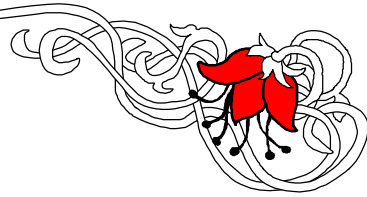


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 9, Issue 12

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER December 2007

New Master Gardeners: 2007 Class Profile By Julie Riley

Fifty-five new gardeners enrolled in the Master Gardener course in Anchorage this fall. They have an incredible amount of experience— 54% have been gardening in Alaska for 20 years or more.

People found out about the program in a diversity of ways. Four mentioned the internet as their source of information. This is a new venue, but word-of-mouth through other Master Gardeners still remains an important means of getting the word out. Nine people found out about Master Gardener from MG friends or relatives. Some mentioned they were *encouraged* to take the course. Thank you C.J. Douglas. Four people found out about the program at shows where Master Gardeners staffed displays. Two people mentioned AMGA member Susan Miller and five their bosses (Pat Leary, Chris Miselle and Jason Coe) who have taken the course. Also thanks to the Anchorage Daily News. Six people said “the newspaper” or specifically the ADN was how they found out about the Master Gardener course.

Eight of new class enrollees are men. This beats the last class’s male participation by three. Eighty percent (80%) of the group has done some type of volunteer work in the past. This statistic is lower than usual but is still a great testament to volunteerism in our community.

There are 12 class members who are involved in the horticulture industry or who are horticulture professionals (22% of class participants). Four people from the UAA Grounds/landscaping crew are taking the course. Owners of Baker Lawn Maintenance, Alaska Pest and Happy Plants Interior Service (in Eagle River) are participating. Other professionals include a sales associate with Bells Nursery & Greenhouse, someone with outdoor flower maintenance responsibilities with Coba’s Plant Care (based in Mat-Su) and someone who does floral design and plant care for Safeway. Nobody has a degree in a horticultural science although one person mentioned Biological Science and another Environment Quality. One person said they’d be happy to get a horticulture degree if a program was offered here.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the class belongs to a gardening club or association. Five groups were mentioned including the Anchorage Garden Club, the Wildflower Garden Club, and the Alaska Orchid Society. One person is already an AMGA member! Thirty percent (30%) of the class are members of the Alaska Botanical Garden. Lori Zaumseil is starting a non-profit organization with the purpose of helping to stop invasive plants (CANWIN). One person mentioned belonging to 3 wildlife/environmental organizations. (Interestingly, many of these groups also include gardening information in their publications.) Mary Ellen Harris went through Master Gardener training in Seattle and Mike Peters in Texas.

When asked which gardening magazines were read regularly, 46% of the class responded affirmatively. The magazine *Horticulture* is the winner with nine people reading it regularly. Three people listed *Organic Gardening*, *Mother Earth News*, *Herb Quarterly* and *Fine Gardening*. Other magazines mentioned included *Garden Design*, *Birds ‘n’ Blooms*, *Country Living Gardener*, and *Garden Gate*. The two people who read *Sunset* asked if it was considered a gardening magazine. Three professional/trade publications also surfaced— [Good] *Fruit Grower*, the American Rose Society’s magazine, and interior plantscaping journals. One person asked if seed catalogs counted and another said they read any hand-me-downs they can get their hands on. (So keep recycling your old magazines at AMGA meetings.) Although not asked, more than 10 class members mentioned getting gardening information through books, the newspaper, the internet, newsletters and Extension publications.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



New MG Profiles cont.

Fifty-six percent (56%) of class participants said they had not tried to take the Master Gardener course before this year. Of those who said they had tried before, 5 people couldn't get into the class because it was full, 7 said they had been hoping to take the course in 2006 but it wasn't offered, 1 person said she had no Alaskan gardening experience and 2 couldn't take it because of their own schedules.

Amazingly, 40% of the class has made special arrangements to be able to take the class when it is offered on Wednesday and Friday afternoons. Of the 20 people who made special arrangements, 18 said they had to somehow change their work schedule. Wow! One person had to find child care and 1 person planned not to travel. It looks like the Anchorage Cooperative Extension Service will have a great group of new Master Gardener volunteers in 2008 and AMGA will have a new crop of members.

