

Anchorage Chapter



Volume 9, Issue 7

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER July 2007

From the President's Corner
Dana Klinkhart

Can you picture planning the gardening calendar for the year 2008? Your board of directors met just last month to plan the Alaska Master Gardeners conference for next year. The date has been set. Mark your calendar for **Friday, May 9 and Saturday, May 10, 2008**. The conference will be held just before Mother's Day. It will have been seven years since the Alaska Master Gardeners conference was held here in Anchorage. The place and the theme have yet to be decided. Our past conferences were well attended. It is our goal to once again provide inspiring guest speakers that will explore all areas of gardening. We hope to include something for everyone from flowers to fruit and vegetables. This next year will be a busy one for all of us in the Association. It will take your great ideas and participation to plan and carry out this event. The month of May 2008 was selected so that in addition to nursery and garden tours, vendors would have live plants to offer those in attendance. Won't we just love that? So, please contact any or all of us on the board of directors to share your ideas on class topics, guest speakers and possible locations for an event that will serve 150 gardeners. We are open to your creative ideas and we are counting on your resourcefulness.

Are you successfully growing vines? I plan to investigate 'climbing things' this summer. This project is in the beginning stages for me. I am hoping that you would like to show your vines and the structures that they grow on. Both perennials and annuals will be the focus. I am very interested in taking pictures and collecting information on what our local community has found to work well right here in Anchorage. It is my plan to gather all that I can about the identity of these plants, their optimum growing requirements and the structures and locations that provide a happy home for them. After the details and photos are collected, the information will be compiled into a presentation that will be shared with others in the gardening community. This is not a 'for profit' adventure, but it could be published in our monthly newsletter. I plan to create a slideshow that will be made available through the Master Gardeners Association and the Cooperative Extension Service. I'm excited to learn all that I can about 'climbing things' and I would be very grateful for your help.

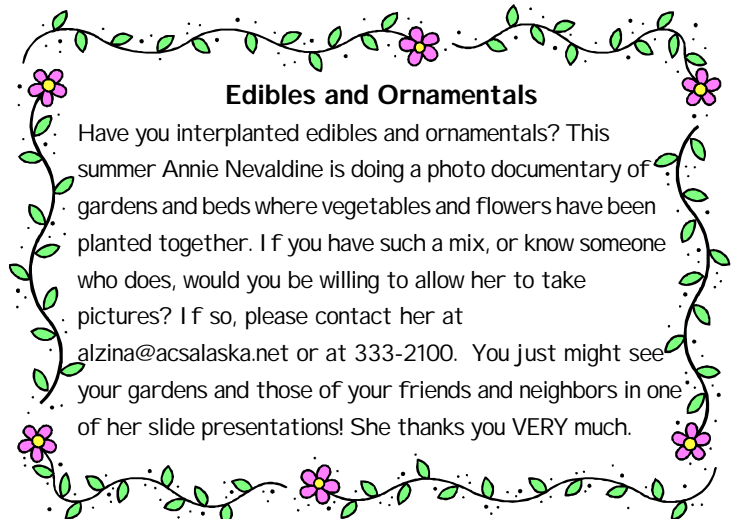


Please let me know if you have an interest in sharing your 'climbing things' this summer and fall. You can send a message, write a note or give me a call and I'll respond.

Dana Klinkhart
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Anchorage AK 99516
346-1631
klinkhart@gci.net

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.





"Amelia's Garden"

By Jo Anne Banta

Ah, yes. As usual, a tour through Amelia and John Walsh's garden leaves everyone charmed, amazed and envious (overheard comment by one viewer, "... and I thought my geraniums were beautiful").

