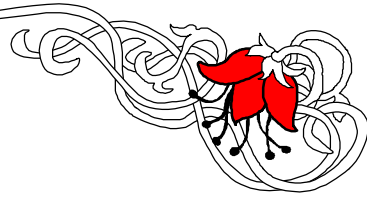


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 7, Issue 12

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

November 2005

From the President's Corner By Dana Klinkhart

As the memory of summer fades and the crisp and cold days of November find me engaged in planning activities for winter, I think back on those hastily scribed lists of ideas that flashed through my mind. Now is the time to group them into the file for spring and put these activities onto the calendar. Foremost on my calendar is the Master Gardeners Association meeting this winter.

Were you at the AMGA meeting in October? If you were sitting in the audience and had the chance to hear Jeff Lowenfels share his passion of Organic Gardening, you were included in the forty other gardeners held captive to his position on the diversity of organisms that make up the soil food web. The phrase "food for thought" comes to mind after attending our last meeting.

Have you noticed how many gardeners are attending our AMGA meetings? Our small conference room at the Cooperative Extension is often bulging at the seams. This is good news! Your interest in the programs is obvious and apparently we are attracting folk's attention. The downside to this however, is the fact that we have outgrown our meeting room. We are required by code to keep our attendance under 50 persons.

So...what should we do? Let's examine some alternatives:

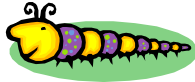
- We can investigate the availability of a larger meeting room. This would mean moving our location. This might also mean that we need to rent space, which could develop into a dues increase.
- We could limit the number in attendance to 50 on a first come, first served and turn the rest of our members away. Or we could consider taking reservations.
- Another angle might see us scheduling the program on more than one evening and continue to hold the meetings at the current location.

Changing locations starts to complicate the process. At our present location, we have access to office equipment and a refreshment center. Our need for technology such as slide projectors, laptop computers, projection screens, overhead projectors and the like are available in our current location. Transporting equipment efficiently and safely is an issue.

Changes can be awkward but if we all put our thinking caps on, I believe that we can come up with a plan that will help us to grow as an association as well as in fellowship.

I challenge you to send in your ideas to your board of directors. We will be working on this. Please feel welcome to call me or send an email message. Call me @ 346-1631 or use email: klinkhart@gci.net

We will be meeting again this month on November 17th. We will need to decide how to proceed with our location. Stay in touch. Our most efficient means of communicating on short notice is through email. If you are unsure of the location, call the Cooperative Extension Service or me. Until then... let's be thinking.



PARAMECIA, FUNGI...

And All That Stuff

By Jo Anne Banta

October found AMGA members deep into organic gardening. Yes, after wandering around the UAA campus looking for our meeting place, we finally settled down for a fine organic presentation by Jeff Lowenfels. The idea of healthier soil, healthier plants and less work has always appealed to many of us. It was certainly reinforced by pictures of the numerous microscopic creatures in Lowenfels' slides and by the overwhelming statistics he quoted.

Jeff, as many of you know, has a radio talk show, "The Garden Party," on Saturday mornings and is a driving force in the Alaska Botanical Garden where he serves on the Board of Directors. I'll confess, when he began and said, "I have an hour, don't I?" I flinched. However, the hour simply flew by. Some enlightening facts:

- 40 to 60 % of photosynthesis takes place in the plant's roots.
- Fertilizer over 10-10-10 kills bacteria and fungi.
- Mycorrhizals increase soil surface 900 times as they die, leaving a subway system.
- Annuals thrive best on green mulch, which is bacterial, thus alkaline.
- Trees and perennials prefer brown mulch, which is fungal, thus acidic.
- Mushrooms growing under trees are signs of tree-healthy soil.

The entire soil food web is complicated. Bacteria eat simple things like sugar, but they must have water in order to produce slime, which is important. Blind nematodes cling to roots (Remember Rosemary Kimball's predatory nematodes from last month?). Soil fungus can travel 10 to 20 feet. Then we have the amoebae, paramecia and protozoa that feed on the fungi and bacteria – and, finally, our worms that yum up the paramecia and friends.

