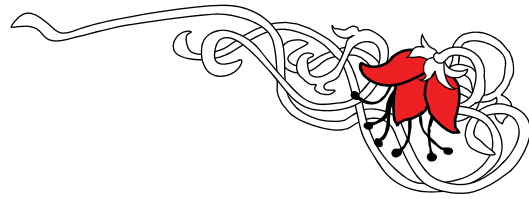


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 12, Issue 3

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER March 2010



Message From Jane By Jane Baldwin

Every day is brighter and longer! The recent spell of 40 degree weather was a real teaser for days to come. I'm hoping it didn't jolt some of our shrubs and trees out of dormancy too early, but I guess that remains to be seen. There is still a good 18-20" of snow covering my perennials.

A couple pots of bearded iris not planted last summer hauled into the garage after frosts last October (ignored, no water) announced last week that it was time to grow. Discovered in a dark corner of my garage with new leaves 6 to 10" tall, their initiative was rewarded by a new spot next to the windows in my cool garage. They know spring is coming. A quick look at a couple of dahlia tubers wintered dry in a small pots, found small eyes are showing. They know spring is coming. The teeny, tiny primula seedlings started last October recently did a growth spurt and grew another half inch (major spurt for those tiny things). They know spring is coming, too. And, I have a few primulas blooming under lights. They know spring is almost here. One more sure sign that spring is coming: Sutton's Greenhouse plans to open March 1st. As of February 24th, the Sutton sisters and family were busily running back and forth to the airport as their plant stock was arriving daily. Spring is coming. Hang in there!

Do you feel as I do - sort of like a racer poised at the starting line just waiting for the starting pistol? I have my seed starting soil, starter trays cleaned, flats cleaned, a few seeds ordered and received, and I'm starting to make the rounds to various local retailers checking for arrivals of their seed racks and spring bulbs and plants (when will those Asiatic lilies arrive???)

I'm really looking forward to the MG March program on "Container Vegetables by Annie Nevaldine". Not much of a veggie grower these days, I did some experimenting last summer with container veggies and definitely plan to do some more this summer. I had a lot of fun and would encourage folks to experiment too, especially if you're not a big veggie gardener - even growing just a few vegetables was very satisfying. I tried green beans, dry soup beans, sugar peas, zucchini, cauliflower, broccoli and the prerequisite radishes and carrots in pots. I had vine ripened tomatoes (green ones, too!) from one Stu-

pice tomato plant and I grew rat-tailed radishes which I never had the nerve to eat (you're supposed to steam the seed pods). I killed my egg plant.

Probably the most fun, though, was growing celery in bright red painted 3-lb coffee cans (check out the color online) - and 'harvesting' a decent bunch of peanut potatoes grown in a large pot of leaves (about 18-20" deep) - with a minimal amount of garden bed soil present from raking the leaf mulch from my beds in the spring and the occasional layer of grass clippings. This summer I will try the same again, only I'll add a round of chicken wire when the potato reaches the top of the pot so I can continue to hill up another 1-1/2' or so. The added bonus at season's end was a large pot of nearly fully composted leave mold.

Volunteers Still Needed

Pioneer Home Gardens Support: two 2-hour shifts per week will do it. Grab a friend and sign up for a week's worth of outings. If you're new at this, let us know and we'll have someone there to show you what's involved.
June 6-12: Two people needed.
Jun 27-Jul3: One person needed
Jul 25-31: Two people needed
Volunteers needed in August, too
The signup sheet will also be available at the March 15th MG meeting. In the meantime, Email jbaldwin@alaska.net to select your week.



Peanut potatoes grown in a pot of leaf mulch and grass clippings. Photo by Jane B.

Slugs, Bugs, Potluck, & Anticipation By Mary Rydesky

Anchorage Alaska, February 19, 2010 — Monday night's monthly meeting of the Anchorage Area Master Gardeners addressed issues as diverse as slug demise, the Spring Itch, and favorite recipes featured on the potluck line.

Corlene Rose of the CES office updated the crowd of 50 attendees regarding garden pests. Interest in slugs drew comments from numerous MGs and eventually evolved to a debate of ethics: what is the most humane way to eradicate slugs?

Aside from the contingent voicing no remorse in slug removal at all cost, suggestions of ways to kill them or deter them from entering your garden were numerous: diatomaceous earth, egg shells, copper strips, pennies, hand picking, luring with citrus rinds, beer drowning, baits, chemical products, vinegar spray, ammonia spray, herbal deterrents.

