

Anchorage Chapter



Volume 9, Issue 11

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER November 2007

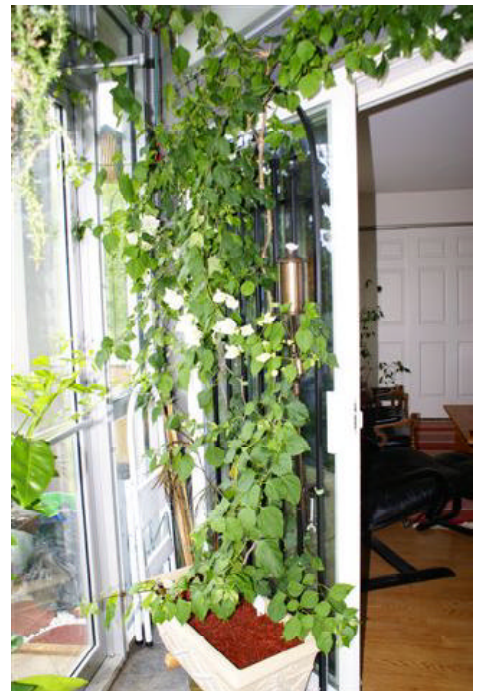
From the President's Corner By Dana Klinkhart

Gardening in Alaska offers endless possibilities and cultivating house plants is just another form of gardening for me with our long winters. Having admired the beautiful bougainvillea since I first saw them in Hawaii, I was taken back this summer when our family friend shared his success in growing a lush white bougainvillea in his solarium right here in Anchorage. His was grown without artificial light and had matured in just a couple of years to form a dense, six-foot vine that was loaded with blossoms. After I documented his success with digital pictures for my vine project this year, I searched the internet for sources to find one for myself. Before I knew it, an order arrived. I must have been sleep walking when I placed the order because in the box were four different colors of bare root bougainvillea, not just one. The stocks were just four to five inches tall and each had a generous root system. The starts were given a home in potting soil enriched with fishy peat. Already the month-old, woody stems are developing leaves. They sit on a rack with water under them and seem to flourish under lights at 65 degrees. Misting them frequently is recommended. Prejeans Nursery from Louisiana proved to be a reliable source for what I hope will develop into a tropical paradise at home. Wish me luck!



Your computer generated renewal form was mailed to you in October. If you did not receive the printout with your personal contact information on it, please let me know. I will generate another one and email a duplicate. If you do not have access to email, forms are available at the Cooperative Extension Office. The Master Gardeners web site has the generic form available to download at www.alaskamastergardeners.org Even though we are all as busy as ever, please mail your updated renewal form and payment in now so that it arrives in the hands of our treasurer and membership chairman in plenty of time to be included in the directory. Your renewal will assure that you will continue to receive the monthly newsletter and email messages. This year your membership expiration date has been included so that you would know if you might had paid your dues more than one year in advance.

The 2008 Conference team is developing a plan that will support our needs in the conference volunteer area. Tasks, both large and small, will be defined for the conference and requests for specific skills and time will be published. We will need members to volunteer time and talents for tasks such as driving, computer skills, phone calls to decorating and more.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



October Program Highlights

By Julie Riley, CES Horticulture Agent

October's topic on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) drew more than the regular faces to the AMGA meeting. It was great to have a controversial subject on the agenda. Guest speaker Dr. Roseann Leiner stated that the role of science was to develop the technology for genetically modifying organisms but that value judgments on the results of the technology were best debated by the public. That night's audience included Master Gardeners with a broad spectrum of opinions. One participant distributed flyers developed by **Foods for Thought** (alaskafood@yahoo.com), an Alaskan organization advocating that GMO products be boycotted. Another had worked for a large corporation involved in developing GMOs.

According to Roseann the 'Flavr Savr' tomato was the first commercially grown genetically engineered crop to be granted a license for human consumption. First sold in 1994, 'Flavr Savr' was only available for a few years. Today's top genetically modified crops include corn, soybeans, tobacco, cotton, canola, and papaya.

Dr. Leiner spent much of the rest of the program explaining how genetically modified plants are made by cutting out and transferring small pieces of DNA. She made it sound quite simple and there are many websites that describe the transcription and translation processes.

