

Anchorage Chapter



Volume 7, Issue 4

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

March 2005

From the President's Corner

By Dana Klinkhart

Have you noticed symptoms that seem to surface this time of year? I saw warning signs after the Spring Garden Conference in Soldotna. The impulse to play in the dirt took root. Each seed catalog that arrived was given my full attention. I would find myself browsing through the 'garden section' of stores. Colorful flowers embellished my note cards and correspondence. The gardening magazines at the checkout stand found their way to the conveyor belt and into my shopping bag. My fingers magically made the connection to internet sites that announced the beauty of 'proven winners'. And I've been longing for things that grow from baby greens to begonias. My diagnosis is spring fever!

Now that the days seem longer and I can feel the warmth of the sun, spring can't be far away, can it? The geraniums think so. They have sprouted new leaves after a long nap. A few of the houseplants are showing signs of awakening, too.

Are there remedies? Until the real season surfaces, I plan to repot some of those house plants that have struggled along all winter. There are new varieties of flowers I've read about, I'll order some of those seeds. The Master Gardener's Journal will get dusted off and the notes from last fall will serve as a guide for the 2005 calendar. Our monthly Master Gardener Association presentations are always inspiring and they serve to ease the symptoms. I'll bet every gardener has a treatment or two for this time of year. Teach a gardening class. Grow some sprouts in jars or start some salad greens under lights. Include our own homegrown kids, the neighbor kids and grandkids in a seed starting project. Or help them to build a terrarium. Children love to connect with the wonder of spring and gardening. March is here and I am looking forward to planning ahead.

Master Gardener Meeting - March 21st Come Celebrate the First Day of Spring!

At our next Master Gardener meeting, March 21st, MG Erika Kienlen will be presenting a powerpoint presentation on "Landscaping for Small Spaces and Tract Homes". Erika has been a landscaper since 1993 and is the owner of "A Change in Scenery". I'm sure she will have lots of ideas and inspiration for all of our yards. There will probably be some things that you will "need" to include in your garden plans for this summer!

[Last month's newsletter incorrectly listed the date as the 25th; it's really on the 21st, Monday night, as usual!]



Tomatoes in Alaska

By Nancy Larsen



When Mary Shier spoke to the MG group during their January meeting, it was clear she's had a long and loving relationship with TOMATOES! As a young girl growing up back east, she'd head out to the garden with salt so she could eat em' there warm off the vine. And now, during the depths of our cold snowy weather, she confesses to dreaming of the tomatoes to come. She shared her dream - and its reality - with us.

Tomatoes can definitely be a success here. Mary tells us they can thrive in an indoor sunroom, in a south-facing window, or in hanging baskets outside, out of the wind, and preferably close to the kitchen! They can be planted in the ground in the warmest, most protected area of your yard, using raised beds to get the soil warmed earlier. They can do well in big tubs in a sheltered spot, and of course in a greenhouse.

Depending on the variety and the ultimate planting location, you can start seeds anywhere from early January to mid-March. Mary grows 5 to 9 varieties each year, and usually tries out a couple of new varieties every spring. She's kept good records on which ones do best, and if you were there at the January meeting, you took home a nice chart that shows her comments and favorites and suggests a timetable for seeding and planting out.

She recommends starting the seeds in sterile starting mix, to help prevent damp-off. After planting, cover to retain moisture, and as soon as they germinate, gradually remove the cover and give them good light -12 to 18 hours a day - to keep them from getting leggy. When 4 inches high, they're ready to transplant. Grasp by the leaves, never the stem. When there are 2 seedlings per cell, books say to keep the stronger one and snip the other off. Now here's another of Mary's confessions: she can't bear to do that- she's found that by putting the two into a saucer of water, she can gently tease and fiddle them apart with a sharpened chopstick or a little hors-d'oeuvre fork. No seedling has to die at Mary's hands!

On the second transplanting, cover the stem right up to its leaves by laying the plant over in a planting trench, perhaps even stripping off some of the lower leaves. In a day or two it will turn and grow upright once again. The final transplanting can take your tomato plant into its final home.

