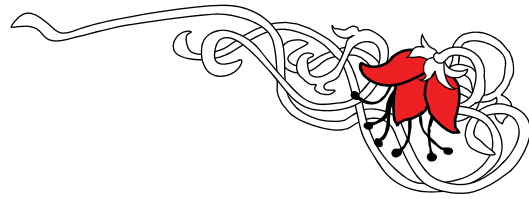


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 11, Issue 4

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER April 2009



Message From the President Beth Schlabaugh

For someone born in the 1970's the words "Victory Garden" evoke images of a dull Saturday afternoon when my folks took over the TV from my brother and I and



forced us to watch PBS. The famous gardening show was squeezed between Bob Villa the original home repair guru and something equally dull Bob Ross painting "happy little trees". Definitely No Cartoons. Definitely No interest for a kid....

Older now, if not wiser, I've come to enjoy the wonderful programs that public television has to offer including the famed Victory Garden. However, it wasn't until this last few weeks that I really learned that the term "Victory

Garden" wasn't some flashy marketing title but a description of something vastly more important.

I was thrilled and surprised when I started to research some information about Victory Gardens for this month's article. During the last month or two I've been hearing quite a lot about them. A quickly edited definition from Wikipedia explains that "Victory Gardens" also termed "War Gardens" or "Food Gardens for Defense" were vegetable, fruit and herb gardens planted at private homes in the US the UK, Canada, and Germany during the first and second World Wars. They were designed to reduce the pressure on the public food supply brought on by the war effort. In addition to indirectly aiding the war effort these gardens were also considered a "morale booster" — in that gardeners could feel empowered by their contribution of labor and rewarded by the produce grown. Making victory gardens became a part of daily life on the home front.

While we are not in a time of a world war we definitely

seem to be in an economic, food safety, and maybe even gustatory crisis.

Why all of the attention on an idea from the beginning of the last century? To answer you have to look no further than the front pages of the local newspaper. The continued rise of food costs, and the increase of food safety warnings and recalls are just two of the reasons that many are reverting back to the "grow your own" independent ideas of our parents and grandparents.

Today many no longer live on the family farm, and the reality is that it's just not feasible to grow most of your own food supply. It is however very possible to grow enough that you see a dent in your grocery bill and an increase in yummy nutritious offerings on your table. Even the smallest city lot or condo patio can offer enough space to do this.

Keeping these thoughts in mind we have compiled a wonderful learning opportunity for you this spring. Rather than a two-day spring conference we will be offering a one-day more hands-on event. Our keynote speaker will be presenter and author Rose Marie Nichols McGee. Rose Marie is co-author of the best selling book *The Bountiful Container*. Considered by many to be "The bible for small-space gardeners who want to grow what they eat." In addition Rose Marie is a MG from Oregon and she and her husband Keane are the current owners and operators of Nichols Garden Nursery. NGN is a family business that has been in the seed and nursery business for over 50 years. It is located in the famous Willamette Valley. NGN has never offered genetically modified seed, plants, or products and they are one of ten core sponsors of The Safe Seed Initiative. www.nicholsgardennursery.com

In addition to our wonderful keynote speaker we will have many classes designed to increase your garden knowledge, save you money and get your hands dirty! Some of the classes not to be missed... *Maintaining Your Garden Tools, Garden Design and Layout, Proper Selection, Placement & Planting of a Tree, Build Your Own Wooden Garden Trellis* and too many more to mention!

The AMGA Spring Workshop will be held Saturday May 9th at the Gateway Education Building at the Alaska Zoo. The Early Registration cost is \$55. Lunch is included. See the Registration Insert for more information.

AMGA Meeting Report - March 16, 2009 By Jane Baldwin

If you weren't there, you missed a great March meeting, with tantalizing hints of the summer to come. It will come, you know, it does every year in some form or fashion.

