

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

February 2007



From the President's Corner Dana Klinkhart

The AMGA members elected four directors to the MG Board at our annual business meeting on January 15th. I am very pleased to welcome JoAnna Littau, Joyce Palmer, Gina Docherty and Sue Lincoln to the Board of Directors. Elections were held for officers and the results were:

Dana Klinkhart President
Marge Olson Vice President
Sue Lincoln Treasurer
Anita Williams Co Secretary
Pat Anderson Co Secretary

The Board of Directors will now serve the association and run all the business required to keep everything flowing smoothly. We always hope that you will feel welcome to contact us with your ideas and your concerns. It takes all of us to keep the organizational gears running. Did you realize that in addition to officers, numerous committee chair persons volunteer to serve our gardening community as well? Our new volunteer coordinator is JoAnna Littau, Sandra Harrington creates the directory and maintains the membership database and Marge Olson heads the educational committee to bring us great programs and tours. And each month, we all receive our eight page newsletter designed and published by Gina Docherty. The service projects at the Pioneer Home and the Alaska Botanical Garden function efficiently because of the leadership of Mary Shier, Judy Christianson and Beth Schlabaugh. And kudos to all members who generously give of their time and talent to teach others in our gardening community!

Thanks to the numerous responses on the membership renewal forms, we have a creative list of ideas for programs and tours. This year promises to bring us together to experience new ways to garden and then to pass that knowledge along. Stay tuned!

Please help us to keep your contact information accurate during the course of the year. You can contact Sandra Harrington at: dsharr@ptialaska.net or 346-3599 to make the changes.

A survey is being designed to serve as a tool for the board of directors to review the operation of the Alaska Master Gardeners Association. We want to hear from you. We want to know what you appreciate and what is not working for you. This survey will be generated through an email message with a link to the site for participation. It is planned to take just a few moments of your time. So please, watch for the questionnaire in the coming weeks.

We are already filling our calendar with plans for gardening. The Alaska State Master Gardener Conference is March 16 & 17 at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge, the ABG Spring Conference is being held here in Anchorage on March 31st, and the Alaska Garden and Art Festival has been scheduled at the State Fair Grounds on July 21. Ah... so many things, so little time. How fortunate we are to have the choices, right?



Master Gardener Nationwide News

Cooperative Extension Service's Master Gardener program started in King County, Washington, in 1973. Since that time Master Gardeners across the country have become revered as experts trained to be volunteers for Cooperative Extension Service. Whenever something big pops up, such as getting the word out on Sudden Oak Death, the cry goes out that: "Master Gardeners can do it". But can Master Gardeners do it? Who can speak for Master Gardeners? In Alaska alone there are (at least) four organized Master Gardener Associations. How can Master Gardeners operate across county/district/ state lines?

At a meeting in Minneapolis of Extension Master Gardener Coordinators/Consumer Horticulture Specialists, Jim Green, National Program Leader for Horticulture, broached the idea of putting together a National Master Gardener Steering Committee (11/ 05)

Last summer committee members were elected from MG Coordinators across the U.S. (6/06). I mmediately the committee started working on a promotional campaign for the MG Program which included sponsoring a National MG logo contest. (The winning entry will be announced at the I nternational Master Gardener Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, May 2-5, 2007.)

Then in Lexington, Kentucky, at an eXtension forum titled Consumer Horticulture II (11/06), a mission statement was created for the Master Gardener Program which reads in part: "Certified Extension Master Gardener volunteers empower people and communities by delivering research-based horticulture programs and educational information." The "Certified Extension" part is an effort to distinguish Master Gardeners from others who claim the title in a non-Extension volunteer capacity.

eXtension, (little e, big X and pronounced ee-extension) is an educational partnership of more than 70 universities including UAF. Plans are afoot to ask for your participation as part of a national effort to provide answers to gardening questions via the internet through eXtension's "Ask an Expert", something you already do through your own website. It's an exciting time to be a Master Gardener. Stay tuned for more on eXtension next month.

