

Anchorage Chapter



Volume 9, Issue 8

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

August 2007

From the President's Corner Dana Klinkhart

"The environment is where we all meet; where all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share. It is not only a mirror of ourselves, but a focusing lens on what we can become." Those were the words of Lady Bird Johnson. I wished I had known more about Lady Bird Johnson before but sadly, I didn't. She passed away on July 11th at 94. Most people think of Lady Bird Johnson as the reason why we see wildflowers blooming along the nation's highways and fewer junkyards and billboards. Mrs. Johnson made it her mission to call attention to the natural beauty of our nation.

It was in 1964 that Mrs. Johnson formed the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital to make Washington DC a "garden city" and a model for the rest of the country. With funds received from private donations she started small, at malls and in meridians. The project grew to include public housing. The Committee agreed to plant flowers in triangle parks all over the city and to give awards for neighborhood beautification. Mrs. Johnson's effort prompted businesses and others to begin beautification efforts in low-income neighborhoods hidden from the much-visited tourist attractions. Mrs. Johnson recognized the opportunity to start a nationwide effort that involved restoring and protecting native plant habitats. Her work in Washington served as an introduction for the first major legislative campaign ever launched by a first lady - The Highway Beautification Act of 1965. Known as "Lady Bird's Bill," it was one of many of Lady Bird's accomplishments that protected the environment and had an impact on the American landscape.

After leaving Washington, Mrs. Johnson focused her energy on Texas. For years she encouraged the beautification of Texas highways by personally giving awards to the highway districts that used native Texas plants and scenery to the best advantage. She created the National Wildflower Research Center in 1982. The Center soon became a national leader in research, education and projects that encouraged the use of wildflowers. A new location for the center opened in 1995 on located on 279 acres in Austin, Texas and was later named the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Today the Center has more than 700 plant species on display, and a fully developed education program for children and adults. With its mission of increasing the use of native wildflowers and plants, the Center works to teach everyone how these plants conserve water and reduce the use of fertilizers and insecticides.



Maybe there is a bit of Lady Bird Johnson in all of us gardeners. Community respect for beauty and our environment is evident here in Anchorage, Alaska, too. The garden groups in our city are dedicated to serving as educators in horticulture and ambassadors of our natural world. Our own Alaska Master Gardeners Association stands front and center as one of many in service in our community. I think Mrs. Johnson had it right... she wanted Texas to look like Texas just as you and I want Alaska to look continue to look like Alaska.





Let's Tour a Water Garden

Jo Anne Banta

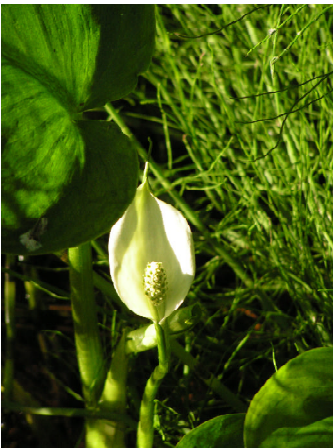


"Water, water everywhere . . ." No, we're not talking about The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, but about AMGA's summer tour to the home of Stephanie and Gary Moore. Hidden in the Eagle River woods, their five-acre sanctuary is a series of calming "water works." A good description, for one can only imagine the work that has gone into the seven ponds, the small cascading creek and the large naturalized slough.

On arriving, one first hears the babbling of the small stream as it flows over its gravel bottom and moss-covered rocks. The Moores have cleaned out and channeled what was formerly a muddy mess; its one-foot waterfall, however, is nature's work, and they love the way it changes from time to time. At the other side of the property, nearly hidden by the woods, a large slough features bog plants, marsh marigolds, native calla lilies and irises. It is thirty inches deep, and they formerly had children canoeing on it. Today it serves as a dark "mirror," the sunlight reflecting the beauty of the surrounding vegetation.

The seven ponds range from large to small and are all filled with water lilies and goldfish, some reaching the size of koi. Throughout the landscape

Stephanie has her "garden islands:" groups of Siberian irises near the slough, clumps of rhubarb by a pond (Careful, rhubarb leaves will poison the fish.) and wonderful water-loving plants surrounding the ponds. There are small statues and colorful dry-land flowers islands, all enhanced by the native habitat, the woods and the Moore's home with its lovely stained-glass windows.