In summer AMGA members forego their regular meetings for garden tours; and what better way to start the season than a sojourn through the Walsh's beautifully landscaped grounds. From the lush front baskets of fuchsias and geraniums to the back dahlia garden (yes, all 300 of them), everything is luxurious, as usual. Need I mention that, if we include the potted dahlias along the front, Amelia has about 500 of these beauties. The fuchsia and geranium baskets, too numerous to count, are nearly all wintered in the greenhouse. Did you note the Gardenmeister fuchsia pruned into a tree? It gets cut low before it self-winters in the garage. Only the four huge fuchsias spend the cold season at a nursery. Amelia winters her zonal geraniums in the greenhouse and the garage, as well. She says it gets so crowded that she really needs to tip-toe to water. Her geraniums she cuts back to about half their growth, waters only sparingly and doesn't allow to bloom.

Instead of revisiting all the blossoms and greenery as I did last summer, I thought readers might enjoy some pointers from Amelia herself. Their huge terraced garden, this season brimming with colorful primroses and stunning yellow kamtschaticum sedum, features a new wrinkle: an attractive strip of chipped slate as a "sedum stopper" between the top terrace and the lawn. Also new this year are the front anemones. Amelia, like many of us, loves her anemones, and this year she has planted them in the front center garden where they wave merrily in the breeze.

I love the rock patio at the bottom of the terrace, the Irish moss that thrives between the rocks throughout. I love the garden art, Amelia's whimsies, the clever spade-bodied chicken, the cat with the 10-penny nails for whiskers, the gnomes, birdhouses and frogs everywhere. New this year, guarding the three-piece dragon that emerges half-buried in the woods, are Wang and Chang, two beautifully-crafted Chinese metal warriors, Amelia's Father's Day gift to John.

I love the way the gardens gently fade into the natural habitat and the way the Walshes have incorporated native vegetation into their grounds: the elderberries, low-growing dogwood flowers, high bush cranberries, and even the devil's club. I love the sound of trickling water throughout, from the cascading waterfall to the strategically placed fountains.

Amelia haunts the garden departments and the nurseries in town and in the valley searching out new plants, often finding unique specimens at big box stores. With the size of her garden, she says, she finds places like Lowes and Fred Meyers more fitting to her budget, especially for annuals. Perhaps you saw the pot of tiny blue star flowers, Star Lithodora or Lithodora estrella, that she picked up at Lowes. When it comes to perennials, Amelia likes Alaska Mill and Feed for Alaska products – that's where she got her chocolate lilies that are new this year. As for primroses and hardy perennials, she enjoys the selection at In The Garden. Amelia also recommends a little-advertised local nursery on Pintail Street; owner Loretta Wieler carries a great inventory of fine perennials, all adapted to the Alaskan climate. Incidentally, Loretta was finally introduced to Amelia's garden when she joined our tour Monday.

As for watering, weeding, and fertilizing, the Walshes water nearly everything by hand from hoses and sprinklers. Only the lawn has an underground water system. When it comes to weeding, Amelia says that birch seedlings are the biggest pest. She does not fertilize her perennials, but she amends the soil in the fall with steer manure and uses a bit of a different fertilizer each year; this year's choice was blood meal because it works as a rabbit repellent.

We can't, of course, forget the wonderful refreshments: refreshing ice water with lemon, white and red wine, and, above all, several kinds of fresh cookies – baked (until 3:00 am) by Amelia the night before, and served by their charming daughter, Nicole.



World's first blue rose

[REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM
CSIRO PLANT INDUSTRY]

Breeding a blue rose has been the 'Holy Grail' of rose breeding for centuries, but roses have proven a particularly difficult candidate to turn blue. That has all now changed with the joint venture between the Australian based Florigene and the Japanese Suntory company, successfully using CSIRO's gene silencing technology to help create the world's first blue rose.

Roses are famous for their beautiful colours including red, pink, orange, yellow and even white. These colours have been developed through traditional breeding but never has a blue rose successfully been bred. Some mauve roses have been bred but as it turns out these colours are actually produced by variations of red pigment not by the production of blue pigment. To develop the world's first blue rose with blue pigment three steps had to be achieved:

1. Turn off the production of red pigment;
2. Open the 'door' to production of blue pigment; and then
3. Produce blue pigment.