Mary showed some beautiful harvest photos of her tomatoes - every bit as rich and luscious looking as the catalogs portray! They come in three general sizes: 1) the small cherry or grape tomatoes; 2) the medium-sized roma or paste tomatoes; and 3) the large slicing kind like the *Beefsteak* variety. There are other amazing varieties that come in purple, white, speckles, or green stripes.

Oh, if you're growing your tomatoes in a greenhouse, you will have to be responsible for their pollination! Mary Shier has a special fertility dance she can show you. Have fun!

Welcome New AMGA Board Members!!

The January 17th meeting was also the annual elections. The following are our new AMGA board members:

President- Dana Klinkhart

Vice President- Marge Olson

Secretary- Eva Hancock,

Treasurer- Sue Lincoln

Membership Coordinator- Blythe Campbell

Directory Coordinator- Marguerite Barnard

Volunteer Coordinator- Linda Klinkhart

Public Relations Coordinator- Annie Nevaldine



Cordova's Giant Black Slug

by Jo Anne Banta

Four years ago, the Cordova Junior High Problem Solvers' Team won national recognition when they placed first in their division at the nation-wide competition. Their problem: the *European Arion ater*, Cordova's giant slug. What had formerly been simply a local scourge, became a scientific reality. Their research identified the creature, its habits and how to alleviate many of the problems it caused.

Arion ater is the size of a large cigar; it weighs several ounces; and, when threatened, rolls itself into a ball the size of a mouse. It averages seven inches in length, although a friend says the Boone-and-Crockett-size sometimes get larger. The slug has blue to black ribbed skin, green blood, and its eyes are located on a pair of stalks on its head.

It loves a cool, wet climate and decaying, as well as fresh, vegetation — even daffodils are left with nothing but a stem. It smells with its body, slides on its slime, and can cover four-and-a-quarter feet per hour. It uses a variety of slime: for defense, for navigation, for mating. The giant slug eats 30-40 times its own weight. It lays hundreds of eggs per year and can live for six years. Its one redeeming feature: it eats other dead slugs and dog feces.

These slugs are hermaphroditic so any slug can fertilize another's eggs, even those of a dead one. For that reason, folks are urged not to use the old method of cutting them in two. Each slug lays about two-dozen eggs at a time under decaying vegetation; the eggs are not connected, they are white and about the size of lentils. Cordova gardeners are encouraged to clean up dead foliage and to destroy any eggs they find. (I have a friend who drops them in household bleach or kerosene.).

The beasts are cannibalistic, and the dead or wounded attract others. The standard method of destroying one is to poke it through with a sharp stick, pick it up and place it in a cardboard milk carton (along with many others!) and take it to the local "burn pile." Wearing rubber gloves is important since the slime is nearly impossible to remove. Hikers are urged to carry zip-lock bags for slug collecting.

Most critical, however, is the method of disposing of the creatures. One must be sure to use a cardboard container and not to throw them in the regular garbage. The Forest Service is worried that sealed plastic bags may be broken when compacted and transfer giant slugs to the landfill area near the Chugach Forest.

Where did Cordova's mollusks come from? No one knows, though there is a tale about their being imported during the early Twentieth Century. Seems, so the story goes, that the Chinese cannery workers ate them, and a shipment came in after the salmon season ended. The slugs were turned loose in the salmonberries to save for next season, and it has taken them this long (at 4.25' per hour) to make it over the mountain and into the gardens of Cordova.

The battle continues. Today's Problem Solvers earn a good deal of their travel budget by taking donations for slug-picking local yards and by accepting pledges for collecting by the quart. One incident may add credence to the above story: while they were collecting in one neighborhood, an elderly Filipino gentleman strolled by, saw what they were doing, and commented, "Deep fried - YUM!"



Extending the Summer Garden

By Annie Nevaldine

As I drive around town, I keep seeing bumper stickers that read "Another Alaskan for Global Warming." Whether or not you welcome global warming, it cannot be denied that the summer of 2004 was one of the sunniest, warmest, and driest on record in Southcentral Alaska. There were several effects of this on local gardens.