The ponds are lined with heavy plastic. There are bog filtering systems and gravel filtering systems. There is an above-ground pond. There are two ponds in the greenhouse featuring lovely tropical water lilies and the largest of orange and white goldfish. No "ring of rocks" for Stephanie's ponds; she prefers natural edges. They look so natural that the moose sometimes go grazing in the larger ones, much to her chagrin – she loses track of which variety of lily they have displaced. A make-shift willow corral now helps to prevent this.

One must see the different water lilies to fully appreciate their beauty; most are a lush pink, white or pale yellow. However, there are two lovely blue tropicals in the greenhouse: the mid-blue 'Tina' and the darker 'Pamela.' Stephanie informed us that the plants are

Marliacea albida, developed in France during the 1800's by Joseph Marliac. To care for them, she usually wears hip waders since the ponds are about three feet deep; of course she has fallen in many times. Once while crouched near the edge, reaching for a spent blossom, she was "overwhelmed" by a joyous pup. She slipped, fell and ended up sitting on the pond bottom, emerging soaked and wearing duckweed in her hair and glasses.

At one pond, we watched the feeding frenzy as Stephanie fed the fish. This brought up the question of wintering. Yes, the plants spend the winters inside, most in the basement in large plastic totes where the hardiest of them stay cool. There are two basement ponds for fish, as well. The tropical lilies are in the house where they must remain at 50 to 55 degrees; and the largest of the fish spend the winter in a 100-gallon tank in a sunny corner window.

One can only admire what the Moores have accomplished in the seven short years that they have lived here. Prior to moving, they spent 24 years in Birchwood where they owned and operated Sacred Art Glass Studio. Today they both have studios in their home where they continue their artistic work – that is when they are not wading, fence building, fish feeding or generally maintaining the water works of their forest home. The easy-going Stephanie has a wonderful work philosophy: "Anything really worth doing is worth doing however well you can manage to do it." And her husband Gary has a great name for those miserable drifting cottonwood seed clumps, he calls them "cotton weeds." The Moores leave us with a special message that we are sure they live by, "Don't forget to enjoy your garden."



A Letter to Gardeners

Dear Kindred Spirits in the Gardens,

I'm feeling a little melancholia after reading our AMGA newsletter, July issue. Those who write about the goings on in the gardening community write with familiarity of each other. I truly feel like I am missing out on something very wonderful and special. Perhaps some time in the near future I will allow myself time away from my demanding occupation to become more acquainted as well as involved in such a delightful growing community.

I was hoping some of you might share titles and authors of great books related to gardens and gardeners. Here are some I would like to share with you as well as excerpts from each.

The Faithful Gardener by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, PH.D.

"The miracle of new life made in fallow ground is an old, old story."

Cultivating Delight, A Natural History of My Garden by Diane Ackerman

"One of my garden chores these days is to castrate the lilies. When their flowers finish, lilies produce round ripe pods that are taut enough to crack off like walnuts, or sever with sharp scissors. I don't need the lilies to grow from seed (it would take too long), and plants can't spend the same energy twice. I'd rather they care for their tuberous roots and prepare for next year's blossoms."

The Botany of Desire by Michael Pollan; "Plants are nature's alchemists, expert at transforming water, soil, and sunlight into an array of precious substances, many of them beyond the ability of human beings to conceive."

My Life My Trees by Richard St. Barbe Baker

"In sleep of helpless infancy
Trees were the arms that cradled me
On Tree my daily food is spread,
Tree is my chair and Tree is my bed." Teresa Hooley

A Gentle Plea for Chaos by Mirabel Oster

"I once observed a group of Hardy Plant Society members walking round a garden where they were discussing those ravishing flowers. Pettifogging their way from clump to clump, their eyes seeing subtleties and refinements that had passed me by completely. Where I had been looking at a heavenly rampage of mottled and freckled flowers in a herbaceous border, they had been looking at a conundrum. 'Is that penstemon "King George" or "Schoenholzeria"?'"