Leadership Changes at CES

The new year brought changes in UAF Cooperative Extension Service's leadership. Tony Nakazawa recently accepted a faculty position in UAF's School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences (SNRAS) and Associate Director, Bill Butler is no longer at CES.

Dr. Nakazawa served as Director for UAF Cooperative Extension Service for 10 years and during this time strongly supported the Master Gardener program. I remember him being impressed with the conference you put together in 1998.

Pete Pinney, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs with the College of Rural and Community Development has been appointed Interim Director. According to a press release issued by UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks Chancellor Steve Jones and Bernice Joseph, Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education have announced that UAF plans to launch a national search for a new director for Cooperative Extension Service. The move is in concert with a plan to strengthen Cooperative Extension and boost its statewide visibility and impact. Goals include increasing public awareness of the education and information services available at the nearly two dozen extension offices and publication distribution points throughout Alaska. In addition, UAF plans to reinforce the relationship between Cooperative Extension and other units in UAF so that it is recognized both as a source of reliable information and as a gateway to UAF. Eric Madsen, Dean of the UAF School of Education, will lead the CES Director Search Committee.



Upcoming Winter AMGA Programs

The February AMGA meeting presentation will be "Dahlias", by Camille Williams. Camille is always a blue ribbon winner for her dahlias at the State Fair and was on the Anchorage Garden tour to showcase her dahlia garden. Don't forget to bring your favorite dish for the POTLUCK!

The March meeting will be "Plant Life in I srael", presented by Elizabeth Holt. The slide presentation of her trip to I srael last spring and the plant life in this type of landscape promises to be a very interesting evening. The plantings are gorgeous in the desert - a challenge with all the rock.

Mark your calendars - see you there!



Alaska Botanical Garden Hosts Special Event



Annual meeting

Feature guest Sally Cunningham, author of **Great Garden Companions**, will be addressing beneficial insects and other creatures that can help your garden thrive in her presentation "I nvite Nature to Your Yard & Garden". Held at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art

on Friday, March 31, from 7-9 p.m. the presentation is open to the public and free of charge.

Spring Garden Conference

Saturday, March 31, brings a full day of gardening seminars with a choice of 16 sessions to choose from. The fee for this event is \$25 for ABG members or Master Gardeners (\$30 for non-members) and includes a complimentary lunch for those registered by March 23. Full registration materials will be available in the March ABG newsletter and on the ABG website. The ABG Spring Garden Conference will be held at the UAA/APU Consortium Library, 3rd floor from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Below is the list of classes.

10:30am Session

- ∠ Terrestrial Orchids, Sally Karabelnikoff, Alaska Orchid Society
- Two Perspectives on Rock Garden Design, Verna Pratt & Carmel Tysver, Alaska Rock Garden Society
- Fruit Trees, Dan Elliot & Kevin I rvin, Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers

12:00 to 1:00pm Lunch

1:00pm Session

- ∠ Let's Prepare a PowerPoint Show from our Digital Photos, Dana Klinkhart, Master Gardener & Perennial Learner
- 🗷 Hardy Bulbs, Charlie Kempton, Anchorage Garden Club

2:30pm Session

- Teaming with Microbes: Learn How & Why to Garden Organically, Jeff Lowenfels, Alaska Botanical Garden
- *⊠* Garden Literature Index for Beginners, Judy Green, Alaska Botanical Garden

4:00pm Session

- Falling for Autumn, Les Brake, Willow Garden Club
- Z Centennial Rose Garden: Where Alaska's History & Roses Grow Together, Debbie Hinchey, Alaska Rose Society
- *⊠* Garden Literature Index for Scholars, Judy Green, Alaska Botanical Garden
- *⊠* Winter Hardy Trees for Bonsai, Paul Marmora, Cook I nlet Bonsai Study Group



Potato Fact or Fiction

In honor of National Potato Lover's Month and to remember those Master Gardeners who last February sampled over 20 different potato varieties (without butter) we bring you the following True or False trivia game.