One interesting point Roseann made is to "never say never". She used the production of insulin as an example that may make you change your mind about the use of GMO technology. She explained that the insulin used to come from pigs and cows and some people were sensitive to it. Now insulin is produced using bacteria and GMO technology and is safer for diabetics.

One thought-provoking question asked was "How is the recombining of genes through genetic engineering different from hybridization?" One of the best websites I found on the topic is the University of California, Berkeley's. You can find the answer to this question and others at ucbiotech.org. The site includes recent news articles, both pro and con, and has links to related sites including a group titled "broader perspective" where you'll find easy access to the Organic Consumers Association and Greenpeace.

A special thanks to Janie Taylor for suggesting that the topic of GMOs be put on the agenda and to Marge Olson for making arrangements with Dr. Leiner.

[Regular monthly program columnist JoAnne Banta was home recovering from back surgery. Hopefully, she'll be back to write next month's column.]

Request for Master Gardeners

From Lorri Abel

As the snow comes down the mountain and temperatures are falling it's time, at least if you are in the nursery business to think spring! This is the time of year to order plants for next spring, old favorites as well as new varieties.

Though I rarely make it to open gardens during the busy spring and summer months I always enjoy reading the reports that make it into the newsletter and am grateful for those who take the time to write about all those great gardens I am missing! There are master gardeners growing all kinds of new and interesting plants around town.

I have been inspired by your efforts and have decided to work a little harder to bring in new plants to trial. I hope to have a section of the nursery devoted to expanding our plant palette. My focus has always been perennials but I am always interested in new or unusual annuals.

Though I haven't worked out the details I am very interested to hear from you. What has been a reliable plant or species for you that is not available locally yet? Do you have any ideas for plants to trial? Are you interested in see more native plants available for sale? (Nationally this is a trend and I believe it is the beginning of a trend here too)

I will write up a follow up article towards spring and let you know what is new, at least to I n the Garden nursery, and what will be available to trial.

Please email me at abel@gci.net or give me a call and give me your thoughts. Thank you.

Lorri Abel
I n the Garden nursery



November comes
And November goes,
With the last red berries
And the first white snows.
With night coming early,
And dawn coming late,
And ice in the bucket
And frost by the gate.

The fires burn
And the kettles sing,
And earth sinks to rest
Until next spring.
- Clyde Watson



Honeyberry, a.k.a. Blue Honeysuckle, Haskap

Julie Riley, Extension Horticulture Agent

Dr. Bob Bors, from the University of Saskatchewan, has inspired many gardeners in Alaska to try growing honeyberry, an edible blue-berried honeysuckle. Sheri Walker, editor of the Mat-Su Master Gardeners newsletter wrote in their July issue:

Having attended the Master Gardener Conference in Fairbanks last winter, Wayne and Arlene Bowman reported their fascination with University of Saskatchewan Professor Bob Bors' presentation about the honeyberry... Having sampled the berries myself at Snowfire Gardens, I fully intend to add a couple of the berry bushes to my own garden!

A very hardy and unique small shrub, Honeyberry is a species of Honeysuckle with sweet and tasty fruit. While the Honeysuckle family consists of over 200 species of vines and shrubs, almost all of them are used solely as decorative plants. This edible and very hardy species is native to Eastern Siberia, the Russian Far East, and Northern Japan, where, from ancient times, the native people have gathered and consumed the fruit in large quantities. Honeyberry is valued for its tasty blueberry-like fruit, its extremely early ripening, often two weeks before strawberries, and for its exceptional hardiness, to minus 40° F. or below. Fruits are sweet enough to enjoy fresh, with tiny edible seeds, and can be used in cooking as with blueberries. Honeyberry also makes delicious preserves. Berries are produced in easy to harvest clusters.



Honeyberry is a compact rounded shrub with dark green foliage in summer turning yellow in the fall. It has yellowish-white flowers in spring followed by bluish, edible berries in the summer. Honeyberry attracts birds and will grow to 5 ft. tall with a spread of 5 ft. Plant in full sun but is also shade tolerant. Hardy to zone 3. Plant two varieties for cross pollination and fruit production. Some varieties, such as Blue Bird and Blue Belle are from the far North and can bloom too early in milder winter areas or regions subject to warm spells in the spring. Blue Moon and Blue Velvet are two later blooming varieties that are more likely to be flowering when pollinating insects are active and are equally winter hardy to Blue Belle and Blue Bird. I found this information and more by googling "honeyberry shrub" and browsing the many nursery websites that sell these shrubs.