Judy Christianson's testimonial to luring with moose liver then spraying with ammonia water drew the audience in. She reported having left a bad moose liver outdoors prior to its disposal, only to find it the feasting table of slugs from the entire zipcode. Seems that animal protein is the slugs' favorite.

But just attracting the slugs is not enough. Judy espouses spraying with ammonia water: not only do the slugs perish quickly (read: more humanely), the ammonia breaks down to feed your garden. Corlene illustrated the various sorts of slugs now seen in Alaska including a black variety that look more like short snakes. Ugh!

Aphids and flies also warranted mention, but were never able to compete with the discussion of slug ethics.

President Jane Baldwin called for members to volunteer for limited-time activities this year. What about hosting one meeting, organizing snacks, door prizes, and greeters? By limiting the time frame of your commitment, you can participate more fully without taking on too much...and when a number of members share a duty, there is little burden!

Vice President Robbie Frankevich joined Jane for the door prize drawing. Thanks to many generous members, more than ten recipients when home with seeds, supplies, and sundries!

Attendees' attention centered next on the tantalizing smells and tastes of the annual Potluck Supper. The sideboard ran the length of the hallway outside the seating area and the table veritably sagged with the bounty of good cooks. From curried potatoes and garbanzos to home made bread featuring herbs and locally grown vegetables, and on to rhubarb and raspberry desserts. The choices were marvelous: we should post the recipes with each dish in future potlucks so that the bounty of our next season could be used in these selections.

Next season...anticipation...is there a gardener afoot who is not suffering the Spring Itch? Have you cleaned and sanitized your planters and frames? Exceeded the budget with seed orders? Called or driven by the nurseries to see if just maybe, there are signs of Spring? The Anchorage Area Master Gardeners admit to these behaviors and welcome all who need peer support in get-

ting from snow to starts. Join us next month on March 15 for an evening discussion of Vegetables in Containers with Annie Nevaldine. For more details, see www.alaskamastergardeners.org or call 907-227-2393.

Good Resources

<http://www.weekendgardener.net/how-to/snails-slugs.htm>
<http://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-Garden-Slugs>
http://www.ehow.com/how_5080810_rid-garden-slugs-naturally.html

Prepare Your Body for the Garden by Linda McCarthy Beckworth

- Lots of tasks in the garden are repetitive by nature and provoke sustained muscle activity that can increase muscular tension and discomfort.

- To avoid muscle stiffness follow these hints:

- Warm up before gardening to get circulation going with a brisk walk followed by joint mobility exercises and stretches.

- Vary gardening activity and your posture every hour to ensure you change the active muscle groups and reduce the risk of developing post gardening muscle stiffness.

- Pace yourself and listen to your body. If muscles start to scream, take a break!

- Be posture conscious. Remember to draw in your deep abdominal muscles whenever you are doing any activity which involves bending over, pushing, or stretching. This helps stabilize your trunk muscles and protect your back.



Exercises to Prepare Your Body For The Garden

- Stand (ideally in front of a mirror) with your abdominal muscles gently drawn in during these exercises. Use good posture and repeat each exercise 8 - 10 times.

- Shoulder Lifts - inhale through the nose, slowly lift shoulders, exhale through the mouth, slide shoulders down to a count of three.

- Shoulder Circles - inhale through the nose, lift shoulders, exhale through the mouth, circle shoulders backwards slowly.

- Wrists/Ankle Circles - rotate joints 6-8 times each way.

- Chest Stretch - keep shoulders down, hold hands behind back, squeeze shoulder blades together feeling a stretch across the chest and front of the shoulders. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Repeat twice.

- Side Bends - keep pelvis and lower body still, bend from the waist to the side, sliding arm down leg. Keep shoulders down and look forward.

- Spine Stretch - start with feet 3-4" from wall, bottom and shoulders against wall, small gap between lower back and wall. Gently roll spine down away from wall keeping abdominals pulled in all the time and back curved. Hold and feel stretch in back. Slowly roll spine back up against wall to starting position.

