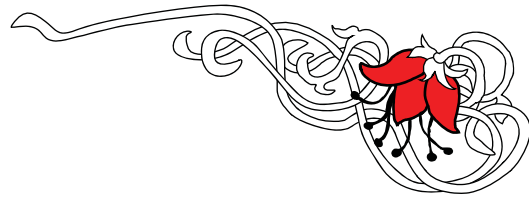


Anchorage Chapter



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ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER October 2009



Message From the President Beth Schlabaugh

The AMGA board is beginning to plan for the upcoming 2010 board elections. At this time we are seeking personal nominations. If you are interested in serving on the board, please let the current board know by mailing your name and contact information to:
AMGA
P.O Box 221403
Anchorage, AK 99522-1403.

You may also submit the name of another member only AFTER you have received their permission. Their name as well as their contact information may also be sent to the Association's P.O. Box. The names will be forwarded to the Nomination Committee once it has been finalized. We anticipate having a nomination box available by the next meeting. There will also be other opportunities to submit nominations.

The outgoing board members will be vacating several executive positions. As there are many duties for each of the executive positions, I will ask that the position descriptions be posted on the website. Please allow a week or two for this to happen. If you are interested in an executive position, I recommend that you review the job descriptions once they are posted.

Last but not least, it is my pleasure to invite all of you to our general membership meeting this month. In addition to our monthly program, we will be honoring Master Gardener Verna Pratt and husband Frank Pratt by presenting them with the first Alaska Master Gardeners Association- Life Time Achievement Award.

For more than 25 years Verna and Frank have been advocating for and educating people about the native plants and wildflowers of Alaska and the Alaskan highway. Considered by most to be the leading botanist and authority on Alaska native plants, including wildflowers and berries, Verna continues to give lectures and lead groups through out Alaska. Not to be outshone by Verna's enthusiasm for wild plants, it is through Frank's magnificent photographs that many of us experience these plants for the first time.

In addition to their numerous guide books and publications, over the years Verna and Frank have been involved with many gardening organizations. They were the founding members of the Alaska Native Plant

Society where Verna served as the first president. Verna has been an active member of AMGA since 1986 and Frank has served as its Treasurer.

With contributions too many to list, this husband and wife team has indeed given much more than a lifetimes worth of knowledge, dedication and energy to the Gardening community. So join us for this auspicious event. Frivolities will commence after the general program. Come on out, chat with Verna and Frank and enjoy some cake!

New Advanced MG Program for Anchorage Julie Riley, Extension Horticulture Agent



An advanced course of study for Anchorage Master Gardeners has been a long time in coming. There have always been Master Gardeners who have desired more in-depth training on topics that are skimmed over in class. "We need more information on botany." "I'd love to have a chance to go more into depth on soils." "The regular course doesn't even cover topics like landscape design." The first time I remember a formal request for an advanced course was in 1997. Martie Black was AMGA President and after a long discussion at a board meeting, I said, "It can't be done unless I don't teach the basic course." That was the end of the subject, for a brief while.

Today, I am happy to be part of AMGA's announcement of a new Advanced Master Gardener program. The program, as put together by the AMGA Education Committee and chaired by Sue Lincoln, is attainable, sustainable and looks like it will be a lot of fun. The committee, which also included Jane Baldwin and Dana Klinkhart, worked long and hard to flush out program details. There may be a few glitches that will need to be worked out just as there usually are with anything new, but the AMGA Board of Directors has given the program its stamp of approval. The AMGA Education Committee will meet as often as necessary to address issues as they arise.

A brochure outlining how the Advanced Master Gardener Program will work is posted on the AMGA website and mailings were done to make sure everybody in AMGA is aware of the first core course in entomology.
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AMGA Meeting Report September 21, 2009 By Jane Baldwin

The first AMGA meeting after a summer of tours offered a great evening of summer garden pictures.

Fran Durner gave us a photo collection complete with music that included garden tours in the Valley, Willow and Homer. What a treat for those of us who did not get to the garden tours farther afield.