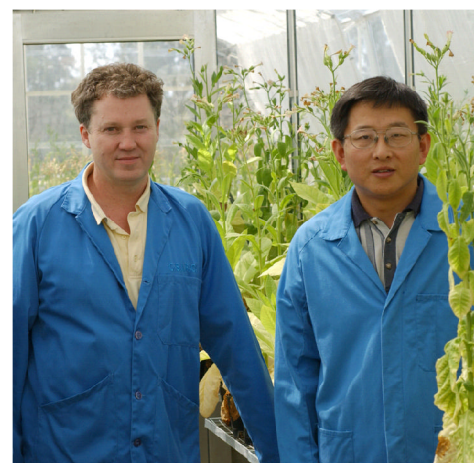
One gene involved in flower colour, is the dihydroflavonol reductase (DFR) gene. The DFR gene makes the enzyme dihydroflavonol reductase (DFR) which turns on the manufacturing process in the plant that produces pigment that in turn colours flowers. In roses the DFR gene is very good at producing red pigment and hence the range of commonly seen rose colours. However, the rose DFR gene is particularly bad at producing blue pigment, hence the difficulty in breeding a blue rose.

The first critical step in producing a blue rose was to stop the rose DFR gene making red pigment.

Preventing red pigment

CSIRO first developed gene silencing, or hairpin RNAi, in 1997. It was a significant breakthrough allowing scientists to turn down or switch off completely the activity of genes. Gene silencing uses a natural mechanism that degrades RNA – the courier that delivers the gene's instructions to make proteins, like the enzyme DFR. Florigene and Suntory used CSIRO's gene silencing technology to turn off the activity of the rose DFR gene so that it didn't produce red pigment. Gene silencing has been used in a number of research applications to determine gene function and in the development of experimental plants with favourable properties. Its use in the development of the blue rose is likely to be its first commercial application.

Dr Peter Waterhouse (left) and Dr Ming-Bo Wang (right) in the glasshouse, are the lead researchers of the gene silencing team at CSIRO Plant Industry who developed the gene silencing technique being used to help create the blue rose.



Opening the blue door

The second step towards a blue rose was to open the 'door' to allow for blue pigment to be produced. The production process of colouring flowers is like a pathway. In roses the pathway to producing red pigment is open, but the blue pathway is closed. Florigene and Suntory inserted a gene commonly called a delphinidin gene from pansy that opened the door to the production of blue pigment in the rose flowers.

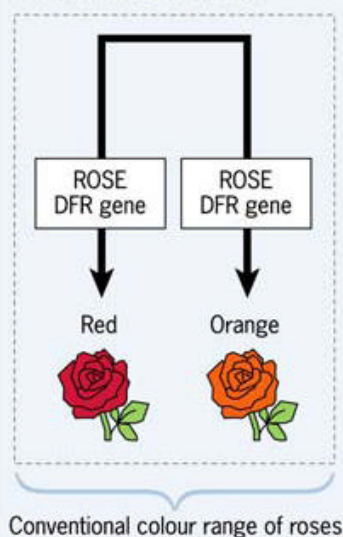
Importing the blue colour

With the red pigment production turned off using CSIRO's gene silencing and the door open to the production of blue pigment, the final task was to find a DFR gene good at producing blue and placing it in the rose. Florigene and Suntory decided to replace the rose DFR gene with a DFR gene from an iris, which is excellent at producing blue pigment. The iris DFR gene was inserted into the rose and subsequently a rose with a blue flower was produced.