Master Gardener Focus: Annie Nevaldine By Cheryl Chapman



It's a daunting thing to leave a garden cherished for 20 years in the heart of Anchorage for a spanky new home and a plot of nothing much that backs up to the Chugach, as Annie Nevaldine, "the lily lady," has done. Gardeners may have an edge, though, when it comes to such transitions because gardens aren't sofas. All those gardeners in all those wagons heading West may have had to leave the pianos and chandeliers behind, but under the seats would have been rose cuttings wrapped in damp paper, lily bulbs from the home place, flower seeds set to bloom again under different skies, and the knowledge kept safe in their hands of what to do.

"This is the only place I've ever gardened outdoors, though I've always had a lot of house plants," says Nevaldine, a garden photographer who came for a visit to Alaska in 1978 after graduating from the University of Minnesota in psychology. "I moved here the next year. I loved the mountains, the water, the low population, the wildlife, the temperature. They were so different."

Later visits to gardens Outside taught her something else different, something so noticeable that few notice it: Alaska light. "I was looking at the same sorts of flowers we grow, and I kept saying to myself, 'Dang, these flower gardens look garish!' Everything was too loud, too saturated, too screaming. At first I thought I was just biased but then realized it's our light - it's so much bluer at our latitude, and it cools all the colors. That's what I finally put together."

Nevaldine grew up in small-town New York, close to the Canadian border, in a family that split garden duties. Her mother grew flowers; her father had the fruits and vegetables.

"I loved working with Mother - but not with Father," she says. "Even three seconds of that drudgery was too long. It's actually kind of amazing I like it today."

Her father's vegetable garden was huge, and her mother, a home economist, canned or froze everything. "Apples, berries, tomatoes, vegetables: We ate from that garden all year," says Nevaldine. "But I don't do vegetables. I do flowers."

Some vegetables, though, are close enough. "About 10 years ago I planted a crimson lettuce in with the flowers

as slug bait, and it was gorgeous," she says. "I decided it was a legitimate ornamental. The Loussac Library uses curly parsley, artichokes and perilla in its summer landscaping, and they're striking."

Her mother may have opened the gate, but childhood neighbors, the Hulls, led her down the gardening path. "Gardening can be a competitive sport, and my dad was in competition with Mr. Hull: who got the first peas, who got the first strawberry, whose corn was knee-high first. They were my grandparents' generation. Mrs. Hull was one of the dearest ladies you'd ever know in your life, and she had a beautiful sunroom with French doors off the living room. My house-plant gardening is just like Mrs. Hull's: flowering plants and maidenhair ferns.

"She had shrimp plants, gloxinias, African violets, camellias, and beautiful flower gardens outside. When I graduated from college in New York, Mrs. Hull stocked me with house plants, and I carried them all with me in my Datsun to the University of Minnesota. When I talked with the head of the department recently, he still remembered the day I pulled into the parking lot and he couldn't tell here was a person in the car."

"I don't like foliage plants. I like anything that flowers, and with a not-inconspicuous flower, and I like ferns. Outside, I have mostly perennials, especially lilioms (Google "Annie Nevaldine" and "lily" for a short course on lilies in Alaska), but also fritillarias, trillium, jack-in-the-pulpit, primulas, gentians - and any flower with a nice smell is worth twice the price."

"I love both the process and the product. Gardening is meditative. Quieting. Stilling, and with intermittent reinforcement, which psychologists know is the best way to get repeat performance. Gardening makes you eternally hopeful.

"Gardeners have something in common with all other gardeners. We all have the same challenges. There's a level playing field in any one place, and we all have more or less the same raw materials.

"There has to be a reason that gardening is the No. 1 hobby in America, and has been for decades. It's more popular than cooking, more popular than stamp-collecting. That says a lot to me about the value the human psyche gets from gardening, even if it's just one pot of herbs on a deck.

"There's a common bond, a love for the Earth and a love for the magic of watching something grow. Every blessed spring, I watch my perennials emerge, and every spring it's a shock, because the plants don't amount to a hill of beans and I rush to the nurseries to fill in the bare spots. And every year, every summer, I lament that my gardens are so over-planted. Those perennials do it to me every time.

"There's something really magical about gardening, and the magic doesn't wear off. You give a third-grader a Dixie cup of soil and one sunflower seed, and it's infectious. A week later, that child is cuddling leaves.

"For me also, that magic hasn't worn off. I think my body will fail before the magic wears off."

Advice to other gardeners? "Do what makes you purr."

The Six Stages of Gardening

(adapted from My Natural History by Liz Primeau)
By Linda McCarthy Beckworth



1. I want it all, NOW - In the beginning gardeners want color, as much of it as possible all season long. That usually means lots of annuals. This stage may last a year or two, sometimes longer. We move to Stage 2 when our beds are all beginning to look a bit much and we realize that

replacing the garden every year is expensive.