- 1. Because of their vitamin C content, miners during the Alaskan Klondike gold rush traded gold for potatoes.
- T / F
- 2. Potatoes occur naturally on every continent.
- T/F
- 3. The largest potato on record was longer than a Volkswagen bus, but weighed more than 3 Volkswagens.
- T/F
- 4. Marie Antoinette, wife of French King Louis XV, was known to wear potato blossoms in her hair.
- T / F
- 5. I ntroduced in 1952, Mr. Potato Head was the first toy to be advertised on television.
- T/F
- 6. I daho's nickname is "The Potato State".
- T/F
- 7. Horticulture Specialist Jeff Smeenk is testing 200 potato varieties at the UAF Ag & Forestry Experiment Station in Palmer.
- T / F
- 8. Late blight was not found on potatoes in the Mat-Su Valley in 2006.
- T/F
- 9. Peruvian villagers called potatoes *huatáta*, meaning "ground apples".
- T/F
- 10. Clark, South Dakota, is home to the world famous Mashed Potato Wrestling Contest.
- T / F
- (Answers on page 7)







To Be a Gardener

By Marge Olson

Lately, while walking the dogs, I reflect on some of my new friends this past year. They aren't gardeners. What a strange lot they are.

First of all, they ask, "What do you do in the winter when you can't garden?" I tell them that first, I spend time shoveling snow into the yard to clear the walkways and drives. This is followed up months later by shoveling the snow into the street when it starts to melt to expose the ground earlier. This gives me a two week head start on my neighbors. These people actually believe that 'gardening' only occurs when the ground is exposed and not frozen. Gardeners are busy thinking of changes that they would like to see in our garden. Is this the year that I try a water feature?

They complain about all the catalogs in the mail at Christmas time. We look forward to the spring garden catalogs. Winter is for dreaming. We check the catalogs for new unknown plants that we haven't tried. Maybe a new color is available. Maybe it is a new nursery that we just heard of. We plot out what we want and where we want to order it from. This keeps us quite busy.

Non gardeners buy sad lights to brighten their day. Early spring is when we start all sorts of plants inside for our garden. We have plants under grow lamps and they are our "glad" lights. What is coming up today? Have you ever planted cat grass and literally watch it come up and get tall in one week?

About now the days are getting longer and we are getting more serious about additions to our yard this year. I mportant decisions are made about when to remove the compost and leaves from the garden. What fertilizer shall I buy or should I try the compost tea? I tried the 'sprayed on compost tea' last summer and it was great. I'll never spread chemicals again. It worked for me but will it work for you? We have long intellectual discussions on whether Messenger is right for your plants. Mensa would love us.

What a happy day it is when the nurseries open and we can go and pick out plants, trees and shrubs. You have to get there early to get the best buys. The days are longer now but never long enough to get every thing done that we dreamed about. The riot of color in the yard is our reward and we spend much of our time just enjoying the beauty.

We know that global warming is happening. We do have a fall now and need to adjust our plantings to have fall berries and colorful leaves. As it gets cooler we spread the compost around the plants to keep them warm until the snows blanket the earth again.

The yearly cycle is completed once more. Snow covers the earth and we can enjoy the bare branches coated with snow reaching for the sky. The snow glistens in the light and we are kept inside by the fireplace remembering the past year in our garden and planning the next year to be even better. Our work is done but really never done because each new day brings a new cycle. Non gardeners are still trying to figure out what we do and when. The only hope is to get them started on a new life with nature.

"To create a garden is to search for a better world.

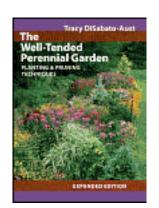
In our effort to improve on nature,
we are guided by a vision of paradise.
Whether the result is a horticultural masterpiece
Or only a modest vegetable patch,
it is based on the expectation of a glorious future.
This hope for the future is at the heart of all gardening."

Martha Schinz



Meet Tracy DiSabato-Aust

One of three national speakers to be featured at the Alaska Master Gardener Conference March 16-17 in Fairbanks, Tracy DiSabato-Aust a.k.a. "The Queen of Deadheading" has earned international acclaim as one of America's most entertaining and knowledgeable garden



writers and professional speakers. With more than 30 years experience in the horticulture industry— both in the United States and abroad—the Web is full of information on all the fascinating work Tracy has done. Her bookThe Well—Tended Perennial Garden was just printed as an expanded edition last year. It has been one of Timber Press's top selling gardening books, and discusses in-depth maintenance techniques

for many Zone 2 & 3 perennials.





Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball

WOW!!! The bright spot of the month was Brenda Adams of Gardens By Design in Homer (www.gardensbybrenda.com) who started off our spring lecture series. It was snowing that night, yet we had 65 people show up for her talk!

Brenda and her husband came up to Alaska for a long weekend in 1991 and casually drove to Homer. They stopped at the overlook coming into town, fell in love with the area and six months later moved into their newly-built house. Now that's what I call moving!

Brenda had a Power Point presentation of gardens that she has designed in the Homer area starting with 'before' and going through to the finished products. Her web site has the pictures she showed us, but what you don't get are her explanations of the site's challenges and her solutions to them. Her web site shows what she's accomplished at the Homer Boat Harbor, not the most glamorous of venues. Her 'before' pictures show two sites with absolutely NO redeeming features: compacted soil, people trails, gravel. The finished products are small, virtually maintenance-free, attractive, raised bed gardens.

Two things that really grabbed my attention were a perennial Geranium named Rozanne and a big rock she used for a water feature in a garden. She got Rozanne, the geranium, from Fritz Creek Gardens, and that flower is a "must have" for me next summer: low growing and big blue flowers with white eyes. I have a site where I can let it spread as large as it wants and it can turn into a "thug" in a

Rozanne



small area. The other grabber, the rock, was 9 feet by 2-1/2 feet by I don't know what. Me, The Tightwad of all tightwads, would have shelled out the cost of that rock (substantial) in half a heartbeat and with great delight!

There's a certain amount of plant angst when one bunks a garden designer for the night. Kathy Wartinbee just laughed and said her garden was perfect for Brenda's visit—covered by snow!

Ramrod Janice brought up the fact that we'd been doing the public lecture series for nine years! That would be nine Pad Thais, at least thirty batches of cookies that we bring as enticements for an equal number speakers. The lecture series started with a cohort of people in a Master Gardener class that wanted to get their hours in with limited opportunities down here for that, and has morphed into some really interesting programs! J.D. Megchelson, holder of the Alaska 1,019 pound record pumpkin is speaking February 15. We're planning on our goodies having a pumpkin base.

Other then Brenda's star in the firmament, the winter is continuing in its slow pace. It's so slow I 've got all my herb and spice jars filled and alphabetized and I 've ordered and received my first few seed orders. That's slow! Don't forget to go to Territorial Seed Company (www.territorial-seed.com) to check out the Beaverlodge series of tomatoes, developed by the Beaverlodge Research Center in Alberta, Canada. And Thompson and Morgan have a 3-foot tall hollyhock they say blooms early enough that it can be used as an annual! Got that one too.

The last day of December we had just one snowshoe hare track across the driveway. That night we had a quarter inch of snow so the tracks were fresh the next morning and it looked like there were <u>herds</u> of hares that crossed the drive in several places! This looks like it's going to be a hare-curry-for-dinner year. After the decade vacation from them we've had, I suppose we have it coming. (Trivia note: hares are born furred and with open eyes; rabbits, nude and blind.)

I heard on the radio in early January that according to a British Meteorological Report, 2007 is to be the warmest summer on record in the world because of greenhouse gases and El Niño. I think I will put the parthenocarpic squash down in the lower garden, over and under plastic, instead of in front of the south-ish facing greenhouse since I don't have to remember to pollinate them every morning. I hope the Brits were including Alaska in the warm world.

Don't forget the Master Gardener's Conference in Fairbanks March 16 and 17. MG Kathy Wartinbee and I are flying up from Anchorage and taking the train back on Sunday after the meeting. Listening to Dr. Bob Bors from Saskatchewan talking about fruit for the North Country is worth the price of admission. As frosting, Julie Riley will be speaking also and we know she's good. It's also cheaper housing for the winter festival up there and let's not forget the museum has been redone and is getting rave reviews.