The organic way seems to be gaining popularity. Note that Miracle-Gro has bought Whitney Farms and is coming out with an "Organic" label, and that the Audubon standards for new golf courses stress organics. Jeff's seasoned advice: use no more poison or heavy fertilizers; use only vinegar on dandelions (Does it really work?); do not rototill since it only disturbs the soil network (Half-a-worm is a dead worm even if it is chock-full of paramecia.); put natural substances back into the soil (compost, compost tea, mulches); and if you make your own compost tea, be sure to aerate it (Use a fish tank pump.) to get the good aerobic bacteria.

I have merely touched on the highlights. If you want to see Jeff's notes on the whole presentation, look to www.alaskahumus.com and go to the third heading, "More Information." And come fall 2006, be sure to look for Teaming with Microbes, A Gardener's Guide to Using the Soil Web published by Timber Press (and written by Jeff Lowenfels?).

AMGA exchange tidbits included cheers for Bacopa and perennial Phlox as long-lasting summer blooms; a question regarding Devil's Walking Stick which really does revive in the spring after losing its branches in fall; a cheer, by Verna Pratt, for the Beefmaster tomato; and Julie's agreeing that peat is a good soil additive. Refreshments were great; Annie Nevaldine's cupcakes (pumpkin added) were scrumptious.

Be sure to watch your e-mail to verify November's meeting time and place. Our speaker will be Mike Post, owner-operator of Tall Trees. 'See you all there.



Monster Veggies in Scotland

According to a September, 2004, BBC article on the web, a Scottish family has produced onions the size of footballs, and strawberries the size of apples on what used to be a boggy hillside. The family credits using rock dust, (crushed volcanic rock) over the land, and letting microbes and worms work it into the soil. They call it remineralization. Scientists at Glasgow University have begun a three year study of this method.

Coke - The 'Real Thing' For this Gardener's Compost Pile!



All one gardener wanted was a compost bin that produced compost, but hers didn't work like the ones she saw on TV. So the gardener from Redwood City, California, went searching for answers on the internet. She found a reference to using Coke as a way to kick-start compost piles. Coke? She figured, "What the heck, I'm not drinking the stuff" so she poured a can of Coke into her composter and within a week, the pile had settled a good 4 inches. "It smelled really sweet" she said, "and the stuff even near the top was broken down– green grass and brown leaves. I found the bottom drawer stuff crumbly as potting soil. I'd not thrown in anything else that week."



The Continuing Saga of the Cordova Slugs

Submitted by Julie Riley

Cordova Slug Story #1

According to **Jo Anne Banta**, black slugs first showed up near Cordova on the west side of Lake Eyak in the mid-80s and gradually moved toward town. She had friends bring her two in a 3 lb coffee can, nestled in moss. They were so big, Jo Anne first thought they were mice! She reports that Cordova's black slugs are only black and grow to 7".

Because a few years ago the Cordova slugs were identified as *Arion ater* Jo Anne is getting a couple slugs sent up from Cordova to confirm their (new) identity as *Arion rufus*. She takes her science seriously!

Neva Nolan's Cordova Slug Story #2

The slugs in Cordova have been increasing significantly for the last 20 years. There is speculation that the big black slugs may have come over with the Asian cannery workers in the 1940's, maybe earlier, with their garden plants, packing crates, between ship slats, etc., and unknowingly cultivated at the Orca Cannery, which is approximately 3 miles from town. Just a note, there wasn't a road out to the cannery until the 1960's.

In 1981 when I moved to Cordova and began gardening I never encountered slugs of any type. I gardened in kelp boxes on our city sidewalk and deck so the biggest issue was of the four legged variety (cats & dogs). I hiked a lot back then but don't recall seeing slugs, but, as my children say, "You don't have a very good memory mom!"