Not all honeyberries are created equal. Some taste better than others. Last spring, the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers ordered two cultivars of honeyberries not commonly available in the United States, 'Cinderella' and 'Svetlana'.

'Cinderella' is a smaller sized bush with large fruit. Yields have been described as moderate to high. 'Svetlana' is a cross between 'Berry Blue' and 'Blue Belle'. Fruit size is also large. DNA Gardens lists 'Svetlana' as a pollinator.

Fifty plants each of 'Cinderella' and 'Svetlana' were shipped to Alaska last spring. MG and Alaska Pioneer Fruit Grower Kevin Irvn orchestrated getting the tissue cultured plants from DNA Gardens, a specialty nursery in Alberta, Canada (www.dnagardens.com). He said interest in the plants was good and they sold right away. In spring 2008, Kevin plans to bring in 100 plants of three new varieties, 'Tundra', 'Borealis' and numbered variety 9-92 because they are rated highest for berry quality.

This past summer Kevin picked 4-5 quarts off his 'Berry Blue' bushes and a few berries of 'Blue Velvet' and 'Blue Moon'. 'Blue Velvet' was his favorite because fruit flavor was like a cross between blueberry and raspberry. After losing his entire honeyberry crop to birds in 2006, Kevin recommends using netting to protect the fruit.

According to Kevin, Honeyberry is called Haskap in Japan. Dr. Bors is now using Haskap as the common name of the fruit because his new varieties contain *Lonicera* breeding material from the Kuril I lands which were once part of Japan. DNA Gardens also uses the common name Haskap.



Plants Appear to Recognize Own Kin©

Program #5248 of the Earth & Sky Radio Series
with hosts Deborah Byrd, Joel Block,
Lindsay Patterson and Jorge Salazar.
www.earthsky.org
[with permission from Earth & Sky Inc.]

A new study suggests that plants will work to your advantage if you're another plant and a family member.

Susan Dudley: Mostly we think about plants as passive, just the victims of their environment and just growing in response to the physical environment. But they actually actively sense and respond to the environment, including what is specifically the presence of other plants, and I think that's a really neat thing.

That's Susan Dudley, at McMaster University in Ontario. She's a biologist and evolutionary plant ecologist, which means she wants to understand what about a plant makes it good at growing. Research in the past showed that plants can sense and respond to the presence of other plants. It made Dudley wonder if plants can recognize their own kin.

Plants are considered siblings if their seeds came from the same "mother" plant. Dudley studied the roots of plants growing in different living situations. She found that the plants living with other unrelated plants grew more roots to try to edge out the other plants for water and nutrients.

But those living alongside family were distinctly less aggressive. Their roots were the same as plants living alone, so it seems that competition among plants is less along family members.

Earthsky.org
Program #5248 of the Earth & Sky Radio Series
with hosts [Deborah Byrd](#), [Joel Block](#),
[Lindsay Patterson](#) and [Jorge Salazar](#).



One of the keys to happiness is a bad memory.
-Rita Mae Brown, author (1944-)

Human urine as fertilizer©



by Jereme Shere
Published October 22nd, 2007.
From "Earth & Sky - Blogs"
www.earthsky.org
[with permission
from Earth & Sky Inc.]

We all know that dung makes for good fertilizer. But human urine? Yes, according to researchers at the University of Kuopio, Finland.

Why, you ask, would researchers want to test this hypothesis in the first place? First, because urine has an ancient legacy as fertilizer. It's sterile and nitrogen-rich and evidently good for growing cabbage. The Finnish scientists found this out when they grew their own cabbage—some using urine, some using synthetic fertilizer, and some without fertilizer. The urine-grown cabbage were slightly more robust than cabbage grown using commercial fertilizer. And, according to the researcher's report, the urine-grown cabbage didn't taste or smell like urine.

Is urine as fertilizer good for growing crops other than cabbage? It's not clear. But if urine proves to be at least as effective as other organic fertilizers, it could be a boon to organic farmers as a cheap, plentiful and viable alternative to commercial fertilizers that pollute groundwater and rivers.
Source: Physorg.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER CONTINUED...

