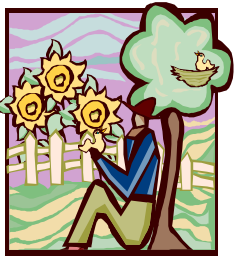


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 10, Issue 2

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER February 2008



Making the Most of Shade Julie Riley

[Larry Hodgson is one of the speakers to be featured at the 2008 Alaska Master Gardener Conference, May 9 & 10. This article is the second of three book reviews that I am writing before the conference. Larry will not be speaking on shade gardening when he is in Anchorage, but the Conference Planning Committee hopes to have his books available for purchase. Julie Riley]

Reading Larry Hodgson's book *Making the Most of Shade* (Rodale Press, 2005) will change the way you think about shade gardening. His premise is that "continuous bloom is not absolutely essential to the success of a shade garden". Larry states that foliage color, texture, form and height are key to creating year round interest.

Perhaps Larry's biggest message is to "stop looking at shade as a tragedy" and consider its advantages. He offers that "shade plants need less routine maintenance, such as deadheading" and gives 10 additional reasons why gardening in the shade is easy. I had to chuckle when I read "how much you appreciate the advantages of shade gardening partly depends on your personality". Are you Type A or Type B?

One thing the book addresses right away is the different types of shade and ways to recognize what you've got. For example, petunia, a sun-loving plant, will grow fairly well in partial shade. Planted in full shade, it will not bloom at all.

Then Larry boldly suggests that shade may not be your problem but rather competition from tree roots. This is so true but gardeners continually search for something to plant under trees. Larry offers helpful tips that go beyond selecting the right plants. My favorite suggestions from the book are to 1) plant bigger-sized plants or 2) "plant" pots of plants between the tree's large roots. *Making the Most of Shade* even includes a chart of trees that have less aggressive root systems and provide moderate instead of deep shade. Unfortunately, out of 20 trees only crabapple, Japanese tree lilac and possibly eastern white pine will grow in Southcentral Alaska. (Amur maple is on the shrub list and can grow to be a small tree in height.)



My disappointment with the tree species list was short-lived when I delved into the part of the book which includes shade tolerant perennials, annuals, bulbs, ferns and grasses. A high percentage of the plants listed work for us. Larry's zone designations are pretty consistent with Alaskan experience, too, although he lists astilbe and masterwort as Zone 4 and I think they're reliable in our Zone 3. Conversely, I'd bump sweet woodruff from Zone 3 to Zone 4 as I've seen it survive only occasional winters in Anchorage. Our native baneberry gets it's own two pages of description as a recommended shade plant and Larry mentions monkey flower as being native to Alaska. It's great to have a Canadian author recognize our plants!

Making the Most of Shade is good for beginning gardeners but also provides plenty of fresh ideas for those with more experience, i.e. *Aconitum septentrionale* 'I vorine' is the most shade tolerant of the monkshoods. The book also straightened me out on the hardy, half-hardy designation often given to annuals by British gardeners. As you can tell, I love *Making the Most of Shade* and if you only buy one book on shade gardening, I recommend this be the one.



New Master Gardeners

Congratulations to everyone listed below who completed the Master Gardener course in December. 2008 promises to be a banner year for volunteer activities. Flory Vinson has already made a contribution to the AMGA newsletter. Charles Baker is working with Lori Zaumseil's non-profit CANWIN (Citizen's Against Noxious Weeds Invading the North) to develop a web site. Nancy Sullivan and a few others are going to start a garden club at the Anchorage Senior Center. Barbara Baker will be researching tree/shrub origins to be used in the publication "Landscape Plants for Alaska". These are just a few of the many projects Master Gardeners will be involved with in the coming year.