Good Reading for your Favorite Gardener Suggestions from the 2007 Master Gardener Class Submitted by Kay Vinson

Epitaph for a Peach,

David Mas Masumoto. (1996).

A California orchardist farms organically to promote a heritage peach to a different market.

One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest,

Wade Davis. (1996).

An Ethnobotanist explores the forest, plants and people of the rain forest.

The Lost Gardens of Heligan,

Tim Smit. (1997).

An amazing tale of a garden restoration in Northern England.

Tulipomania,

Mike Dash. (1999).

The history of the tulip and the economic speculation that occurred in Holland in the late 1630's.

The Omnivore's Dilemma,

Michael Pollan, (2006).

A different view of America's meat production and eating habits.

The Botany of Desire,

Michael Pollan. (2001).

A clever view of our relationship to nature and four plants (apple, tulip, marijuana and potato).

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food,

Barbara Kingsolver, (2007).

Second Nature: a gardener's education,

Michael Pollan, (1991).

Gardening philosophy.

Botany for Gardeners,

Brian Capon, (2005).

Guerilla Gardening,

David Tracy, Ph.D. (2007).

Weeders Digest: the best of green prints,

Pat Stone, (1996).

"Great Alaskan Taste Discoveries"

Submitted by Julie Riley

The November AMGA meeting, "Great Alaska Taste Discoveries" brought an interesting sampling of dishes, most of which sat on the dessert end of the table. Carol Ross, Master Gardener and retired home economics teacher, brought a delicious fruit crisp made with Alaskan-grown rhubarb, apples and lowbush cranberries that she harvested. Carol owns & operates Big Bear Bed & Breakfast and also shared the following recipe at her statewide B&B convention.

Rhubarb/Apple /Cranberry Crisp

5 C rhubarb
2 tart apples (pared, cored and sliced into chunks)
1 C Alaska lowbush cranberries
zest of 1 orange
2 C sugar
3 Tbsp. minute tapioca
½ Tsp. cinnamon

Combine sugar, tapioca, cinnamon and pour over fruit. Mix to coat and let sit a while to make juice.

Pour into 10" round casserole dish (or 9 X 13 pan) and cover with wax paper. Microwave 3 minutes, 3 times, until fruit sinks down a bit. Then put on crumb topping. Carol likes to use 2/3 of the recipe below (and keep the other 1/3 refrigerated for later).*

½ C flour
½ C sugar
½ C quick oats
½ C old-fashioned oats
½ cube butter, cut into small pieces (1/4 C)

Mix the above ingredients with a pastry blender until crumbly. Then add 1/2 C chopped walnuts.

Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes, letting fruit boil for 10 minutes. The length of time depends on the kind of apples used. Apples are cooked if a tooth pick goes easily through the fruit. (Carol places the fruit crisp on the bottom rack of her oven with a foil pizza pan or other drip catcher beneath it to keep the oven clean.)

* Working her way through college at Peggy's Airport Cafe in Anchorage, Carol learned a way to create recipes that had easy-to-remember quantities of ingredients.



*If "ifs" and "buts" were
candy and nuts,
wouldn't it be
a Merry Christmas?
~Don Meredith*



Pickling your Paperwhites Ginning Up Paperwhites That Don't Flop Over Using Alcohol to Reduce Growth of Paperwhite Narcissus

http://www.hort.cornell.edu/miller/bulb/Pickling_your_Paperwhites.pdf

William B. Miller

Professor of Horticulture

Director of the Flowerbulb Research Program

Cornell University

The paperwhite narcissus is a popular bulb for indoor forcing in the winter months. Unlike most other daffodils, paperwhites (*Narcissus tazetta*) do not require a cold period. They are simply planted in pots with soil, or even more commonly, in dishes or bowls with gravel, marbles or other decorative material. With a little water, they rapidly form roots, grow leaves and shoots. The white, fragrant flowers usually open up within 2-3 weeks of planting.

A common problem with paperwhites, however, is that they often grow too tall and flop over.

Recent research conducted by the Flowerbulb Research Program at Cornell University has found a simple and effective way to reduce stem and leaf growth of paperwhites. The "secret" is using dilute solutions of alcohol. Properly used, the result is paperwhites that are 1/3 to 1/2 shorter, with equal sized flowers that last as long as normal.