These gardeners will be called upon for jobs that can make our conference fun and successful. Let me introduce Martha Jokela. She has been a master gardener since 2005/2006 and been an active member of our association ever since. It was music to my ears to hear Martha ask, "How can I help?" We met and discussed different projects that were ahead of us. Martha has agreed to take on the task of *Volunteer Leader* for our conference. She'll collect your offers to assist and what resources or talents you might like to contribute. This would include the hours in the day or evening or a specific day, week or month that you would be available. She is taking offers from each of us right now and, in time, a more defined list of needs and resources will be created. So... put on your 'thinking cap' and give her a call or send her a message with your offer to volunteer for our 2008 conference. Martha can be reached at: **345-9569** or jokela@acsalaska.net.

Dana - 346-1631 - klinkhart@gci.net



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

by Rosemary Kimball



Where to begin? I got an e-mail from Margaret Simon in Nikiski saying the leisurely fall let her prepare the yard for winter to the point of "scariness"! She said she's usually not so ready. We need to take lessons from her here in Sterling. Stuff scattered around the yard when we went to Hawaii was right where we left it when we got back. I'm trying to put away five things a day and there is a little difference. The lawnmower

looked so bedraggled and weighed a ton from our snow that I huffed and puffed and dragged it under cover. Poor dear, to be treated so shabbily and then start so easily when I need it. It can't be beat for "raking" up leaves. All the leaf debris went on a bed outside the greenhouse. I don't know what to grow there next summer. The bush beans I grew in my lidless cold frames didn't do as well as a friend's grown in an unprotected row.

One of the things I do for neighbor Mark White is to put clear plastic book covers on his new books. That means I get to look at what's on his shelf easily and I just covered a super new book: Delphiniums by David and Shirley Bassett. At Amazon.com it's around \$20. Glad that it's in the hood.

Did you read Heather Linde's essay on the usefulness of the wheelbarrow in the Anchorage Daily News? If you missed it, go to www.adn.com and into the archives for October 18. She's always good.

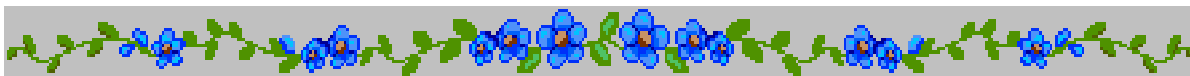
A Soldotna friend who grows stupendous asparagus saves me the fronds for my compost pile when she puts the plants to bed in the fall. Since we were not here, she stacked them outside her garden fence. A few days later she noticed the fronds had been disturbed and some were missing. Then she saw the culprit- the neighborhood moose. Exotic tastes some of those animals have!

Our three local jays, whose families have been around for 25 years, left for unknown parts while we were gone. My husband, Phil, had them trained to take suet from his hand and they had him trained to break out the food every time they came past. Two of them came by for a couple minutes a few weeks after we returned but flew off even though there was food available. It's lonely without them and why didn't I take a picture of the moochers this summer?

Don't remember where I got the information but go to www.agraquest.com and look at their description of the uses for Serenade. It's a broad spectrum, preventative, organic, biofungicide and just what I needed for the moldy green beans I grew last summer. I thought I'd try it next summer on some of the local plants that are vectors for powdery mildew. Usually if there is a problem I use baking soda but the article on the woman who developed the product intrigued me.

Two Master Gardener meetings for me in one year in Anchorage! I really wanted to hear Roseanne Leiner so the day after we got home I came back up again. I'm reading a lot more about genetically modified organisms and I have mixed feelings. Having insulin-dependent friends, I'm glad the process is being used; but on the other hand... There was an article in the magazine American Vegetable Grower about weeds that have also become Roundup ready and so a second herbicide must be used in conjunction with the Roundup. Then to top the meeting off, I won a door prize of the biology text book. That was interesting to look at and I got to thinking that when I took college biology, plate tectonics and DNA hadn't been invented yet! At the end of the third week in October the Thompson and Morgan seed catalog arrived. With it here, can the others be far behind? I haven't even moved my on-hand seeds to the root cellar for winter storage yet! T&M are offering their parthenogenic zucchini seeds again and I don't know whether to order a year's supply or a decade's. It's really wonderful when you don't have reliable pollinators.

