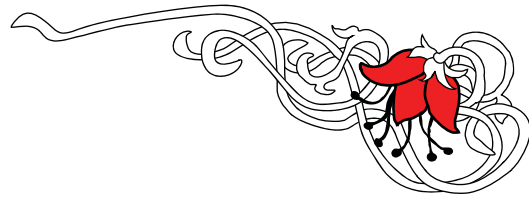


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 11, Issue 3

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER March 2009



Message From the President by Beth Schlabaugh

My weekly trip to the supermarket continues to see my grocery budget purchase less and less, yet as a mom and a gardener, I want to feed my family the healthiest food available. One real conundrum that I run into is in the produce section. To buy Organic or Not to buy Organic? That is the question.

What is the real scoop on Organics? Individuals who buy organic are looking for confidence that the product is safer, healthier, and produced in an environmentally conscious way. However, at up to double the cost are they really worth the money? I went on the hunt to find out information on the best and smartest way to spend my grocery dollars and I hoped to find out exactly what I was getting for my money. Here is a quick synopsis of what I found on many different websites, as well as in several publications.

Organic Foods are grown with out synthetic pesticides and/or chemical fertilizers. What this means is that fewer chemicals get into your system and the environment.

*According to the EPA, "organic" foods cannot be treated with any synthetic pesticides, sewage, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation. They may use pesticides derived from a natural source.

After reading numerous articles I've found the same reoccurring theme. The best way to protect the environment, my health and my bank account is to focus on a few key organic products and to remember the "Rule of Thumb"... "If I'm going to eat the skin go Organic, but...if I can peel it, (I'll be stripping away most of the chemical residues) it's not worth the extra money."

The U.S.D.A. asserts that even after you wash some fruits and vegetables, they still contain much higher levels of pesticide residue than others. The following produce is the most heavily contaminated when grown conventionally, and is a great example of where to spend your extra money.

Veggies: Bell Peppers, Celery, Lettuce, Potatoes, and Spinach

Fruits: Strawberries, Nectarines, Peaches, Cherries, Apples, Pears and imported (Chile) Grapes- (soft skinned fruits allow the residues to penetrate into the flesh, 92% of apples tested positive for pesticide and 72% of those had more than one type on their peel.)

Produce with the least residues included: Asparagus, Broccoli, Cabbage, Onions, Sweet peas (frozen), Sweet corn (frozen), Avocados, Bananas, Kiwi, Mangoes, Papayas, and Pineapple.



While it is not always feasible to grow my own produce, I do try to buy locally and when purchasing from the store, I read the label. Food labeling is another issue all together, "100% organic", "organic", "made with organic ingredients" all mean different things. I found a book online that I hope will help demystify the process even further: A Field Guide to Buying Organic by Perry & Schultz - \$6.99 on Amazon.com.

My quick recap of healthy Organic produce is this - Grow your own, buy local, wash it! peel it! ...And join us on March 21 for the last of our Winter Lecture Series, as we welcome Dr. Bret Luick. Dr Luick will be discussing in depth the role of Organics in the home, learn much more about organic foods and their nutritional impact versus their conventionally grown counterparts. 7p-9p Loussac Library, MG ticket cost \$12 at the door or email "tickets" at alaskadragonfly@hotmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE
AMGA Spring Conference May 9th.
More Info to Follow.

AMGA Meeting Report February 16, 2009 by Jane Baldwin

If you missed the February 16th AMGA meeting, you really missed an event! The evening began with Master Gardener Herb Spencer presenting a program, "Making Do: Landscaping Design on a Budget."

Herb showed us that we could all undertake some of our own garden design and find some economical ways to accomplish it. Herb's first advice was to understand your property: know the sun directions, the sun/shade patterns; the drainage patterns; roof angles and how 'roof melt' and 'run off' impact drainage. Armed with this knowledge, you can do some preliminary planning and work toward selecting plants that will keep your garden flowering all season.

You can mitigate drainage problems or incorporate them into your designs using water features, restructuring existing slopes, diverting water away from foundations. You should also understand the soil on your lot: new construction landscaping will only have about 4-6" of topsoil in place. What is found beneath the top soil layer might surprise you. You may find buried construction junk. The root support systems of your trees and shrubs may be growing only within that 'good' top soil layer and not deeply rooted.