Barbara Baker,	Charles Baker,
Lance Baker,	Dawn Bishop-Kleweno,
Warren Brown,	Anne Butcher,
Linda Butler,	Michael Carey,
Cheryl Chapman,	Ellen Cordes,
Gretchen Cuddy,	Kathleen Douglass,
Liz Dowler,	Carmen Dunham,
Fran Durner,	Martha Fenger,
Julie Ginder,	Lynden Grothe,
Elaine Hammes,	Mary Ellen Harris,
Dani Haviland,	Marnie Isaacs,
Tamea Isham,	Debbie Jeske,
Judy Jett,	Colleen Joest,
Carol Jones,	Deborah Laabs,
Susan Lang,	Ryan Leary,
Jeannine Lysterly,	Matt Marth,
Penny McEntire,	Edward Mesick,
Julia Orwen,	Mike Peters,
Vicki Radonich,	Cathy Robbins,
Catherine Shenk,	Cheryl Simpson,
Tammie Stoops,	Nancy Sullivan,
Donna Swenson,	Nan Thompson,
Tina Thompson,	Kathy Tiede,
Jan VanDenTop,	Flory Vinson,
Mari Wood,	Becky Woodward,
Lori Zaumseil,	Troy Zaumseil

A CALL TO ALL CONCERNED

From Nickel LaFleur

Please make a date to be at the Town Square downtown on Monday, February 11th between 5-9p to give comments on what you would like to see happen to the design of Town Square.

With the new convention center to be opening soon, it is expected that a greater number of people will be in the downtown area. To accommodate, there are lots of changes happening to both "E" and "F" Street from 9th Avenue going north. Some of the proposed changes affect Town Square.

Do you want to see changes to Town Square? If so, do the plans currently developed reflect what you think it should look like? Are you happy with its current design and just want something done with the bricks? What is your vision? This is your opportunity to have a voice!

For those people that are not able to make it to the downtown area on February 11th but want to make sure your voice is heard, go to this website www.muni.org/parks/planning.cfm. Go to the Northwest Park District and double click on the Town Square site to read more. If you have any questions, or would like to comment on the project, please contact Holly Spoth-Torres at 343-4585 or poth-TorresHJ@muni.org. If you would like to write, you may write Parks and Recreation Department Attn: Holly Spoth-Torres Re: Town Square PO Box 196650 Anchorage, AK 99519-6650.

The proposed plans, members from the E and F street teams, Parks & Recreation folks along with the Town Square Citizen Advisory Group will be available to help with any questions or confusion you may have with the changes to Town Square on Monday, February 11th from 5 to 9p. Light refreshments will be served as well. Hope to see you downtown!

Get Dirty and Be Happy!

From Garden Gate January/February issue...

Gardeners know how important soil is to plants, but researchers at Bristol University and University College London discovered that the soil bacteria *Mycobacterium vaccae* helps elevate your mood. Originally used to treat cancer patients' pain, scientists found the bacterium also increased feelings of well-being. Studies with mice found that *M. vaccae* affects the brain in a way similar to antidepressants. So get out in the garden and get dirty - it's good for you.



Geranium 'Rozanne'– Perennial Plant of the Year®

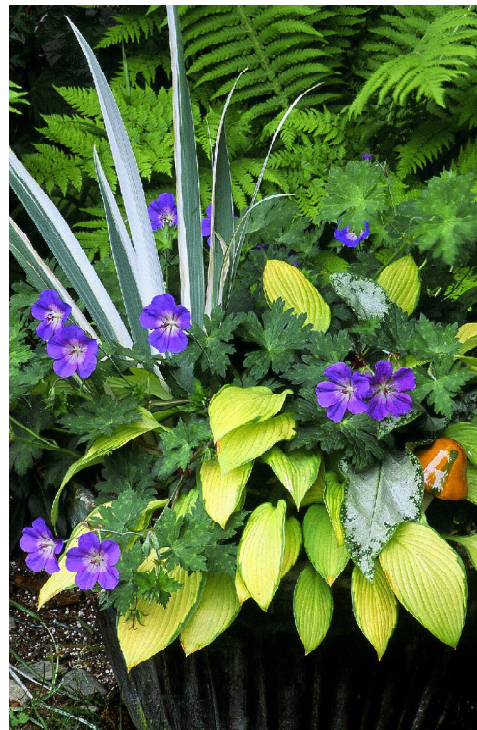
Julie Riley, Extension Horticulture Agent

This fabulous hybrid geranium has extra-large, iridescent blue flowers. I saw Geranium 'Rozanne' last year at Fritz Creek Gardens. The pictures on the Internet don't do it justice. Rita Jo Shoultz featured 'Rozanne' in a container of mixed perennials placed at the entrance to her display gardeners and I was truly smitten. Unfortunately, the plant is listed as a Zone 5 perennial, but we never know what will work for us until we try it.