First, some perennial species bloomed at their typical times while others bloomed earlier than usual by anywhere from a half week to nearly two weeks. Second, the length of the bloom period for many species was considerably shorter than usual.

Examples lie in Judy Wilmarth's experience with peonies. She noted that the very early ones (species, singles, and some hybrids) bloomed within just days of their normal bloom period. Varieties that typically bloom the last weeks of July into the first weeks of August were fully developed by about July 20, with some of them losing their petals by that date. Her yellow peonies (intersectionals), which historically take two to three weeks to bloom, were completely bloomed out in ten days. Her cut flower season was very compressed.

Judy also observed that the peonies that received all day sun were the quickest to flower and lose their petals, while those that were protected from the mid-afternoon (2-6 p.m.) sun lasted the longest. As a result, she has begun to add some flowering trees to her peony field to provide partial shade.

Most years, only the very early varieties of Judy's peonies have time to produce mature seed. This summer she was able to harvest ripe seed from her later blooming lactifloras, which comprise the large, many-petalled double peonies.

In several species I noticed that flower color changed more quickly than usual. Species that fade with age tended to fade sooner and ones that darken with age darkened more quickly.

Since many annual and perennial species had completed their bloom cycle considerably earlier than usual, many gardens were bereft of bloom by early to mid-August. Such gardens, in a more typical summer, do not become lackluster until late August or even early September.

Planning for late summer and fall gardens is typically an issue that local gardeners have not had to address, as cool, overcast summers and early frost usually render the incorporation of such consideration needless. If this past summer is a harbinger of trends to come, then gardeners may want to rethink later season gardening and to plan for it.

Although we are not able to control the weather, we can make some modifications in our gardening to mitigate the early

demise of perennial gardens that warmer, sunnier, and drier weather brings. Gardeners can add more plants whose foliage is exceptional (and whose flowers may even be insignificant), more late-blooming perennial species, more perennials that add late season foliage color even after their flowers are gone, and more annual species that bloom later and resist frost well.

Winter is our season for reading seed and plant catalogues and dreaming of ideas to implement in our gardens next summer. This winter, keep in mind ways to extend the beauty of your gardens in case we have another warm, sunny, dry summer. You may or may not be *for* global warming, but your gardens might be prettier longer if you *plant* for global warming.

Thank you, Julie Riley, for generously supplying the species list below that was excerpted from *Gardening with Annual Flowers In Interior Alaska*, Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, Circular 59).

Late Flowering Perennials

Baby's breath, *Gypsophila paniculata*
Culver's root, *Veronicastrum virginicum*
Dahlia, *Dahlia* cultivars (tender perennial)
German garlic, *Allium senescens* var. *glaucum*
Gladiolus, *Gladiolus* X *hortulanus* (tender perennial)
Globe thistle, *Echinops ritro*
Goldenrod, *Solidago* spp.
Hosta, *Hosta fortunei*, *H. undulata*
Lily, tiger, *Lilium lancifolium* (syn. *L. tigrinum*)
Meadow rue, *Thalictrum delavayi*, *T. dipterocarpum*,
T. rochebrunianum, *T. speciosissimum* (Not *T. aquilegifolium*)
Meadowsweet, *Filipendula rubra*, *F. ulmaria*, *F. vulgaris*
Monkshood, *Aconitum napellus*, *A. X bicolor*
Obedient plant, *Physostegia virginiana*

Perennials that may not be hardy in all locations:

Bee balm, *Monarda didyma*
Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea* (biennial; first year plants started early.)

Perennials that may be too late to flower in some years:

Daylily, *Hemerocallis* spp.
Red flame miscanthus, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Purpureus'
Loosestrife, gooseneck, *Lysimachia clethroides*
Hollyhock, *Alcea rosea* (some biennial)
Lily, Oriental, *Lilium* hybrid
Sea Lavender, *Limonium latifolium*

May not be hardy in all locations and/or may be too late to flower in some years:

Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*
Cone flower, *Echinacea purpurea*
Coreopsis, *Coreopsis verticillata*



Garden phlox, *Phlox paniculata*
 Michaelmas daisy, *Aster novi-belgii*
 Rusty Foxglove, *D. ferruginea* (often biennial)

(Foliage survived frost to 30° F. Not all cultivars of a species have been tested and there may be variation in frost tolerance among cultivars of the same species.)