Some areas of Cordova began seeing black slug appearances mid to late 1980's. The problem was recognized by a long-time resident/teacher/gardener. She set her 2001 Community Problem Solving team to work. The seventh graders researched the black European slugs, scientific name *Arion ater*. Their conclusions and eradication methods were published and handed out locally. The team won first place at State and placed first in the International competition as well. We have been using their research ever since.

With options of getting rid of these pests, gardeners in Cordova began working together, telling their stories, sharing their methods and implementing the Community Problem Solvers' ideas. We still have more and more black and brown spotted slugs arriving each spring. The only conclusion I have for the invasion is that slugs are imported on nursery plants, emerge from local compost piles, and come down from mountain tops. Slugs have been witnessed riding on debris crossing lakes in Cordova. Ugh!? HELP!!

In the last two to three years many gardeners have been trying slug bait. One particular brand, "Sluggo", was flown in from California. A dedicated gardening and walking couple purchased 80 pounds and spread a thick layer around their entire property, in the garden, driveway and along Power Creek road. They applied the slug bait every 2-3 weeks. If it works, we may need a crop duster to dust all of Cordova and outlying areas with the stuff.

The big black slugs are such a problem one of my friends gave up on her garden all together. Another still gardens but gets quite discouraged as she counts the slugs and picks up over 200 per day during the gardening season!

Some of the methods of eradicating the slugs are to hand-pick the slugs, drop them into a saltwater, Clorox or ammonia solution in a burnable container such as a waxy 1D 2 gallon milk or juice container. Then, when it's too stinky or full, take the container to the local burn pile. Never, never, never send them to a land fill or leave them dead on the ground. (Slugs are attracted to their dead.) Burying dead slugs may work if they are buried deep enough; try 3-6 inches.

[X-Rated] Slugs mating - photo submitted by Debbie Hinchey





Soldotna's Pioneer Garden

By Barbara Jewell, CP Master Gardener

A bright spot in Soldotna is Pioneer Garden along the Sterling Highway. However, it wasn't always like that. At one time what is now that green belt with flower beds was the DOT parking lot with overflowing dumpsters. Eventually, it evolved into a sod area where growing small seedlings were experimented with unsuccessfully.

In 1996, a few community-minded Master Gardener's raided their home flower beds and planted perennials and annuals along the outer perimeter of the DOT fenced area. With a grander vision for Soldotna, Merle Dean Feldman gathered her MG friends and they designed the garden much as it looks today. A fundraising effort took place in 1997, where numerous businesses and individuals contributed towards loads of topsoil, donations and purchases of annuals, perennials, pavers and gardening supplies. By the end of that summer Soldotna was the fortunate recipient of the Master Gardener's and volunteer's effort. In the summer of 1998, then-Mayor Ken Lancaster dedicated the garden as Pioneer Garden in honor of the early settlers of Soldotna.

Much effort has gone into the garden under the Master Gardener Program including holding Tuesday night "Garden Parties" under the direction of Barbara Jewell and the other Master Gardeners. The "Garden Parties" were instruction oriented, accompanied with much elbow grease for weeding and cleaning the flower beds. In 1998, the DOT relocated to a location south of Soldotna and the City of Soldotna acquired the property making it an expansion of Soldotna Creek Park. The seven acre grassed area adjacent to the Kenai River provides a beautiful background for the garden. In 2004, the Master Gardeners turned Pioneer Garden over to the City of Soldotna Parks and Recreation Department whereupon they hired a full-time summer gardener. This summer a new gardener was hired to replace the first employed gardener when her family relocated to their home area in Louisiana. Diligent efforts have gone into this lovely place in Soldotna with the hopes that the City of Soldotna will continue to maintain it as is intended.

Antisthenes says that in a certain faraway land the cold is so intense that words freeze as soon as they are uttered, and after some time then thaw and become audible, so that words spoken in winter go unheard until the next summer.

