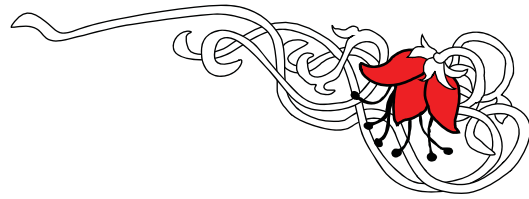


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 10, Issue 12

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER December 2008



Message from the President:

A Holiday Story by Beth Schlabaugh

Every few days for the last month or so we've received a new toy catalogue in the mail. Having little kids, this is inevitable. Alex, my 4 year old, dutifully sits down and pages through them and "circles" things he'd like to put on his list to Santa. My husband and I, like many parents, try to find ways to teach our boys some of the other concepts of Christmas: charity, sharing, love, good will.

We remind the boys that while they may like a toy in the catalogue, many of them really are almost identical to one they already have. We remind them that even when they decide which items go on their list to Santa they may not get everything on the list. We also ask them to go through their toys and pick out 2 each that they don't play with as much. We donate those to charity so another child can play with and enjoy them. They are also allowed to pick out a new toy at the store that we donate to Toys for Tots.

I know all of you have Holiday traditions and are generous with your time and money, so what does this anecdote have to do with Gardening?

Well...I have a confession to make. I've been getting catalogues in the mail too. Garden catalogues, filled with tools and toys, seeds and plants. I've been doing a lot of circling myself. My husband happened across my new seed catalogue from Nichols Garden Nursery the other day and saw all of the marks on it. He asked if the boys had been coloring on my catalogues and I had to confess "No". He picked it up and looked at it in more depth, it happened to be opened to the Herb section.

The conversation that proceeded went something like this: "How come you've circled sage, don't we already have sage in the garden?"

"Yes, but..."

Now every spouse knows that when you hear this phrase your mind clicks off, because it doesn't matter what is to follow, any rebuttal that you may have even a more logical one just won't work. My husband managed to stay focused.

"Yes, but ours is common or broad leaf garden sage. The ones that I circled are purple sage, and a tri-colored sage."

Our conversation went on for several minutes in this way, he kept asking about plants that he thought we had in the garden and I kept pointing out why the specific cultivar that I'd circled was different and a "must have" for our garden.

Then he said something to this effect. "Well, why are you buying all of these seeds anyway, don't you have a big box of seeds in the garage that you didn't get planted last year?"

He had a point....I started to think.

Most of the plants that I had selected were almost identical to the ones I already had...and "Yes" I do still have a lot of seeds from last year that I hadn't planted. Finally "Yes", I know that even though I've circled many plants and seeds in that catalogue (and others) I know I can't really have them all.

So what to do? Well...

-I've decided not to ask for gift certificates to my favorite nurseries for Christmas. Instead I'll ask my family members that live outside to donate to their local botanical garden or a garden project in their area.

-I remembered that I have multiples of several garden tools in the shed. I plan to have the extras cleaned up and donate them to one of the local growing projects this spring.

-I plan to send in the dues for my garden memberships on time, and with an additional small donation.

-I promise to plant more of the seeds that I have now, making sure that I donate any additional produce to the local food banks and maybe take some of the flowers to the nursing facilities.

Finally, I'll try to remember the reasons that I love to garden. One of those reasons is the joy in seeing something beautiful develop and grow. Maybe this year the boys will develop and grow a little and learn about the Holiday spirit through my example.

I hope that you found this narrative humorous, entertaining and not too personally accurate.
Happy Holidays! - Beth

AMGA Meeting November 17, 2008
Master Gardeners vs. Moose
by Jane Baldwin

The MGs vs. Moose program consisted of anti-moose prevention efforts gleaned from local folks & internet searching, a slide show of pictures of some approaches used by gardeners in the area, and comments & advice from local MGs.

Scare tactics like yelling, dogs barking, whistles, fire crackers, & water-spraying may make the critter leave your yard, but is actually harassment adding to their stress level and may trigger aggressive action towards humans. REMEMBER: Treat visiting moose with caution. 'Stress' signs such as hackles (hair on hump) raised and ears back and flattened are classic signs of an agitated and stressed moose and could signal imminent aggressive behavior.

