

Anchorage Chapter



Volume 9, Issue 3

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER March 2007

From the President's Corner By Dana Klinkhart

This gardener is anxious to watch things grow. And just how does one fix that? We all have our own special ways, I suppose. From the catalogs that have haunted me since they started arriving in November, I ordered a few seeds just to give me a jump on spring. Did I say a few seeds? Disregard that statement. Delphinium seeds from the Delphinium Society have been waiting to be planted since they arrived from England last fall. And lo and behold, they've germinated and are happily growing under lights.

Seeds collected from one of my favorite perennials, the *Primula cortusoides*, have germinated and they join their neighbors, the delphiniums. Cuttings from the variegated and the green-leaved geraniums are looking good. Last fall, I took cuttings from my 'Endless Summer' Hydrangea and over the winter, they have not only developed lots of new foliage but blossomed. The sweet pea seeds that were nipped with a nail clipper and soaked before planting have successfully sprouted. They've already been pinched to keep them compact. So with the longer days of sunshine in Anchorage, a few seeds, cuttings and artificial light, I manage to satisfy my passion for growing green things way before the snow disappears. Send us a note on ways that you've found to enjoy a bit of gardening in the late winter and early spring. Send your ideas to: AMGA@gci.net so that Gina can publish them to share with everyone.

Seattle has the Northwest Garden Show. And we here in Anchorage are invited to attend The Alaska Botanical Garden's 2007 Spring Garden Conference at UAA/APU Consortium Library. A full day of gardening seminars promises to inspire and inform gardeners on a variety of subjects. So what is the motto for this conference? **Bring Back the Bugs!** The title already has my attention. Sally Cunningham, author of *Great Garden Companions*, will be the featured speaker. The classes will be presented by some of our own Master Gardeners as well as many others from our gardening community. Sixteen topics are being offered and from the list of choices, it will be difficult to choose which to attend. Gardeners will be able to attend four sessions and the cost is reasonable-\$25 for those with a membership in a gardening group. A complimentary lunch will be provided if you register by 5 pm Friday March 23rd. The registration form is available at: www.alaskabg.org or email me and I'll send you a copy. Let's celebrate spring at the conference Saturday & Sunday, March 30-31st.



**Alaska Master Gardener Association Meeting:
"Growing Dahlias"
February 19, 2007
Submitted by Pat Anderson, Co-Secretary**

President Dana welcomed everyone to begin the Potluck which had been set up in the hall. It was fabulous as always.

At 7:45 PM the Dana welcomed everyone, including three guests: Jean Marie G. was a guest Master Gardener from Ohio. Two other guests, Jeri and Sherrie, were friends of other Master Gardeners. They signed up with Julie to have their names included on the list which will inform them of the next AMG course which will be given later in the year.



Program Chairman Marge Olson introduced Camille Williams who gave an informative presentation, including a hand out on the growing and storing of Dahlias, and email sources for catalogs. Amelia Walsh also contributed valuable information on how she stores and plants Dahlias. Camille uses steer manure mixed with dried leaves to plant her dahlias in. She sprays the leaves with a combination of milk & water (1/3 milk to 2/3

water) to prevent powdery mildew. Also, an organic control for thrips is Pyrethrum. Other members joined in and exchanged remarks, questions and growing- in - container information on the subject.

A couple of interesting things from the discussion: did you know that you can eat dahlia bulbs? [According to a source on the internet, they taste like 'scented parsnips' and one person said that she has tried them baked, fried, and stir-fried, & would 'stick to their cousin the potato'.]

Elizabeth (Beth) Schlabaugh will deliver the program in March which will be a power point presentation of "The Flowers of Israel" given from pictures and experiences from her recent trip there.

There was general discussion, more eating and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

The door prize winner of a dahlia bulb: Amelia Walsh!

The Primrose Study Group gathered at CES Tuesday, February 27. A power point presentation with "eye-candy" (lots of slides) and information was given by Mary Jo Burns. There was a good turn out of Primula lovers. Mary Jo provided an excellent, informative showing and talk. Participants learned a lot and made off with a few free seeds Mary Jo provided as well. Next month, Juneau MG and president of the American Primrose Society, Ed Buyarski, may be speaking in Anchorage on March 24, as he will be in town. Contact Mary Jo: burns2@gci.net, or 248-2827.