~Plutarch, *Moralia*

Some Good Fall Recipes from Rosemary Kimball

Broccoli Buttermilk Soup

About 1 pound of broccoli
2 cups of broth- chicken, beef or whatever
1 small onion quartered
a bay leaf
1 t. dried basil or 1 Tablespoon fresh
1/2 sugar
1 clove garlic

Break broccoli into flowerets and slice the stem into manageable pieces. Combine the the above ingredients and cook until the broccoli is soft. Discard the bay leaf. Whirl in the blender until smooth and return to the pot.

Whisk in:
2 cups of buttermilk
and heat until steaming. Correct the seasoning and serve.

Cook's notes: Leftover potatoes add well.
Milk can be used instead of buttermilk but if you want that nice tang, use some yogurt or sour cream in addition.

Source: *Sunset Magazine* Homemade Soups which unfortunately is out of print because it is a wonderful book

From Margaret Simon:
CELERY RELISH
(given to Margaret by Claramae Moore)

1 quart chopped celery
1 quart chopped cabbage
1 pint chopped onion
4-5 chopped red & green bell peppers
4 teaspoons salt
4 tablespoons mustard seed
4 cups sugar
1 quart white vinegar

Grind vegetables on fine set. Add remaining ingredients. Boil for about 15 minutes. While boiling hot, pack into sterilized jars and seal.

Especially good in tarter sauce, with pot roast, on hot dogs or in a spoon from the jar!

Cabbage Stir Fry

Know that half cabbage in the back of the refrigerator accusing you of neglect? Shred it and sauté with some green onions, then add a little water, a smidge of salt and cover and cook for about 6 minutes. Toss in some cream cheese to taste and a little celery seed and stir it around and you are ready for the table. Or try some dried cranberries for a little sweetness.



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

By Rosemary Kimball

It's November. What is there to say? The sauerkraut is made. The leaves have been mowed up and if I find a round "tu-it" in my collection, the last of them might be mulched on the lawn. The seed catalogs aren't here yet. The garden is finished for all practical purposes and the slugs aren't moving around any more. Wasn't last month's issue the slug issue! Except for that one bad customer in Soldotna, I haven't heard of any more black ones locally. Do we quarantine a neighborhood? Heeding the call for slugs, I lifted all our boards that we have down as slug traps and couldn't find any— a quantum change over the summer's haul. I just hope cutting them in half with a knife doesn't multiply them instead of dividing them. After we discovered lots of slugs in the garden this summer we laid all sorts of scrap wood where they seemed thickest and started collecting them into a jar of salt water to see if they could swim. They couldn't. From there I went to the knife. It saved steps.

Janice, our ramrod, has also been one of the ramrods of the Noxious and Invasive Plants conference held in Fairbanks in late October. I got a flyer and sighed over some of the offerings that I was going to miss hearing but right now, without governmental funding, Fairbanks is a world away. It would have been especially interesting in light of the purple loosestrife losing itself on an island of Campbell Creek. On our September foray to the MG meeting a couple of years ago, we saw purple loosestrife neatly labeled as a plant at the garden next to the Palmer Visitors' Center. That generated a collective "EEEEEEK" .

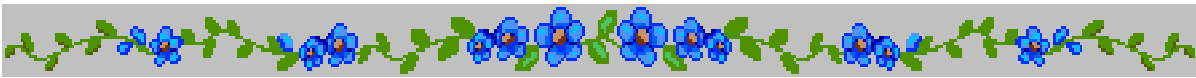
The colchicum I was sent by a Zone 5 gardener in Wisconsin is still alive and well. According to Timber Press' neat pocket bulb guide, it shouldn't be as we are a full zone colder. When it started up to bloom mid-October, I looked at the buds which were a puny white and thought the plant would not last the coming winter even if it weren't cold. But then the buds swelled and bloomed. It seemed a shame to leave them in the lower garden where they couldn't be admired frequently so I picked them, and using parsley for the greenery like MG Barb Jewell did, made a small arrangement for our bedroom window where they can get their proper adoration. They are a long-lasting cut flower.