Annie Nevaldine premiered her "Mystery Program" treat: a five minute collage of pictures of our local gardeners set to a folk song, "Talkin' Harvest Time Blues" by singer/songwriter Stephanie Davis. It is a perfect song about the perils of perusing garden and seed catalogs while snowbound. The song lyrics cover the excessive orders placed, the UPS delivery (when the snow finally melts) of umpteen boxes of plants, bulbs and seeds, and then bemoans that the gorgeous pictures of tomatoes (and other perfect vegetables) found in the seed catalogs conveniently do not cover the hard work, slugs, bugs and other things that are actually involved in getting to "Harvest Time". I can't begin to remember all of the local stars in her production - although Mary Shier, Judy Christianson, Julie Riley, Dick & June Juelson, and a very cooperative UPS driver come to mind. It was a big hit - great job, Annie!



The main program was a presentation on "Iris" by Debbie Hinchey. It was an excellent program, with gorgeous pictures and just enough technical plant information to keep you on your toes. Debbie presented enough tantalizing information about differ-

ent iris that can be grown here successfully and some that might do well. We all love our native *Iris setosa* (purple, blue & white). *Iris Siberia* is grown here successfully, as well as some dwarf bearded iris (*I. pumila*). Although a bit marginal, there are apparently some successes with tall standard bearded iris. Some of the smaller, early spring iris (such as *I. reticulata*) also do reasonably well. Hmmmm..... maybe it's time for an iris study group to come together.....?

Photos by Jane Baldwin
Above: Bearded Iris "Sherbert"
Below: Iris Reticulata



Master Gardener Focus: Sue Lincoln By Cheryl Chapman



In her different hats, Master Gardener Sue Lincoln helped so many people in so many different ways at Anchorage's Cooperative Extension Service that they can't say just how long she worked there.

For two years, she was the office's Master Gardener volunteer coordinator, "and that was the last time I was caught up with my work," says horticulturist Julie Riley. "We passed her along after that to wherever we had funding." Hence Lincoln's subsequent stints in water quality, the office's pesticide safety program, and as an integrated pest management (IPM) technician. "She's organized," says Riley. "She's thoughtful. Sue's the person behind the scenes who sees that things get done."

The job shifts at CES weren't a problem; Lincoln's no stranger to change. In 1959 her dad loaded his wife and four children, including a 3-month-old baby boy, into a 1958 International Harvester Travelall with a Liberty trailer hitched to the rear and hauled out of Torrington, Conn., for Alaska. They settled first in Muldoon; her father worked at Fort Rich and planted roses and begonias at their home.

"I remember him taking classes at Muldoon Greenhouse, and coming home and saying his plants never had any of the conditions he learned about until he learned about them in the classes," she says.

By 1961 the family was homesteading in Willow, six people packed in a one-room cabin for the winter, though her father drove daily to Fort Rich. "Mom was an R.N., a real East Coast gal who didn't know a thing about Alaska, but she pulled up her boots and did it," says Lincoln.

Lincoln was working at Elmendorf when she and her husband, Gary, career Air Force, met, and the couple settled into the home they still own in Eagle River. Within a year, though, they were on the move to North Little Rock, Ark.: deep South, steaming hot, ticks, chiggers. "It was a shock," says Lincoln. "Huge trees. Green all the time. And you couldn't take walks in the summer. I decided there that I wanted to become a horticulturist."

The government had other plans: the Lincolns were whisked to Omaha, Neb., where Lincoln enrolled in a two-year program that would have ended with an associate's degree in horticulture. Her husband, though, was transferred again, this time to Hawaii. Lincoln's course credits were not.

She started over, this time in the tropics, and graduated from the University of Hawaii-Manoa with a B.S. in horticulture technology.

From Alaska to the South, the South to the Midwest, the Midwest to Hawaii: The Lincolns were ready to close

the circle. In 1992, Gary retired and they returned to their Eagle River house in the trees, halfway down a steep hill.

Lincoln signed up for the Master Gardener course under then-CES horticulturist Wayne Vandre. She was in the 1995/96 class: by correspondence. "And that was the toughest thing I've ever done," she says..