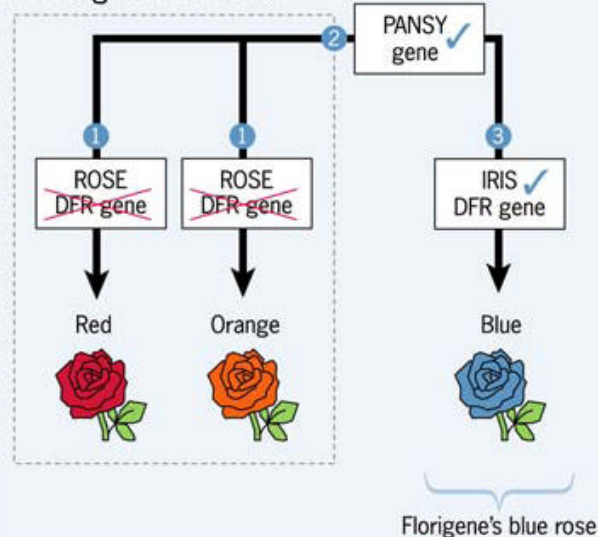
To make a blue rose:

- 1 'Turn off' the rose DFR gene
- 2 Insert pansy gene to open the 'blue' door
- 3 Insert iris DFR gene to make blue pigment

Rose colour production in conventional roses



Rose colour production in Florigene's blue rose



BLUE ROSE CONT. FROM PAGE 3

A bluer rose

While the prototype blue rose made by Florigene and Suntory is in fact a pale violet colour it is the first rose of this colour that comes from blue pigment. The colour of other 'blue' roses currently on the market is only a modification of red pigment. Even bluer flowers should be achievable if rose petals can be made less acidic, as acidity inhibits blue pigment.

Florigene and Suntory researchers are searching for genes that affect petal acidity or that affect petal colour in other ways, to breed a bluer rose.

Commercial availability

Florigene has already successfully created blue carnations using gene technology and these have been available in Australia since 1996. It will be at least 3 years before blue roses will be commercially available in Australia, pending approval from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator for their commercial release.

For further information contact:

CSIRO Enquiries

Bag 10 Clayton South VIC 3169 AUSTRALIA

Phone: 1300 363 400 (National local call)

+61 3 95452176 (International phone)

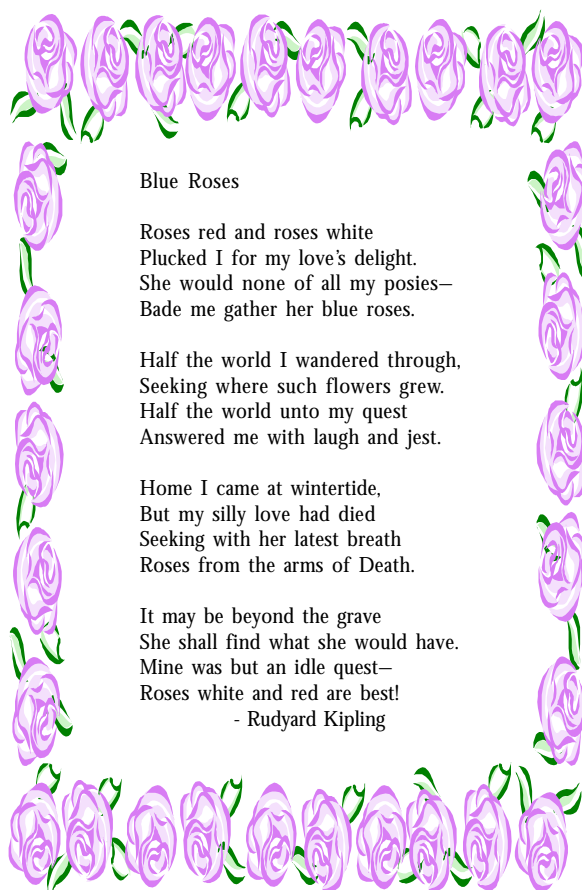
Fax: +61 3 9545 2175

Email: enquiries@csiro.au

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Produced by CSIRO Plant Industry Communication Group 2005





Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

by Rosemary Kimball

Summer came to the Peninsula Friday, June 15th...FI NALLY. It's really been a cool beginning to the gardening season. It was cold in the unheated greenhouse and in the mid-to-high 20s outdoors for quite a few mornings. It was so cold that even the weeds weren't enthusiastic about growing. Not good. At the end of June I got button heads from two

broccoli plants that weren't a foot tall yet as a response to the cold stress the plants had as seedlings. I'm not anticipating that any of the four colors of cauliflower, which is even less tolerant of cold stress, will head beyond the buttons.