Jane Baldwin presented a compilation of three months of AMGA garden tours. A great retrospective of highlights of the wonderful gardens we visited this summer. There was a great picture of the Alyeska pond; it looked just like how one would imagine a palace garden in Europe! Nice job, Robbie Frankevich with the Alyeska grounds. A warm thank you to all who shared your gardens with AMGA this summer. We all collected some ideas worth trying in our own yards (like the great garden glove organizer at Bonnie Lembo's).

Carol Ross shared pictures of the gardens at her B&B - from veggies and strawberries to a lot of perennials - and some wonderful annual plants used for color & texture that she winters over as plants or cuttings in her solarium.

Beth Schlabaugh also shared pictures from her yard and Jane gave a brief picture summary of her summer: from beans to bats with a stop along the way for primroses.

Our thanks to Julia Sargent (MG & CES Nutrition Educator) for filling in for Julie Riley as our computer tech to help some of the techno-challenged MGs get our pictures up on the wall. So whose gardens are up for touring next year?

Fall Project: Make Your Own Pin Wheel

Make your own windmills to decorate the top of a pencil or just for fun!

What you need:

Ruler
Scissors,
Pencil
Pins with large heads
Small beads
Stiff colored paper
Pencils with erasers on the end or pieces of wooden dowel



What you do:

1. Using your ruler measure and draw to equal size squares on two different colors of paper.
2. Cut out the squares.
3. Using the ruler, draw two diagonal lines across each square so that they cross in the middle. Cut 2/3 of the way on each line towards the centre.
4. Holding the squares of paper together, bend the paper back along each cut line toward the center. Hold the corners with your fingers until you have all four corners folded into the center.

Strange Garden-Related News Items

**Woman's toilet planters create stink in Ill. town
June 2009, The Associated Press**

LAKEMOOR, Ill. (AP) — The planters in TA's front yard aren't too pleasing to some of her neighbors, and village officials in Lakemoor have told her to remove them, or face a fine. TA, who likes to recycle discarded items, created the planters out of two old toilets and a pedestal sink. The Mayor, a plumber by trade, said he stands behind police who have given TA 30 days to remove the toilets. He said she faces a fine of \$25 to \$500 if she doesn't comply by June 15.

TA said she will not remove her "art pieces" since each toilet planter cost about \$100 to make and holds an assortment of daisies, angel's breath, lilies and other flowers.

**Gardening nudists claim landlord discrimination
June 2009, The Associated Press**

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — A couple of nudists claim their landlord is discriminating against them by trying to get them to cover up while gardening. RP & CP have been accused by their landlord of being a nuisance by gardening wearing only thong underwear, plus pasties for CP. Neighbors complained to police about their scanty clothing but police say the P's are not violating the law as long as their genitals are covered.

But their landlord has sent the P's a letter saying they could face eviction if they don't cover up. The P's say the threat of eviction amounts to discrimination. "We want our freedom," said RP, 58. "We want exactly what the law gives you, and we don't want to be harassed about it."

The executive director of the Boulder Housing Partners, which administers Boulder's affordable housing program, told the newspaper that defining the word "nuisance" is difficult. "This is not a legal issue, it's a community issue," she said. "We try and balance the needs of the whole community."

A neighbor said she spied CP, 51, gardening as she was driving home with her daughter, whose "jaw dropped." The neighbor said she's not opposed to people being nude in their houses — or even in a fenced-off back yard — but the P's home is on a corner just a couple of blocks from a school. "There are so many parks around here, and there are lots of kids around," the neighbor said. "They're on the corner lot right across the street from the community gardens and the school. The whole street is lined with kids."

Ultimately, if the P's continue their near-naked gardening, Boulder Housing Partners can choose to evict them. If the couple fought the eviction, the municipal court would be left to decide whether their behavior constitutes a nuisance.

**Beer run on a lawn mower leads to OUI charge
June, 2009, The Associated Press**

VASSALBORO, Maine (AP) — A Maine man has been charged with operating under the influence after he and a friend made a beer run on a riding lawn mower.