The unusual spelling of 'Rozanne' comes from its discoverers. According to the Perennial Plant Association, Donald and Rozanne Waterer collected seed from two geraniums growing in their garden in Somerset, England. From the seedlings of this collection, 'Rozanne' stood out as being exceptional, featuring stronger growth and larger flowers than its parent plants.

'Rozanne' grows 20 to 24 inches tall and 24 to 28 inches wide in full sun or partial shade. The 2½ inch, violet-blue flowers have purple veins and a small white eye. The Perennial Plant Association touts it as one of the longest flowering perennial geraniums. And, of course, they suggest you plant it everywhere– garden beds and borders, patio planters, window boxes and hanging baskets. Plants that become raggedy can be sheared back to 3" although I doubt that given its selection as Perennial Plant of the Year® it will become as straggley as geranium 'Johnson's Blue'.

I'm hoping many of you will give geranium 'Rozanne' a try this summer and we can see how it survives the winter. Master Gardener Fran Durner already has one in the ground.



Horticultural Internship Offered at Sheep Mountain Lodge

The horticultural intern will be responsible for upkeep of the lodge gardens, flower beds, containers, greenhouse and grounds. We plant 4 – 50' rows of primarily annual and vegetable plants each summer. Knowledge of cool climate vegetable crops and annual flowers is important. The Sheep Mountain Lodge is located in a Zone 2/3 climate; we grow only the most hardy perennials. Each summer we add additional perennial plants to our existing beds including our 100 square foot rock garden. Job responsibilities include: watering, transplanting, greenhouse plant watering and care, cleaning and bed planting.

Monthly salary: \$750 including room and board. 30-40 hours per week, two days off per week. Position begins the first week of May 2008, ends August 14, 2008. Additional hours as a lodge employee possible and the work season can be extended until Sept 15 with other lodge-related tasks. Eligible applicants will be studying an outdoor-related discipline at a college-level, will have work experience, be able to work independently, and have the ability to operate an all-terrain vehicle.

For more information on application procedures visit our webpage at www.sheepmountain.com

Sheep Mountain Lodge
www.sheepmountain.com
info@sheepmountain.com
Mile 113.5 Glenn Highway
Fax 907.745.5120
Toll Free 877-645-5121
Ph. 907.745.5121
Mailing address: 17701 W. Glenn Hwy
Sutton, AK 99674



**TO FEED OR
NOT TO FEED
YOUR GARDEN BIRDS**
From The Curious Gardener's
Almanac
by Niall Edworthy 2006

You **can** feed the following household foods to your garden birds:

Raisins and currants
Fat enjoyed by thrushes and wrens
Cooked, unsalted rice
Grated mild cheddar cheese enjoyed by robins, blackbirds, wrens and song thrushes
Dry Oats
Cold plain potatoes in all forms except potato chips
Pieces of apple and pear enjoyed by thrushes and starlings
Pastry, cooked or uncooked
Peanuts sold for the express purpose of feeding birds

You should **NOT** feed these foods to your garden birds:

Cheap peanuts (it may contain a harmful toxin that can kill some birds)
Dried coconut (it can swell the stomach and kill some birds)
Spicy or salty food
Salted nuts, bacon, crisps and snack foods
Margarine and vegetable oils
Food with mold on it
Chocolate



The Wheelbarrow



One of the most useful garden tools is the wheelbarrow. Its origin is usually traced to China's Chuko Liang, an adviser to the Shu-Han Dynasty from AD 197 to 234. Liang developed it as

a means of transportation for military supplies. The first evidence of wheelbarrows being used in Europe is found in illustrations in the 13th century.