Herb reminded us that we should first assess our property, define the problems and develop plans to deal with them. Too much shade: find out what's causing it; can you change, remove, or prune trees? Problem water drainage: divert, accommodate with water features, or change slopes. Short growing season: Consider raised beds, cold frames, or greenhouses. Need a focal point? create one - it can be anything that draws the eye.

Herb discussed economical approaches to plant purchasing: end of season sales; decide your best buy: annuals, perennials or shrubs. Consider do-it-yourself greenhouse kits vs. installation. Recycle used construction material like concrete chunks for retaining walls, beds, and terracing. Material is often free for the hauling, but be sure to ask first before helping yourself. Other local recycling sources included craigslist.com and freecycle.org.

Herb ended his program with **AND NOW I'M GETTING MARRIED AND YOU'RE ALL INVITED TO THE WEDDING!** And sure enough, within a few minutes the scene was transformed. Herb donned his suit jacket and tie and we had a wedding complete with a garden arbor adorned with yellow tulips.

MGs Linda Slack and Herb Spencer were married by MG Ski Olsonosky. The blushing bride, dressed in a cranberry wine colored dress, carried a bouquet of yellow tulips, and was attended by her two daughters. A lovely reception followed and Linda and Herb cut their beautiful wedding cake decorated with fresh multicolored cascading roses.

This AMGA meeting was certainly one to remember. Two MGs married by an MG at an MG meeting. AND they went to the NW Flower & Garden Show for their honeymoon! Congratulations Herb and Linda!



**Master Gardener Focus:
Dick and Jane Juelson**
by Cheryl Chapman

Dick and June Juelson have discovered the secret to growing good things in Alaska: Keep the soil warm. Not just plants, either. The Juelsons' home and garden on Karluk Street, from the special "friendship" cup of hot tea for winter visitors to the summer gazebo with its comfortable chairs, makes even strangers feel comforted, warmed and welcomed. "Our yard is a people yard," says June. "It's not a showcase to exhibit. I just love to have people come and sit in the gazebo in the summer. It's such a good place to talk."

The Juelsons came from Oregon to Anchorage by way of Kodiak, their home from 1947 to 1983. Dick was originally from Portland, and joined his father working at the Kodiak Air Station in 1947. June flew to Kodiak from her farm family's home in Brookings, Ore., to visit her sister, who took June straight from the airplane to meet Dick.

"I told my sister on the way to her place, 'Dick's OK - but, oh, is his dad handsome!'" June recalls, and she and Dick both laugh.

"It was to a movie," says Dick. "'The Jolson Story.' Our first date. Neither of us dated anyone else after that."

On May 4, June and Dick will have been married 61 years. "We're total opposites," says June. "Nobody gave it six months. He was a city boy but I made him a country boy and a gardener. There were eight kids in my family, and we had to have a big garden to eat."

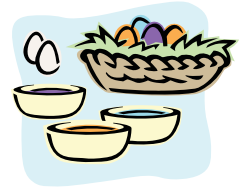
Dick decided to start with things they loved but couldn't get easily. "We grew our first cucumbers and tomatoes in the base greenhouse," he says.

Then along came the Korean War: the Marines drafted Dick and sent him and June both to El Toro Marine Base outside Santa Ana, Calif., to learn to repair aviation electronics and update the old transceivers on Corsair aircraft.

"The work was interesting and I liked it," says Dick, "but June and I were about to starve to death." "There were

Coloring Easter Eggs Using Natural Dyes

By Jane Baldwin



days we'd divide one wiener between us," says June. "We lived in the middle of an orange grove in two converted stalls in a horse-and-buggy stable. We ate a lot of oranges."

The day Dick got his discharge they hopped in the car and headed north. Dick resumed working on the base on Kodiak, this time in electrical systems, June got a job in human resources, and in 1961 they and their first of two sons moved to Spruce Cape, where they had a Kodiak Island beach garden growing "mostly potatoes and broccoli."

"We wanted to grow more and I'd learned that Anchorage had the best year-round weather in the state, so when I retired in 1983 I came up here to find us a place," says Dick. He ran into a friend from Kodiak on the street with an Anchorage home he wanted to sell, Dick and June wanted to buy, and they've lived and worked on that home and garden ever since.

First out was the barbed wire. A rusty, prickly fence cordoned off the back yard from LaTouche Street, and Dick pulled it down. He replaced it with about a hundred feet of white pickets. "That fence reminds people of a friendly farmhouse, a home," says Dick. "It gives everybody a good feeling."