Yet, one noon while walking back from neighbor Mark's (I'm brooding 30 chicks in his garage) I looked at the mountains and the snow had disappeared. When it went I don't know. It was just gone. So it really is summer after all even if the nights are cold.

It was a crummy November and a cold spring but some things have done exceptionally well...things like flea beetles for example. The wild roses by the roadsides are stunning down here. The bunch berry in the yard has never been prettier. A friend's lilies of the valley went nuts! There are so many plants with so many blossoms that her front door area is perfumed. My Holland Longbunch red currants have more blossoms on them than they every have had. I look at them in awe!

I am grateful for friends that have heated greenhouses and grow cucumbers. MG Margaret Simon gave me four cucumbers from hers: a regular one, a wee one (I ate it on the way home) and two lemon cukes. Lemon cukes sectioned like tomatoes and mixed in with them are really good and I salivate as I write in remembrance of that salad.

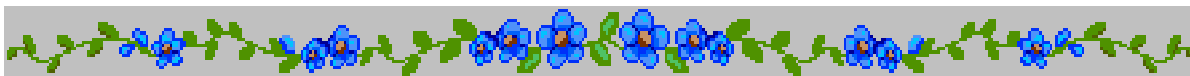
There are some times when I wish we lived closer to Anchorage and one of them was when I got the report back from Anchorage MG Kathy Tarr about the trip to Amelia Walsh's garden. "Her place was the kind of garden that when, after you visit, you feel a gigantic, botanical inferiority complex coming on. I couldn't believe my eyes! ...and not a weed to be found. Aye-karamba!" I wanted to cry! I have an upcoming garden tour of my button heads and weeds for the Central Peninsula Garden Club and if I can't weed with a rototiller (8 HP or the mini) it probably won't get weeded. All I've got is big and big is not necessarily beautiful here. A friend who is a clinical herbalist prizes my shepherd's purse to tincture for gout and she thinks our nettles are the most beautiful she's seen. (We do keep the nettles for early soup and actually tend the patch- especially as it tends to want to leave its designated area.)



I'm not sure whether it was the cool temperatures or what, but the female sea berries (really, really sour but full of lycopenes for aging eyes) came out of dormancy just fine, but the male took his own sweet time until after the girls had quit blossoming. I was not amused. I think he needs some competition in that wind-pollinated fertility rite but it's too late this year....Wait until next year when he has some younger competition.

The friend, Donna Franzmann of Soldotna, with the lilies of the valleys also grows asparagus that is stunning. She's the only one I know of close by that does grow it...picture proof enclosed. (My asparagus died.)

During June, in our Sterling micro climate, we had many mornings in the high 20s and low 30s so hold this thought: A British Meteorological Report said that this is to be the warmest summer on record in the world. I hope Southcentral Alaska was included in their calculations.