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Master Gardener Focus: Robbie Frankevich By Cheryl Chapman

Some gardeners have mountains of work: For Master Gardener Robbie Frankevich, his work is mountains. "Come on in my office," says Robbie, with an expansive wave, pulling in meadows, slopes, spruce forests, ski runs, trails, parking lots, lake, bridal pavilion, luxury hotel, and everywhere, foliage and flowers that "blend" surrounding wildness with luxury at the 1,400-acre Alyeska Resort in Girdwood. "Everywhere outside here is my office."

Though it's late September -- touch-and-go time for Alaska bedding plants -- a Frankevich perennial bed at the entrance of the 305-room Alyeska Prince hotel ripples with color and foliage yet: variegated dogwood, Ligularias, Pulmonarias, pink and purple poppies, hostas.

A similar used-to-be bed fronting the entrance was canopied this year, replaced with pavers and flanked and backed with flowers and foliage to echo the sister across the drive. Here, hotel guests can shelter while offloading or waiting to catch their buses. It's Robbie's job as Alyeska's parking and grounds supervisor to install amenities like this and make them seem to have been there forever. "We're always making improvements here, and it can't look like they're scabbed on," says Robbie. "I'm always being challenged. It's nice."

There was the bear challenge, for instance - a bronze, life-sized, irritable grizzly. The bear stands drawn up to his formidable height just outside wide lobby windows overlooking a lake surrounded by irises and lilies. Robbie's task was to establish proper placement for the sculpture's base by standing on a moveable 5-gallon bucket and acting like a bear while hotel supervisors scurried up and down the stairs inside, critiquing.

Though he grew up in northern New Jersey, license plates call it "the garden state," the child Robbie dodged every possible chore in his stepfather's garden until he dodged all the way to Alaska, where he fished year-round for king crab out of Kodiak until 1983. "We'd get beat up pretty bad all winter, so when we docked, I headed straight for the bar," he says. "There was a TV ad going about the Alyeska Spring Carnival, and I said to myself, 'Wow! That's what I'm going to do in winter. I'm going to ski."

"I came to Girdwood in the fall. I played the banjo. It was home overnight."

He started on the Alyeska resort snowmaking crew and made supervisor, graduated to lift crew and made assistant supervisor. Summers, he'd take off and fish for salmon until 1989. "Every time I'd come home from fishing after being gone two and a half months, I'd have to find a new girlfriend, and I got tired of it," he says. He joined the summer grounds crew.

"I was doing grunt work with landscaping, and I have to say, if you'd asked me the last thing on my list I wanted to do, it would have been gardening," he says. "But Johnnie Lazarus was on the crew too, and she was a big gardener and she started giving me flowers to take home. That got me started."

By 2002, Robbie was supervising the grounds crew and trying to come up with a unified vision of garden and wilderness. He found it in the Japanese. "It's an idea of blendedness, instead of wildness right up to the doorstep," he says.

Beauty was important to general manager Chris Von Imhof and his wife, Nina, and they encouraged Robbie, as did Nate Works, then-parking and grounds supervisor and himself a Master Gardener. By 2003, Robbie was driving 40 miles to Anchorage once a week for the Master Gardener course.

People showed him things. He joined the Girdwood Community Gardeners (his wife is on the board). He takes many, many photos. "People should take pictures of their gardens," he says. "Nothing does more to improve your garden than to study pictures of it." But the thing he likes best, he says, is "going to other people's gardens. I'm a hands-on guy, and that's a better education than you can get sitting down."

"People may think gardens aren't important, but I can quantify their effect and their economics," says Robbie. "Every Friday, I have 300 guests either coming or going, and I offer a slide presentation on our gardens: winter snow, to spring bulbs, to the summer splash, to the golds and purples of fall, and then back to winter. "Every one of these tourists has expectations about what Alaska will be like. The thing they haven't been expecting is beautiful flowers everywhere. How big the begonias are. The 8-foot-tall delphiniums. They're in awe of this, and they appreciate it. The gardens and flowers make this place special."

"What can I say? We have seven months of snow. We embrace flowers."

The bulbs have arrived. Robbie and his crew are planting furiously. Thousands of tulips. Multitudes of crocuses. Moose coming down from the high country don't bother Alyeska tulips, he says: "Your Anchorage moose have developed an exotic palate. My moose prefer their natural vegetation." The voles are something else.