What to do

We suggest planting your paperwhite bulbs in stones, gravel, marbles, glass beads, etc. as usual. Add water as you normally would, then wait about 1 week until roots are growing, and the shoot is green and growing about 1-2" above the top of the bulb. At this point, pour off the water and replace it with a solution of 4 to 6% alcohol, made from just about any "hard" liquor. You can do the calculations to figure the dilution, but, as an example, to get a 5% solution from a 40% distilled spirit (e.g., gin, vodka, whiskey, rum, tequila), you add 1 part of the booze to 7 parts of water. This is an 8-fold dilution yielding 5% alcohol. Then, simply use this solution, instead of water, for further irrigation (watering) of your bulbs. It's as simple as that. The result will be a plant that is 1/3 shorter, but with flowers just as large, fragrant, and long-lasting as usual. But, the plant will be nicely proportioned and won't need support stakes, wires, or other gizmos to keep it upright. You will see results within just a few days. You can have some fun by doing a simple experiment having one bowl of bulbs given normal water and the other given the alcohol. You will see a dramatic difference, as shown in the picture. This could be a neat activity to occupy kids during the upcoming holiday season!

A few other thoughts

- Do not use beer or wine, as the sugars in them will cause major problems with the plants
- As with humans, paperwhites can also suffer alcohol overdoses! We suggest 4-6% alcohol as a normal and safe range. If plants are given much more than 10% alcohol, growth problems will start, and 25% alcohol is dramatically toxic. So, moderation is the key!
- It is not strictly necessary pour off the water after the plants are rooted (as we suggest above). You can just as well add your 5% alcohol without pouring the water off. The result, though, will be a lower than optimal alcohol concentration around the roots, and, ultimately, growth will not be reduced as much as you expect. The reason to pour off the water is to simply maximize the alcohol level around the roots.
- Basically, the higher the alcohol concentration (within reason), the shorter the plants. So it is not critical whether you use 4, 5, or 6% alcohol. Just stay well below 10%, where growth problems become noticeable.
- If you do not have alcohol for consumption in your household, rubbing alcohol (isopropyl alcohol) works just as well. Since this is usually 70% alcohol when purchased, a dilution of 1 part rubbing alcohol to 10 or 11 parts water is appropriate.
- Why does this happen? We are currently working on this, but we feel it is simply "water stress", where the alcohol makes it more difficult for the plant to absorb water. The plant suffers a slight lack of water, enough to reduce leaf and stem growth, but not enough to affect flower size or flower longevity.
- I thank Erin Finan (Cornell '05, horticulture undergrad) who worked on this as a senior project, and to Leslie Land of the New York Times who first posed the question "Does gin affect paperwhites?" to me in early 2005. Jan Doornbosch of International Bulb Co. in New Jersey graciously supplied bulbs, and Group 1 of the Royal Dutch Wholesalers' Association for Flowerbulbs and Nursery Stock, Hillegom, The Netherlands, provided financial support for this work.



The effect of alcohol on growth of 'Ziva' paperwhite narcissus. Left: Untreated plant, growing in pebbles with water. Right: Plant in pebbles, grown with 5% alcohol instead of water.



From the "Ask a Master Gardener" Files

My husband wants to become a master gardener when he retires. He's "practicing" now with our little greenhouse and raised vegetable garden beds. I'd like to get him some "inspiring" gifts for Christmas, including membership in the Alaska Master Gardeners Association - :-). Do you have any suggestions for gifts for a budding master gardener?

Cool Gadgets?

Best Magazine Subscriptions?

Best books?

Necessary Tools?

If you have any ideas, can you give me a good resource on where to go to obtain any of these items? Any suggestions would be gratefully received. S

Dear S:

There is lots and lots of stuff for gardeners. Start with a trip to the Cooperative Extension Service for pamphlets, many of which are free. Or/and you can get a CD of all their pamphlets, \$50 worth!, for \$10. I have an apple and although it is apple compatible, it is slow. But when I need a reference, I've got it without going to my messy file cabinet downstairs. Particularly good references are "16 Steps to Gardening in Alaska" and the one on trees and shrubs for this area.

Then go to Borders/Amazon/Title Wave. Sunset and Readers' Digest put out good basic reference books. There are also several local gardening books which are more specific to Alaska.