Immortelle, *Acroclinium roseum*
 Alyssum, *Lobularia maritima*
 Aster, *Callistephus chinensis*
 Calendula, *Calendula officinalis*
 Carnation, *Dianthus caryophyllus*
 Chrysanthemum 'Yellow buttons', *Coleostephus myconis* 'Yellow Buttons' (*Chrysanthemum multicaule*)
 Daisy, crown, *Chrysanthemum coronarium*
 Daisy, dwarf marguerite, *Leucanthemum paludosum*
 Dianthus, *Dianthus chinensis*
 Dusty miller, *Senecio cineraria* and *Tanacetum ptarmiciflorum*
 Feverfew, *Tanacetum parthenium* (Used as an annual in Fairbanks)
 Flowering cabbage and kale, *Brassica oleracea*
 Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea* 'Foxy'
 Gazania, *Gazania rigens*
 Geranium, zonal, *Pelargonium X hortorum*
 Hollyhock, *Alcea rosea* 'Pinafore Mix'
 Lavatera, *Lavatera trimestris*
 Linaria, *Linaria maroccana*
 Livingstone daisy, *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis*
 Malope, *Malope trifida*
 Malva, *Malva sylvestris*
 Monarch of the Veldt, Cape Daisy, *Arctotis fastuosum*
 Morning glory, dwarf, *Convolvulus tricolor*
 Nemesis, *Nemesis strumosa*
 Nicotiana, *Nicotiana alata*
 Pansy, *Viola X wittrockiana*
 Petunia, *Petunia X hybrida*
 Phlox, annual, *Phlox drummondii*
 Poppy, California, *Eschscholtzia californica*
 Rudbeckia, *Rudbeckia hirta*
 Salvia, blue, *Salvia farinacea*
 Daisy, shasta, *Leucanthemum X superbum*
 Snapdragon, *Antirrhinum majus*
 Stocks, *Matthiola incana*
 Strawflower, *Helichrysum bracteatum*
 Summer cypress, *Bassia scoparia trichophylla*
 'Acapulco Silver' (Kochia)
 Sweet Pea, *Lathyrus odoratus*
 Sweet William, *Dianthus barbatus*
 Tidy Tips, *Layia platyglossa*
 Ursinia, *Ursinia anethoides* and *U. anthemoides*
 Verbena, *Verbena X hybrida*
 Viola, *Viola cornuta*
 Viper's bugloss, *Echium vulgare*
 Winged everlasting, *Ammobium alatum*



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News by Rosemary Kimball

We "Thought Spring" after almost a foot of snow on the first day of the MG conference. But Friday dawned clear and sunny....never mind that it was twenty below in Sterling. Considering all that, we had as good a turnout as we were hoping for. Friday was vegetables and Saturday was the rest of the stuff. I think what I liked best about the whole thing was the weekly update meetings that we had. It was a chance to get out of the house and see nice friends for an hour or so. Special thanks go to our Ramrod, Janice, and to a new woman who joined the group, Lori Holloman. Lori put on the fire chiefs' convention down here a couple years ago so she was experienced, big time. She saved our bacon. When we talked about buying plates or other things, she scotched that in a hurry and got them donated. She's the donation queen! She was also responsible for getting so many neat door prizes donated including the boat trip on Prince William Sound that was our grand prize. That woman was awesome. I really think she could have gotten Silas Marner to donate a piece of gold for a door prize!

Seed catalogs are piled on my floor unordered. Soon.

By the time you read this I will have been to the Winter Study Weekend of the North American Rock Garden Society in Everett, WA, and come back. I will be bunking with Carmel Tysver who is always good company. Then I'm taking a quick 4 days to visit a friend, Ronda, in Arizona, hoping that the flowers will be starting to bloom. With all the rain that has hit the area, they will be stunning this year. I will probably be too early and if so, Ronda and I will hit the garage sales. One way or another, we've got a good time planned. I am also returning to another friend in Arizona, a cactus that she gave me from her Seattle balcony years ago that won't let me murder it. It's a consistent bloomer and I will miss it, but it really will be happier in warmer climes.