Explaining eXtension

Julie Riley, Extension Horticulture Agent

Cooperative Extension Service has a new national Internet based program called **eXtension**, pronounced e-eXtension and spelled with a small-case e and upper-case X. The website http://www.extension.org/pages/About_eXtension explains eXtension's goal to help people improve their life by accessing objective, research-based information and educational opportunities.

eXtension's website is full of 100's of pages, but at this point, only a few sites are available to the public. Extension faculty and others are working collaboratively around the country to get additional pages up and running. The content areas currently open for public viewing include horses, personal finance, and wildlife management damage. If these topics are of interest to you, take a look at <http://www.extension.org/>. eXtension plans to roll-out more content areas later this year.

As an Extension horticulture agent, I have joined a Community of Practice (CoP) on Consumer Horticulture. CoP is defined as a virtual network of subject matter content providers.

As part of the Consumer Horticulture CoP, I will be working on a wiki site to peer review Consumer Horticulture's FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on flowers and herbs. The Consumer Horticulture CoP is planning to roll out 5,000 peer reviewed FAQs in fall 2007. A prototype of the Consumer Horticulture web pages will be shown at the International Master Gardener Conference in Little Rock in May. At this time, it is hoped Master Gardeners can be recruited from each state to answer **Ask an Expert** questions. Internet users searching Frequently Asked (gardening) Questions will have access to **Ask an Expert** when they do not find a FAQ that answers their question. AMGA currently answers gardening questions through its web site. Once eXtension's Consumer Horticulture site is up, questions from Alaska gardeners will come to MGs designated to answer **Ask an Expert** questions.

eXtension is a national program but it is being designed to be relevant at the local level. Visitors who register when they enter an eXtension site will be identified by zip code and put in touch with their local Cooperative Extension Service and Master Gardeners. The whole system is pretty impressive. It's no longer lonely up here in Alaska.



Perennial of the Year 2007: Catmint 'Walker's Low'

By Julie Riley, Extension Horticulture Agent

This year's Perennial Plant of the Year, *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low' should perform well in Southcentral Alaska gardens. Don't let the name fool you. This catmint is listed as growing to 36 inches tall and 30 inches wide. Exactly how tall it will get in Alaska we won't know until we try it.

'Walker's Low' was named for a garden in Europe and was introduced into the horticultural trade in 1988. The plant has become increasingly popular and was voted as Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association (PPA).

As with many other catmints, the flowers of 'Walker's Low' are a lovely blue-violet and have a long period of bloom. The foliage is a crinkled silver-green and contains the chemical nepetalactone, which is known to attract cats. However, according to PPA member Denise Adams, gardeners have reported that Walker's Low catmint is not as attractive to cats as are many of its relatives.

The plant prefers well drained soil and a neutral pH. Place in a location where it will receive full sun. Walker's Low catmint is a good companion plant for early and late blooming perennials. It combines nicely with *Artemisia*s and peonies and looks great mixed among roses. We hope to be able to plant it in the ABG herb garden this summer in place of *Nepeta nervosa* which has lost its vigor. Because of its long season of bloom, you might also want to include *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low' as a container plant. It's bound to attract bees and butterflies to your garden.

Nepeta 'Walker's Low' is a low maintenance perennial with few insect or disease problems. To see a picture of it in full color go to the Perennial Plant Association's website at <http://www.perennialplant.org>.

Can of Worms



Landscape Design Workshop Offered

Learn the art of landscape design and plan your own garden at a series of lectures and workshops presented by the American Society of Landscape Architects, Alaska Chapter. Lecture topics include such subjects as:

- Introduction to Garden Design,
- Understanding Your Site
- Understanding Climate and Microclimate
- Developing a Concept Plan
- Common Landscape Problems (how to avoid and solve them)
- Detail Art in the Garden
- Plants for the Garden

There are two lecture dates from 6:30-8:30pm, Tuesday March 27th and April 3rd. There is a two hour workshop session on Sat. April 7th (10:10-12:10am or 12:50-2:50pm, actual times to be arranged) and will allow the students to individually develop a unique garden plan with a landscape architect. Cost for the event is \$225. Lectures and Workshops will be held at the BP Energy Center (900 E. Benson Blvd.) Sign up by March 23rd. Call 279-2688 or email: ehuggins@earthscape.alaska.com.