"My first year, the voles dragged the crocuses into big middens, and when the snow melted I had crocuses blooming in heaps," he says. The next fall he shaved to the ground anything a vole could use for cover. "I love the ermines," says Robbie. "They eat those voles."

The back hotel entrance, around the corner from the Frederic Remington "Mountain Man" bronze, is off a pleasant paved veranda accented with plants such Cimicifuga (Actaea racemosa, or bugbane) that complement the architecture. "It has white flowers and a wonderful fragrance," says Robbie. "At least, I'm told it has a wonderful fragrance. The foliage is so interesting I try not to mind that I've never seen it bloom. The point is to keep things interesting."

One small bed there holds the dwarf and dainty pink Portage poppy (Papaver alboroseum), an Alaska native found near Portage and on the Seward Peninsula. Dozens of hostas shoulder through lava rock in beds framing the back door. Soon, snow will cover them past the window ledges.

And when the snow comes to the mountains, Robbie's focus will be removing it. "That's a full-time job," he says. "In winter I don't get to sit and look at flower books and dream of my next endeavor. I'm out there on the plow." "I'm just a home gardener who drives heavy equipment."

2009 Bean Challenge Report



Jane Baldwin's Cannelini soup beans - the best producer out of several bean varieties she tested this year.

Jane Baldwin reports encouraging success with her dry soup bean trial project. She will try it again next year, using bigger pots and perhaps fewer varieties. All bush bean plants produced beans, but there wasn't enough season to dry on the plants - so they are drying in her garage. The pots were too small, so she had trouble staying on top of watering. Also with only one or two plants per pot, the yield wasn't very high. After the beans are dried, there should be enough

for a small pot of bean soup by putting all of the bush beans together (Cherokee, Dried Paint, Tiger's Eye, and Indian Woman Yellow). The best producer was a Cannelini Soup Bean, described as a half-runner bean, which climbed/twined and vined up over and around about a 4' high teepee of garden stakes.

MG Marilyn Barker reported that one bean from her Scarlet Runner bean vine is enough for a meal side dish.

Gina Docherty learned a good lesson when planting beans: do not soak them like peas in a paper towel in a baggy or you will get 'bean soup'. The one bean plant that survived had a few beans on the stalk when she pulled them out this fall, but none were mature. Next year: plant them whole (unsoaked) in the ground early!

Advanced MG Program cont. from page 1

Master Gardener is synonymous with CES volunteer. Without you, Extension's horticulture program in Anchorage would not exist to the extent that it does. In keeping with this philosophy, the Advanced Master Gardener program also requires volunteer hours. Ten hours are required the first year you become an Advanced MG, but thereafter your advanced status can be retained by taking additional CEUs and/or volunteer hours.

Plus, hours put toward community service projects sponsored by AMGA such as the Anchorage Pioneer Home entrance beds or serving on the AMGA board also count toward the required Advanced MG 10 hours. In Anchorage these types of volunteer activities cannot be used toward the 40 hours you committed to when you signed up for the initial class. You can't become an Advanced Master Gardener without being a Master Gardener and you can't sign up for the program to do more volunteer hours until you've completed the first 40 hours.

As of this writing, it looks like the Oct/Nov Advanced MG core course will fill. Will those who were not able to participate have a chance to take it at another time? It's possible, but right now plans are to offer the core course on a different topic each year. If there is demand, a core topic may be repeated. Because the course will be self-supporting, its cost may also vary from year to year depending on expenses.

For now, there are no tests in the Advanced MG course. It was proposed, but not all members of the AMGA Education Committee were in favor. One thing that remains to be worked out is whether there will be an assignment required. It's possible that a class project compiling information into a presentation on the 'Wild, Wacky, Wonderful World of Insects' is something the first Advanced MG class would like to do.