Repellents work some of the time. Moose learn to tolerate smells and tastes. It may be that repellents fade with time, rain or snow and need frequent freshening to remain effective. Reports on the use of Plantskydd® are positive; there is some indication that a history of use may train moose (and subsequent offspring) to leave certain plants alone even when they are not currently treated. The flip-side: moose have been seen feeding on treated plants and bears like it. The product's strength (bloodmeal based) may fade and/or have a finite "shelf-life". Try buying smaller amounts at a time to combat this. One could also try one of the home-made sprays which are usually based on eggs, garlic & Tabasco®.

There are plants said to be moose and/or deer proof, but a hungry moose will eat almost anything. No plant is likely to be totally moose-proof. Deer (and perhaps moose) tend to avoid plants with a milky sap or strongly fragrant foliage.

Of interest is a study reported by UAF CES of controlling moose browse on ornamental kale using salmon fish oil and a dried fish protein waste might be equally effective. Just our luck that this might work well - keeping the moose away and attracting bears.

The only positive control over moose browsing in your yard is to build a tall fence around your property. Fencing your garden and fencing or wrapping individual trees and shrubs may be the only sure bet. To be effective, fences should be at least 8-10' high. Extensions of existing fences using posts and plastic mesh can hit the 8-10' height and deter hungry winter moose. Visual bluffs set boundaries that moose often will not cross. A single rope strung between stakes with bright surveyor's tape, Mylar strips, aluminum pie pans, orange newspaper bags, can be a temporary barricade, as was Jane Baldwin's summer gate of flashing pinwheels on garden stakes.

Electric fences do the trick, but can zap unintended animals and people; use it as a last resort. Wireless Moose or Wireless Deer fences have been effective.

In the words of Jeff Lowenfels (ADN column, 15 Sep 2005): "Sooner or later they [moose] will eat anything, no matter how bad it tastes or how ugly it looks. . . any remedy that works will eventually fail to faze a hungry moose. Those moose that don't eat, die. Those that overcome the taste of a repellent will thrive and pass on the acquired taste to future generations. Evolution at work. . ."

Master Gardener Focus:
Martie Black
By Cheryl Chapman



Alaska has lost its elephant, but it's home to at least one giraffe, a concrete 5-footer with a Mona Lisa smile in the front yard of Master Gardener Martie and Les Black's neat mint-green house in West Anchorage. With the Blacks, always expect the unexpected.

Alaska was a venture-some compromise for them after they

married in the 1960s: "I was from California," says Martie. "Les was from New Mexico. He didn't want to stay in California and I couldn't live near his mom in New Mexico (she and I eventually became best friends)."

Les had a favorite aunt, Rosie, in Anchorage, so there's where Martie and Les landed. Martie, who devoted herself to continuing education for Master Gardeners during a double term as the group's president in 1997 and 1998, was not always a gardener. But Aunt Rosie was.

"Aunt Rosie and her husband grew beautiful flowers," says Martie. "I have lilies growing now that I got from Aunt Rosie. She got me started."

"My mom gardened sometimes (in California), but all I remember was the caterpillars coming through and eating everything. When you rode in the car, you would hear them crackle under the tires.

"I did have a house plant before I came to Alaska. A Gloxinia, I think. It was beautiful. I didn't bring it with me and I haven't had one since."

Martie started slowly with a row of Nemesias. "They did great," she said. The next year she branched into gladioli, with equal success.

"My favorites are anything that blooms early, especially the primulas," she says. "I also am very fond of lilies, and I have several fruit trees. I have a beautiful yard and flower beds but after 40 years it could use some major revamping."

The Blacks' interests go far beyond their yard. Each is intensely creative: For them, there's no such thing as a piece of junk, just art that hasn't happened yet. Playfulness, inventiveness and craftsmanship are givens in the things they make, as well as a love of nature (11 bird-baths in the front yard) and natural forms (a sculptural metal tulip on the front door, a daisy on the side gate).

Martie's decorative Easter eggs are world famous. They've been shown at the White House, two during the Clinton administrations and one with the Bushes. Another, a "medieval egg" was featured in the 1999 International Egg Art Guild artists' calendar, and she and

Les once created one with a tiny carousel inside that revolved with a tinier motor.