Lincoln, who's served on the board of directors and as treasurer for the Anchorage Master Gardeners, now is working with the education committee, "looking at other programs in other states," she says. "Some have a statewide Master Gardener volunteer coordinator who handles this stuff. Some require that Master Gardeners get recertified every year with classes and volunteer work." "Books are good, but you can read a book until it falls apart and not get as much out of it as hands-on experience will give. The best thing for any gardener to do is volunteer work in unfamiliar areas, areas you're not comfortable with, with people who know more than you do. That's the way to learn."

An ornamentalist - "I don't do veggies" - Lincoln was in the first graduating class of tree stewards run by the Alaska Division of Forestry's Community Forestry Program. "We try to encourage communities to care for their trees," she says. "We helped the municipality of Anchorage do a tree inventory; we gave classes on tree health. We went with schools to Eagle River Nature Center to ID trees. Yes, I hug 'em."

She grieves her 20-foot backyard larch flattened in the gale that came through early this winter. She mulls over what to do about the sap-leaking galls on a mammoth white spruce out front. She worries about a young blue spruce planted in its shadow: too close? The golden elder, a specimen shrub, is thriving next to the massive stone terraces the Lincolns put in last year to keep their hill from joining them in the living room, and the Jacobs ladder draping the wall looks really nice but may be too happy because it's "spreading like crazy."

Moose leave the lilac James MacFarlane alone, but not the shrub roses: The William Baffin, the Rosa glauca, "they love those." "I don't ever chase the moose away. They're hungry and have to eat, poor things," she says.

Too bad they don't have much appetite for weeds. The topsoil hauled in to fill the stone terraces last year was loaded with weed seeds, "weeds I've never seen before, weeds that aren't even in the weed books," says Lincoln. "This is my main plan for this garden year: Weed, weed, weed."

Sometimes, she says, chemicals are appropriate. "I'm not afraid to use the big guns, but as a last resort. Because we live on a slope, we have to be careful because everything we use winds up downhill."

If all goes according to plan, there'll be more terraces put in this summer, hopefully minus the weeds. The native silverberries will spread their intoxicating fragrance. Maybe the Lincolns can save enough cherries from the waxwings for a pie. Some more lilacs would be nice. "The addictive thing about gardening is that it is never quite right," says Lincoln. "I only have one area of the yard that I can say is a 'garden,' and that part I find peaceful. The rest of it is still in a state of unrest."

She can handle it.

Fluorescent lights: Cool White or Grow Lights? By Jane Baldwin



'Tis the season to start seeds for the coming summer! Starting seeds is only the first step: the hard part is trying to get those teeny plants to planting-out size by the end of May. Not blessed with exceptional window light or cool enough temperatures in my house, I use the work bench and fluorescent lights in my 48-52 degree garage.

The following info is straight out of the UAF CES Bulletin, HGA-00432, "Fluorescent Lights for Plant Growth". Light is the source of energy used by plants in photosynthesis - the energy contained in light is absorbed in the chlorophyll of plants. Not all wave-lengths of light are used with equal efficiency by the plant.

Special fluorescent tubes (grow lights) have been designed to emit more blue and red wavelengths. These tubes have reduced portions of the green-yellow-orange spectrum. "Experiments show that maximum growth of most plants under cool white fluorescent lights will be equivalent to or better than that obtained under the blue-red phosphors." Work by [university studies cited] indicates that there is no advantage to the use of blue-red fluorescent tubes except for aesthetic purposes. The higher cost may be justified on experimental or aesthetic grounds but is hardly warranted on the basis of plant growth. To sum up, cool white light is as, or more efficient for most growing than blue-red fluorescent tubes.

Light intensity also affects the growth of plants - the brighter the light, the more energy the plant receives. This has to do with how far above your plants you put your lights (watts and foot candles): 3-6" seems to work best. For me two fixtures, two bulbs each, set on about 9-10" centers, have provided sufficient light for 4 garden flats. Check out Bulletin HGA-00432 for more detail.

More Light Trivia

Some plants are photoperiodic, which means they produce either flowers or vegetative growth based on the length of each night (darkness). Long night plants need 11-14 hours or more of darkness to flower (poinsettias, chrysanthemums). Short night plants require less than 10 hours of darkness (dahlias, many annuals). Indeterminate plants will flower at all seasons without regard to photoperiod, but usually require 12-18 hours of light for good growth. Plants will grow under continuous light, but almost all plants prefer a dark period each day for best growth.