Martha Galbreath writes, "Here's one for the compost pile."

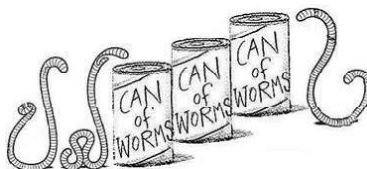
A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon. Four worms were placed into four separate jars.

The first worm was put into a container of alcohol. The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke. The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup. The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol - **Dead**.
The second worm in cigarette smoke - **Dead**
Third worm in chocolate syrup - **Dead**
Fourth worm in good clean soil - **Alive**.

So the Minister asked the congregation, "What can you learn from this demonstration?"



Maxine was sitting in the back, quickly raised her hand and said, "As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!"



Spring Tree Seedling Sale Saturday, May 12, 2007

The Society of American Foresters– Cook Inlet Chapter will have tree seedlings available on in the parking lot on W. Northern Lights Blvd and Spenard Road,

near R.E.I. starting at 9 am. Seedlings will be approximately 8 inches tall with root plug wrapped in plastic. Orders that are received at least one week in advanced with payment will be held and not subject to first-come first-serve sale.

Order Form and Invoice

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

E-Mail Address (if available) _____

Quantity in multiples of twenty
Cost @ 1\$ each

Species:

Lodgepole pine _____

Siberian larch _____

Paper birch _____

Blue spruce _____

White spruce _____

TOTAL: _____

Provide payment by check for total amount listed above.
Make check to: Society of American Foresters– Cook Inlet
Chapter. Mail check and a copy of this form to:

Society of American Foresters
Cook Inlet Chapter
PO Box 240432
Anchorage AK 99524-0432

Note: the chapter is not set up to take credit card payments but will provide a federal tax ID number for tree sale payments other than by personal or corporate check (e.g., purchase orders).

The Society of American Foresters– Cook Inlet Chapter is a non-profit organization. All proceeds from the annual tree sales go to two endowed scholarships maintained on the chapter's behalf at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. For more information on these scholarships, contact the Cook Inlet Chapter at the address above.



ABG Annual Meeting & Spring Garden Conference: Bring Back the Bugs!

March 30 & 31

Friday, March 30, 7 - 9 p.m.

Friday night, author Sally Cunningham will introduce the beneficial insects that keep a garden thriving. It will be held at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 121 W. 7th Ave. There is free parking in the Museum garage. The talk is free and open to the public as well.

Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturday, a full day of gardening classes will be held on the third floor of the UAA/APU Consortium Library.

Sessions include:

Great Garden Companions for Vegetables & Perennials, Sally Cunningham

Terrestrial Orchids, Sally Karabelnikoff, Alaska Orchid Society

Two Perspectives on Rock Garden Design, Verna Pratt & Carmel Tysver, Alaska Rock Garden Society

Fruit Trees, Dan Elliott & Kevin Irvin, Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers

Flower and Garden Photography, Annie Nevaldine, Alaska Master Gardener

Let's Prepare a PowerPoint Presentation with Garden Photos, Dana Klinkhart, Alaska Master Gardener

Hardy Bulbs, Charlie Kempton, Anchorage Garden Club

Teaming with Microbes: Learn How and WHY to Garden Organically, Jeff Lowenfels

Growing and Enjoying Herbs, Julie Riley, Herb Study Group

Garden Literature Index for Beginners, Judy Green, ABG Volunteer Librarian

Pruning Young Trees, Stephen Nickel, Alaska Community Forestry Program

Falling for Autumn, Les Brake, Willow Garden Club

Centennial Rose Garden: Where Alaska's History and Hardy Roses Grow Together, Debbie Hinchey, Alaska Rose Society

Garden Literature Index for Scholars, Judy Green, ABG Volunteer Librarian

Winter Hardy Trees for Bonsai, Paul Marmora, Cook Inlet Bonsai Study Group

Register by 3/23 for a gourmet boxed lunch. Free parking.