The Beckoning Path Aperture, Lessons of a Lifelong Garden, text by Mark Kane, photographs by Ted Nierenberg

"Fortunate accidents seem to multiply in the garden, where nature embellishes the gardener's handiwork."

The Gardener's Essential by Gertrude Jekyll

"Some of the most delightful of all gardens are the little strips in front of roadside cottages. They have a simple and tender charm that one may look for in vain in gardens of greater pretension."

The Findhorn Garden, Pioneering a New Vision of Man and Nature in Cooperation by the Findhorn Community

"In the garden we feel that we are indeed pioneers... we are learning the very secret of creation."

With warm regards,

Sally Tilton, Master Gardener





St Fiacre, Patron Saint of Gardeners

Submitted by Linda McCarthy



I always thought that St. Francis was the patron saint of gardens because his statute usually has birds and frequently animals around it. But recently I learned of St. Fiacre and discovered he's the true Patron Saint of Gardeners. St. Fiacre was an Irish Monk who spent his days creating beautiful gardens and healing people. He was a colorful character who lived in the 600's (a good 500 years before St. Francis).

Fiacre was raised in an Irish monastery, which in the 7th century were great repositories of learning and studied the use of healing herbs. His knowledge and holiness caused followers to flock to him, which destroyed the holy isolation he sought. He left for France, established a hermitage in a cave near a spring, and was given land for his hermitage by Saint Faro of Meaux, who was bishop at the time. Fiacre asked for land for a garden for food and healing herbs. The bishop said Fiacre could have as much land as he could entrench in one day. The next morning Fiacre walked around the perimeter of the land he wanted, dragged his spade behind him. As the legend goes, wherever the spade touched, trees were toppled, bushes uprooted, and the soil was entrenched. A local woman heard of this, and claimed sorcery was involved, but the bishop decided it was a miracle. This garden, miraculously obtained, became a place of pilgrimage for centuries for those seeking healing.

Is this a Garage Sale?

Everyone knows that I'm the messiest gardener around. When it comes to spring seed starting, planting and transplanting, only I could begin to find anything in our garage. Consequently, we try to keep the garage door closed. This particular day, the area was scattered with pots, plants, and buckets, with frogs, mushrooms and glass balls awaiting their summer home. Slamming down the door, we rushed off to the airport to meet three friends who had brought blueberries and produce from Washington. On our return, we opened the garage to access the freezer. The five of us were busily unloading and storing blueberries when suddenly we noticed a strange mother and son in our midst. Would you believe they thought we were having a garage sale?

(Author's name withheld to protect the innocent.)



Garden Sacrifices

Brenda Bissell

Like all good gardeners, we occasionally have to make sacrifices for one reason or another. This past week, I had to sacrifice my beautiful begonia basket that hangs outside my front door to greet my visitors when I discovered that a bird (Sparrow, I think) decided that this beautiful basket would make a great home for her off spring.

My best friend Deborah came over one night to visit and said, "Buddy, I think a bird is making a nest in your basket." Several days later there was a perfectly formed nest resting inside the large leaves of the plant. There are currently four eggs inside the nest. This basket is off limits to everyone because when you try to look in, the mother gets very agitated and will fly down on the ground and do a lot of dancing and squealing to let you know you are not welcome.

Hopefully all the babies will fare well in the beautiful basket and think of this as a good home. As a side note, I would like to add that I have 9 beautiful trees in my front yard, but apparently the nest had a more "homey" appeal.

Gardening = Strong bones From Garden Gate Magazine July 2007



Researchers at the University of Arkansas recently found that gardening is good for your bones. Women age 50 and over who gardened at least once a week had higher bone densities than did those who jogged, swam, walked, or did aerobics. It's probably the combination of hard work - digging, pulling, pushing, and being outside in the sun.

Sunlight boosts vitamin D production, which helps the body absorb calcium. So get out there and pull weeds- it's good for you.

I graduated from U of A so the article caught my attention! [Editor's note: Whoever sent this please contact me so I can give you credit in next month's newsletter; I inadvertently misplaced your email!]