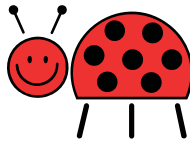
Afternoon With A Spider By Sharon Lovejoy from Hollyhock Days

Spiders should never be taunted,
Maligned, abused, or scorned---
They're hard at work in our gardens---
Just look how that web is adorned.
The filigreed tating and dewdrops
Tell tales of a hardworking sprite---
An assortment of bugs,
Some mosquitoes, a grub,
Don't spiders get time off at night?



LADYBUGS

From Linda McCarthy
(Source www.celticbug.com)



Their scientific names (Coleoptera, meaning "sheath-winged", and Coccinellidae, meaning "little red sphere") can be quite a mouthful, but by whatever name you call them, Ladybugs are well-known and well-loved all over the Earth. Nearly 400 species of Ladybug live in North America, and there are nearly 5,000 species worldwide. Also commonly known as the Lady Beetle or Ladybird Beetle, the name of these insects reflects their global admiration. None are much larger than a pencil-eraser (some are even smaller) and they come in a wide variety of colors, including red, orange, pink, yellow and black. They can have as many as 20 spots or no spots at all. They're also one of the few insects who hibernate during the winter months (called "over-wintering"), emerging in the spring to lay their eggs.

Female Ladybugs produce clusters of 20-50 yellow-orange oval-shaped eggs in the early spring. You can usually find them stuck to the undersides of leaves. The average female will lay anywhere from 300 to 1000 eggs during her lifetime. The eggs hatch primarily in March and April, depending on the temperature. Ladybug larvae are actually larger than their parents and they look very much like miniature blue-black alligators! The larvae are ravenous and immediately begin gorging on aphids, mealy bugs, scale insects, and other soft-bodied pests. One larva can consume as many as 400 aphids during the 3-week period before it enters the pupae stage and turns into an adult.

Ladybugs are a bit clumsy, though efficient enough, fliers. Their transparent sheath-wings (hidden from view under the outer wing cases, until they take to the air) flutter at a rate of 85 beats per second. Their bright colors serve as a warning sign to birds and other potential predators that they don't taste good. If attacked by a predator, Ladybugs ooze a yellow, foul-smelling liquid (actually their blood) from their leg joints, which is usually all it takes to convince their attacker not to continue snacking on them!

After consuming aphids all summer-long, the air starts to turn brisk, and the Ladybugs begin to seek shelter for the winter. They cluster together by the thousands (for warmth, it's presumed) under dead leaves, inside hollow logs, and even high up in the eaves of our houses. For still unknown reasons, they tend to prefer light-colored structures with a prominent southern exposure. They remain in hibernation until the warmer temperatures return, indicating that spring has come and the aphid population has been replenished. The Ladybugs will then devote themselves to several days of eating and frenzied mating, the females sometimes feeding and breeding at the same time! The ladybugs will die soon after laying new clusters of yellow-orange eggs and the life cycle begins anew.

HOW THE LADYBUG GOT ITS NAME

Legends vary about how the Ladybug came to be named, but the most common is this: In Europe, during the Middle Ages, swarms of insects were destroying the crops. The farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary for help. Soon thereafter the Ladybugs came, devouring the plant-destroying pests and saving the crops! The farmers called these beautiful insects "The Beetles of Our Lady", and over time they eventually became popularly

known as "Lady Beetles". The red wings were said to represent the Virgin's cloak and the black spots were symbolic of both her joys and her sorrows.

Next month: **Ladybug Legends**

International MG Conference, 2009 Julie Riley, Extension Horticulture Agent

Within an hour of arriving in Las Vegas, Martha Galbreath and I met a woman with green fingernails. No one was yet wearing name badges, but she had to be a Master Gardener. Sure enough, the woman was a MG from Texas touting her green thumb prowess!

It was a good conference with Anchorage's own Jeff Lowenfels making the keynote presentation on the soil food web. Attendance was rumored to be between 600 and 750. Martha knew quite a few people from past conferences. I had a chance to meet with MG Coordinators from other states. The conference was billed as "Green" so speakers were encouraged to spare the handouts. Materials from some talks will be posted on the web, but to date, are not there.