I found a new and useful kitchen tool. To clean carrots and the tender early potato skins, I had been using a complexion brush until it finally disintegrated. Then I discovered a cat brush. Cat hated the soft bristles, but it worked just fine in the kitchen especially since this brush had a handle.

If I wanted to keep my smug feeling of accomplishment from last month, I'd have to sand and then put boiled linseed oil on the well-worn handles of our garden tools, but right now that sounds like a project done in the greenhouse and in the spring sun. I did suggest to my neighbor, MG Mark White, that I sort all his seeds for him by flower or vegetable and put them in order... I've already done mine, but that way I can see what he has that I don't need to order. Fortunately that works both ways and he won't have to order cosmos seeds for sure until something enticing shows up in the front section of the Thompson and Morgan seed catalog.

Soldotna (and the Hillside area) had their first nipping frosts two months after we did. I don't know whether to be relieved that the season ended earlier here or jealous that they had more time. By the last week in October we were down to 7°F in the morning. Blue sky and sunshine has its price.

I retrieved my lavender and rosemary plants from the greenhouse and the very last thing on the list is to make lavender honey. Pack a jar with lavender stems with leaves, cover with honey warmed to about 150°F. Cover and bid it adieu for a month. Rewarm it, strain and store. If you've saved a flower stem, put it in a pretty jar with the strained honey and you have a Christmas present. I want to try it also with my scented geranium leaves. It works well with lemon thyme too.



Bird Chatter

- It was a hardy crew that cleaned up the ABG entrance beds in the rain. Thanks to Tracy Johnson, Joyce Palmer, Joanna Littau, Pat Anderson and for a valiant effort by Lupita Weese.
- The Anchorage Pioneer Home garden beds were cleaned up by Mary Shier, Sue Bailey, Ann Spohnholz, and Verna Paluba. The flowering cabbage was left in because of its fall color. THANK YOU!
- From the cookbook Every Which Way With Rhubarb by Amanda Brannon of Palmer (available at Title Wave for \$20) comes an aphid killer: Boil 1 pound of rhubarb leaves in a quart of water for a half hour. Strain, add a wee bit of dish soap and spray. That's cheaper than Safers' Soap and the recipes are really really good.
- Maureen Pinter (almost) moved to a new location this fall and dug up half her garden to take along- 400 containers!
- New MG course recruit Cheryl Shroyer said her neighborhood is carrying on with the community garden that Mardane Connor started before she passed away two years ago.
- Gary Schneider reports that not all of the grapes he planted this spring leafed out. Please contact him for a refund if you bought grapes that did not grow, garyak@gci.net or 333-1751. (He's not in the directory.)
- A *Tricyrtis*, not only overwintered in Anchorage, but was in-bloom in Annie Nevaldine's garden in October. She writes, "Another Alaska gardener for global warming-NOT".
- MG Leonard Grau was voted Wildflower Garden Club Member of the Year for 2005!
- The apple originated in Kazakhstan where forests of wild apples were discovered in 1929 by the Russian botanist Nikolai Vavilov. These early cousins of our domesticated apple bear little resemblance to the fruit we cultivate today.
- Cooperative Extension Service is now part of the UAF College of Rural and Community Development. (The College, formerly the College of Rural Alaska, recently added Community Development to its name.
- The current Master Gardener class has 50 participants enrolled.

Grant Opportunity for Master Gardeners

Applications are due **DEC 1** for the James W. Matthews Extension Volunteer Leadership Development Fund. This scholarship has been established to support Extension volunteers interested in building leadership credentials. Applicants can be new volunteers or can be longtimers seeking to broaden their leadership skills.

Monies requested can be used for travel, registration, tuition or living costs related to participation in workshops, conferences, training meetings or other education settings that have as a primary objective the development of volunteer leadership skills. In the past, Master Gardeners have received funds from the James W. Matthews Extension Volunteer Leadership Development Fund for web design instruction and for money to attend Master Gardener conferences.