She has presided over the arts and crafts component of Fur Rendezvous for more than 20 years, and also has been one of two superintendents of the Alaska State Fair's Arts & Crafts division.

"All my activities such as gardening, egg art, photography, ceramics and everything else work together in many ways," she says.

When the Anchorage Garden Club needed a ringmaster for their 65th annual flower show in July at the Alaska Botanical Garden, they turned to Martie; the Blacks didn't let them down.

"She is talented beyond belief," says Camille Williams, vice president of the club. "They made a ceramic ringmaster for us, and Martie sewed his clothes. I did all the staging for the show, and Martie was my assistant. There's nothing the woman can't do. She is phenomenal."



Where do Cloves Come From?

By Kathy Wartinbee

Wednesday afternoons finds a group of us at the hospital in the oncology department. Our friend receives chemo Wednesdays and we spend time with her. While there, we discuss world problems, joking, but mostly laughing. The kidding and laughter help pass the time. But what does a chemo treatment have to do with cloves?

Sometimes during these afternoons odd questions come up and this time it was, "Where do cloves come from?" Questions often arise and are forgotten, but this one stuck. I had no clue where cloves came from. I have used cloves and really like the flavor they give applesauce, ham, etc. After a quick look through some of my gardening books and on line sources, this is what I found:

Cloves are immature flowers from an evergreen tree *Syzygium aromaticum* which is a member of the myrtle family. These trees are native to the North Moluccas (the Spice Islands of Indonesia) but can be found in Brazil, the West Indies, Mauritius, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka, Zanzibar and Pemba.

These trees can reach 10-20 meters or about 65 feet tall. The bark is gray. Leaves are elliptical, fragrant, and shiny dark green. Flowers are crimson and grow in clusters at the ends of branches.

The word clove comes from Latin *clavus* meaning 'nail'. A clove is an immature unopened flower bud. When fresh,

it is pinky yellow, but when dried turns to the rust brown color we are familiar with. Buds are harvested when they are about 1.5-2.0 cm long, and consist of a long calyx, terminating in four spreading sepals, and four unopened petals which form the small ball at the center. During Roman times, cloves were highly prized. In the Middle ages, they were traded by the Arabs as part of the Indian Ocean trade and were one of the most valuable spices. In the 17th century the Dutch dominated the spice trade. At that time in Britain, cloves were worth their weight in gold, due to the high cost of importing them.

The French introduced the clove tree into Mauritius. Later trees were introduced into Guiana, Brazil, most of the West Indies, and Zanzibar, where the majority of cloves are grown today.

Besides being used for flavoring, cloves have had a wide variety of medicinal uses. Some early uses include the prevention of nausea, aiding food digestion, numbing toothaches, etc. Early Chinese physicians used cloves to treat hernia, and ringworm, as well as athlete's foot and other fungal infections. In India some herbalists also used cloves to treat respiratory problems. While in medieval Germany, herbalists sometimes used cloves as part of an anti-gout mixture.

Today the most common use of cloves is as a flavoring for foods. Cloves can be purchased from a variety of places in various forms ... whole, ground, or clove oils. Enjoy this spice.

This is one of our favorite applesauce/butter recipes: Cranberry Apple Butter
Adapted From: "The Flying Biscuit Café Cookbook" by Chef April Moon. c1998

2 cups dark brown sugar
2 cups white sugar (I added)
1 cinnamon stick
1 ¼ teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon allspice (I added)
1 teaspoon pumpkin spice (I added)
1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice (I used what I had)
2 cup cranberries (I used 1 12-oz bag of cranberries or 2 cups of low bush cranberries)
10 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
Place sugar, spices, and orange juice in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a simmer and add the cranberries. Cook over medium heat until cranberries begin to pop.



Add the apples and cook over low heat, stirring frequently. Cook until apples are tender and falling apart. Puree contents in a food mill or mash with potato masher until smooth and thick. Cool and serve with hot biscuits. Cranberry Apple Butter will keep for 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

Yield: About 4 ½ cups but my additions make more than this with if the additional sugar is used.