Next out was a mugo pine-gone-crazy ramping across the center of the back yard. Its removal left a pretty grove of birches and another of willows. June circled them with stone flower beds and planted red and white columbines and blue iris. "We didn't start with a grand plan," says June. "Once the picket fence was in, we started working backwards toward the house, one thing at a time."

Dick and June were in the Anchorage Garden Club and Dick had been a Master Gardener since 1987 ("I took the classes in '93-'94," says June.) The buzz then was about Anchorage soil: Cold, colder, coldest. "I knew we had to have raised beds," says Dick. "The Cooperative Extension Service and the other Master Gardeners kept talking about them. Otherwise it's too cold to grow a lot of the things you want to grow." He built two sturdy sandboxes of 1 x 12 boards just inside the picket fence, filled them with good soil, and "things grew good."

A thermometer consistently shows a temperature difference of 6 to 10 degrees between the soil in the raised beds and the earth right beside them. Those first two experimental beds have expanded to nine 4-foot by 8-foot raised beds, plus two 10-foot trellises for sugar snap peas and scarlet runner beans.

The Juelsons have laid windows across their raised beds so sun coming through the glass warms the soil; they've also had good luck with shoveling out the snow, then laying clear plastic over the bare earth to warm it to get a jump on planting. Row covers protect young seedlings from pests yet let in light and moisture; wire from clothes hangers pegs the covers in place. "We always have something blooming or coming into bloom," says June.

Continued on page 5

Here's a fun, very "Martha" way to dye Easter eggs using natural dyes. Common foods, plants, and flowers are used for varied and different results in coloring Easter eggs the natural way.

Start with cooled or refrigerated hard-cooked eggs. Wash and rinse the eggs if needed (with soapy water) to cut any oily stuff on the shell that might interfere with coloring.

Ingredients are simmered in water to obtain the desired color, keeping in mind that eggs dyed in the liquid will not get as dark as the liquid in the pan. Use about a cup of water for a bunch or a handful of 'dye stuffs' and bring just to boiling; simmer for 15 minutes or longer until pleased with the color achieved. Remove from heat, strain if necessary, and add 2 to 3 teaspoons of white vinegar if desired. The longer the egg soaks in the dye, the deeper the color will be. If you plan to eat the eggs, be sure to refrigerate during the dye baths. Natural colored dyes tend to produce a somewhat dull finish that can be polished up a bit by rubbing with a little bit of cooking oil and a soft cloth.

I've tried several of the following dyes which were collected from multiple online sources with a Google search:

Blue: canned blueberries; boiled red cabbage leaves; purple grape juice (concentrates work well)

Brown/beige/tan: strong or instant coffee, boiled black walnut shells, black tea

Brown-gold: dill seeds,

Brown-orange: chili powder

Green: boiled spinach leaves; grass clippings chopped in a blender

Greenish-yellow: boiled yellow Delicious apple peelings

Gray: diluted purple or red grape juice; beet juice (shred or grate first)

Lavender: purple grape juice; Red Zinger tea

Violet/purple: Hibiscus tea, dilute boiled red onions, red wine; crushed pansy petals; blueberries/blackberries; crushed and simmered blue iris petals;

Orange: boiled yellow onion skins; carrots, paprika

Pink: beets, cranberries or cranberry juice; raspberries; red grape juice; crushed currants

Red: lots of red onion skins boiled; pomegranate juice, canned cherries, raspberries

Yellow: boiled: orange or lemon peels; carrot tops; celery seed; ground cumin, mustard, turmeric or saffron; goldenrod flowers, dandelions; Chamomile or green tea

Miscellaneous reports: squish and rub various berries directly onto egg shell; a brown egg boiled in red cabbage dye then soaked overnight reportedly came out a deep royal blue. One report said natural dyed eggs tended to take on a bit of the flavor if soaked for long periods and that particular family thought cherry and onion flavored hardboiled eggs were "icky".

Jane's ponderings: I can't get lily pollen out of my garden t-shirts, so that might work well!

Grow Your Own Easter Basket Grass By Jane Baldwin



It's easy and fun to grow your own Easter basket grass! Even with no Easter baskets, you can create a wonderful living green 'grass' spring centerpiece or a fun "kid" activity. There are only a couple of steps involved, and a few words of wisdom to impart.