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

By Rosemary Kimball



NEWS FLASH: Parthenogenic zucchini (Thompson and Morgan catalog) work! Without having to pollinate by hand, I'm getting lots of nice fruit. I will need to fertilize the plants soon though, because little boy flowers are starting to appear instead of having all girls.

Have you ever thought about how many of your friends are MGs? I was thinking about friends that I have the other day and MGs are a common trait, and those that aren't MGs generally have a garden. I was sitting in the Las Vegas airport one day long ago waiting for a late plane and got to talking to the woman to my left. It turned out she was a MG from Wisconsin and had a roll-on suitcase full of cacti. My kind of woman! We've corresponded ever since.

I have several plants in the garden that have become "pet" weeds. I have johnny-jumpups, monkey flowers and some kind of greens for stir fry planted years ago as a row crop which now reseeds somewhat freely. The greens sprout early in the spring and I get several dinners before 8 or 10 of them go to seed for next year's crop.

Have you ever had one of those days when all your planets align, the sun shines and everything that happens that day is wonderful? Have you ever had it again two weeks later? And you know it is going to happen yet again? MG Kathy Wartinbee and I took a mental health day and drove to Anchorage with no real agenda on July 7. After dropping a plant at a friend's house we stopped at Doug Tryk's nursery and he kindly gave us an off-trail tour. His wife started honking the car horn, the signal that someone was waiting in the sales area, so he went down and we followed more leisurely. He was talking to two women when we got back and he introduced me to a woman named Amelia. I stared and said, "as in Walsh?" Remember my whining last month because I didn't live close enough to go to the garden tour at her house? She kindly invited us to see the garden and we followed her home. Yes, it is stunning. The newly stained siding of her house with the red geraniums in front were luminous in the sun, something that can't be captured by camera, just by heart. She took over an hour out of her day to show us around...Thank you, Amelia! We followed it up with a quick trip to Mary Shier's and Gina Docherty's, MGs all. At Mary's house we got to see the ADN photographer shoot a zillion pictures of her and her compost system to illustrate the article that appeared in the paper the following Thursday.

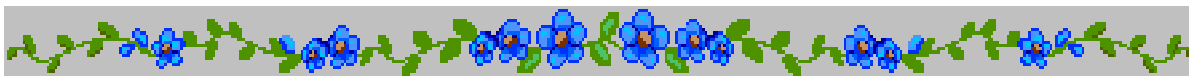
Two weeks later Kathy and I had an invitation to a "brown bag" lunch at MG Edith and David Goodgame's house in Anchorage and I had orders from our local garden club to bring the Goodgames back alive for a presentation down here later in the year. Their yard is stunning. The delphiniums, for which David is known, weren't out yet but the sun was and there was plenty of other stuff blooming...back to that feeling of botanical inferiority. We did get to see the Alika rose blooming that Kathy had ordered new for her garden this year. David also took us over to the house of one of his friends where he has experimental delphiniums rowed out. They also weren't blooming yet, but the yard was so nice, it was worth the visit!

Then July 28/29, Kathy and I are going with two other MGs to Homer to hear Stephanie Cohen speak, spend the night and take in the garden tour. Kathy and I play well together, and as she said, "we don't run with scissors".

Aphids appear in the greenhouse around August first every year. I could almost set my calendar by it. Ditto the dragon flies and the "hop grassers". Cold spring or no, all three showed up, in force, on the doorstep three weeks early. How come is that? It was a cold spring and I would have expected them later, not sooner!

Greenhouse tomatoes are subject to a major mineral deficiency of magnesium. A good site to see what the intervein bronzing looks like is (thank you Kathy Wartinbee) <http://www.luminet.net/~wenonah/min-def/tomatoes.htm> for detailed pictures. A good dose of Epsom salts, a half cup to the watering can, several times during the summer takes care of it mostly.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Bird Chatter

– Julie Riley, Anchorage Horticulture Agent, will be out of the office August 1 through September 18. She is having hip surgery and then taking a mandatory one month off. Most CES faculty are now required to find 1-3 months of their salary through grants.

– Michele Hébert, Land Resources Agent in the Tanana District, starts sabbatical August 1st.