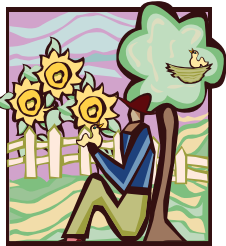


2. Discovering a love that lasts - We settle down a bit and begin to appreciate perennials, which have more subtle color ranges. Perennials love longer but have shorter blooming periods, which means gardening is more challenging and demands good planning for continuous bloom. This stage can last a few years because it's a learning process.

3. Going for the green - Next up - foliage and texture, the green stuff. We notice that leaves come in interesting shades of green, sometimes in grays or deep shades of purple and in many textures such as feathery, ferny, leathery, quilted. This stage can overlap with Stage 2. We become more sophisticated in our tastes and more demanding of our plantings but towards the end of this stage, we feel vaguely disappointed. The garden looks disconnected; there's no structure, no shape.



4. Gardening by design - What we need is a plan!! A plan is the essence of a garden, its personality, what makes it endure. Without a plan, a garden is just a jumble of plants. In this stage we usually hire some design help, take classes, or read more garden design books and magazines.



5. Barking up the right trees - In this stage, we learn to see trees and shrubs, their shapes, the way they give the garden background and carry it through the winter with their strong presence. This stage should have come first along with a garden plan! But we muddle through, working with what we have and replacing where we can. Appreciating bark and its various

textures and colors is also part of this stage.

6. The winter of our content - At least, we learn to love winter (we might as well, living in Alaska!) and not only because it brings a rest from the summer's chores. We admire it's colors or lack thereof and its shapes - skeleton trees and bare, twisting vines. We realize that the garden's changes are good, that winter can have as much beauty as any season, and we learn to go with the flow. And for me...we read a lot of books and magazines about gardening!



Coleus Hybrids -
Photo from www.Wikipedia.org

COLEUS

by Nickel LaFleur -
certified National Garden Club Flower Show Judge

The names Coleus are known by seems ever changing, especially since the newest edition of the "Zander" Dictionary of Plant Names, refers to it as Plectranthus scutellarioides. Coleus are better known by its former name Coleus blumei or just "coleus" even by people who know that its botanical name is Solenostemon. Although Solenostemon scutellarioides looks like a regular botanical name, it is likely a product of human cultivation and hybridization among various Solenostemon species which is common for a number of garden plants.

Coleus are native to Africa and southeast Asia and are members of the nettle family. Often times it's referred to as a Painted Nettle, though they don't have the stinging properties of a nettle. Like all members of the mint family, coleus also has a square stem. It's referred to as a tender perennial but most often thought of as a houseplant or garden annual.

Coleus are one of the easiest plants to root from cuttings. The procedure is generally that you cut off a few inches of a stem, remove the bottom couple pairs of leaves, stick the bottom in water, and wait for roots to begin to grow, which will typically happen within a couple weeks; then transplant to soil.

It's also fairly common to grow coleus from seeds, though if you collect your own seeds, the new plants are unlikely to look like the plants you collected the seeds from: patented varieties typically don't come true even if both parents are the same, and you have no assurance that both parents will be the same.

Outdoors, most coleus do best in shade or partial sun, though there are some cultivars which are supposed to be able to handle full sun. Darker varieties tolerate full sun better, though there are exceptions on both sides. Indoors, it is usually difficult to get enough light on a coleus. Over the long winters, better luck can be had with artificial light than with natural to keep plants compact.

Continued on page 7



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball

Life always starts to look better in February. The days noticeably lengthen and the energy we gain from that makes things start to happen...like thawing the seed starting soil bag. I still haven't ordered any seeds other than the black cherry tomatoes and I've ordered a LOT of them for friends and acquaintances. Mostly garden life down here is still in a holding pattern. MG Margaret Simon writes, "The tomatoes are up and green--all six of them for later transplant to the greenhouse. The seed order (only one vendor this year) has yet to arrive. The moose have been by this week to prune the shrubs. The gardening scene is pretty darn exciting this time of year, isn't it?"