- (1) Watch your timing - Easter this year is April 12th - plant accordingly so your end result coincides with Easter. Seed will germinate in 3-5 days and then will grow rapidly. About 10-12 days after planting, your 'grass' will be 1-1/2" tall.
- (2) If you want to use your home grown grass in an Easter basket, choose a growing container that will fit in the basket.
- (3) If using a relatively shallow growing container, stay on top of watering. You may need to water twice a day.
- (4) Cat proof your growing situation. My cat LOVES to eat this 'grass' and has destroyed my best intentions a couple of times.

You will need hard winter wheat from the bulk natural food section of your grocery store, light weight soil mixture or seed starter mix, and an appropriate growing container. One can use almost anything to suit your size requirements: regular garden pots and flats, recycled frozen food trays, salad bar containers, recycled fast food containers. A nice big square of green with a natural dyed Easter egg makes a pretty cool minimalist centerpiece!

- Step 1: Fill container with slightly moistened soil mix, lightly settle.
Step 2: HEAVILY sprinkle winter wheat on top. And I do mean heavily sprinkle: I usually end up with almost total coverage. Cover seeds very lightly with soil mix.
Step 3: Gently water or mist surface.
Step 4: Wait, watch and water as needed.

From the "Cooper Landing Community Crier"
January 25, 2009:
Start Seeds! And Make a Garden Journal!
By Deb Carlson

Saturday, March 28, 2009 11 AM to 2 PM
Cooper Landing School

Start your seeds during class time. Learn seed starting techniques, lighting requirements and go home with a mini greenhouse flat with 15 varieties of seeds already planted! A selection of flower, herb and vegetable seeds will be provided. Trays, soil, pots, a clear dome, tags, and written instructions will be provided.

We will alternate preparing pots and seed planting with making, binding and embellishing a garden journal. All materials provided. \$25.00

Optional:
Bring tweezers with your identification on them. Bring garden/nature related rubber stamps and embellishments, cool papers, paper cutters for making your journal. Bring latex type gloves for working in soil. Class size minimum 5, maximum 15

Contact Deb Carlson for reservation: 595 1455 or carlsons@arctic.net

Eat your Beets! By Rosemary Kimball



[Reprinted with permission from the Central Peninsula Garden Club on-line news letter, January, 2009]

Eat your beets (*Beta vulgaris*). They're good for you. You don't know just how good! And did you know they are in the same family as strawberry blight, a native wildflower, and pigweed of garden weed infamy?

The Greeks were eating the herb millennia before the Common Era. Beet cultivation had stretched all the way to China by 800 A.D. but it lost its popularity in Europe with the cultivation of spinach. The sugar beet was developed in Germany about 1750 as a substitution for cane sugar. Mangelwurzel, developed about the same time, is a fodder crop. Our familiar red beet was refined about 100 years earlier. Swiss Chard is a bulbless beet.

The color of the root is from the purple pigment betacyanin and the yellow betaxanthin so Burpee can sell you seed for a yellow beet. The color in the cells is unstable which is why you boil beets with their skins on and a good inch of stem still attached. The seeds are really a fruit which is why, when planted closely, they come up so thickly. You haven't planted one seed, you've planted three. Thinning beets is a contemplative activity. Eating the thinnings is achieving a kind of gastronomic nirvana.

Beet juice has been used as an aphrodisiac since Roman times. It can also be used to lower blood pressure according to research in the American Heart Association's Journal "Hypertension" The Romans also used beets for fevers and constipation. Beet leaves could be used as a binding for wounds. Beet juice in vinegar is said to rid the scalp of dandruff. The juice, a decoction of the seeds, or other parts of the plant is said to help tumors and other forms of cancer.

This recipe for beet cake came from the Anchorage Daily News decades ago. It is by far the moistest, most flavorful chocolate cake I know. Unless you frost it with vanilla frosting, which will turn pink in three days, no one will ever know about the beet inclusion.

Chocolate Beet Cake

Beat well in a large bowl:
3 eggs
1-1/2 cup sugar
1 cup salad oil or melted butter
1-1/2 cup puréed cooked beets
2 ounces of melted chocolate or 6 Tablespoons of cocoa

Add and beat for 3 minutes:
1-3/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 teaspoon salt

Bake in a 9x9 or 9x12 pan at 350°F for 50-60 minutes or until the cake starts to pull away from the side of the pan.