[Illustrations from Wikipedia]

Holiday Traditions By Linda McCarthy

Mistletoe



The mistletoe we kiss under at Christmas is not the mistletoe of tradition. Ours is *Phoradendron flavescens*, a parasite that grows on deciduous trees from Florida to New Jersey (not in Alaska unfortunately). The mystic plant of the old world was *viscum* which grew on many trees, even evergreens but was most prized when it grew on an oak. Druids held mistletoe growing on oaks sacred and called it all-heal. It was their custom to send a boy with a branch from house to house to announce the New Year. Mistletoe has a long history in medicine and mythology before it became associated with Christmas. It was an ancient cure-all in Europe, parts of Japan, and Africa. It was supposed to cure epilepsy and other bodily ills, be an antidote to poison, a safeguard against fire, a protection from witches, trolls, and all evil beings, and a talisman against all evil. A sprig laid on your threshold is supposed to keep away bad dreams and it's said it can open locks. Quite a lot for a little parasite! Aeneas, a Trojan hero and son of Prince Anchises and the goddess Venus, unlocked the gates of death with it. However, mistletoe didn't protect the Norse god Balder, the best loved of all immortals, because after he dreamed he was about to die his mother asked all the hurtful things in the world not to hurt anyone, but she forgot to ask the lowly mistletoe. The jealous god Loki threw a sprig of mistletoe at Balder and killed him. No one knows where the kissing comes from though some say that after the death of Balder it was decreed that mistletoe must never again bring destruction and that those who pass under it must exchange the kiss of love and peace. (Adapted from "Through The Garden Gate" by Elizabeth Lawrence)

Pomanders

Does anyone make these any longer? They are made by sticking whole cloves in an orange. Sounds easy but since the clove ends are blunt and the orange skin may be tough, sometimes a little hole must be made with a needle first. I used to see them in homes at Christmas but they are traditional New Year's Day presents. Once the desired design is made with the cloves, the orange can then be rolled in powdered spices (cinnamon, orris root, nutmeg, or cardamon), placed in a bowl, or hung for decorations. They were the poor man's pomanders. Pomanders are associated with the Elizabethans but they are much older than that. They probably originated in France for the name comes from old French: *pome ambre*, the amber is *amberggris*. There is a 13th century reference in "Roman de la Rose." Pomanders were worn as a protection against plagues and pestilence, to counteract evil odors, and to cure insomnia. Sometimes cloves were stuck in apples and given as a token of sympathy to friends in sorrow or distress. They were called "comfort apples." (Adapted from "Through The Garden Gate" by Elizabeth Lawrence)



Gardening Without Losing Your Grip Nickel LaFleur - AGC member

November 6th, the Anchorage Garden Club hosted Valley Dirt Diva, Brooke Heppinstall's, program on "How to Not Kill Yourself in the Garden". With the temperatures in the high teens, Brooke reminded us that even though we were no longer actively working in our yards, exercise is still important and available through such ways as: going to the gym, joining a yoga group, daily walks with friends. (Approximately 300 calories an hour can be burned through different horticultural activities). She suggested thinking of gardening as a sport saying 'You wouldn't perform any other sport without first stretching and working out,' so apply that to gardening.



Since gardening requires a lot of hard work and repetitive movements, she gave us hints about using proper techniques such as: take lots of breaks, use gel kneeling pads, be ambidextrous, raise your work surface to comfortable height, walk perpendicular to slopes, and use proper posture.

Her advice to help your back is to 'tuck in your stomach and lead with your hips'. (You know, like how models walk). Various attendees have been practicing leading with your hips and it has been a riot!



Brooke brought her favorite tools: a by-pass pruner; anvil lopper, telescoping rake and a pair of shoes that lace. She said gardening was no place for Crocs (I was thankful I didn't have mine on that evening) and made some valid points on having covered feet with support while working in the soil. Along with the many ideas and hints Brooke gave, the message

she wanted to get across was to be good to yourself. Garden with things you can't kill and use Alaska grown perennial plants.

Did you know that plants having the Alaska Grown sticker on it are ones that have lived outside at least two growing seasons before being marketed? Brooke recommended using plants that require less work to maintain such as yarrow, lady's mantle, veronica, Monk's hood, Maltese Cross, Asiatic lilies, Campanulas, hardy roses, lilacs, iris setosa, saxifrage, ferns, and meadow rue. So, as we daydream about our next gardening opportunities, I hope you will join me in getting adequate exercise ... and don't forget to lead with your hips!



Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveller, thousands of miles away, back to his own fire-side and his quiet home!

~Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers, 1836



South Central Peninsula MG News by Rosemary Kimball

The winter seems to be getting longer earlier, or, scary thought, I'm getting more efficient! The kitchen cabinets are washed (January job) and my herbs and spices are in alphabetical order (also January). I haven't figured out how I'm going to occupy January--clean house? Order seeds? (April job).

We had a nice snowfall mid-November and it is interesting to see who is around the next day. We have spruce grouse, squirrels, voles and a large number of hares. Boy! are we hare-y! I surprised a lynx at my neighbor's when I went over to feed the chickens. The beautiful cat was as surprised as I was to meet. I later saw its tracks around the garden fence where we have our ducks. The problem in our bird yard wasn't the lynx but the Goshawk which nailed one of the chickens. I interrupted his dinner and we had chicken and dumplings for dinner.

At least there is snow on the ground this November. The previous two Novembers we have had 20 below with no snow cover and have had to replant strawberries, which is no one's idea of a good time. A check of our soil temp thermometer shows 30°F at 4 inches which is very nice. For some strange reason, leaves are persisting on some of the trees--mountain ash and service berries among my gardening friends-- and at our house, also the raspberries. Since we have had temperatures just below zero for several nights during the month it seems that they should have fallen. Any one know why?

After we got back from Hawaii I had to deal with a refrigerator stuffed full of cabbage so I started on the sauerkraut. My Cuisinart broke after slicing only three pounds of the first head so I had to carry on by hand. I'm not so sure it isn't easier that way except for the blister on my hand from the knife pressure. I let the kraut meditate for a couple days and there was more room in the bucket so I sliced more. I have ended up with 25 pounds of fermenting cabbage and it's a good thing I have friends that like sauerkraut. Now only the bottom shelf is stuffed with eight cabbages and it's time to find how many friends like the raw stuff, eight pounds at a time.

Ahhhh, house-sitting in Hawaii. It's a rough job, but someone has to do it. As happy as I am to be in Alaska in the winter--really--, I admit I miss sitting with my coffee in the morning on the verandah watching the stunning tropical sunrises. My friend left a flyer for the World Botanical Garden at Umauma Falls (www.wbgi.com) which was about four miles away and which we'd driven by for several years and the flyer said that for a modest sum, one could have lunch with the director and do a walkabout with him so we did. That's some of the best-spent money this year. I was impressed with the labeling of the plant collection as I like to see which plants are related... I think of them in terms of human families with cousins. I learned that there are clumping and solitary palms, with fern, fan or fish tail fronds.

I also learned that there is no botanical key for palms, so if you want something for your Master's project, the key is yours to make. The garden keeps samples of many of the fruits that are in season at the office and shares them with visitors; this gives mainland people a chance to taste things they never would have access to. Even growing up on Oahu with a gardening father, there were fruits that I'd never seen before. Bay laurel trees grow well there and a friend sent me some home-grown nutmeg. We go to Hawaii with a cooler of salmon and hooligan and return with a cooler of guava and lilikoi (*Passiflora edulis*). We learned about a lilikoi vine by the side of the road that yields what our friend calls "road kill lilikoi" and we kept the roadside clean during our visit.

Your homework now is to go to the World Botanical Garden's web site and click on the photo of the month, the Ivory Cane Palm.

Cashew Fruit

At the bottom of the fruit is the single nut. Think what it takes to make that jar of cashew nuts at Costco!

Photo by Rosemary Kimball



Need a Winter Project? Submitted by Margaret Simon

Try putting together a glass totem for your yard. It's a trendy fun thing to do. Here's a picture of what I glued together with Goop. Besides having something new to put in my garden, I have more space on my shelves because I used flower vases and glassware that I never used but didn't want to throw away.

Google 'glass totems' for further ideas. You'll be surprised and maybe you can make more room on your shelves, too.