We took along a poster highlighting the invasive weeds work that MGs Lori and Troy Zaumseil have done at the local, state and national level. (They exchanged tickets to Cabo last month to make another trip to D.C. to speak to legislators and department heads on the invasive weeds issue.)

At the trade show I purchased a long handled weeding/cultivating tool called a "Cobrahead" for volunteers in the Alaska Botanical Garden herb garden. Margaret Love and Erna Rousey are determined to keep the liverworts and moss out of the beds. I also bought a "worm factory" since I have no place to compost this season.

Martha and I took in a Vegas-style show called "Jubilee", which dripped glitz and glamour. "Encore Follies" dancers performing at the IMG banquet were between the ages of 64 and 93 years old and boy, could they kick a leg. (That 93 is not a typo!)

Mark your 2011 calendar for the International MG Conference in Charleston, West Virginia. The dates will be October 11- 14, in perfect time to see fall color.

MG IMPACT NATIONWIDE

Statistics released at the International Master Gardener Conference for 2008 show the following.

- Master Gardeners, 94,865 nationwide
- Volunteer hours, 5,197,573
- Value of volunteer hours, \$64.5 million
- New Master Gardeners, 16,471
- Personal contacts made by MGs, 4,850,285
- Pounds of produce donated to local food banks by MGs, 685,554



South Central Peninsula MG News by Rosemary Kimball

My head is still reeling from last month's visit to the Western Winter Study Weekend of the North American Rock Garden Society in Portland, Oregon. There were six of us from southcentral, MGs all: Florene Carney, Amelia Walsh, Madge Oswald, Carmel Tysver, Kathy Wartinbee and me.

Three of us stayed at my son's house in the "annex", a 26-foot motor home, when we weren't at the conference. I had mentioned that I wanted to put in a rock garden in a little corner at the end of the driveway. I shouldn't have spoken as loud as I did. I was just thinking some pretty plants. Not with Carmel and Kathy! Carmel squared her jaw and told me if there was going to be a rock garden there it would be a real one. Yes, M'am! After six bags of sand, two bags of rocks and lots of plants in among all the appropriate big rocks garnered from the yard, there was a real pretty little garden. Mind you now, my kid is not a gardener. Not at all. But I think he can manage that one. He was also left with two cherry trees and a plum in the back yard to go with the pear tree from two years ago in the front yard. You've got to watch these MGs; they can get pretty pushy. Then Carmel and Kathy moved on to Yamhill to Merle Dean Feldman's little curve at the end of a cut bank. They used all of her husband's rocks and wanted more. His back just groaned.

Locally, the birds are really twittering. A flock of cross bills has been around from all the cone litter in the driveway. Ernie seems to have gotten rid of all the squirrels as there's no chatter anywhere. That's fine with me. I thought those "tree rats" were picturesque running around the top of the pole garden fence. Cute, until I saw one hauling off a ripe strawberry and figured out that had been going on for awhile which explained the berries I'd find in the middle of the paths. Open season on red squirrels is all year.

The 200-pound red poll that Kathy Wartinbee knew was around since it was cleaning out six bird feeders a day, turned out to have four hooves and last year's calf with her. Kathy doesn't put bird feed out during the summer because of bears. Does this mean she can't put it out in the winter because of moose? Another Alaska story.

It's time to start tomatoes. I have a greenhouse workshop coming up in May and I want a leggy tomato to demonstrate what to do with it when planting. Kenai River Nursery gives away six free plants and I think that may be an option too. They have Early Girl but in my greenhouse I prefer Northern Exposure which has a tad more acid (flavor) and is not so prone to blossom-end rot when I ignore the greenhouse for a day. Since cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli do most thriftily with five true leaves, I'll start them after tax day.

MG Mark White is going to speak to the Alaska Rock Garden Society on Saturday, April 18 at 2 PM somewhere in Anchorage, on conifers, dwarf and otherwise.