The CES has \$50 worth of their pamphlets on a CD for only \$10. What could be better than not having to figure out where you filed the pamphlet on composting? So enjoy the mild weather but hope for a decent snow cover soon...



Bird Chatter

- At the last planning meeting for the 2008 MG conference, Beth Schlabaugh asked, “Where’s the 2009 conference?” Are the Central Peninsula MGs up for it again or will it be Mat-Su?
- Judy See was tickled to meet Rosemary Kimball at an AMGA meeting. She was overheard saying, “Your newsletter articles are the first ones I read.” And now Rosemary’s picture has turned up on the Anchorage Daily News blog <http://community.adn.com/adn/node/112216>.
- Soldotna MG Barbara Jewell sent Rosemary Kimball the perfect birthday card– something I can’t print about tomatoes not ripening but cucumbers growing 8 inches.
- This season MG and egg artist Martie Black is not letting some other state’s egg represent Alaska at the American Egg Board’s annual Easter egg show in Washington D.C..
- TSA found a large green caterpillar crawling around their gray plastic bin after Julie Riley went through airport security last month. The critter had been destined for the CES office and hitched a ride on Julie’s laptop.
- Denise Saigh’s Japanese knotweed is participating in a DNA study at Umass in Boston.
- Hairy carrots are the result of high nitrogen. Overfertilization with fresh manure or commercial fertilizer can cause the problem.
- Received in the AMGA mailbox: a postcard from Linda Abbott Trapp on her newly published Ornamental Plants & Flowers of Tropical Mexico available at www.abbottpub.com. How did she know Alaskans vacation South of the border?
- The Anchorage Daily News blog has a great picture of Michael Carey and the ‘Red Stripe’ tomatoes he brought to Anchorage MG class last month, <http://community.adn.com/adn/node/112140>.
- Guess who went to a Halloween event dressed as a SLUG (including slime trails)– Sue Lincoln! On another side of town Julie Riley could be seen carrying a club and wearing a devil’s outfit. You guessed it– Devil’s club– but hardly anyone else figured it out, even with 14-inch palmately-veined leaves and shish kabob skewer thorns.
- MG Genevieve Holubik called CES to say she has 100 toilets and lots of shredded wood, 552-3585.
- For eight of the world’s most unusual plants see <http://divinecaroline.com/article/22167/37205>.
- Recently hired Mat-Su Extension agent Steve Brown said he used the AMGA website when he was getting ready for his interview.
- Pictures of Les Brake’s ice creations are included on 6 pages of a new book by Suzy Bales, The Garden in Winter: Plants for Beauty & Interest in the Quiet Season, published October 30 by Rodale Press.

Slug Rebuttal From Sue Lincoln

Concerning last month’s Bird Chatter - A word to clarify...

Before I am forever known for cavorting with the enemy, look at these forlorn, pleading eyes and tell me if you, too, wouldn’t have had a softened heart! Giving it a lift in the right direction was the least I could do for it letting me take its picture!

Sue Lincoln



More on Perilla

After last month’s Perilla (Shizu) article, MG Tom Throop relays that when he used to buy teka maki (tuna sushi) at New Sagya’s he’d ask for a package of shizu (green, not purple). They used to have to bring it out from the back; in those days it was never set out with the produce or herbs. Today Shizu can be found in the produce section. Tom says, “You eat it by wrapping a leaf around the teka maki.”

Calendar item

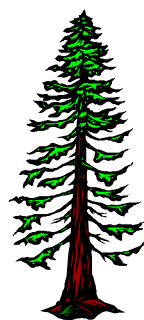
The Municipality of Anchorage is holding a training Municipality of Anchorage Permit Center, main training room, on November 09, 2007 from 1:00-2:30 pm. The training is for people who would like to learn the approach Watershed Management Services has developed for designing rain gardens in Anchorage and for businesses who wish to be added to an “approved list” of contractors on the Watershed Management’s rain garden website.

Compostumbler For Sale

I am selling an “Original Compostumbler” for \$300. You can see one at: www.compostumbler.com
It’s in very good condition. Call Heather Rice at 258-6877 (evenings).

