes and onions in the open ground May 4. They planted potatoes May 15 and transplanted cabbage May 18. When setting out plants they drop a little rich earth in the hole with each plant. It is this vigilant, painstaking care, which knows no failure, that has made the gardens at Holy Cross famous on the Yukon. It enables the good people of the mission to have an abundance of crops, palatable vegetables to give passing prospectors, who probably for months have had nothing better in that line than evaporated potatoes and onions, and also to share with officers and travelers on passing steamboats.



Cyclamen CONT. FROM PAGE 4

In the summer of 2003, I planted about 150 seeds (I know; that's immoderate) in cell trays. That September I transplanted the seedlings into 4-inch pots, which grew to a modest size for holiday gift giving. When the days began to lengthen noticeably in March, the ones Santa hadn't distributed started to bloom. In late May I plunged those plants into my garden beds for use as annuals. They flowered all summer, and were still in bloom in early October after several frosts. They could be lifted to overwinter in the house but, as I already have enough houseplants and a continual seed source, I let the frost ultimately deliver them to cyclamen heaven.

Whether in a garden bed or in a pot in the house, cyclamen tubers need to be positioned so that they are mostly exposed above the surface of the soil. The soil needs to retain moisture yet drain well. Plants should be allowed nearly to dry out between waterings. I lift the pot and only water the plant when the pot feels very light. Cyclamen will forgive you for underwatering but not for overwatering. Overwatering can be, and often is, fatal.

In the house, cyclamen like cool rooms or windowsills with daytime temperatures between 60° and 70°F and nighttime temps between 40° and 60°F. That's easy enough for us to provide. See why they also do so well in the garden in Alaska summers? Both indoors and out, they appreciate bright indirect light but not full south sun. Need another shade plant outdoors? You might try cyclamen.

In the home, cyclamen can live for many, many years, making them a very rewarding houseplant. Outdoors, they provide an unusual plant that I guarantee most of your neighbors don't have. In flower and in foliage cyclamen are hard to beat.

An excellent reference for further information is *Cyclamen: A Guide for Gardeners, Horticulturists and Botanists* by Christopher Grey-Wilson (Timber Press, 2003).

Artichoke Growing 101 CONT. FROM PAGE 3

The flowerhead 'bracts' can be eaten or dried for flower arrangements. They seldom go to full bloom here due to the shorter growing season, but a ripe artichoke may continue to bloom if brought into the house. They are probably related to the Cardoon (*C. cardunculus*) but are horticulturally distinct. These can also be grown here as an annual, but their buds are not edible. The side buds can be pinched off to allow the main bud to get larger, but the side buds will eventually develop into full size heads if the season is long enough.

I am so excited when picking the first 'choke for the season to have for supper. Nothing like dipping a homegrown artichoke into butter seasoned with lots of garlic. Ummmm! Give it a try this year. It's well worth the time & effort.

Gardening Calendar

February 11-12

Alaska MG Conference, Soldotna, AK. See article below

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.

Alaska Master Gardener Conference

The Alaska Master Gardener conference is scheduled for February 11 & 12 (1/2 day Friday and all day Saturday) at Kenai Peninsula College in Soldotna. Speakers will include Diana Reeck of Collectors Nursery in Battleground, Washington. Sandy and Suzanne Williams, Master Gardeners from Juneau speaking on vegetables; Bill Campbell, Alaska Plant Materials Center on potatoes; and Julie Riley on growing and enjoying herbs.

Information will be available from the Anchorage CES office or you can call CES in Soldotna directly, 262-5824. Registration forms & conference information can be found @ the AMGA web site: corecom.net/~gardener - MG Conference Information



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: 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:

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2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone 786-6300

Fax Line 786-6312



See you at the
2005 AMGA Conference
in Soldotna, Alaska
February 11-12

Contact: 262-6187 in Soldotna
786-6300 in Anchorage
or visit the AMGA web site:

www.corecom.net/~gardener

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