Then you go to Alaska Mill and Feed and poke around there for ideas.

And then, if you really want to score, you go to the Honda dealer and get him one of the Honda 4-cycle minitillers for around \$325. I use one frequently during the summer for "weeding" when I can't use my 8-HP Troybilt. It's a wonderful machine in that it can work up a square foot to a long row. Then you get a January magazine dealing with gardens and look for the blow-in slips for catalogs. Stoke and Thompson and Morgan are good. And there is Burpee, Parks, White Flower Farm, Shephards, Pine Tree (nice small quantities of interesting veggie seeds) Johnny's, Charlie's Greenhouse and lots more.

Have fun with this present. R

Dear S:

Gardeners can always use new tools. Check out Alaska Mill Feed & Garden store, they have a lot of neat gardening tools; think about ergonomic tools if he is retiring in 2 years (trowels, spades, shovels, rakes, etc). Good thick gardening gloves are nice too, as well as the disposable latex ones, but this is a matter of taste too. Compost bins are nice, but it might be the wrong time of year to get one. Kneeling pads are always nice, or knee pads. Those little

contraptions that you can kneel on (garden kneelers) or turn over & sit on are nice; they're about \$30. Check out www.gardeners.com & see what kind of stuff they have. Or just do a search on line for 'garden gifts' & you will find a ton of stuff. You can also compare prices with shipping as opposed to buying it locally. Lowes probably has stuff too.

There is a good book by Lenore Hedla about gardening in AK. It is a general gardening book that explains a lot about gardening in AK. I'm not sure if it is still in print or not but hopefully AK M&F will have it. Book selection is a matter of taste too; what you & I might like, he might not enjoy.

There are a lot of good gardening magazines out there too; it kind of depends on his taste. Why not give him an assortment of garden magazines for Christmas & see what he likes. You can also send away on line to get him some seed catalogs to browse through & they are free.

Good luck! G



Virus "X"

Lorri Abel,

"In The Garden Nursery"

Mid summer last year an astute gardener, Sharon Davies, pointed out a subtle problem with some Hosta in my nursery and acquainted me with what is known in the trade as "Virus X".

While the plants appeared to be growing well, there was some subtle color variations on them and sure enough after I did my research I discovered she was right. I was unknowingly selling plants affected with this problem. The leaves appeared mottled, there were dark patches in the gold foliage, and some subtle 'bleeding' of color into surrounding tissue. Though it was a bit painful, I delivered about six flats of Hosta to the landfill the next day.

There is a concerted effort in the trade to eliminate this disease. The varieties most often affected are Gold Standard, Striptease, and Sum and Substance; but there are others too. I will no longer be buying Hosta from the supplier that had sold these but will instead buy from virus tested plant stock.

Please take a moment when purchasing Hosta from any source and examine the leaves carefully. It can be a very subtle difference. To see pictures of affected leaves visit

www.hostalibrary.org/firstlook/HVX.htm.





Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball

This is recovery time from tryptophan-induced somnambulism. After the quick appearance of the Thompson & Morgan catalog, I expected the avalanche of catalogs to begin but I'm still waiting. Ordering from catalogs is a science of sorts. I try to order from T&M each year to guarantee it's arrival and from the other catalogs every two or three years which seems all that is necessary for their assured yearly arrival.

We ate tomatoes until after Thanksgiving. The tomatoes that were picked green as I was clearing out the greenhouse, have had a better texture and flavor than the ones picked "ripe" from the vine! The Northern Exposure (I think that's what they were) had a good acid/sugar balance that gives the fruit its flavor. I'm waiting for my Totally Tomatoes catalog to come to get more seed of that variety. Besides tasting better, it is not subject to blossom-end rot like Early Girl is.