The GREAT MYSTERIOUS STORY OF THE PRIMULA AURICULA

By Mary Jo Burns



The most common and hardy Primula, the auricula, has a long and questioned history. This is an over-view of how it was brought into our world of gardening:

In about 1570, Emperor Maximilian II, of Austria invited a Belgian, L'Ecluse, (Clusius) to be the court physician and botanist in Vienna. The noble ladies of the court had gathered a collection of alpine plants available from the local markets. Among these alpine

plants was Primula auricula and other Primula species. Clusius had a special liking for alpine primula and made a special garden where he collected as many as fifty species. With the many visitors to the Royal Garden, the interest grew. Others collected plants from other areas all over Europe and sent Clusius both living and dried specimens. He traveled to see and collect seeds and plants, and had great correspondence with others who were also attracted to these lovely plants. He lamented that some species are very hard to cultivate out of their habitat. The Countess Trautsmannsdorf, who lived in Brenner Pass sent P. pubescens to Clusius, who then sent P. pubescens and P. auricula to a friend. Their cultivation spread so rapidly that they appeared in most gardens in Belgium, Germany, England and Holland by the middle of the seventeenth century.

This story may or may not be true. A Conference was held by the Royal Horticultural Society in England in 1886 that tried to clear up some of this information, but alas, there are many ideas and versions of this story.

There wasn't even a set name for these plants at that early date. Names have come and gone with the ages. In this era of genetic research, one might identify the true auricula and describe the true lineage and hybridization process that created these plants. Then we might know where they originated from and when. Until then, we'll just continue with stories like this about L'Eluse, the great Botanist.



Winter Primula Blooms

If you have a cool spot (around 40 - 50 degrees) you can bring in one of you little auricula babies and pot it up to keep in your cool spot.

Give it some light come January and it will bloom for your enjoyment. If you are interested further, email Mary Jo Burns for a detailed description of this experiment.



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball

September seems to open with people saying, "Here, take some--fill in the blank--carrots, potatoes, cabbages, cucumbers, or whatever is too much in that house. Our MG group's ramrod and IPM scout, Janice Chumley, came up to the first Anchorage MG meeting with me this year and we scored red peppers from Gina Docherty. When Janice dropped me off, I dropped veggies on her. MG Barb Jewell said it was a wonderful year for her zucchini and people didn't want to see her for any more bread or relish! And so the circle goes until the gardeners' larders even out.

I got a large number of cucumbers from a friend down here along with her Ohio mother-in-law's recipe for frozen cucumber pickles. I didn't believe that it was possible to freeze cucumbers and thaw them into anything more than mush, but it is possible. The so-easy recipe for crunchy pickles will be at the end.

The wee eggplant that Gina gave me last spring gave us three fruit and I will make a ceremonial caponata, a Sicilian cooked eggplant salad. (Google "caponata" for 345,000 references and some good recipes). The nascent artichoke which I was going to cut and bring in for a flower arrangement succumbed to the 18° morning the Wednesday after the MG meeting. We're left with the sour smell of frozen geraniums, nasturtiums and zucchini in our neighborhood. That frost was the "other shoe" that we were waiting to be dropped and it dropped most definitely!

This was a banner year for orange delicious mushrooms at our house and we got several gallons from our yard to star in mushroom omelets (as in, "how do you want your scrambled eggs tonight?") and various pastas. The singularly unusual thing about those mushrooms this year is that they did not have their usual "livestock" crawling around. There was only one very old 'shroom that had its herd and I pitched it out the door.

Our potato crop was overtaken by weeds and neglect and when I went to dig I had a difficult time trying to find many of the plants that didn't survive our 6-25 and 8-1 frosts. Out of 200 feet of potatoes I got about 40 pounds of usable tubers. Fortunately our neighborhood grows lots of potatoes and we like rice and pasta so it will still be a comfortable winter. Neighbor MG Mark had beautiful potatoes including a long row of French Reds. If you can find seed and have room, grow some! Another must-have for my garden next year is the black cherry tomato. It out produced the sweet 100s and had a wonderful flavor.

MG Margaret Simon said the Brussels sprouts look to be the biggest she's ever grown. The one hill of potatoes she dug a month ago to have with creamed peas and fried chicken produced well. The carrots she's snatched are sweet. She has a VERY LARGE green cabbage long-ing to be stuffed. After last summer, we deserve good gardens this year.