Bird Chatter

- The presentation that Robbie Frankevich gave to Master Gardeners on their field trip to Alyeska Resort has turned into a regularly scheduled talk for visitors at the hotel.
- Shasta daisy, *Leucanthemum* 'Becky', Perennial Plant of the Year for 2003 did not survive the winter in Carmel Tysver's garden. It is listed as a Zone 4 perennial.
- At the AMGA Board meeting last month, JoAnna Littau had the dirtiest finger nails (and she claims to wear gloves!)
- Bohemian knotweed, a hybrid of Japanese knotweed, has grown out through the chimney of a house in Anchorage. It has also run from one side of the house through the foundation and is coming out from under a door on the other side of the house.
- If you have Japanese knotweed in your yard and would like to participate in a national DNA testing program contact Julie Riley. (Apparently, all the Japanese knotweed in England is the same clone but ours appears more genetically diverse.)
- Bears eat corn gluten (preemergent herbicide).
- MG Sandy Rapp was searching for *Cuphea* 'Tiny Mice' that she had seen at an AMGA presentation. Since the flowers look like mice, she thought they would be perfect to put with her cat planter.
- Be on the look-out for larch sawfly larva this month. They can completely defoliate Siberian larch and our native tamarack.

Volunteer Help Requested

The Lekisch family is looking for someone to maintain the Andrew Lekisch Memorial Garden at Kincaid Park. Andrew was a high school athlete who was involved in a fatal accident while jogging in the Chugach State Park. The garden is a beautiful collection of annual and perennial flowers and ferns placed among large rocks at the Kincaid Chalet. It is currently in good shape with only a few areas that need weeding. There is access to water. Anyone who might be able to help can contact Andrew's sister Jennifer at 382-8888.

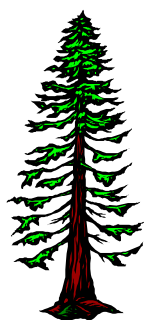
AMELIA'S GARDEN...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Amelia says their yard is truly a labor of love: love of the land, love of the outdoors, love of nature, love of flowers, love of color; and the beauty of it all is that John and Amelia, together, have created this oasis. The Walshes moved to their present location in 1994. The first year they planted containers only. Then began the huge transformation. John is a dentist, no gardener, Amelia says, but he loves working with his hands. Together, they planned and built each and every bed. They hand-picked and hauled every rock, built every terrace, and even created the waterfall. When I asked Amelia when they had finished it, she said that, like any garden, it is never finished; it is ever changing. After all, Amelia quotes August Carter, "You don't have a garden just for yourself, you have it to share." Is it any wonder that AMGA members look forward eagerly to next year's visit and sharing "Amelia's Garden."

Home and Garden For Sale

Botanical gardens on 1.23 acres with 2,226 sq. ft. home, lower Hillside; Was on secret garden tour 2006. Would like to sell to someone who loves to garden. Contact Jerry and Kathy Dowling 243-3984 or dowling_jerry@asdk12.org.





TREerific Q & A

Written by TREerific members for AMGA newsletter

Q: I was one of the lucky thousand people who adopted a tree from the ConocoPhillips TREEmendous tree give away and need a couple quick tips on how & where to plant it. Frances O.

A: Keeping the roots moist until you plant the tree is key to its survival. Submerging it in a bucket of water in the shade until you have the planting hole dug is recommended. The hole should be dug in a saucer shape with the roots in the soil and the trunk out of the soil. Depending on the soil you are planting in will decide whether soil amendments are needed. If you do add top soil, leaf matter, etc. mix it well with the existing soil in the saucer-shape hole and spread the roots out. In Alaska, the majority of its roots will be living in the top eighteen inches of soil vying for the available water supply along with the grass so be diligent in your watering efforts. It is vital to water your trees the first three years of its life. A slow drip with a soaker hose turned on before you go to bed and off in the morning is an easy way to give them the needed moisture. Don't worry about providing the tree any fertilizer for its first year. Then, use a soil tester to determine if your soil is acidic or alkaline before making adjustments. Staking of the tree should not be necessary unless you live in a windy area. If staking is needed, use arbor tape instead of wire to support it and check it in late autumn and early spring. It should be able to support itself after a year.

When planting, don't plant it too close to the house or other structures. If possible, plant it ten to fifteen feet away from anything else. Also, be careful not to plant it under utility lines and checking for locates before digging is always recommended.