Central Peninsula MG News By Rosemary Kimball

Spring is definitely on the horizon this time of year. The chickadees are changing to the honey-here-I-am song and the red polls are all atwitter. I heard a woodpecker drumming and the nuthatches are starting to call. I hope our resident nuthatch finds a mate because it spent weeks calling last year to the point of great annoyance. I got a call from my MG friend in Wisconsin and she's potted up 72 tomato seedlings. I admit I was jealous.

Things that add to my impatience for summer are the conferences that bloom in the spring, tra la. MG Kathy Wartinbee and I went up to the second day of the Growers' Conference in Palmer which concentrated on fruits and veggies. Mid-March is the Western Winter Study Weekend of the North American Rock Garden Society and this year there will be six of us from South Central Alaska, a record number. Kathy and I have been filling the seed orders for the Alaska Rock Garden Society for comic relief. They have some pretty neat varieties. It's worth the price of joining just for the seed exchange.

The Master Gardeners down here had a Pad Thai (meeting with food) to finalize Tracy DiSabato-Aust's talk on May 1. She is a landscape designer with books out that are in the tenor of reference books. She will also be talking up in Anchorage on May 2 so keep your eyes peeled for time and place. She spoke at the Fairbanks Master Gardener meeting a couple years ago and she presents her topic wonderfully well. She will be emphasizing plants for zones 2 to 4. Go to Amazon and take a look at her titles.

Also in the mind-stretching mode, there will be the 5th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Fairbanks, March 17-18. The featured speaker will be the president of the Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa. There will be lots of information suitable for the home gardener available. Go here: <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/newsletters/mastergardeners/2009/0903tananamgu.pdf> for more information and the registration form.

The sunny days at the end of February were a tonic to all, especially the ducks. It was down just below zero every morning but quickly warmed up to freezing so they could be outside the coop with pleasure and the dirty ducks are turning white now that they feel like bathing again. The weasel, (*Mustela erminea*) whom we've named Ernie, is still with us and my husband shot him a squirrel for dinner one afternoon and put it under the truck. Twenty minutes later it was gone. I have the feeling we're under constant surveillance by the creatures that also inhabit our 40 acres. The jays know when there is special stuff in the feeder. The goshawk knows when the birds are out in their yard. (One can never have too much old fishnet on hand. I'm wondering how we would get that hawk untangled if the barrier were tested.)

We had another hare in the garden and I need to post a sign saying "you're curly if caught". I can't tighten up the fence until the knee-deep snow melts.

Winter attrition continues. I think I said that last month too. I did discover that I still had my earliest victim, a rosemary plant, on hand. A friend from Arizona sent me this recipe for a rosemary punch:

2 handfuls of dried rosemary
2 cups of water
a 12-ounce can of frozen pineapple juice
1 quart of ginger ale

Simmer water and rosemary for 5 minutes and strain. Combine with the pineapple juice. Add the ginger ale just before serving.

Continued from page 3: Dick and Jane Juelson

Moose love the home and yard; they feel safe, the Juelsons say. A young bull escorted Dick down the side path to his front door last year and June still gets palpitations when she thinks about it. Birds love the yard, too. June put a waterfall and pool just big enough for one Steller's jay in the center of the birch grove, and in winter, the feeders are way stations for redpolls, nuthatches and chickadees.

For years, Dick took time away from his basement wood-working shop to teach gardening classes, and he and June also have taught gardening in television features.

"I love *Ligularia*," says June, "and peonies are among the best things to grow. We have rose bushes and lots of bleeding heart, including the small fern-leaf bleeding heart, but I've been trying to kill the *Campanula glomerata* ever since I made the mistake of planting it. The *Lamium* and *Trollius* and the *Lewisia tweedyi* all have done well for us, and the alpine aster and Livingstone daisies and the lilies. Oh, I do love the lilies. They smell like heaven."

These gardens are recorded in June's scrapbooks, laid out with such charm that even people who've never met the Juelsons or heard of their garden can enjoy them. She uses her skills and taste to help other people put their best memories into similar visual forms as an album consultant for Creative Memories.

Already the Juelsons are deep into plans for spring and summer - perhaps a new onion, a Walla Walla sweet, to go in salads with the Gold Nugget tomatoes from the hanging baskets. Or perhaps a different variety of squash (last summer wasn't good for squash). Or maybe they'll try the technique called "lasagna gardening."

"When the birch leaves are the size of a squirrel's ear, it's safe to put your live plants in," says Dick. The Juelsons can't wait.



Bird Chatter

-- The bride wore red and looked beautiful carrying yellow tulips. Master Gardeners Linda Slack and Herb Spencer were married at the end of Herb's presentation at the February AMGA meeting. Congratulations!