I've seen the rough draft of his presentation and it has lots of pretty pictures. He leaves the next morning for Europe for three weeks leaving me all his seedlings to water. I mentioned it would be easier to help myself to what I wanted without his being there. He laughed. We call it "counting coup" when we can get the other to take plants home without our having to get any our self.

Go to www.adn.com/talkdirt for March 22, to read MG Fran Durner's note about Costco greenhouses and spread the word. I just can't imagine that Costco wouldn't think they could sell greenhouses in Alaska!!

Gardeners Alert - Iris Yellow Spot Virus From the Tanana MG site, "Garden Alert" 6/9/2008, Michelle Hebert, Land Resources Agent, Cooperative Extension Service, Fairbanks

Since 2004 Iris Yellow Spot Virus has spread through a number of western states that we Alaskan gardeners rely on for our onion starts. IYSV tospovirus affects onions, garlic, leeks, iris, and several weeds. This devastating disease is vectored by the onion thrip (Thrips tabaci) which are known to occur in Alaska. Plants infected with Iris Yellow Spot Virus will have yellow to straw colored lesions and may appear stippled. Lesions may be more or less round with or without a necrotic center or may be diamond shaped. Lesion will appear on both the seed stalk and the leaves. Late in the season, infected plants will fall over.

The virus is transmitted only by the onion thrip, and is transmitted by both larvae and adults, but only larvae can acquire the virus from infected plants, once a thrip has acquired the virus, it can transmit the virus for the remainder of its life. The disease has the potential to spread rapidly and could cause crop failure if not maintained.

The virus is NOT seed-borne and does not appear to be found in the bulbs (or set) and does not survive in the soil, but for those gardeners who purchase onion starts, close inspection is necessary to stop the spread of this disease by the thrips. If you purchase onion starts talk to the supplier and ask if they have Iris Yellow Spot in their fields and have had to treat them. If they do, look for another supplier of the great green seedlings that does not have the virus. Starting the conversation is the best way to avoid introducing this disease into Alaska.

Once the plants are infected there is no cure, they should be removed and destroyed. Do not compost the infected plants, either burn or bag and remove from site.

While Iris Yellow Spot Virus has never been found in Alaska to date, it has tremendous potential to establish here. Most of us that purchase onion starts have suppliers in the southwest or the northwest, the source for the recent spread of IYSV throughout the United States.

Continued on page 6...



Bird Chatter

-- AMGA has a new Education Committee which includes Sue Lincoln as Chair, Dana Klinkhart, Jane Baldwin and Julie Riley.

-- A package of rat-tailed radish seeds from Chiltern was left for Charlotte Lamb at the Fur Rondy display. They are waiting on the CES pick-up shelf.

-- Winter & summer photos of Les Brake's garden can be found on garden writer Suzy Bales's blog, <http://www.suzybalesgarden.com/blog2>.

-- Juneau Master Gardeners shop for gardening products at Western Auto Supply.

-- Nevada's Extension agent in charge of the International MG Conference is an Associate Professor of SOCIAL Horticulture.

-- Composted mosquitos! Mary Jo Burns dumps those that have accumulated in her mosquito catcher machine on her pile.

-- Dr. Meriam Karlsson, Professor of Horticulture at UAF, is working on the effectiveness of LED lights for plant growth.

-- According to Debbie Hinchey there are no Siberian irises in Siberia.

-- Pest control operators can now crystallize insects using liquid nitrogen. Cool...

-- Metasystox MSR no longer carries a label for root injection on ornamental trees. In Anchorage this product was used extensively by professional tree care companies to treat for birch aphids.

-- If you have spider mites and only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the eggs they lay hatch out, in 3 cycles there will be 2 million mites.

-- 5th Graders planted a kitchen garden at the White House with First Lady Michelle Obama on the first day of spring. Master Gardeners will plant another kitchen garden at the ABG entrance this year.

Seeds for an Old Friend

Les Brake sends the following suggestion for those of you who miss Recluse Gardens.

Rhonda Van Zandt (formerly Rhonda Williams) is ready to garden again, but she needs seeds. Every gardener in south-central Alaska still misses her, and a good way for everyone to express that to her would be by sending her a packet of seeds. Mail to Rhonda Van Zandt, P.O. Box 745, Tok, Alaska 99780.