Admission \$25/members, \$30/non-members.

A link to the [registration form](http://alaskabg.org/calendar/) can be found at: alaskabg.org/calendar/



CENTRAL PENINSULA MG NEWS

By Margaret Simon

[Substituting for Rosemary K. who is somewhere warm.]

Still not much happening in the gardening arena on the Peninsula but I am enjoying the 'wild life.' For some reason the birds seem to be extraordinarily plentiful this winter. Redpolls, pine siskins, boreal and black-capped chickadees, hairy and downy woodpeckers, nuthatches, a pair of Stellar's jay and even a robin (perhaps it was a thrush— I only saw it at a glance!)

We noticed a couple of the black-capped chickadees had deformed, long crossed bills. We so wanted to catch them and snip the extra growth off so they could more easily eat from the feeder. I talked with Wildlife Refuge personnel and that was not recommended. He told me they had experimented with that in Anchorage and the bill simply grew back. Isn't that interesting? What in our environs is causing such deformity, I wonder.



To harass all these small birds, we have been visited on numerous occasions by a sharp-shinned hawk. A saw-whet owl even stopped to rest on our deck long enough for me to snap a couple of pictures. And, of course, the ravens and

bald eagles are often in the air overhead - great winter entertainment. The birds are like summer grasses— they provide movement outside our windows.



On my front porch I had a lovely arrangement of mountain ash berries. (Weren't they beautiful last fall after all that rain?) A young Moose decided they looked pretty yummy so he stepped up on the porch and had a snack (several days running) and when

they were all gone, he decided to try the wreath on our front door. Unfortunately for him (fortunately for me) it was artificial so he didn't pursue it. As I write this, that same moose is pruning the shrubbery for me. He tends to overdo the pruning, but what the heck. Talk about a Big Wild Life.

Anchorage you have nothing over us in the bird/moose department!

Of course, like all of you, I have read many seed catalogs and left drool on the pages. The seeds are ordered and in stock waiting to be placed in Redi-Earth or some other medium. The fluorescent lights are getting cleaned; the bulbs replaced, the fan plugged in, and my 'green adrenaline' is starting to flow.

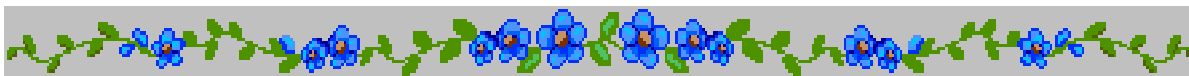
Rosemary has fled the scene for her spring thaw. She has good timing as we're seeing below zero temperatures this week. Before departing she attended our second session of the MG winter lecture series. J.D. Megchelsen spoke about his 1,019 pound pumpkin and how to grow such 'monsters'. Here's Rosemary's resume of that evening:

This month we watched The Alaska record-holding pumpkin from seed, leaves, to weigh-in at the state fair in Palmer. That was some vegetable! At the end of the season 'The Pumpkin' even had its own 'blankies' at night— three king-sized ones. The growing process was something else too! And never mind the cost of the seed. They can be really, really pricey! The final 'take' when the pumpkin was 'butchered' was 7 (yes, seven— no typo) viable seeds! The area the vine sprawled over was heated by underground cables but only a 10x20 foot area was enclosed in a green house and then as 'The Pumpkin' (referred to now as TP) grew larger, there was a smaller enclosure complete with a heat lamp 24/7. JD estimated the weight of the 35 foot vine at 1500 to 2000 pounds. That's a lot of compost.

Soil amendments were mainly of natural matter: seaweed, kelp, that kind of stuff. TP was planted into the ground from a 7-gallon pot which was then carefully removed to not damage the root system. Nodes along the stem were then covered with soil in order to root and provide more food for TP. By mid June she was gaining 25-50 pounds a day. Her leaves would reach 2 feet across! Hot rocks were placed in strategic spots to encourage the fruit to grow in the correct direction so that she would have a 45° angle to the stem. And that fruit better be set by the first of June or the season is over. Since the blossom end tends to be weak, he put paper toweling on it and sprayed the toweling with chelated calcium. Daily. TP must have loved it because she sure did grow. At maximum growing speed she was gaining 45-50 pounds a day. Weight is done with a tape measure around three dimensions and calculated from a published table. When TP was harvested, two feet of stem were left attached and water bottles were hooked up to them and TP drank a gallon on the 260 mile drive to Palmer. She also had a tarp on top to prevent skin damage and dehydration.