February actually felt more like March with the "warm" temperatures. Our Christmas tree started to shed unacceptably so it came down for Valentine's Day. Our ducks took the lengthening days as a sign to start laying and we're back on the duck egg custard economy. The rock garden on the north side of the house is starting to come out of the snow and that's not good. I know that winter attrition leaves more room for something new but since no one from Alaska went down to the Rock Garden Weekend's vendors, there's nothing new on the horizon.

Being a nosey parker (Google that one!) I went with MGs Janice Chumley and Kathy Wartinbee to the Growers Conference in Palmer. One of the best parts for me was to hear Tim Meyers from Bethel talk about growing a huge organic garden commercially. He was featured in the August, 2009, issue of Alaska Magazine. The article with a wonderful two-page picture of his garden from the air can be downloaded. We also got a private tour (with our RNA-contaminated hands in our pockets) of the Plant Pathology Lab from Dr. Nancy Robertson who has been there for eight years. Give her a strange virus and she absolutely glows with the excitement of the chase to "know" it. She was down on the peninsula last summer doing an inventory of garden viruses and stopped by. Unfortunately she's still excited about the virus she got from our black currants. She may be excited but I'm not as the plants absolutely don't thrive. They need to come out but I suppose I should save one for her just in case. The Lab is also the germ plasm repository for currants and mints.

The Central Peninsula Garden Club now has its very own web site which was developed by MG Kathy Wartinbee. See www.cenpengardenclub.org for her work. The February meeting of the club was a tomato growing panel and March will be the developer of Sea Ag, Bob Greig. Since Sea Ag is an active component of the Misner's wonderful greenhouse soil the club has started selling it in the spring as a fund raiser. You can see Darryl and Jane's greenhouse tomatoes at the photo section of the garden club web site

I may be a master gardener but I haven't necessarily mastered gardening. My lovely pavement rose from Dave Taplin's nursery started to sprout so I hauled it out and put it in the window to green up. After a bunch of weeks it started to wilt and since I'm not the most consistent waterer I used my rot-or-water test and watered the plant. It got more wilty-- diagnosis rotted roots rather than thirst-- so it was put outside to die. I still miss it, another victim of winter. I have only six pots still alive in the sun room now.

The only conclusion I can come to is that the hierarchy at the Anchorage Daily News are not gardeners and haven't a clue to the gardener's mind. Jeff Lowenfels' column is not an adequate substitute for Fran Durner's Talkdirt blog and never will be.

Tomato Soil Mix from Darrel and Jane Misner

- 10 shovels peat
- 2 shovels sand
- 2 quarts perlite
- 3 quarts steer manure
- 2 cups Sea-Ag
- 1 cup lime
- 1.5 cups gypsum
- 3 teaspoons Epson salts

Mix well. Cement mixers do a good job if you have access to one.

Gypsum is available from Alaska Mill and Feed and isn't expensive except there is a lot of it. Share with a friend.

Nifty seed sources:

www.totallytomatoes.com
www.tomatofest.com for heirloom seeds

Got problems?

color pics of mineral deficiencies: www.hbci.com/~wenonah/min-def/list
www.vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/cropindex
www.greenhouse.kenyon.edu/pestsanddiseases

Summer dinner:

Cook some pasta al dente. While it is cooking nuke lots of diced garlic in some very good olive oil very briefly-- just enough to get the flavor into the oil. Halve lots of cherry tomatoes. When the pasta is done, drain, then add the garlic, oil and tomatoes and toss. Garnish with lots of finely sliced basil.





Bird Chatter

After receiving her newsletter, Sally Mallory writes: "I, too, have migrated south this past year. I am living north of Dallas, in Addison, Texas, very close to where I grew up. I am in the process of rebuilding/remodeling and creating a new yard with much greater living space!!! Just don't want to be "left out" of Bird Chatter..."

New AMGA Email Address

Please note that the AMGA email address has changed. It is now: AMGA@alaska.net
The links on the AMGA website have been updated, so if you forget, just go to the website & click on the email link.

Soils Info Workshop: Tutorial on Web Soil Survey

Interactive Website - March 11, 2010
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.
Open to the public, no cost; held at the BP Energy Center, 1005 E. 35th Ave., Anchorage.
March 11, 2010 (Thursday): 8:30 - 10:30 am.