More tips and brochures such as "How to Plant Tree" are available from:

Alaska Department of Natural Resources/Division of Forestry/
Community Forestry Program
550 West 7th Avenue Ste. 1450
Anchorage, AK 99501-3566

Or call 269-8465 or 269-8466 or you can email us at TREerificAnchorage@yahoo.com with your specific questions. We are busily planting and caring for trees in our city parks and would love to have you help volunteer in these projects. Call Nancy Beardsley at 343-4288 if you can help or have any questions.

Gardening Calendar

July 3, Tuesday

North Root Big Lake Gardeners meeting, 6:30 pm, Native plants in the garden, trellises, arbors and canes. Supporting plants, shrubs and trees with local willow branches. Location: Faith Bible Fellowship Hall. Contact Linda Lockhart, 892-8119.

July 12, Thursday

Wildflower Garden Club field trip to Girdwood, "Moose Meadows/ Mt. Alyeska" led by Verna Pratt. Meet at Carrs Huffman parking lot, south side, 9 am. Contact Verna on what to bring, 333-8212.

July 14, Saturday

Bells Nursery 3rd Annual Garden Fair, 10 am – 4 pm. See new varieties for 2008 and other displays, 13700 Specking Road. Contact Steph at 345-4476 if you have questions.

July 16, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association field trip, "Tropical Greenhouse Tour", 7 pm, Gary & Stephanie Moore's, 11719 Laurie Circle, Eagle River, 786-6300.

July 21, Saturday

Willow Garden Club Garden Tour. Meet at the Willow community Center, Mile 69.2 Parks Highway to get maps. Bring a sack lunch. Tour ends at Les Brake's Coyote Garden. Contact Karen Mattson, 495-6636.

July 21, Saturday

Alaska Garden & Art Festival, 11 am – 6 pm. Explore the beautiful Alaska State Fair Gardens in Palmer, attend garden-related talks, workshops and demonstrations. Learn about local gardening clubs and enjoy a variety of vendors. \$5, children 11 and under free, gardenfestival@alaskastatefair.org.

July 21 & 22, Saturday & Sunday

Coyote Garden Tour, Saturday 10 am – 5 pm, Sunday 12 – 5 pm. Enjoy Les Brake's beautiful garden which has been featured in the magazines *Horticulture*, *Sunset*, *Country Gardens* and *Gardens Illustrated*. Donations benefit the Alaska Botanical Garden and the Willow Garden Club. Mile 7, Willow/Fishhook Road, Willow, 770-3692 or garden@alaskabg.org.

July 27 – 29, Friday – Sunday

Alaska Herb Conference: Herb-Land Security Conference, Meier Lake Conference Center between Wasilla and Palmer. Themes include: 1) Empowerment thru Education: Physical Well Being, 2) Mental-Emotional Well Being, 3) Pets, 4) Spiritual Connection, and 5) Empowerment in Action: Gardens for Life. Saturday evening herbal spa, herb walks and delicious organic meals. Registration by June 30, \$175; \$195 after this date. Full details at <http://www.goodearthgardenschool.com>.

July 29, Sunday

Anchorage Garden Club's Annual City Garden Tour, 12 – 5 pm, a self-guided tour 6-8 wonderful gardens. Watch the Anchorage Daily News on Thursday, July 26 for details. If you have a garden to nominate for the tour http://communitynews.adn.com/main.wsi?group_id=49, or 566-0539.

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 6, Monday

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



The Anchorage Chapter of the Alaska Master Gardeners Association welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. Contact the editor, Gina Docherty, at:

Mail: 4006 DeArmoun Road
Anchorage, AK 99516

Phone: 345-4099

Email: amga@gci.net

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

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

Cooperative Extension Office
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone 786-6300

Fax Line 786-6312



Part of the rock gardens featured at the AMGA Summer tour
of Amelia Walsh's garden..
[See article on page 2.]

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