Only one person I've talked to has said they got any apples to speak of. MG Kathy Martinbee said her fruit trees didn't bloom this spring. MG Marion Nelson usually plans a family get together for apple picking and there was no fruit for her either this year. Someone wondered if the two weeks of -30° to -40° we got at the New Year had anything to do with it. Our service berry didn't bloom at all.

Freezer Cucumber Pickles

2 quarts of peeled, sliced cucumbers, 1 medium onion, diced, 3 T salt
Sprinkle the salt over the cucumbers and onion and work it in. Let stand for 2 hours to draw water. Dump the liquid and wash the cucumbers until they get to the saltiness you like. SQUEEZE dry.

Place them in freezer containers and cover with a solution of 1/2 cup white vinegar into which 1-1/2 cups sugar has been dissolved. Note: I added diced ginger to two of the containers to give an Oriental flavor.

Hemp Nettle By Rosemary Kimball

The mint family, for the most part, is benign: spearmint, lemon mint, orange mint, peppermint, mojitos...and the introduced hemp nettle, the not very nice weed that pops up in your garden and along the sides of the roads, disturbed areas both.



You know the plant is a mint by its square stems and the way it flowers: bracts from the leaf nodes and inside, tiny rather pretty flowers. It also has annoying pricklers.

Galeopsis bifida Boenn. and G. tetrahit L. - photo from "Weed Ranking Project" akweeds.uaa.alaska.edu

It was introduced from Europe, found in Alaska mostly south of the Chugach range, down along SE and over to Kodiak. It has no redeeming medicinal properties or eating properties. In fact, the Plants for a Future website www.pfaf.org says the plant is poisonous and causes paralysis. Not nice!

And the control? Pulling...and pulling and pulling, year after year or a good dose of 2-4-D (as in Weed be Gone and other similar products that take out broadleaved plants but leaves the grasses). All of this should be done as early in the spring as possible and before it flowers and seeds so you don't make the problem so everlasting.

Mystery Question

Vanity plates abound. The Anchorage Daily News even has a section on its website devoted to them. Recently in East Anchorage a car was spotted with "APHID" on its plates. What are the color and model of that car? (The answer to this mystery is on page 6.)





Bird Chatter

How Does Your AeroGarden™ Grow? by Michelle Semerad

- Kathy Wartinbee writes: *Did you know that a Jetta station wagon can hold 5 40-lb bales of straw? The car didn't hold much else but the folks at Alaska Mill and Feed got 5 of them in for me. David (the husband) had to vacuum the roof of the Jetta.*

- Lighted Plant Stand for the garage or a cool room. 6-shelf, 48x 18" footprint, sturdy, chrome baker's rack, on wheels. Cost: \$110; 4 lighted shelves for seed starting, 8 shop lights, 2 per shelf. Cost: \$80; 16' of lighted shelves for plants & seedlings: Cost: priceless!

-- It's time to start feeding the birds once the bears have gone down for their winter nap. The staple for birds most likely to be found at feeders are sunflower seeds-- whole, hulled or cracked. No millet, please.

-- Anchorage MG Greg Kalal was only 2 ounces away from being the Giant Cabbage King of Trapper Creek. He came in second place with a 17.25 pounder.

-- Heirloom tomatoes have been available to Anchorage consumers this fall. New Sagaya offered a couple of different varieties and Eric Unrein of P&M Garden Services had 'Black Cream' at the Northway Mall Farmers' Market.

-- 'The Flower Ladies' (Annie Nevaldine, Jill Shepherd and Julie Riley) have been asked to share the results of their June photo junket to the Valley at the Nov 2 meeting of the Mat-Su Master Gardeners. It helps that the president of the association, Sheri Walker, used to be an Anchorage MG.

-- An historical first... the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference will be held in Juneau in early 2010.

-- Horticulture students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, (Julie Riley's alma mater) are now required to participate in the Giant Pumpkin Regatta where they paddle while sitting or kneeling in the 400-550 pound pumpkins grown for this purpose. Large inner tubes keep the students from flipping over into Lake Mendota.