MG Volunteer Opportunities

AMGA Newsletter Calendar

Gina Docherty, AMGA newsletter editor and web master, needs someone who can compile items for the monthly calendar of events and send it to her formatted for the newsletter each month, 345-4099, amga@cgi.net.

Sears Mall & Alaska Women's Show

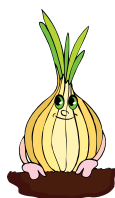
Kristin Ryan is coordinating April's garden clinics/shows. The Spring Garden Show at Sears Mall is April 11. The Alaska Women's Show is April 17-19. Kristin's contact info is 272-2753, 632-2557 and 272-7645; veronica2557@hotmail.com.

Calendar of Gardening Events

A Master Gardener is needed to build on the calendar of events started by Lynne Opstad for her Garden Snaps web site. This info will be distributed widely to gardeners in Anchorage. Give Julie a call for details, 786-6300.

Have You Counted Your Onion Leaves Lately?

by Bruce "Onionman" Frasier
From The Onion Patch, March 2009
Dixondale Farms Website:
Dixondalefarms.com

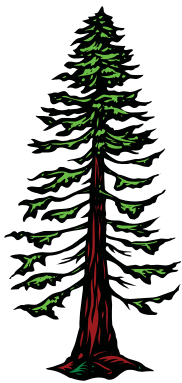


The size of an onion bulb is dependent upon the number and size of green leaves at the time of bulb maturity. For each leaf, there will be a ring of onion; the larger the leaf, the larger the ring will be. The perfect onion has 13 rings, which means that you should strive for 13 leaves if you want the biggest onions you've ever grown. The 9th leaf is usually the largest leaf on the plant, and that's when the nitrogen fertility should peak. When the 13th leaf appears, the onion is getting ready to start curing. This occurs at about the same time that the rest of the larger leaves have transferred most of their carbohydrates to the rings, so the onion's neck will start getting soft. It won't need as much moisture, which means you should stop irrigating the crop from this point on.

So count your leaves to determine what stage your onions are in. If you have only 9 leaves, then you'll probably get a medium-sized onion. And remember, planting closer or later reduces bulb size.

Iris Yellow Spot Virus cont. from page 5...

Make sure you keep your garden area perimeter weed free, water your plants regularly as thrips prefer warm and dry, and inspect them often. When in doubt you can always bring a specimen into your local Cooperative Extension Office for identification and more information. Good pictures and web related information can be found from Colorado State University, Extension Tri River area. www.coopext.colostate.edu/TRA/PLANTS or: Cornell University <http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/Onion>



TREErific News By Nickel LaFleur

Everyone's calendars are filling up with all the gardening events and here are more to note - be sure not to miss:

Anchorage TREErific and the Municipality of Anchorage - Parks and Recreation Department welcome master gardeners to join us for Anchorage's 3rd Annual TREE CITY USA event to be held Tuesday, May 5th from 1130am until 1pm. Along with celebrating being a TREE CITY, Anchorage TREErific will be recognizing three local businesses

that have done a great job in maintaining their landscapes. Last year TREErific recognized the University of Alaska-Anchorage, BP and Arctic Office Supply for their outstanding landscaping.

The short event will be held at the Mann Leiser Greenhouse at 1600 Lidia Selkregg Lane. Everyone is welcome. Come out to see which three businesses were chosen this year!

Monday, May 18th is Alaska's Arbor Day. This year we will be having a program and tree planting ceremony at Trailside Elementary School located at 5151 Abbott Road (next to Service High School). Master Gardener Patrick Ryan is helping to coordinate the events along with the Anchorage Garden Club. Weather permitting, the ceremony will be held outside with a 2 pm start for the short program. Acting Mayor Matt Claman and Superintendent Carol Comeau have accepted our invitation to attend and we hope you can take time to celebrate Arbor Day this year, too. It's FREE and everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, May 25th is Anchorage TREErific's next educational meeting to be held at Bob Boyer's Greenhouse and Nursery off Old Seward and 81st Avenue. We will be eradicating weeds around the orchard trees and hearing Bob talk about some of his successes and failures with his orchard. Bring along your gloves, knee pads and weeding tools and spend a couple hours with us cleaning up the orchard. Pizza donated by The Moose's Tooth to be available to the hard working weed warriors. It's free -everyone is welcome. We'll plan to be there from 4 pm until 8pm. Please join us for how ever long you can spare.