Garden "Pots"
By Linda McCarthy

I've been planting very large pots every year for the last several years with annuals and roses that won't survive the winters in the ground. Even after switching from ceramic pots to lighter weight ones, I soon learned that they were too heavy to move around when full of soil. I started adding Styrofoam packing peanuts to the bottom 1/3 of the pot. That proved disastrous when several pots blew over in the high winds on the hillside and the peanuts went flying all over the neighborhood. The next year I put the peanuts in a plastic bag and put the bag in the bottom of the pot. Recently I read another interesting and "recycling" approach in the January/February issue of "Backyard Living" magazine.....use crushed aluminum soda cans! Simple put them in the bottom of the pot covered with landscape fabric, add soil and your plants. After the season is over you can either reuse or recycle the cans. At least they would be easier to "catch" if the pots blow over again.

MORE ON RECYCLING
By Linda McCarthy

If your hanging baskets leak heavily after being watered, try sphagnum moss in the bottom of the container. Other more ingenious gardeners use modern-day baby diapers (unused I'm sure) or an old wool sweater cut to size to retain the water in the soil.

An old ironing board makes a versatile and easily moved potting table. It can be adjusted to the best height for you and takes up very little space when stored away.

New bricks, walls, rocks or stonework in the garden can be aged by smearing them with live yogurt. The active bacteria will quickly attract moss and lichen and help darken the surface of the stones.

Terracotta pots absorb water, drying out the soil inside quicker than pots made from other materials. To prevent this problem, line the inside of the pots with plastic shopping bags with holes punched in the bottom to allow for drainage.





Central Peninsula Master Gardener News

By Rosemary Kimball

Believe it or not, I thought getting so much out this time of year was impossible!

Our Christmas tree is still up at the end of January. It's such a pleasant source of light this time of year it seemed a shame to take it down before its shedding becomes annoying. We've never had a tree that has refused to shed as long this one has. I've forgotten to give it water many times and the bucket has gone dry several times and still it stays on!

My *Brunnera macrophylla* "Jack Frost" that I rushed out and rescued from its totally inappropriate habitat last November then potted up, has started to sprout in our root cellar. It needs a better, brighter home than it has there, so off it goes to Neighbor Mark. He's already gotten my Christmas cactus which started shedding segments slowly and steadily after blooming no matter what I did or did not do. If anyone knows why, I'd love to hear from you. It's nice having a neighbor who has plant environments that are missing at our house and be able to freely use them.

MG Kathy Wartinbee, a member of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association, put me in touch with a man in Idaho, Bob Purvis, who is grafting hardier apricots onto the hardiest rootstock. There are none for sale until late winter 2009, but you can bet that Kathy and I are standing in line for his products. Bob may be reached at his e-mail address, purvisrc@msn.com. Kathy Wartinbee writes: 'Bob understands what Alaska hardy should be. Bob and his wife lived in Anchorage for 14 years, and they have visited many places in Alaska. He helped start the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association in 1984. After nearly 8 years working for the USDA-NASS in St. Paul MN and growing fruit trees and nursery stock at his home in Cottage Grove MN, he recently relocated to Homedale, ID where he is currently setting up his fruit-tree nursery once again in a semi-arid, USDA Zone 7 location. He expects to have cold-hardy varieties of apricots and plums.' As a bonus, Julie Riley said he received his MG training from her in 1985.

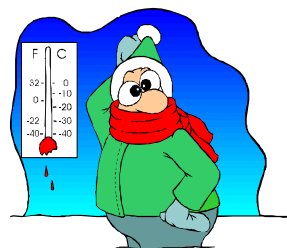
I'm pea-green jealous of the offer from ALPAR to dump a load of former Christmas tree chips on one's property in Anchorage. Down here, HEA had a company doing power line clearing and needed chip dump space. We got two loads and six years later I'm still using them in my compost. When they arrived they smoked for a couple weeks, and then settled down to continued breakdown. We've been running the chips through the shredder to provide the carbon content for our compost piles and they exit the chute in a brown powder. I purr as I watch them go.

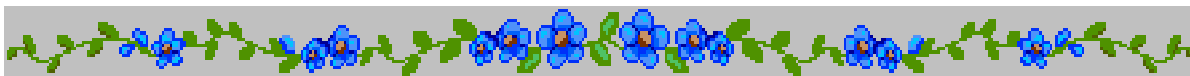
Heronswood sent me a catalog and I swooned. The pictures are wonderful and the descriptions are enticing. I'll order, I'll order.