New Non-profit Seeks Help

Lori and Troy Zaumseil have started a new citizen’s non-profit organization dedicated to helping stop the advance of invasive species in Alaska. It’s called CANWIN, which stands for **Citizens Against Noxious Weeds Invading the North!** Is there anyone who can help procure/secure 501(C)3 status with the IRS? Lori has already gotten the group registered as a non-profit organization with the state. Lori and her husband Troy are currently enrolled in the Anchorage Master Gardener Course. She can be reached at AKCANWIN@AOL.COM; 245-2373 or 230-9494 cell.



TREerific Q & A

Q: We live outside Anchorage in Peters Creek. We have nine 2 year old trees with full sun exposure that we are considering wrapping to protect from moose damage to branches. They were not bothered by moose last year, but we don't want them damaged. What is your advice? Is this a wise practice? Is it good or bad for the trees? When do you do it? Do you use burlap? How long do you leave them wrapped? Thank you

so much. I have read various advice online but haven't found one for Alaska. J & B

Dear J & B,
Not all trees need to be fenced in to be protected from moose. What type of trees do you have? And if you do need to protect the tree, it is not the trunk that is wrapped...

Here's a picture of a maple tree that I recently fenced in using deer block netting and 10' long rebar stakes and tie wraps to secure. I really 12' stakes would have been nicer, butnot available.



Here is a picture of a grouping of trees that we fenced in at a local park using a heavier mesh and 10' conduit stakes with tie wraps to secure the mesh to the poles. As you see, we didn't fence in the evergreen trees as they aren't as much of a moose snack as the deciduous trees...



In regard to timing, NOW is the time to fence your trees, before the ground is frozen – it's easier to get the stakes into the ground and much nicer to work outside when you aren't freezing cold, right?

I don't think burlap is the right thing to fence the trees with, and have found the deer netting or a heavy Plastic fencing to be a better fencing material. Heavy winds cause havoc with burlap, where the wind can just sail right through the plastic fencing. Feel free to email me back at agalak@alaska.net so I may respond to any of your questions on the fencing issue.

Master Gardeners are always ready to help.

Nickel LaFleur - TREerific

Gardening Calendar

November 8, Thursday

Wildflower Garden Club meeting, "Climate Changes in Anchorage", presented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 10 am, Central Lutheran Church, 15th & Cordova, 277-7150.

November 13 & 14, Tuesday & Wednesday

Anchorage Garden Club's 47th Annual Holiday Flower Show. A flower show to start the holiday season. Anyone can enter. There are both horticulture and design categories. A schedule listing the categories should be available in September. Check the Anchorage Garden Club hotline for show hours, 566-0539. Tuesday Tea from 1 – 3 pm. Held at Wells Fargo Bank, C Street and Northern Lights Blvd., http://communitynews.adn.com/main.wsi?group_id=49.

November 19, Monday

Anchorage Master Gardener Association meeting, "Great Alaskan Taste Discoveries", 7 pm. Bring a special treat with recipe to share. Cooperative Extension Service, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. (behind Medical Park), 786-6300.

November 22, Thursday

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

November 29, Thursday

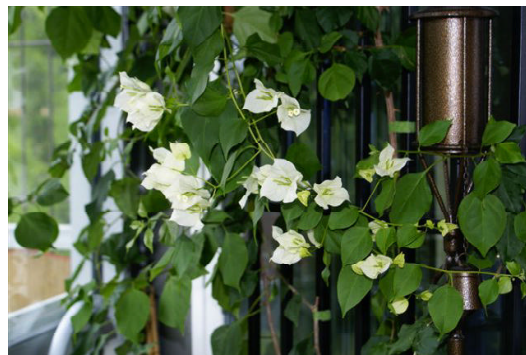
Wildflower Garden Club special meeting, "Holiday Wreaths", taught by Wayne Leiser, 10 am, Dimond Greenhouses, 1050 W, Dimond Blvd., \$20/person, 277-7150.

Mark your calendars for next year's Master Gardener Conference: May 9 – 10, 2008 at the Sheraton Hotel.



*For man, autumn is a time of harvest,
of gathering together.
For nature, it is a time of sowing,
of scattering abroad.
- Edwin Way Teale*

The Anchorage Chapter of the Alaska Master Gardeners Association welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. Contact the editor, Gina Docherty, at:
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Email: amga@gci.net
AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org
(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)



New Houseplant to try? Bougainvillea vine in solarium

Photo by Dana Klinkhart

[See *President's Corner* article, page 1, for more details.]

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