HAPPY SPRING and for any questions on any TREErific events, call Nancy Beardsley at 343-4288 or email us at TREErificAnchorage@yahoo.com

"He who plants a tree plants hope."

Lucy Larcom (19th c)

According to the National Arbor Day Foundation, over a fifty-year period a single healthy, mature oak tree can generate \$62,000 worth of air-pollution control, recycle \$37,500 in water, and prevent \$31,500 in soil erosion.... plant a tree!

Garden Event Calendar

Thursday, April 2

"All About Herbs: Medicinal & Ornamental", Julie Riley, CES, Anchorage Garden Club meeting, 7:00 p.m., Pioneer School House, 437 E Third Street, 786-6300.

Friday, April 3

Alaska Botanical Garden Annual meeting, Keynote speaker Paul Stamets, "Solutions from Nature: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World", 6:30 p.m., Wilda Marston Theater.

Saturday, 4

Alaska Botanical Garden Spring Garden Conference, "Life in the Garden: from Mushrooms to Moose", UAA/APU Consortium Library, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. \$70 members/\$95 non-members, reception \$35, see www.alaskabg.org for details.

April 4

"Tomatoes & Potatoes", MG Brenda Carlson, Alaska Mill, Feed & Garden Center, call the store to get on the waiting list.

Saturday, April 11

"Front Yard Farming for Novice Gardeners", MGs Joette Storm, Noel Nelson, Diana DeFazio and Marianne Kerr, CES 4-H & Youth Development Agent. 1:00, CES conference room, call 786-6300 to register.

Friday, April 17

Primrose Study Group meeting at Mary Jo Burns's, 7:00 p.m., 4169 Westwood Drive, 248-2827. Feel free to bring treats.

Saturday, April 18

*"Container Vegetable Gardening", MG Mary Tilly, Alaska Women's Show, time TBA. * "Roses", MG Dani Haviland, 10:00 a.m., Alaska Mill, Feed & Garden Center, call the store to register.

* Alaska Rock Garden Society Meeting: "Conifers" by Mark White; 2 p.m., at the CES conference room, Anchorage.

Sunday, April 19

"What it Means to Go Organic", Julie Riley, CES, Alaska Women's Show, 4:00 p.m.

Monday, April 20

AMGA meeting: Topiary Demonstration at Sutton's Greenhouse, 7 p.m. 2845 E Tudor Rd: Directions: From Tudor Rd., north on Wright Street. Car pooling might be a good idea.

Saturday, April 25

"Container Vegetable Gardening", MG Mary Tilly, Alaska Mill, Feed & Garden Center, call the store to register.

Saturday, May 2

"The Well-Designed Mixed Garden: Building Beds and Borders with Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, Annuals, and Bulbs", nationally acclaimed author Tracy DiSabato-Aust, 7:00 p.m. Alaska Wild Berry Theater. Hosted by the Alaska Botanical Garden, with sponsorship by The Hotel Captain Cook, Avis, AMGA and GCI. See the ABG website for registration details and <http://www.timberpress.com/speakers/author.cfm?id=380> for Tracy's bio.

Saturday May 9th

The AMGA Spring Workshop will be held at the Gateway Education Building at the Alaska Zoo. The Early Registration cost is \$55. Lunch is included. See the Registration Insert for more information.



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
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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Debbie Hinchey ushered in spring 2009 by speaking to a full house of master gardeners at the AMGA meeting about Iris at the March AMGA meeting. Article on page 2.

Photo by Jane Baldwin - "Iris Pumilla"

Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Inc.
Anchorage Chapter
University of Alaska Cooperative Extension
P.O. Box 221403
Anchorage, Alaska 99522-1403

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