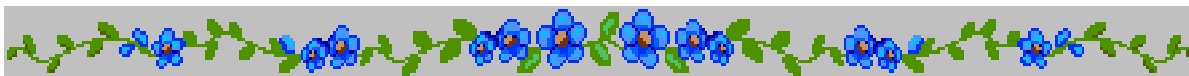
I came across a reference to genetically modified organisms calling the process "synthetic" biology which you have to admit is a catchy phrase but which may not be wholly accurate. Science News for September 29 this year had a short article on a GM rice that was modified to greatly reduce its water requirement for growing. Rice is the staple grain for more than half of the world's population, especially those in developing nations, and since a looming cause of war is water, that seems like a good use of modification. The article said the developers are not sure whether the yield will be as good as the water-grown rice,

The first inch of snow was November 9, and then two days later the morning temperature dropped to 4°F! There was 8 inches of snow, a satisfactory amount, by November 18. MG Barb Jewell said her perennials were purring under the blanket. HOWEVER! After days of $\pm 40^\circ$ F the snow is gone and the bare ground is saturated at the top from all the rain. For the very end of November, the temperature is to drop, the skies clear and no snow is predicted. I just wince. Barb has characterized the climactic conditions now as "scary". After last November with no snow insulation and cold temperatures we had to replant 400 feet of strawberries, only the second time in 25 years. I'm really not in the mood to do that two years running. I did want to modify the row placement for greater ease of rototilling (read weeding) but I hope this will not have to be the year.

I finally got enough time to read the Spring Planting Issue of Horticulture Magazine as it floated to the top of the summer's accumulated heap of magazines that I was sorting through. An interesting web site to visit (www.advancedsoils.com) is that for ZeoPro, a NASA-developed fertilizer/growing medium. It's rather pricey but if it would enable me to grow geraniums without sick leaves, I'd be willing to try it—once. The magazine also had a plant profile of *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' which I'd gotten in May, planted out and then wondered why it didn't grow well. It needs dampish soil with plenty of organic matter and it was planted in the driest part of the sandy soil in front of the house. Who could blame it? The hardiness zone was 3, the soil not frozen in spite of the calendar, so I rushed out and dug it, apologizing profusely, and put it in a generous pot in the unheated sun room.

It's gray and rainy. Why do I keep going over in my mind the wonderful warm sunny afternoon in Amelia Walsh's garden?





Bird Chatter

- Does soon-to-be Master Gardener Michael Carey get the prize for planting the last bulbs in Anchorage this fall? He was out digging Thanksgiving week!
- MG Nickel LeFleur was named Volunteer of the Month for November by Anchorage Parks & Recreation. Thanks for all you do Nickel and for providing the AMGA newsletter with Anchorage TREErific articles.
- Heard on David Letterman- New York City plans to plant 1 million trees so they will have as many trees as Starbucks.
- AMGA Directory editor Sandra Harrington has additional talents. Her brightly colored abstract oil paintings and paint collages were featured at Artique, Ltd. last month. See http://www.artiqueltd.com/artworks/item/artwork_id/816/start/39.
- Have you ever wondered what happened to Doug Leiser of Alaska Greenhouses? The Nov. issue of the magazine Alaska contains an article on Doug and his sons doing extensive volunteer cleaning-up work in Prince William Sound and at other beach locations.
- STAR's fall newsletter included a paragraph thanking Amelia Walsh for her thoughtful donation of cut flowers for the tables at their "Tea in the Garden" fundraiser last summer which was held in the garden of MG Catherine Renfro.
- MG and garden designer Erma MacMillan has a house with a "green roof". She will be speaking at the Alaska Botanical Garden's Spring Garden Conference on March 29, 2008 as will MG and Fritz Creek Gardens owner Rita Jo Shultz. (Other MGs and AMGA members are expected to show up on the agenda, too.)
- Julie Riley attended a national meeting of Extension Master Gardener Coordinators at the University of California-Davis last month and at an olive oil tasting at the Chancellor's residence learned that much of the olive oil we use is rancid.
- Master Gardeners are always on the look-out for important horticultural news. Katherine Renshaw sent in an article from a Grand Junction, Colorado, newspaper about a dog trained to sniff out invasive weeds! His name is Nightmare.

- In keeping with the AMGA newsletter thread on slugs, Fran Durner provides the following list of plants that slugs adore (in addition to Hosta and Ligularia): wood violet, lily-of-the-valley, rhubarb, Verbascum phoenicium, Rudbeckia 'Green Wizard', Campanula 'White Clips' and heirloom French marigolds. [Julie Riley would be happy to add your nominees to the list.]

- The CES office will be closed between December 24 and January 2 for the holidays. Remember there is no AMGA meeting this month.

- Remember to feed the birds. Sunflower seeds, both cracked and whole seed, are enjoyed but not millet.