-- On their honeymoon at the Northwest Flower & Garden Show, Herb and Linda sent coverage from Seattle to "Talk Dirt", Fran Durner's Anchorage Daily News gardening blog. Check it out at community.adn.com/?q=adn/blog/36232.

-- Was she lounging in a bed of cut-flower peonies or resting after an exhausting day at Omeo Farms in New Zealand? Rita Jo Shoutlz's picture adorned the front page of the Anchorage Daily News last month (2/3/09).

-- Master Gardeners are multi-talented. Gretchen Cuddy created a modern Trapper's Cap and boiled wool mittens using CES patterns. Both were on display at the CES Fur Rendezvous exhibit in the Dimond Mall.

-- Julie Riley and Martha Galbreath are headed to Las Vegas for the International Master Gardener Conference. Word has it that the hotel is non-gambling.

-- Last summer was cold (and wet). Commercial potato production was the lowest since 2000. The state's barley crop was the smallest since 1976 and according to the Alaska Farm Reporter newsletter, most of the major hay growing areas had one of the wettest Julys on record.

-- Welcome to Paige Manning-McEwen who completed the Master Gardener course via correspondence. Paige lives and gardens in Anchorage.

-- The story of how Lori and Troy Zaumseil got involved in the invasive weed battle is featured in CES's 2008 Program Highlights at www.uaf.edu/ces <<http://www.uaf.edu/ces>> .

-- The list of UAF Cooperative Extension Service publications is now searchable by topic. Yipee!!

-- Lucky for us, research done by Kansas State University has shown that one of the health benefits of gardening is keeping older hands strong and nimble (HortScience, Feb 09).

-- According to a documentary on the Mat Valley Colonists "Alaska Far Away", one of the first crops planted on a large scale was raspberries. The Pippels planted 1,000 bushes in 1936.

-- Dan Elliott will be trying out a new fruit this year--goji berries. Thanks to fruit breeder Chaim Kempler of Ag & Agri-Food Canada in Agassiz, BC, Dan hopes to have seedlings to share with others this spring.

American Society of Landscape Architects, Alaska Chapter presents: GARDEN DESIGN WORKSHOP

This workshop will teach the ins and outs of functional and beautiful garden design in our climatic conditions. All participants will have the opportunity to develop unique plans for their own garden with the assistance of the best professional designers in Anchorage.

The Workshop consists of two lecture-style classes on Wednesdays, April 1st, 6:30 to 8:30pm, and April 8th 6:30 to 8:30pm. The one-on-one consultations with landscape designers are scheduled for Saturday, April 11th morning (10-12am) or afternoon (1-3pm), or on another appointment date according to the individual participant's preference.

The Garden Design Workshop is an annual event of the Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Classes are held at the BP Energy Center. The fee is \$225 per person (or persons working on the same garden plan).

For reservation and additional information please contact Eric Morey by calling 279 - 2688 or at the email address emorey@earthscape.alaska.com

WILDFLOWER GARDEN CLUB SCHOLARSHIP

The Wildflower Garden Club offers an annual \$1,000 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.

For more information contact the Career Resource Center at your local secondary or post-secondary school, link to: www.wildflowergardenclub.org www.wildflowergardenclub.org or email: kjfarley@mtaonline.net

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 2009

From the AMGA Email Files:

Wikigardens (www.wikigardens.com) is a new website for the landscape architect, the practiced gardener, the amateur plant nerd and anyone who falls between the three. It is primarily a site for plant research, featuring a 50,000 plant encyclopedia, a garden showcase, a forum, a members' journal, seasonal topics of interest, and listings of local garden groups.

What separates this site from other garden database websites is the "wiki" function which allows any member (membership is free) to contribute information about plants, successes and failures, helpful hints, post shots of their garden, etc. The information is vetted by other WikiGardens members to insure it is correct and trustworthy. The philosophy behind this is "many eyes make mistakes small" therefore the more users, the more accurate the information. And NO popup ads. Check it out.