– The Anchorage Daily News would love to have more volunteers involved in answering the questions they receive for their Thursday "Ask an Expert" column. Contact Kirsten Schultz, Features Editor, 257-4330, kschultz@adn.com for details.

– The larva of the yellow-headed spruce sawfly is doing a lot of damage right now. Also there is a sawfly defoliating alders that's not the wooly one.

– The refugees Julie Riley has been working with this summer are selling produce at the Downtown Saturday Market (and at some of the Northway Mall Wednesday Markets) under the business name Fresh International Gardens.

– Is anyone growing perennial *Penstemon*? According to the website <http://www.pfaf.org/index.html>, a number of *Penstemon* species are edible. A plant was brought into the CES for identification and the gardener said his wife thought the leaves were quite delicious. Who knew?

– Check out Perennial Plant of the Year *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low' in the center beds at the ABG herb garden.

– Remember the Alaska State Fair in Palmer this month. You don't have to grow something **GIANT** to place an entry, but you do need a lifetime entry number which you can get from the fair office, 907-746-7166.

– If you are interested in helping with Alaska State Fair flower entries/judging contact Jaime Rodriguez, 907-357-2747, jaime@matnet.com. Superintendent of Crops (which includes herbs) is Kathy Liska, 337-2196, akliska@aol.com. By volunteering you'll get a chance to meet Mat-Su Master Gardeners and will see friendly faces from AMGA.

– Kathy Wartenbe writes: We had some visitors this week. A brown bear sow and 2 spring cubs have visited us twice. The cubs are fun to watch as they play follow the hose, etc. One cub liked to take a break sitting in our cement cast rhubarb leaf. It is a big leaf and a small cub. Hopefully they will move back to the river.

– Herb Spencer ran across an interesting article in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer that recommends aspirin for ailing plants. http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/nwgardens/325091_lovejoy28.html Has anyone up here has tried aspirin? Email: coffeedrinker56@yahoo.com

Denali Park "Need for Seed"

In Denali National Park, native plant seeds are collected by hand every fall to maintain a seed bank for restoration and revegetation projects. This year there is an increased need for seed due to the Front Country Plan, which includes a new Visitors Center, Learning Center, remodel of the Denali Railroad Depot and a new Eielson Visitors Center.

I am now organizing the "Need for Seed - 2007" volunteer effort. This year I will have two sessions. The first session is Tues., Aug. 14 - Fri., Aug. 17. You do not need to commit for the entire 4 days, but please inform me if you can't keep your "Need for Seed" commitment, as I usually have a waiting list of interested volunteers. The second session is Mon., Aug. 20 - Fri., Aug. 24. Due to logistical concerns, I would ask that you commit to the entire five days for this session.

I will instruct you on how to identify the seeds that we are going to collect. We will be working 6 to 8 hours a day and the rest of the time will be yours to enjoy the Park. After your 4 days of volunteer work you will have the option to sign up for up to 3 additional nights of camping in the Park.

What we will provide:

- Camping at the Volunteer Campground, which is ONLY tent camping
- no RV's. This primitive campground is located about .25 miles from the Riley Creek Mercantile which is located near the Park entrance and has pit toilets and drinking water available.
- Transportation from the campground to the worksite.
- All tools necessary for the job including bags and scissors.

What you should bring:

- Camping gear
- Food
- Plenty of warm clothes and rain gear

If you would like to participate in this worthwhile effort or if you have any questions, please call **(907) 683-6246** and leave a message on my voice mail or e-mail me at: wendy_mahovlic@nps.gov. I am in the field during most of the weekdays, but I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thanks so much for your interest and I am looking forward to the opportunity of working with you in collecting seeds which will be used in revegetating the most visible area in Denali National Park and Preserve.

Sincerely,

Wendy Mahovlic
Vegetation Technician



**CENTRAL PENINSULA
MASTER GARDENER NEWS**
cont. from page 5

Summer has settled down to my version of "Weed and Feed" ... weed the garden and feed anyone who stops by. I'm beginning to think of the knee-high weeds that I yank and put into the walkway to till under as inexpensive green manure (just as I think of dust bunnies as inexpensive house pets).