The evening's baked goodies all contained pumpkin with one of the cookie recipes containing the pulp from TP! Next month our lecture series will host Teena Garay of Homer discussing Shade Gardens. Too, Rosemary should be back with pen in hand.

Think SPRI NG!



Bird Chatter

- MG Mary Sue Doering is involved with GAP, (Garden Assistance Program) a group organizing in an effort to stimulate more urban food production by bringing together folks who own property, those who have gardening expertise and those who desire to contribute labor.
- A 1994 photo of Mel Monsen's garden can be seen in this month's *Sunset* magazine next to a plate of muffins.
- Kodiak MG, author, photographer and entrepreneur Marion Owen's PlanTea organic fertilizer has a new package and was mentioned in the February issue of *Sunset* magazine.
- An updated draft of the Delaney Park Strip Master Plan is now available on the Municipality of Anchorage's website.
- When asked to reply with word association to "good garden soil", the 30 responses given by "Think Spring" class participants varied tremendously including those that described texture, structure, water-holding capacity, fertility, and organic matter content. Worms/earthworms got four votes. The one gardener who said loam, grew up on a farm.
- Julie Riley is working with refugees who will be growing vegetables (and maybe flowers and herbs) to sell at a farmers' market this summer. The group includes 6 Hmong, 1 Chinese and 1 Uzbekistani gardener.
- Horticulture is no longer buried in Extension's Land Resources program area. LR has been divided into two programs, Agriculture & Horticulture and Natural Resources/Community Development.
- Is Martha Galbreath the only MG in Alaska planning to go to the International Master Gardener Conference in Little Rock, May 2-5, 2007?
- A new exotic pest, the Large Yellow Underwing, a moth with a wingspan measuring over 2 inches was discovered in one of the IPM program's gypsy moth traps last season. The pest feeds on a wide variety of hosts including vegetables, fruits, flowers and even dandelions.
- Mary Moline is excited to be driving to Fairbanks for the statewide Alaska Master Gardener Conference, March 16 & 17. She's considering it a winter vacation and will be checking out the ice sculptures while she is there.

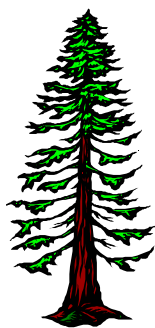
- Gardeners interested in primroses should get on Mary Jo Burns's Primrose Study Group list (burns2@gci.net; 248-2827). American Primrose Society President Ed Buyarski (and Juneau MG) will likely be speaking on Saturday, March 24 in Anchorage. May 19 & 20 in Juneau will be the Primrose Society's Show (including a few speakers) and tours of Juneau area gardens.
- If you are interested in collecting fireweed seed, one of the nurserymen in the Mat-Su Valley has an order for 20 lbs.
- Extension's publication on "Landscape Plants for Alaska" is undergoing revisions. If you have a favorite tree or shrub (growing in Alaska) that is not listed, please get in touch with Julie Riley, 786-6300, afjar@uaa.alaska.edu.
- Master Gardeners in Anchorage are needed to work with Dimond High School on a school-wide horticulture project. McLaughlin Youth Center would like someone to help their students in the greenhouse.



2007 Alaska MG Conference Fairbanks, AK March 16-17, 2007

Speakers & Topics

- **"The Well Designed Mixed Garden: Building Borders"**, Tracy DiSabato-Aust
- **"Therapeutic Gardening"**, Eva Shaw, Author and Therapeutic Gardening/Grief Recovery expert
- **"Cooperative Breeding of Hort Crops", "Brain Picking for MGs", "Top Secret Propagation Tips"**, Bob Bors: University of Saskatchewan
- **"Proven Winners for Alaska"**, Linda Toomey, EuroAmerican Propagators
- **"Irrigation"**, Grant Matheke: Horticulturist, Georgeson Botanical Garden
- **"Fun with Film and Digital"**, Julie Riley, CES
- **"Garden Thugs"**, Michele Hébert, CES, Fairbanks
- **"Falling for Autumn", "Coyote Garden at 22"**, Les Brake, Garden Writer and gardener extraordinaire
- **"Natural Landscaping: Flowers, Berries, Fruits and Research"**, Pat Holloway, UAF, Georgeson Botanical Garden



TREErific Q & A

Written by a couple TREErific members
for AMGA

Q: I'm thinking about having my trees pruned this summer. I've looked in the Yellow Pages where several tree services are listed, and some say that they are certified arborists. What does it mean to be a certified arborist?