Now if only the snow would melt...





- Of 195 membership renewals...only 30 members do not have email access
- Denise Saigh did not offer the 10 items attributed to her in last month's newsletter as her favorite gardening tools.
 They belonged to DENI SE ELDER.
- MG Blythe Campbell has started a new business to help companies make more compelling presentations and speeches according to the Anchorage Daily News, 1/16/07. See www.blythecampbell.com.
- Sue Lincoln reports that when used as mulch, shredded paper grows interesting mushrooms.
- And speaking of mushrooms, Marguerite Barnard,
 Margaret Love, Lupita Weese, Dana Klinkhart, Mel Monsen,
 Pat Leary, Sharon Hoffbeck and Mary Shier are learning about the "fungus among us" in Roseann Leiner's class,
 Leaves in Our Lives & Fungi.
- MGs Mary Jo Burns and Brenda Bissell divulged their shopping habits to 100 participants at the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference last month.
- The Municipality of Anchorage is developing a Rain Garden manual and is wondering how successful Joe Pye Weed is in Anchorage. Who has experience trying to grow it?
- Participants in Julie Riley's "Think Spring" series favor *Primula* as this year's **Perennial that Anchorage Gardeners are Most Excited About**. (See calendar listing for upcoming presentations)



Help to Make Eagle River More Beautiful

The Eagle River Parks & Recreation Department is in need of gardening volunteers who are willing to plant, maintain, and/or design flowerbeds in the Eagle River/Chugiak Municipal Parks. Plant materials will be provided by the Municipal Greenhouse. Any amount of time or effort would be appreciated. Contact Beverly McCloud if you can help: mccloudba@ci.anchorage.ak.us

MG Volunteer Help Needed in Anchorage Area Please contact Julie Riley, 786-6300 or afjar@uaa.alaska.edu

Tree/shrub Research

CES is in the process of updating its tree/shrub publication titled, "Landscape Plants for Alaska". MGs are needed to help with on-line research and typing. The areas where help would be useful include 1) checking to see if the cultivars listed are still available, 2) checking to see if there are sources of the native plants listed, 3) typing lists of plants that can be used in a new section of the publication. This can be done from home or at the CES office.

Gardening Events/Activities Calendar

Each spring Extension tries to provide as comprehensive of a calendar as possible for the gardening public. The calendar is also printed in the Anchorage Daily News gardening supplement. If materials can be pulled together quickly enough Sandra Harrington can use the information in the AMGA Directory. Gina Docherty always uses it on the AMGA website and the Alaska Botanical Garden can also help distribute the information.

The job requires someone who can track down the information and type it up in Microsoft Word. It takes about 20 hours. The benefit of compiling the gardening calendar is you learn about all the special programs, plant sales and garden tours that are coming up this spring/summer.

Garden Clinic Coordinator

There are a number of opportunities to distribute gardening publications, answer questions and provide people with information on the Fall 2007 Master Gardener Course. I 'm not sure we'll do Fur Rendezvous, but the Spring Gardening Show in the Mall at Sears is Saturday, April 15 and the Alaska Women's Show runs April 20-22.

Alaska Women's Show Presentations, April 20 -22

This annual event takes place in the Sullivan Arena. Right now I 'm looking for MGs who can give a 50-minute presentations on any spring-related gardening topic. This could be slides, PowerPoint, lecture or demonstration.

4-H Talking Plant presentations

Even though we have not advertised that this program is available this spring, we are still getting requests from 2 grade teachers. Please let me know if I can place you on a list of MGs to contact when the calls come in.

AMGA Newsletter Columnist

The AMGA Board of Directors was hoping to be able to spotlight a MG in each issue of the newsletter. It would be easy to do. The Board could give you suggestions on who to interview and all you'd have to do is write up a few paragraphs describing what makes that person special/interesting. Another MG with a digital camera could take the photos. No one stepped up to the plate to write the articles last fall, but perhaps the job sounds more appealing now?





TREErific Q & A Written by a couple TREErific members for AMGA

Q: I am concerned about my trees and the weight of all the snow we have been getting. Is there anything I can do about it From: Louise D.