Successful grant applicants usually request expenses for educational opportunities occurring during the six month period of time after the application due date. There will be another round of grants with the deadline of June 1. For detailed information, please check out the scholarship's Web site at www.uaf.edu/coop-ext/matthews/ or contact the CES office for an application, 786-6300 in Anchorage.

Note: The Master Gardeners in Southeast are planning a two-day conference, April 28 & 29 with a reception the evening of April 27. The Northeast Regional Master Gardener Conference in Newport, Rhode Island is June 5-8, 2006. (Martha Galbreath is planning to represent Alaska at this event.)

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.

- Rabindranath Tagore, philosopher, author, songwriter, painter, educator, composer, Nobel laureate (1861-1941)



I was just thinking, if it is really religion with these nudist colonies, they sure must turn atheists in the wintertime.

~Will Rogers



SLUGS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The slug picking was a good fundraiser for the Community Problem Solvers: 10,971 slugs were picked up and burned in 5-7 days in the little town of Cordova.

If slugs were gold, Cordova would be the richest town in Alaska!!

Cordova slug story #3

Dana Klinkhart used to live in Cordova. She recalls that she sprinkled salt on small brown slugs and said, "I hope they didn't morph into big, black ones. If they did I'll have to change my name and move."

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Jill Shepherd wrote: "Mine are kind of sluggish this time of year."

--

Debbie Hinchey gets the prize for the most diverse collection of slugs brought in for identification.

--

IPM Technician **Kelley McGuirk** has sent 17 slugs to Seattle for identification (plus the original 2 black slugs)

Last year's slugs

To **C.J. Douglas**: Did your monster Leopard slug(s?) reproduce? We hope there were no babies sliding through your garden this past summer.

More Slug Stories

[Last month CES had an opportunity to have an expert in Seattle identify which species of slugs we have in Alaska. Below are the responses/statistics resulting from Julie Riley's request for AMGA members to collect slugs.]

Edith Goodgame e-mailed, "David and I collected at least 20 slugs for you. He placed them in a sealed plastic bag. The slugs ate through the plastic and escaped." [Author's note: Oops, I guess suggesting a plastic bag was not a good idea.]

--

Gary Schneider replied, "Sorry [I can't collect any]; I ate all of mine."

Julie Riley responded, "Escargot, eh"?



Gary answered, "Yep, goes well with fish or poultry. Sauté in olive oil; add just a little salt, pepper, and garlic. They're really not all that durable but if you carefully tie dental floss to one end you can enjoy each one several times."

Gardening Calendar

November 3, Thursday

Anchorage Garden Club Program - "Fruits and Berries" - presented by Julie Riley, Extension Service Horticulturist. 7:30 - 9 p.m., Pioneer Schoolhouse @ 3rd & Eagle St. - Information can be found @ 566-0539, or <http://communitynews.adn.agclub>

November 15 - 16, Tuesday-Wednesday

Anchorage Garden Club 45th Annual Holiday Flower Show - 9:00 am - 6:00 pm - A flower show that will start the holiday season. Anyone can enter. There are both horticulture and design categories. A schedule listing the categories should be available in September. Location: Wells Fargo Bank, C Street and Northern Lights Blvd

November 21, Monday

AMGA Program: "Pruning: How to and When" with Mike Post. 7:00 p.m., at the CES, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd., Conference Room 130. Refreshments and door prizes provided.

December

There is no AMGA meeting scheduled for December -

Enjoy the holidays!

January

AMGA Program: TO BE ANNOUNCED!

January/February Newsletter Deadline

Since the editor will be gone through the month of January, the deadline for January and February's newsletter has been moved up to December 23th. If you have articles or announcements, please send them in early!

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.alaskamastergardeners.org
(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



Happy Thanksgiving!

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Photo by Rosemary Kimball

**Soldotna's Pioneer Garden -
Winner of the Beautiful Business of the week
Chamber of Commerce award 2003.
See story page 4**

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