From: Elizabeth A.

A: Caring for your trees is the best way to protect your investment! Proper care helps them provide the environmental and social benefits we receive from them. If you love your trees, you will want to choose a highly qualified and experienced professional to care for them. A good arborist will take the time to talk with you about your trees and provide you with options based on your individual trees needs and the latest techniques in arboriculture.

An arborist is a skilled professional who is knowledgeable in the methods of proper tree care. An International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist has taken that a step further. To become certified, an arborist must have at least three years of experience in the tree care industry and have passed a comprehensive exam covering topics including tree biology, pruning, tree, soil and water relations, tree preservation during construction, ecology, diagnosis and treatment of diseases and insects, and tree risk assessment. It also means that a voluntary commitment has been made to the arboriculture profession, to follow the recommended standards endorsed by the ISA. To maintain ISA certification, certified arborists must keep abreast of current trends and techniques as well as new research and knowledge in the industry by passing a recertification exam every couple years.

Currently, there are 33 certified arborist in Alaska, with several eagerly preparing for the next exam scheduled in Fairbanks on April 7. If you are interested in learning how to become certified, or for tips on how to hire an arborist to care for your trees, visit <http://www.pnwisa.org/>. To verify an arborist's certification, you can search an online database at <http://www.isa-arbor.com/findArborist/findarborist.aspx>. To learn more about the International Society of Arboriculture, visit <http://www.treesaregood.com/>

Join Anchorage TREErific folk at our next educational meeting the 28th of March at 6 pm at Russian Jack Chalet – corner of Boniface and Debarr Road. For questions, email us at: TREErificAnchorage@yahoo.com. Think Spring!

Gardening Calendar

Saturday March 17

'Lewisias' by Walt Mayr; Alaska Rock Garden Society regular meeting; 2 p.m., Mat-Su College, Room TBA.

Monday, March 19

'Plant Life in Israel', AMGA presentation by Elizabeth Holt. Cooperative Extension Serve, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd., Room 130. Contact 786-6300 for info.

Wednesday, March 28

TREErific educational meeting, 6 p.m., Russian Jack Chalet, corner of Boniface & DeBarr Road.

Friday - Saturday, March 30 & 31

ABG Annual Meeting & Spring Garden Conference: Bring Back the Bugs! Friday 7-9 p.m., Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 121 W. 7th Ave.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., a full day of gardening classes will be held on the third floor of the UAA/APU Consortium Library. [See article page 4 for more details]

Thursday April 5

'Terrestrial Orchids' with Sally Karabelnikoff & Verna Pratt; Anchorage Garden Club program; 7:30p.m., Pioneer School House, 437 E 3rd Ave., Anchorage. Contact: 566-0539

Saturday April 14

Sears Mall Gardening Show 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. - MG Volunteers needed - contact Julie Riley, 786-6300

Saturday April 20-22

Alaska Women's Show @ the Sullivan Arena - MG Volunteers needed - contact Julie Riley, 786-6300



Winter is nature's way of saying, "Up yours."

~Robert Byrne

Spring is nature's way of saying, "Let's party!"

~Robin Williams



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

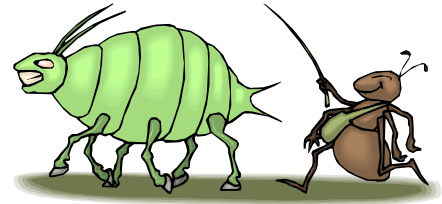
AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org
(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

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

Phone: 786-6300

Fax: 786-6312



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**Don't Miss the Alaska Botanical Garden's
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BRING BACK THE BUGS!

See article on page 4.

**Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Inc.
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