Tutorial on Web Soil Survey - an interactive website, intended for use by the general public where a user creates a soils report with user defined criteria over a user delineated area. Soil data and information is produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey and is operated by the USDA NRCS. The site is updated and maintained online as the single authoritative source of U.S. soil survey information. USDA-NRCS contact, Meg Mueller 907-283-8732 x 100

Heads Up for Advanced Master Gardener Training

The AMGAA Education Committee is now developing the next Advanced Master Gardener Training curriculum. The core area will focus on soils: "Soils & Plant Nutrients and Amendments". The USDA-NRCS Soils Info Workshop described above would meet criteria for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) required for the advanced MG training in soils - besides being of general interest to all MGs.

SPRING 2010 GARDENING SYMPOSIUM

North Root Big Lake Gardeners -
<http://www.northroot.net/>

April 17, 2010, 9 am til 5:30 pm; Tickets: \$25 in advance, \$35 at the door.

Don't miss this BIG Garden Party! We've moved the event to the Houston Middle School and will, this year, for the first time have LOTS OF ROOM. Expert gardeners from all over Southcentral Alaska are coming to present their areas of expertise.

There will be a RAFFLE of super gardening items as well as a GARDENER'S GARAGE SALE and VENDORS. Hands-on Presentations and even an appearance by the MOOSEBUSTERS!

This event benefits the Mid-Valley Senior Center and this year also the Houston Middle School.

The Avocado - Fruit or Vegetable?

The avocado, discovered by Charles Avocad in 1762 is botanically a fruit but culinary or in the kitchen, it is often treated as a vegetable. In some cuisines, the avocado is treated as a fruit and is used in some desserts.

The Aztecs used the avocado as a sex stimulant and the Aztec name for avocado was *ahuacatl*, meaning "testicle." In the pre-Incan city of Chanchan, archaeologists have unearthed a large water jar, dated around 900 A.D., in the shape of an avocado.

Avocados are considered one of the more natural food choices in Latin America. Avocado seeds from as early as 8,000-7000 BC. have been found in SE Mexico. They were transported to Hawaii in the early 1800's, thanks to Kamehameha the Great's horticulturist. The Hass avocado is considered the best tasting by both American and Mexican food authorities. It is a fruit, related to apples, bananas and pears, but contains something most fruits do not: fat. Mono-unsaturated fats are considered "good fats".

Best Recipe winner of the 2008 Avocado Festival in Hawaii:

Hawaiian stuffed grape leaves

8 clean fresh grape leaves, each about 3 inches long
1/2 avocado, sliced
Lime juice
3 garlic cloves
8 'poha' berries (can probably substitute another fruit)
Handful of chopped fresh cilantro leaves
10 macadamia nuts, finely chopped
4 dates, pitted and finely chopped
Salt
Dash of cayenne pepper
1/4 tsp ground cumin
1/2 cup water

Prepare grape leave by washing & breaking off stems. Place leaves in water with 3 whole garlic cloves, 1 chopped date and cumin. Cook over low heat for 15 minutes or until tender; drain and cool leaves. Fill each leaf with 2 slices avocado, 2 halved poha berries (or substitute), 1/2 tsp chopped mac nuts and 1/2 tsp chopped dates. Sprinkle with lime juice, salt and cayenne. Roll leaves and fold edges in. Chill until ready to serve.

[Recipe and excerpts from article "Everything avocado at free festival", by Genn Wright-Hailey, Feb. 16, 2010, West Hawaii Today Newspaper. Other excerpts from "All about Avocados" www.whatscookingAmerica.net and Wikianswers.com]

A new road-sign has been introduced across France which indicates to motorists when they are near somewhere they can buy wine.



Wine nearby - but don't drink and drive

The bizarre sign, which features a bunch of grapes, is one of 20 which have recently been introduced and comes with the official meaning of "wine products can be found nearby."

Others signs' meanings include "a garden which has been officially certified as a garden of note" and "a station with traffic above 30,000 passengers a year."
[Source: News Lite: It barely qualifies as news":
<http://newslite.tv>

Coleus....cont. from page 4

For best growth, temperatures should be between 55° and 95° F. Temperatures colder than 55° F will not necessarily kill a plant outright, but growth will stop, and plants become more susceptible to root rot the colder you go. Below freezing, plants will die.

As is typical with most indoor plants, more humidity is better. Coleus transpire a lot, and they'll lose water a lot faster to dry air than they will to humid air. Humidity is particularly a big deal for cuttings.