2008 AMGA Conference Needs Gardens to Tour

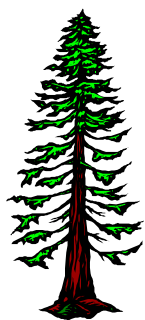
The MG Conference Planning Committee is looking for gardens to tour on the Sunday after the conference (May 11, 2008). Please contact Julie or one of the AMGA board members.

Request from Alaska Home Magazine

Hello Gardeners,
Alaska Home is working on a possible story idea for our Spring issue regarding the use of all natural pest controls in the yard to safeguard pets. Everything from lawn chemicals to pesticides can be potentially harmful to pets. What are the dangers? And what are some all-natural ways to protect our pets? Also, are there actual plants in the garden that can be harmful if pets ingest them? I'd appreciate any feedback. Thank you,
Tosha Kelly
Direct: (907) 562-9031
Tosha@AlaskaLifePublishing.com



*Christmas waves a magic wand
over this world, and behold,
everything is softer
and more beautiful.
~Norman Vincent Peale*



TREErific Q & A

Q. What is a certified arborist?

A: Great question! Trees are the largest and longest lived organisms on earth. They quietly provide us and our cities with many tangible and important benefits. Trees

clean the air and water, capture rainfall, help recharge the groundwater supply and pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Strategically placed trees can reduce utility bills and emissions associated with energy production, and increase property values. To maximize these benefits we need to invest in and care for our trees to keep them vigorous and prolong their lifespans.

There are certain things that we as homeowners can do to care for trees, like watering, mulching, light pruning and keeping an eye on them, but there are many things that we can't do to care for our trees. This is the responsibility of an arborist, someone who is trained and skilled in the art and science of planting, caring for and maintaining individual trees.

A good arborist can provide many services. They know and understand the needs of trees, and how they function. Arborists can become certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) after they have at least 3 years of experience in the tree care industry, and have passed a comprehensive exam. It is a voluntary certification and attests to the individual's knowledge of trees and their care. To maintain this credential, certified arborists are required to keep up to date on current research and trends in the industry. For tips on how to hire an arborist and more about ISA arborist certification, please visit www.treesaregood.org, www.pnwisa.org or www.forestry.alaska.gov/community/.

Anchorage TREErific, a community group that plants, cares for, and promotes trees, would love to have your help. Send questions or sign up for notices of events to TREErificAnchorage@yahoo.com or call Nancy Beardsley at 343-4288.

Written by Stephen Nickel, from the Alaska Division of Forestry, Community Forestry Program, which supports Anchorage TREErific and community forestry groups statewide.

Gardening Calendar

December 12, 2007

"Sports Turf Managers Workshop", Dr. Steve Brown, Cooperative Extension Service, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m., Palmer Agricultural & Forestry Experiment Station, So. Trunk Road (off Parks Hwy.), Palmer. Free, but registration required, 907-745-3360, ffscb2@uaf.edu.

December 17, 2007

No AMGA meeting. HAPPY HOLI DAYS.

January 3, 2008

"Botanical Gardens Across our Continent", a slide show by Debbie Hinchey in conjunction with the Anchorage Garden Club program meeting, Thursday 7:30 p.m., Pioneer School House basement, corner of E. 3rd Ave. and Eagle St.

January 30 & 31, 2008

"Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference", Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge, \$100. For more information, Fairbanks, 907-474-1530; Anchorage, 786-6300.

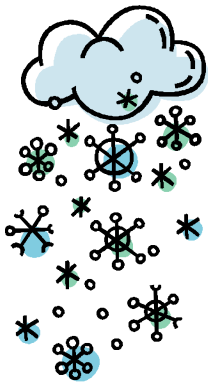
February 9, 2008

"Let's Prepare a PowerPoint Presentation with Digital Photos Level 1", by Dana Klinkhart. A class for computer novices. Saturday, 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Pre-registration with the Alaska Botanical Garden required, 770-3692, \$15 ABG & AMGA members, \$25 non-members. Held at UAA/APU Consortium Library, Rm 309 Computer Lab; 3211 Providence Dr., Anchorage. Space is limited.



*It is Christmas in the heart
that puts Christmas in the air.
~W. T. Ellis*

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!)



Let it SNOW!!!

*Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of hospitality
in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart.*

~Washington Irving

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