Photo by Margaret Simon

Editor's note: I recently got an email about recycling your old appliances. Did you know that the tub from your old washing machine makes a great flower pot? And the drum from your dryer makes a great outdoor firepit? Here's the link if you care to check it out:

<http://www.partselect.com/Blog/category/7.aspx>



Bird Chatter

- MG Troy Zaumseil won the Todd Palin look-alike contest at Blues Central last month. In addition to celebrity look-alike fame, Troy received a gun and guided moose hunting trip. Rumor has it that Lori Z. is shipping in bottles of Jones soda which will feature Troy's Todd persona.
- The 2008 Anchorage Master Gardener course may have set a record. Eleven men are expected to complete their final exam this month.
- Fifty out of 52 gardeners in this year's Anchorage MG class grow Iris setosa and the two without it, want it.
- Soon-to-be MGs in the Anchorage class are more interested in growing vegetables than flowers. The MGs that just finished the class in Wasilla have a greater interest in (annual) flowers. This is a demographics switch.
- Jeff Lowenfels is slated to be keynote speaker at the 2009 International Master Gardener Conference in LAS VEGAS, March 22-25. See <http://www.unce.unr.edu/imgcj> for details. The conference hotel is non-gambling.
- Dead-head queen Tracy DiSabato-Aust will speak in Anchorage thanks to the Kenai-Soldotna MGs who are bringing her to the Southcentral Peninsula in late April/early May. The Alaska Botanical Garden and AMGA are sponsoring Tracy's presentation in Anchorage. She is currently Timber Press's best-selling author.
- The November '08 Cosmopolitan woman's magazine included a relationship quiz that had partners selecting among four trees including oak and redwood. Who knew that trees could predict one's love life!
- Forget bird feed containing millet. None of our Alaskan species find it palatable.
- You can now buy mealworms for the robins this spring at the Alaskan Reptile and Cricket Ranch, located where else... in Spenard.
- While teaching the MG class last month, IPM Technician Michael Rasy was heard to say, "Look at that stinkbug, cute as a bug".
- Bring the garden inside for Christmas. Mary Shier uses Clematis seed heads bedecked with bows.
- Remember to visit garden centers and greenhouses this holiday season for gifts, poinsettias, fresh-cut trees and wreaths.
- AMGA has logo items for sale including long- and short-sleeved t-shirts, baseball caps in periwinkle and pink, an extra large black pile vest and a few other odd and ends.
- The Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference will be held January 27 & 28 at the Anchorage Marriott Hotel. The day and a half event targets Alaska's horticulture industry. More details are available through the Anchorage CES office.
- The Alaska Peony Growers Conference, January 26 & 27, will address the state's emerging cut-flower peony industry and will also be held in downtown Anchorage at the Marriott.
- Keep Saturday April 3 open for the 3rd Annual Alaska Botanical Garden spring gardening conference. Mushroom guru Paul Stametz will be the featured speaker.

Passings...



We extend our sincere condolences to the family of MG Lyn Sinnema who passed away October 26, 2008. Lyn was a Master Gardener who took the course in 1999.

Anchorage Garden Club 48th Annual Holiday Flower Show By Nickel LaFleur

With the theme of 50 Years of Statehood, the Anchorage Garden Club held its 48th annual holiday flower show on November 18th & 19th at the Well Fargo Bank's main branch location on Northern Lights. MG Camille Williams, General Show Chairman outdid herself designing the Christmas tree (which was for sale with proceeds going to American Cancer Society) as well as many of the spectacular table designs and horticultural entries. MG Marge Olson's artistic flair was seen in the sign placement, which made finding and identifying the designs and horticulture a breeze. MG and National Flower Show Judge Della Barry did some great designs as well. MG and National Flower Show Judge Verna Pratt brought in a beautiful begonia she rescued a couple years ago from the entry bed at the Botanical Gardens when it was being ripped up for the season. It was beautiful.

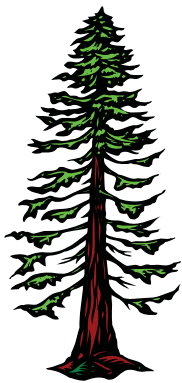
A special thank you goes out to MGs Herb Spencer & Linda Slack for their participation in the horticultural section. Seeing all the beautiful house plants on display did a heart good.

If you would like to participate or get more information about our next flower show, call the hotline number 566-0539 and leave your name, number and someone will call you back. Thanks to all who participated!!