Don't forget to volunteer for the CES booth at the state fair. You get free parking, free admission and meet a lot of neat people. (If you volunteer for the first shift of the day you get to park closer to the entrance!)

And one final thought: Even though the plants are small in May, **DON'T PLANT THREE TUMBLING TOM TOMATOES IN A 12-INCH POT.** You'll never find the fruit when it ripens in the tangle of foliage.



RASPBERRY PLANTS TO SHARE

We have a few red raspberry plants, considerable amount of golden raspberry plants to share or give away. The best time is 11 - 3, Monday through Thursday. Wear heavy gloves and long sleeves, bring digging equipment and containers (bags), whatever - for plants. Some roots are large and don't bend easily.

E-mail me for time possibilities and directions:
sandrah@alaska.com

Sandra Hanson

Edibles and Ornamentals

Have you interplanted edibles and ornamentals? This summer Annie Nevaldine is doing a photo documentary of gardens and beds where vegetables and flowers have been planted together. If you have such a mix, or know someone who does, would you be willing to allow her to take pictures? If so, please contact her at alzina@acsalaska.net or at 333-2100. You just might see your gardens and those of your friends and neighbors in one of her slide presentations! She thanks you VERY much.

Gardening Calendar

August 2, Thursday

Anchorage Garden Club Meeting, "Delphiniums" presented by David Goodgame, 7:30 pm. Contact the Anchorage Garden Club hotline to see if the program is in the Pioneer School House basement or at David's house, 566-0539.

August 5, Sunday

North Root Big Lake Gardeners Hidden Valley Garden Tour, 11 am. Tour interesting and fabulous gardens in the Big Lake/ Meadow Lakes area. This is a progressive tour. Directions for only the first garden are given at the Library. You must proceed to the next garden to get the map to the second garden and so on. There will also be a progressive game with winners selected at the final garden. Location: Meet at Big Lake Library parking lot. Free, but donations will be applied to the NRBLG Scholarship Fund. Need more information? Linda Lockhart at 892-8119

August 6, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association field trip, "Clematis in Bloom", 7 pm. Kris Mulholland's, 7211 E. Chester Heights Circle, 786-6300.

August 15, Wednesday

Mushroom Walk at the Alaska Botanical Garden with Diane Pleninger, 7 pm. Meet at the ABG entrance, 770-3692 or garden@alaskabg.org.

August 18, Saturday

Sweet Pea Day, at Alaska Mill Feed & Garden Center, 1501 E. 1st Ave., Anchorage. Entries can be viewed from 9 am - 5 pm. Flowers will be judged with prizes in several categories, 276-6016

August 20, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association field trip, "Gardens of Spenard", 7 pm. Meet at Gordon Pyle's to begin tour of 3 - 5 gardens. For directions call 786-6300 or 245-8081.

August 23- Sept 3

Alaska State Fair, Palmer "Fun Amongst the GIANTS". Fair hours 12 - 10 pm on weekdays, 10 am - 10 pm on weekends, including Labor. Day Flower and crop entries August 22 and August 28, 907-745-4827.



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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AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org
(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

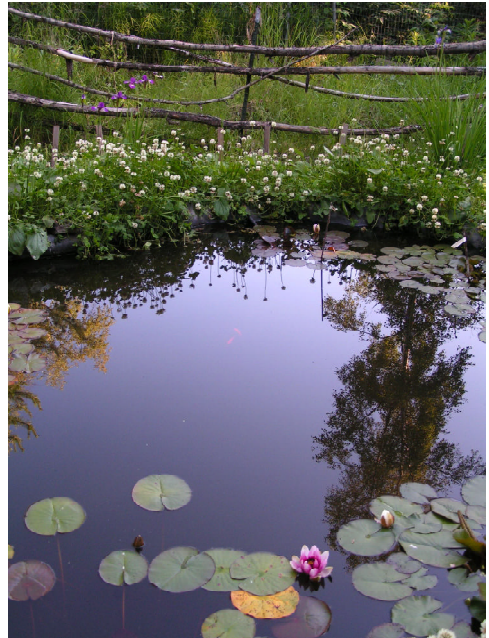
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