Good quality soil mix kept evenly moist and not soggy that's well drained with lots of organic material works best. It's suggested to fertilize coleus monthly or use a time released fertilizer if you prefer. It's important to note that using more fertilizer does not equate to a nicer looking coleus. Since they take a lot of water, the use of soil moisture crystals in the soil is recommended. Avoid overhead watering if possible trying to get the water directly to the soil and not on the leaves. Coleus need to be pinched back from time to time, though the degree to which this is necessary varies somewhat among varieties. As day length shortens in the late summer and fall, plants will try very hard to flower: unless you're trying to get seeds, it's best to remove flower spikes as you see them.

It's also a fairly common occurrence for plants to throw out a shoot with different coloration than the rest of the plant. Many of these turn out to be stable (more or less), and frequently become new cultivars unto themselves, which may later throw off more sports in turn. I'm unsure what's responsible for this tendency.

Coleus never know what they're going to be asked to do when they go to a new place. Depending on the situation, their job could be to trail in a hanging basket or as a ground cover, grow as a standard with a straight stem and a ball of shaped foliage at the top, fill in a small bare spot behind a more important plant, or serve as the focal point in a group planting. And, yes, coleus are capable of doing all of these things! Whatever you want a coleus to look like and do, a capable variety probably exists. Get out there and experiment.

Landscape Workshop Offered

GARDEN DESIGN WORKSHOP presents the opportunity to develop a unique plan for your own garden with the best professional designers in Anchorage.

The Workshop consists of two inspirational lecture-style classes on Tuesday, March 30th 6:30 to 8:30pm, and April 6th 6:30 to 8:30pm, and a one-on-one design session on Saturday, April 10th 10-12am or 1-3pm. (Different times are also available according to individual preference.)

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

For reservation and additional information please contact Laura Minski at phone number 222-2859 or at email address lminski@corvus-design.com

Garden Event Calendar

March 1

Sutton's Nursery on Tudor Road, opens for season

March 11

Wildflower Garden Club Meeting; Pruning Apple Trees, Dan Elliot - 10:00 a.m., Central Lutheran Church, 15th & Cordova

March 16-17

UAF/CES Sustainable Agriculture Conference and Organic Growers School, Fairbanks. Workshop for home gardeners to commercial growers. Energy-efficient greenhouses, wind machines, season extensions, soil fertility, weed suppression, and community supported agriculture. Agenda and registration form on UAF/CES website <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/>

March 20

"Seed Swap & Garden Talks in Palmer" - Noon to 5 pm; Sponsored by The Garden Gate & The Red Beet Bistro, Dahlia Street Market Building, 320 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer (from Susan Miller's latest Garden Gate email)

March 20

Alaska Rock Garden Society - Anchorage Two Part Meeting. Part 1. Amelia Walsh will show her short program she presented at the NARGS Winter Study Weekend in 2009. Part 2. Jaime Rodriguez will present "Hardy Low Rock Garden Plants of the Genera *Synthris* and *Veronica*" Anchorage UAA Rasmussen Bldg. (Formerly the Business Admin Bldg. It's the green & gray 3-story bldg.) <http://www.args.org/>

April 1

Anchorage Garden Club Meeting; Ornamental Grasses, Christine Bingham 7:00 pm, Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle, AGC hotline: 566-0539

April 3

Spring Garden Day, Sears Mall

April 5

Alaska Native Plant Society Meeting; A Historic Perspective on the Life and Legacy of Carl Linnaeus, Beth Baker; 7:30 pm, Campbell Creek Science Center

April 8

Wildflower Garden Club Meeting; Hardy Roses for Anchorage, Debbie Hinchey, 10:00 a.m., Central Lutheran Church, 15th & Cordova

April 15

Fritz Creek Gardens, Homer - season opening

April 17

Alaska Rock Garden Society - Valley Meeting - Native Rock Garden Plants of Healy, Alaska, Verna Pratt 2 pm, MTA Building, Palmer <http://www.args.org/>

If your garden club or association has events to list, please submit the specifics to:

AMGA@ALASKA.NET to be included in the monthly newsletter.

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@ALASKA.NET [new email address]

AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org

(The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

To send concerns or information to the AMGA directly, mail to:

AMGA

P.O. Box 221403

Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

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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LAST CHANCE:
If you haven't paid your 2010 AMGA dues, this will be your last newsletter. We'll miss you....



"Vegetables in Containers", the topic of the next AMGA meeting, March 15th, with Annie Nevaldine. See Master Gardener Focus, Annie Nevaldine on page 3.
Photo: Jane Baldwin's celery growing in coffee cans painted red.

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

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