After all the excitement of the past week, there really isn't anything happening any more until it is time to start seeds. Rosemary's Rule of Thumb: Pay your taxes then start your seeds. (Unless you are growing artichokes like Brenda Adams in Homer.)



Bird Chatter

Overheard in the CES office... *I am now in the Snapdragon part of my life - part of me has lost its snap, and the other part is Draggin !!!!!*

— Master Gardener Charlie Kempton is the President of the Anchorage Garden Club for 2005. Master Gardener Nickel LaFleur is Vice-president.

— Thanks to Gina Docherty for helping the Central Peninsula Master Gardeners put together the brochure for the 2005 conference. And for posting it on the web for the whole world to see before she went on vacation!

— Ever wonder why cut tulips seem to move around in their vase? According to the Netherlands flower Bulb Information Center, the "dance" is a result of their continued growth (unlike most cut flowers) and their bending toward the light (phototropism).

— Tanana Valley Master Gardener President Virginia Damron received a scholarship to attend the International Master Gardener Conference in Saskatoon this coming July.

2005 Gardening Advice

PLANT THREE ROWS OF PEAS:

1. Peace of mind
2. Peace of heart
3. Peace of soul

PLANT FOUR ROWS OF SQUASH:

1. Squash gossip
2. Squash indifference
3. Squash grumbling
4. Squash selfishness

PLANT FOUR ROWS OF LETTUCE:

1. Lettuce be faithful
2. Lettuce be kind
3. Lettuce be patient
4. Lettuce really love one another

NO GARDEN IS WITHOUT TURNIPS:

1. Turnip for meetings
2. Turnip for service
3. Turnip to help one another

TO CONCLUDE OUR GARDEN WE MUST HAVE THYME:

1. Thyme for each other
2. Thyme for family
3. Thyme for friends

Water freely with patience and cultivate with Love. There is much fruit in your Garden because you reap what you sow...

On-line Grafting Course

By Debbie Hinchey

You can enroll in a ten-week grafting course from Cornell University without even leaving the comfort of your home.

With the advancements in home computer technology, the unprecedented dissemination of information available from around the world through the World Wide Web, and the desire of some passionate people, a few gardening courses are available online.

In this case, the ancient skills of grafting are being taught to anyone, anywhere, through this truly modern method of teaching. The course, called "The How, When, and Why of Grafting for Gardeners" begins its fifth year on March 1, 2005.

If I have this correct, Cornell's Department of Horticulture is collaborating with the Natural Resource, Agriculture and Engineering Service to produce this interactive experience.

There are weekly lectures, video clips on a supplied CD, and practice of what you have learned with the grafting supplies and hibiscus plants sent before the class begins. There will be online class discussions with the other 50 students and the instructor, and even quizzes.

After I read about this course in several magazines, I went to the web to check it out. It looked quite good in the course sample and there was an interview that a radio gardening show in Louisville, Kentucky did with Kenneth Mudge, the instructor. When the host asked why grafting would be the first course offered from such a prominent horticulture / agriculture university, he answered that he picked this subject because he was passionate about grafting and what it has done to create the communities that we live in.

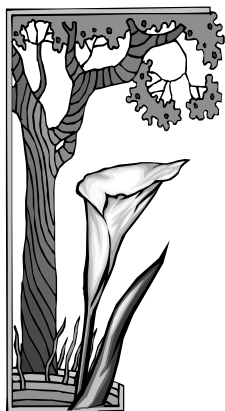
I have a fair amount of experience grafting, from having read a book about it when I was young and saving my neighbors' girdled tree, to the apple trees growing in my back yard. I was intrigued.

The course is fairly expensive, \$300 - I don't need new clothes, do I? I did want to give this new use of technology a try, and having a "passionate" instructor is always the best (even with subjects that you thought you knew well) so I got out my credit card and enrolled.