Garden things are going slowly but MGs Margaret Simon and Barb Jewell are going to soak up inspirational sun on the Big Island of Hawaii then summer in Alaska will be considered.

I'm going to start including some of the activities of the Central Peninsula Garden Club which was formed here a year ago. I did an informal census of members one evening (I'm the president) and about a quarter of the members had gone through the MG class. The MG "organization" here is quiescent at the moment. The garden club has taken over the lecture series with an activity every month instead of a few times during the winter. We had Verna Pratt, as always just wonderful, last month. This month, Dr. Jeff Smeenk is bringing down a large selection of potatoes for taste testing...no salt, no pepper, no butter— just potato. Mind you we are cooking these out of doors in February. March is Arborist Curtis Stigall who owns an Arboristic View in Soldotna and in April, the Goodgames will do delphiniums. All these programs are gotten together by Marion Nelson, the VP/Program chair. She sells Milepost® adds from Seldovia to Girdwood and knows everyone in between to boot!

Don't those five minutes away that we are gaining make a wonderful difference?





Bird Chatter

- For the first time in history ALL recent Master Gardener graduates have email addresses!
- New MG Lori Zaumseil said she went to a garage sale and saw invasive plant signs. This was the MG garage sale organized by Kyle Wessells a few years ago!!
- AMGA member Susan Miller has opened a shop for her business, The Garden Gate, in the heart of the Palmer historic district. You can find The Garden Gate on the east side of the railroad tracks at 320 East Dahlia Street. Sally Koppenberg, of Stonehill Gardens fame, is opening The Red Beet, a café, bakery and catering business in the same location and in the summer will be selling nursery stock.
- Quote from Larry Hodgson, guest speaker at the 2008 MG conference, "Perennial" does not mean eternal..."
- There is a great photo of MG Fran Flint and her cactus collection on the Anchorage Daily News gardening blog.
- Human hair from China has been used to create a garden mat product promoted as both fertilizer and mulch, <http://smartgrow.net/>.
- MG Nickel LaFleur reported that the cutting of 23 acres of trees in Russian Jack Park for the development of a larger golf course has been postponed because of the large response generated by an Anchorage Daily News article.
- USDA-Agricultural Research Service scientists have crossed the cultivated American cranberry, *Vaccinium macrocarpon*, with the Alaskan bog cranberry, *V. oxycoccus*, to create a cranberry with a high level of absorbable antioxidants.
- CANWI N, Citizens Against Noxious Weeds in the North, meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at the Campbell Creek Science Center. The group is headed up by MG Lori Zaumseil.
- To find out why Aaron Hagerty, Agricultural Research Service entomologist, said you should blanch insects like broccoli at the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference, see the Anchorage Daily News garden blog at <http://community.adn.com/?q=adn/blog/36232>.
- There is a use for Fairbanks's static electricity. According to Dr. Pat Holloway who spoke at the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference last month, static electricity will hold fern spores to the paper envelop in which you have collected them while allowing you to dump off the chaff.
- Those attending the Alaska peony growers meeting in Fairbanks Feb 1 & 2 learned that peonies do not like days above 82°F or nights above 70°F. No problem here!
- Ask for Alaska grown carrots if they are not displayed in the produce section where you shop. Last year part of the crop was fed to livestock because it could not be sold. The carrots are very sweet right now and there is still a large quantity in storage.
- Volunteers are unpaid, not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS. (Quote from the Alaska Literacy Program Scrabble Night program.)

Oregon "Mini College" Master Gardener Conference

The 25th Annual Gardener's Mini-College "Going Green on Our Silver" will be Wednesday July 23-Saturday July 26, 2008 at Oregon State University, Corvallis Oregon. Details can be found at:

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/mini-college>

MORE REASONS FOR DIGGING IN THE DIRT

"A woman will not only have the satisfaction of seeing the garden being created by her own hands, she will find her health and spirits wonderfully improved by the exercise and by the reviving smell of the fresh earth."

Jane Loudon in "Gardening for Ladies" 1840.