Judy Christianson Honored for 30 Years of Volunteer Master Gardener Service

Julie Riley opened the November AMGA meeting with a surprise ceremony and gift for Judy Christianson in recognition of Judy's 30 years of active AMGA participation and support. Judy was in the very first Anchorage MG class in 1978/79 and was instrumental in organizing and establishing the Alaska Master Gardener Association. Nonstop for 30 years, she has been an active and integral part of AMGA and has also been one of the major forces behind AMGA's support of the Pioneer Home gardens. Good job, Judy!



What is a tree worth?

Written by Stephen Nickel,
Community Assistance Forester
with the Alaska Division of Forestry,
Community Forestry Program.

This is an interesting question and, depending on your point of view, the answer will differ. For some, the value of a tree can be summed by its aesthetic qualities and its contributions to the landscape. For others, by the value it adds to a piece of property, or the increased resale price of a home.

Some trees have a sentimental or historical value attached to them, and still others are viewed as a valuable timber resource. There are other values that may not readily come to mind like the value of the environmental services that trees perform, many that we cannot live without. Services like carbon storage, wildlife habitat, erosion control, storm water management, and improvements to air quality are essential to the health of the planet.

A healthy urban forest also contributes to the quality of life and livability of our communities by giving us places to recreate and relax, making our cities more attractive to businesses and increasing our property values. Studies show that children with attention deficits will have elevated attention performance following a "dose of nature," and neighborhoods with well kept green spaces have lower crime rates. These benefits or services are harder to quantify, but are none the less important.

This summer, the State of Alaska Division of Forestry Community Forestry Program and Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department began an inventory of Anchorage's public trees with funding from the US Forest Service. Completing this inventory will produce a detailed picture of the composition and condition of Anchorage's urban forest and will be used to create a long range management plan that will streamline maintenance activities and identify new planting spaces.

The value of each tree will also be calculated using a formula developed by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers. The formula considers the species, size, location, and condition of each tree. When completed, we will know the dollar value of one of Anchorage's most valuable assets, its urban forest. We will also be able to determine the value of environmental services it provides.

In the end, what we will gain from this inventory is local data supporting what research shows elsewhere- that urban forests are an essential public asset, one that will increase in value and services over time, and trees are a good investment because they pay us back with numerous environmental, economic, and social benefits.

So, the deeper you dig into this question the harder it is to come up with one answer. In fact it lends itself to another question. Do we value our trees and forests enough?

Garden Event Calendar

January 7, Wednesday

Alaska Rock Garden Society meeting: "Evergreens for the Rock Garden" by Mark White. Mark is driving up from Soldotna, so meeting will be at UAF Cooperative Extension Service, 7 p.m, 2221 E. Northern Lights, room 130.

January 19, Monday

Alaska Master Gardener Association meeting: TBA - Meets at UAF Cooperative Extension Service, 7 p.m, 2221 E. Northern Lights, room 130.

January 26-27, Monday/Tuesday

Alaska Peony Growers Conference, held at the downtown Anchorage Marriott Hotel.

January 27-28, Tuesday/Wednesday

Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference, held at the Anchorage Marriott Hotel. Contact CES for details: 786-6300

February 21, Saturday

Alaska Rock Garden Society meeting: "Douglasia and Drabas", held at the MTA Meeting Room in the Valley.

Feb 20, 27, and March 6, 20, 27, Fridays

March 28, Saturday

Organic Gardening Class with with Ellen Vande Visse, Good Earth Garden School, www.goodearthgardenschool.com
Mat-Su College: Five Friday evenings, 6-8:30pm, plus one Saturday field trip; 1 credit, pass/no pass. Call 745-9746 for information or register on line at www.uaa.alaska.edu and follow Wolf Link for Agri 138, Organic Gardening.

2009 Membership Dues Reminder

Don't forget to update your AMGA Membership by the end of the year. In order to have your name and contact information in the Directory, you must register on time.

Besides member information, the Directory has a calendar list of happenings throughout the year as well as monthly programs, summer tours, Fair dates, and a list of Gardening clubs, Societies and Associations throughout the state.

You should be getting a renewal form in the mail soon. Be sure to fill in all the blanks with ideas for programs and summer tours. Your membership also includes the AMGA monthly newsletter to keep you up to date on gardening happenings throughout the year. Oh! And don't forget to include a check!



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

Mail: 14051 Fejes Road [new mailing address]
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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