If you want to check it out, go to the Cornell Gardening Resources page at <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/programs/hort/gardening>. Go to the "Horticulture Distance Education" section. There is also an "Organic Gardening" course that began a month earlier on Feb. 1, 2005. I will let you know how it goes.



In Memorial



Long time MG Carol Ross sadly lost her husband in a car accident in North Dakota in February. Carol plans to plant two trees in Bill's memory--one at her home and the other at the Mt. View Lion's Park. Master Gardener Caroline Valentine has offered to handle arrangements for the tree memorial. If you'd like to make a contribution, it can be sent to Carol Ross & Family, 3401 Richmond Ave, Anchorage AK 99508-1013. Our heartfelt sympathy to Carol & family.

Free Grafting Workshop

The Fruit Growers Association of Alaska is presenting a grafting workshop at the Dimond Greenhouse in Anchorage on April 9th, at 1 p.m. The workshop is free. Rootstock may cost around \$5. Bring a plastic bag(s) to keep your roots moist. A sharp knife or clippers are recommended, but not mandatory.

Did you order an AMGA Name Tag?

If you ordered a Master Gardener pin last fall and have not made it to a meeting to pick it up, they are now being held in the Cooperative Extension Office. Hopefully this will make it easier for you to pick up your pin. We will also have them at the next meeting, and would love to see you!

Getting their Hours in Giving Advice....



photo submitted by Jim Larsen

Nancy Larsen and Ginny Moore offering gardening advice at the CES Table at the Sears Mall last month.

Gardening Calendar

March 3, Thursday

Anchorage Garden Club Program - "Compost Peat" - presented by Pete Kineen of the Organic Recycling Center. 7:30 - 9 p.m., Pioneer Schoolhouse @ 3rd & Eagle St. - Information can be found @ 566-0539, or <http://communitynews.adn.agclub>

March 5, Saturday

Gardening with Nature Class - A unique workshop for the gardener who seeks ways to blend spiritual connection with the Earth with conventional horticultural practices. 9am to 5pm. Call 907-745-0758 to register.

March 10, Thursday

Wildflower Garden Club - Julie Riley: Culinary Herbs - Bring your questions on how to grow, dry & use those great aromatic herbs. Seed share. Central Lutheran Church, 10 a.m.

March 21, Monday

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, Thursday

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 7, 14, 21, Thursdays

Whole Foods as Good Medicine - How to navigate through the confusion of diets, essential fatty acids, and food processing to maximize your vitality and immunity. Meets 3 Thursday evenings 7-9PM in Palmer. Call 746-7701 for registration and directions. \$30 [more information available @ corecom.net/~gardener]

April 16, Saturday

Sears Mall Garden Show, 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Wildflower Garden Club presents Gail Harbin: Children's Marigold Education. Wear your Wildflower aprons & share with the future gardeners of Alaska the potting, care & perhaps a passion for growing plants. Sears Mall.

April 7, Thursday

Anchorage Garden Club Program - "Baby Greens - Miniature Vegetables" presented by Dr Jeff Smeenk and/or Roseann Leiner, Extension Horticulturist Specialists. 7:30 - 9 p.m., Pioneer Schoolhouse @ 3rd & Eagle St. - Information can be found @ 566-0539, or <http://communitynews.adn.agclub>



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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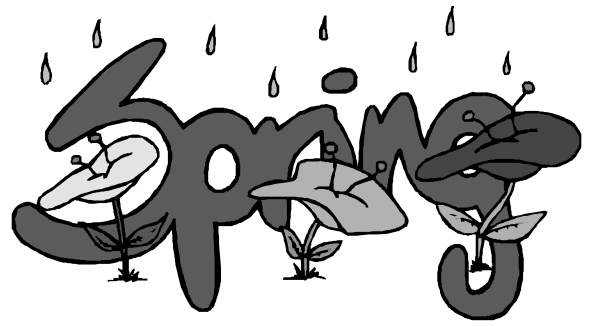
(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

Cooperative Extension Office
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
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is right around the corner!

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