-- This was the year of slime molds. There was even reference to the fungus in a "Pickles" cartoon" (Sept 18, Anchorage Daily News). Grandpa talking to Grandma while viewing large gooey spots : "Did you see this weird fungus on our lawn? I've never see anything like it! I wonder what can be causing it? Maybe we're watering too much. Or maybe the soil's got a low pH." Dog: "Or maybe your dog scattered a package of flour tortillas all over the lawn right before the sprinkler came on."

-- Nancy Sullivan, MG of astilbe fame, celebrated 60 years of marriage to her husband Neal.

-- 'Earthweek' (ADN, Sept 13) reported that scientists have tapped into a tree's natural electric current to power electronic devices. The feat will be published in the journal Transactions on Nanotechnology.

While I know it might seem odd for a Master Gardener to tout gardening sans dirt, not all of us have the necessary space for outdoor gardens. So, we make do. I live in a small apartment, and have done so for years. At my previous apartment, I at least had a nice stoop area outside my door where I placed large pots for container gardening. Then, a few years ago, I moved into a new apartment where I have absolutely no outdoor space. NONE! Yikes! Then I discovered the AeroGarden™. A few friends and co-workers were praising the device, so with coupons in hand (from Bed, Bath & Beyond, which lowered my cost from around \$150 to \$100), I purchased one and quickly became a convert. For those of us who are space-challenged, an AeroGarden™ is a small miracle.

I have had mine for over a year now, and have grown two herb kits, and two lettuce kits. I have learned a few things. Like many things you see on TV ads, things don't always look or produce like the pretty pictures show. That said, I still highly recommend the Aero Garden, for several reasons. First is the space issue. Second is that it easily allows you to "garden" in the winter. And, though I am not even close at this stage of my life, I know there may come a time when it may be physically hard for me to garden traditionally.

My admiration began with my first herb kit. The seeds sprout quickly; and then subsequent growth is extremely quick! I had visions of using all the bounty on a daily basis. After a month or so it became evident that not all the plants would fill out like the pictures. Within the herb kit there are two kinds of basil, Italian and Purple. They quickly took over! They often produced monster leaves almost as big as the palm of my hand! Although I did try a second herb kit and it did produce better parsley, mint, dill and chive plants than the first, I have learned that those other plants don't produce well enough to make it worthwhile growing them in this manner (potted plants would be better for me). So, my next kit will be all basil. AeroGarden™ does have a basil pesto kit for sale; I have not been able to find it locally yet, so I'll have to order it online. (It is also possible to reuse the pods and use your own seeds, but I have not tried this yet). Another option is the International Basil kit (7 different kinds included). The lettuce kits I grew did much better in general. And though they can get a bit wild and messy, I did have lots of fresh lettuce on a regular basis. (This year I also had a green leaf lettuce plant in a traditional pot and that did very well too).

Though I have not tried it yet, I have heard that tomato plants (especially smaller varieties) work well in the AeroGarden™. While I currently garden in pots as much as space allows (my cucumber and pepper plants did well this year), the AeroGarden™ will always have a place in my home (even after I gain suitable outdoor garden space).

Answer to the vanity plate mystery:
APHID belongs to a green bug (VW, that is).



Strange Garden-Related News cont. from page 2

Police say 51-year-old DR of Vassalboro was charged May 29.

The state trooper had been flagged down by several motorists warning of a wayward mower and made the arrest after DR and his friend emerged from a variety store with two cases of beer. DR's driver's license had been revoked, so the pair opted for the lawn mower. DR couldn't be reached for comment.

Brazen NZ parrot steals passport, heads into bush May, 2009, The Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Polly wants a passport — and isn't above stealing one.

A brazen parrot, which spotted a Scottish man's passport in a colored bag in the luggage compartment under a tour bus, nabbed the document and made off into dense bush with it, the Southland Times newspaper reported Friday.

The bird — a parrot of the Kea variety — made its move while the bus was stopped along the highway to Milford Sound on the South Island, and the driver was looking through the compartment. Milford Sound, which runs inland from the Tasman Sea and is surrounded by sheer rock face, is part of Fiordland National Park, a world heritage site and major travel destination. Police told the newspaper the passport has not been recovered and is unlikely to be located in the vast Fiordland rain forest.