Garden Event Calendar



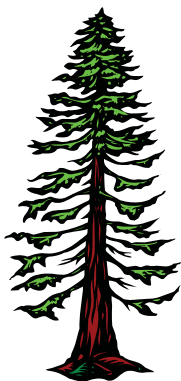
Educational Opportunity:

Pruning Trees & Shrubs with Cass Turnbull

Monday, March 23, 2009, 6:30-9:30 pm
UAF Cooperative Extension Service
2221 E. Northern Lights Boulevard, Anchorage

Cass Turnbull, founder of PlantAmnesty in Seattle, is coming to Anchorage. Cass will discuss the basics of pruning ornamental trees and shrubs and creative solutions to the overgrown or overplanted garden. She will explain the concept of the 'pruning budget' and how to prune based on a plant's natural growth habit. Come and learn from Cass's years of experience, enjoy her sense of humor, and gain insight into the process of yard renovation, where pruning is but one tool in restoring a garden. Cass Turnbull worked for Seattle Parks Department for 11 years before starting her own landscape maintenance and consulting business. Three years later, she founded PlantAmnesty, a private non-profit organization that now numbers over 900 members in 46 states and four countries. PlantAmnesty's goal to "end the senseless torture and mutilation of trees and shrubs" has gained local and national press as the organization strives to educate the commercial and public sectors on responsible and appropriate pruning and landscape management practices, establishing a standard of quality care for the urban landscape. Cass is a Washington State Certified Landscaper, a Certified Arborist, and a veteran of the King County Master Gardener program. She speaks to parks departments, school districts, commercial landscape groups, home shows, and at industry seminars across the U.S. Cass is frequently published and interviewed on the subject of pruning reform and is the author of the book, *Cass Turnbull's Guide to Pruning*.

For information, contact the Alaska Division of Forestry Community Forestry Program at: stephen.nickel@alaska.gov or 269-8466. To reserve a seat, please call the Cooperative Extension Service at 786-6319 as space is limited. The presentation will be certified for ISA continuing education credits. A \$5 donation will be collected at the door. Funding for the Alaska Community Forestry Program provided by the U.S. Forest Service.



Saturday, March 21

Winter Lecture Series: The Role of Organic Foods at Home. Dr. Bret Luick: 7pm in the public conference room on the 1st floor of the Z.J. Loussac Library near the Anchorage Assembly Chambers. \$12 for MG members/\$15 general public, tickets available at the door.

Saturday, May 2

Co-sponsored by the AMGA, the Alaska Botanical Garden will host a lecture on, by well-known garden writer Tracy DiSabato-Aust. Author of *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*, DiSabato-Aust will speak on *The Well-Designed Mixed Garden: Building Borders with Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, Annuals & Bulbs*. Tickets are \$15 for ABG members, \$20 for non-members. This lecture will take place at the Alaska Wild Berry Theatre, 5225 Juneau St. More details to come on DiSabato-Aust's visit as we get closer to that date.

Thursday, March 12

The Wildflower Garden Club meeting: Integrating Pest Management Into Your Yearly Routine - 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova Street, Anchorage

Monday, March 16

AMGA meeting: "Iris" with Debbie Hinchey: 7 - 9 p.m., with refreshments & a door prize. Cooperative Extension Service classroom, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

Tuesday-Wednesday, March 17-18

5th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Fairbanks, March 17-18. The featured speaker will be the president of the Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa. There will be lots of information suitable for the home gardener available. www.uaf.edu/ces/newsletters/mastergardeners/2009/0903_tananamgu.pdf

Saturday, March 21

Alaska Rock Garden Society meeting: Topic: Drabas; to be held in Anchorage - Cooperative Extension Service classroom, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

Thursday, April 9

The Wildflower Garden Club meeting: Flower Arranging 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova Street, Anchorage

Saturday, April 11

The Wildflower Garden Club: Children's Marigold Giveaway 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., The Mall at Sears, 600 East Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage

PLEASE SEND YOUR GROUP'S GARDEN EVENT DATES TO BE LISTED IN THE AMGA NEWSLETTER!

SEND TO: AMGA@GCI.NET



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
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Fax: 786-6312



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Herb Spencer's and Linda Slack's Wedding Vows

Had it not been for poppies, the wedding might not have been. Herb Spencer was asked to deliver a package of Danish Flag poppies over to Linda. Having made such a request, it was only fitting that MG Ski Olsonoski be asked to officiate Linda and Herb's wedding ceremony on February 16. As family members and AMGA friends looked on, a piece of Ski's customized ceremony read as follows:

Linda & Herb, you are both dedicated gardeners. You have studied the need to nurture and feed the plants you care for. You need to utilize these skills to care for your garden of love and marriage. The care and feeding of your vows in this relationship requires your total commitment".

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