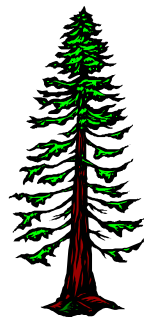


One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides.

~W.E. Johns, The Passing Show



TREErific Notes from Nickel LaFleur



Anchorage TREErific is asking for your help. We would like to celebrate all the notable trees in the Anchorage area by compiling a tree walking tour to help celebrate our state's 50th anniversary this summer. Do you know of a tree that was planted around statehood that we could include on our tour? Do you have any history of a particular tree that you would be willing to share? Please

email us at TREErificAnchorage@yahoo.com with this information along with your name and phone number so we may do a follow-up.

THANK YOU to the Master Gardeners that took the time to email Brad Dunker at Parks and Recreation to let him know where you stood on the issue of trees and golf at Russian Jack Park. I'm so pleased that the project is on hold indefinitely until further public process has been implemented. It's so nice to see that our voices matter and were heard. Thank you for helping me root for healthy trees!

Nickel LaFleur - Anchorage TREErific

Email Corrections

The most recent revisions made to the AMGA database included 10 emails that bounced back. It's important to keep your email address (and mailing address) updated to stay in the loop with what's going on. AMGA has devised a very slick way to keep everyone who needs to communicate with you updated. This includes the AMGA president, AMGA volunteer coordinator, AMGA directory editor, AMGA newsletter editor and your Extension Agent. Any changes in your contact information should be directed to Sandy Harrington, AMGA directory editor dsarr@ptialaska.net, 346-3599. She sends out a monthly updated database to everyone listed above monthly.

WILDFLOWER GARDEN CLUB SCHOLARSHIP

The Wildflower Garden Club offers an annual \$1000 award to a graduating high school or current college student pursuing study in Horticulture, Floriculture, Landscape Design, Forestry, Botany, Agronomy, Plant Pathology, and/or allied subjects. This year's recipient may be forwarded on to higher level garden club federations for additional scholarship consideration.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 30, 2008

For more information contact the Career Resource Center at your local high school, Financial Aide Office at your local college or email kjfarley@mtaonline.net

Garden Event Calendar

Wednesday Feb. 13

ABG: Snowshoe Tour Around Alaska Botanical Garden 1 pm - 3 pm, Open to the Public, Free.

Join Patricia Joyner, Alaska Division of Forestry, for a snowshoe excursion around the perimeter fence to identify trees. Location: meet in Benny Benson school parking lot near front gate of Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Rd., Anchorage

Monday, February 18

AMGA Meeting: Seed Planting 101 by Mary Shier 7:00 p.m. @ the CES, Conference room 130. Call 786-6300 for info

February 20-24th

The Northwest Flower and Garden Show in Seattle <http://www.gardenshow.com/seattle/index/index.asp> (800) 569-2832

Wednesday, February 27

Pruning Trees & Shrubs - Instructor: Patricia Joyner, Community Forestry Program - 1:30 - 3:00 p.m., Anchorage CES Conference room, #130

Registration: Free, but contact CES to register (786-6300; afjar@uaa.alaska.edu)

Saturday, Feb 29

Spring Garden Conference: Sustainability - 9 am - 6 pm; \$60 ABG & Garden Club members. \$70 non-members. A full day of gardening seminars with Lee Reich and local experts. Register by 5 pm March 21 to receive a complimentary lunch. Location: UAA/APU Consortium Library, 3rd floor, 3211 Providence Dr., Anchorage (free parking).

Thursday, April 17

Composting Techniques, Instructor: Jeff Smeenk, Horticulture Specialist, CES; 7 - 9 p.m., Anchorage CES Conference room, #130. Class will be repeated with Julie Riley as the instructor on Wednesday, April 23, 12 - 2 p.m. Registration: Details at a latter date.

Friday - Saturday, May 9-10

Alaska Master Gardener's Conference, "In the Zone" For details and registration, see: Alaskamastergardeners.org and click the **2008 AMGA Conference** link

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!)



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Geranium 'Rozanne'— Perennial Plant of the Year®

With extra-large, iridescent blue flowers,
it is one of the longest flowering perennial geraniums.
See related story on page 3.

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