"My passport is somewhere out there in Fiordland. The Kea's probably using it for fraudulent claims or something," the passport owner, who did not want to be named, told the newspaper. A replacement passport from the British High Commission in Wellington could take six weeks and cost up to \$250. "I'll never look at a Kea in the same way," the man was quoted as saying.

Kea, the world's only snow line-dwelling parrot, are widely known as inquisitive birds who appear to take delight in attacking rubber items like windshield wiper blades. Native to New Zealand, the birds are found only in or near South Island mountains, where they live in high-altitude beech forest and open sub-alpine herb fields that stretch up into the snow line. Covered mainly in brown and green feathers, they have large flashes of bright orange feathers under their wings.

Doing thyme: OH inmates growing food to save money May 2009, The Associated Press

FREMONT, Ohio (AP) — A county sheriff in northern Ohio who banned pancakes from the jail menu to cut costs has found another way to save: He's having the inmates grow their own food.

Sandusky County Sheriff KO got the idea for a vegetable garden at the jail in Fremont after he was forced to reduce his budget by \$75,000 this spring. Low-risk inmates who are allowed to mow lawns and do other chores around the county planted about an acre and a half of fruits and vegetables on jail grounds three weeks ago.

One inmate says everyone will enjoy the fresh food because budget cuts have made meals less appetizing.

Garden Event Calendar

October 14 - December 9, Weds & Fridays, 3 pm - 6 pm
Anchorage Master Gardener Course, become a volunteer for the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, 40 hours of training in return for 40 hours of volunteer service. Cost about \$100. Call 786-6300 for more information.

October 17, Saturday, 2 p.m.

Alaska Rock Garden Society: "Plants for your Troughs", presented by Florene Carney and Verna Pratt; Power-Point program and hand outs. Held the MTA Meeting Room in Palmer.

October 19, Monday, 7 pm - 9 pm

Anchorage Master Gardener Association meeting, "Heirloom Seeds" presented by Julie Riley, UAF Cooperative Extension Service, held at Cooperative Extension Service, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. For information contact 786-6300

October 27-28, Tuesday and Wednesday, 8 am - 5 pm

CNIPM Invasive Weeds Workshop, Ketchikan, sponsored by the Committee on Noxious & Invasive Plants Management. For more information contact the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, 786-6300

November 3, Tuesday, 7 pm - 9 pm

Central Peninsula Garden Club meeting. Learn about the community of Ionia's organic gardens near Kasilof and their unique heating system. The Ionia website states the community is a model for fundamental and sustainable change in their approach to mental, physical and planetary wellness. Held at the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Building on Kalifornsky Beach Road, Kenai. For more information, 283-4632, 398-8669 or mmkn@ptialaska.net

November 5, Thursday, 7 pm - 9 pm

Anchorage Garden Club meeting, "New & Greatest Plants", presenter Jaime Rodriguez, Alpine Garden Nursery, held at the Pioneer School House (lower level), 437 E. 3rd Ave. For information 566-0539 or www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchoragegardenclub

November 12, Thursday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Wildflower Garden Club meeting, "A Facelift for the Older Garden" presented by Rita Jo Shultz, Fritz Creek Gardens, Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova St., Anchorage. For more information, gardencentral.org/asfgc/wildflowergardenclub.

November 15, Monday 7 pm - 9 pm

Anchorage Master Gardener Association meeting, "Winter Time for Gardeners: Dreams, Schemes & Plan Ahead". MGs share their favorite catalogs and nursery website URLs. Held at Cooperative Extension Service, 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. For information call 786-6300

November 21, Saturday, 2 p.m.

Alaska Rock Garden Society: "Plants on the Edge: A floristic inventory of the Bering Glacier Region"; a 10 year study of the vary large receding glacier located between Cordova and Skagway. Speaker: Marilyn Barker. Held at the CES conference room on Northern Lights.



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

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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.
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Fax: 786-6312



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Robbie Frankevich, Alyeska's parking and grounds supervisor, stands next to a bronze, life-sized, irritable grizzly in front of the Alyeska Resort. Robbie is the featured Master Gardener in Cheryl Chapmen's article, "Master Gardener Focus" on page 3.

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