A: This winter in South Central Alaska is shaping up to be one for the record books.

Last month's question highlighted an important point about snow storage and deicing salt. As we dig out from each storm and the snow piles up in the yard and covers our landscape, it is also piling up on our roofs. When removing the snow from the roof, be aware of the location of your plants and trees, and avoid letting snow and ice fall on them. As the snow falls it can break the delicate branches of small trees and shrubs. On another note, the larger and more established trees in your landscape, especially the native varieties, are more adapted to the winter conditions and can deal with the weight of snow. As the snow accumulates on the branches, it sloughs off. This hasn't been a problem lately since the snow we have been receiving has had a low water content and therefore very light. However, if the mercury rises above freezing, and we get a wet snow, or even worse an ice storm, the snow may stick to the branches and increase the potential for branch failure. If you are concerned about your more fragile trees, gently brush it off with a broom, or other utensil taking care not to break any branches. This also stresses the importance of regular maintenance, which can greatly increase the longevity of your trees, and reduce the potential for branch failure under snow and wind load. Depending on the age and condition of your trees, you should consider having an arborist inspect them every three to five years. For the older and mature trees, they should be inspected more frequently to make sure that they are structurally sound. A good arborist will give a thorough evaluation of your trees, keeping an eye out for weak or broken branches and other structural defects and can correct any problems, or provide you with recommendations for treatments. For a list of certified arborist in Alaska, visit: http://www.isa-arbor.com/findArborist/ findarborist.aspx.

Join Anchorage TREErific as we discuss all things trees at 6 p.m .the $4^{\rm th}$ Wednesday of the month (Feb. 28th) at Russian Jack Chalet.



There is a privacy about it which no other season gives you.... In spring, summer and fall people sort of have an open season on each other; only in the winter, in the country, can you have longer, quiet stretches when you can savor belonging to yourself.

Gardening Calendar

Saturday, February 17, 2 p.m.

"Down the Primrose Path", Alaska Rock Garden Society presention by Mary Jo Burns. Cooperative Extension Service office, 2221 E. Northern Lights, Anchorage. Contact Mary Moline, 333-4419 or moline@alaska.net

Monday, February 19, 7 - 9 p.m.

AMGA monthly meeting: "Dahlias", AMGA presentation by Camille Williams. Cooperative Extension Service, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvdl, Room 130. Refreshments: POTLUCK Contact: 786-6300 for info.

Tuesday, February 27, 7 – 9 p.m.

"Down the Primrose Path", Primrose Study Group; a PowerPoint presentation by Mary Jo Burns on primrose basics; Cooperative Extension Service office, 2221 E. Northern Lights, Anchorage, 786-6300.

Thursday March 1st, 7:30 p.m.

"Bonsai" presented by Paul Marmora; Anchorage Garden Club; Pioneer School House, 437 E 3rd. Even if you saw Paul talk about the wonders of Bonsai at a 2006 Fall AMGA meeting, come learn more about it here. There is no cost for the program and a delicious snack will be served after the program. Questions: call 566-0539.

Saturday March 17, 2 p.m.

"Lewisias", Alaska Rock Garden Society presentation by Walt Mayr. Mat-Su College, Matanuska Valley. Mat-Su College is located at mile 2.2 Trunk Road and College Road. Contact Florene Carney at 376-5390. (Map available on AMGA website calendar: www.alaskamastergardeners.org)

Monday, March 19, 7 - 9 p.m.

AMGA monthly meeting: "Plant Life in I srael", AMGA presentation by Elizabeth Holt. Cooperative Extension Service, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvdl, Room 130. Contact: 786-6300 for info.



Potato Fact or Fiction Answers:

1-T; 2-F; 2-F; 3-F; 4-T; 5-T; 6-F; 7-T; 8-F; 9-F; 10-T

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!)

~Ruth Stout PAGE 7

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



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Dr. Tony Nakazaw, strong supporter of the Master Gardener program, is leaving his position as Director for UAF Cooperative Extension Service. See related story on page 2.



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