



Anchorage Chapter



Volume 12, Issue 11

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER November 2010



Message From Jane

Time flies when you're havin' fun... November. Whoosh. It's almost turkey-bird time. The last week of October and incredibly no snow yet; the grass is still green, and a few isolated flowers surviving the freezing nights. This year the Autumn Joy sedum had enough season to color up nicely. I recently spotted fall blooming crocus in another's garden. In mine I even have a couple of Primula auricula who might foolishly be thinking it's spring. Of course good gardeners that we are we're ready for the delayed but inevitable winter: beds mulched if you're so inclined, hoses in, tools away, terra cotta pots emptied, tender perennials pruned and inside for over wintering, anti-moose tactical measures employed (cages, temporary & bluff fencing, plantskydd, pinwheels, etc.). Now we wait for the white stuff to transform our yards into winter wonderlands (and safeguard our perennials!) And meanwhile, here are a few things for our members to look forward to:

Member Interest Survey - The AMGAA Board is looking forward to input from our members - such surveys give you an opportunity to tell us what you want and what you like about YOUR association and what your particular volunteer interests are.

AMGAA November Meeting (11/15). Summer 2010 - MGs share the BEST and WORST. Come prepared to share- if you have pictures bring them. If you have digital pictures, check with Julie Riley (CES 786-6300) ahead of time to see what the options might be for showing them.

Nominations for AMGAA's Board of Directors will be accepted by email November 7-20, 2011. You are invited to self-nominate or to nominate another person (with their permission). Send nominations by email to Gina Docherty, Chair of the Nomination Committee <amga@alaska.net> or in writing to AMGAA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage AK 99522. Nominations will also be accepted at the November 15th AMGAA monthly meeting. Qualifications for serving on the Board of Directors include:
--Current paid membership as a voting member;
--Ability to participate in Board meetings which are regularly scheduled monthly meetings September through May, with specially called meetings as may be necessary to conduct Board business.
--willingness to complete agreed upon tasks on time and to report progress at each meeting.

Membership renewal is due December 31st. Renew by completing and returning the membership form that will be included in the December newsletter or by responding to the e-renewal notice with online payment coming about the first of December, or by downloading the membership/renewal form from the MG website.

Election to fill 4 two-year Board positions will be conducted electronically in early January, 2011 with newly elected Board members announced at the annual meeting on January 17, 2011. E-ballots will be emailed to the MG voting membership. Voting members without email will receive paper copies of the e-ballot to complete and return by mail. Over 70% of the voting membership voted in last year's election - the first year elections were conducted using an electronic balloting procedure. This compares to the 11-14% of the voting membership that typically voted in person when elections were held at the annual meeting.

The Advanced Master Gardener Training course on Soils starts next week and runs 4 Tuesdays in November.

Tanana Valley Master Gardener Conference: March 25-26, 2011, at the Wedgewood Resort Fairbanks Alaska. Speakers, workshops, and vendors. Get all the latest on perennials, dirt, and using what we have for our gardens and landscaping. Open to interested gardeners, and Master Gardeners statewide. Check TVMG website after November 1st for the brochure with agenda and registration. <http://interiormastergardeners.org/>

Alaska Botanical Garden's 5th Annual Spring Garden Conference: March 12, 2011. Keynote Speaker will be Roger Swain, known as "the man with the suspenders", noted for hosting the television show, The Victory Garden on PBS. <http://www.alaskabg.org/>

Association Status on October 25, 2010

Membership: 275
Deposits: \$0
Expenses: - \$196.03
Checking balance 10/25/10 - \$2,123.67

The financial report for AMGAA's savings account and CD reserves will be included in an annual financial report presented at the annual membership meeting in January 2011.

Healthy Foods from Your Own Back Yard

By Mary Rydesky

In my growing up years, a movie called *The Graduate* had a famous dialog oft repeated by fans. "Plastics" was the career tip offered as advice to the new grad by an established person in business. When October's presentation on Healthy Foods From Your Yard zeroed in on plants, speaker Leslie Shallcross said, simply this: KALE. Now kale has replaced 'plastics' in my mind as the word to remember!

Sure, kale is nutritious. It is pretty in the garden and its varieties are versatile. Lacinato ('dinosaur'), Scotch & Russian are three we often see. But cook with this member of the cabbage family? Now that seemed reserved for the intrepid!

Leslie prepared a salad and served the MGs, winning hearts and converting the doubters. Try this at home (and if you want to speed the processing, plump the currants in the microwave instead of steeping overnight).

Leslie's Favorite Kale Salad with Currants, Pinenuts, and Parmesan (also found at epicurious.com):

2 tablespoons dried currants, 7 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar, divided; 1 tablespoon unseasoned rice vinegar, 1 tablespoon honey, 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, 2 bunches Tuscan kale (about 1 pound), center ribs and stems removed, leaves thinly sliced crosswise, 2 tablespoons pine nuts, lightly toasted, Parmesan cheese shavings.

Place currants in small bowl; add 5 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar. Let soak overnight. Drain currants. Whisk remaining 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar, rice vinegar, honey, oil, and salt in large bowl. Add kale, currants, and pine nuts (lightly toasted in olive oil); toss to coat. Let marinate 20 minutes at room temperature, tossing occasionally. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle cheese shavings over salad and serve.

My courage bolstered, I returned to the garden after a light frost, with a knife in hand, cutting two kale with determination. Off with their stalks! Soon the leaves were chopped and ready to sauté in a bit of olive oil in which fresh garlic had been added. In went the kale and two small shredded apples - the last ones from a local orchard's sale, I think. This cooked for nearly 10 minutes due to the quantity - a smaller batch would have been ready sooner. Seasoned with salt and pepper, this dish won rave reviews. Now, picture what you could do with a light sprinkling of candied pecans, or the addition of a pear in place of the apple....

Looking forward to next year's garden, I knew to review the facts before I opened a single catalog bearing enticing photographs. Here is the rap on kale: Kale or borecole (from the Dutch for farmers cabbage) is a form of cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* Acephala Group), green or purple, in which the central leaves do not form a head. It is considered to be closer to wild cabbage than most domesticated forms.

Searching the term, 'growing Kale' in Google will provide copious information. One article, offered by vegetablegardeningonline.com, described my experience with growing kale in a window box, noting that a planter 8 inches wide and 8 inches deep is sufficient for this plant. They note that waiting to harvest kale until after the first frost sweetens the flavor - exactly my findings!

Fall Bulb Survey

By Fran Durner

Did you know that in the language of flowers, even bulbs have certain meaning? During Victorian times, it was all the rage to exchange posies with hidden messages, just by choosing certain flowers for your bouquet.

Here are some translations. If you research your favorite flowers online, depending on the source, you may find contradictions in meanings.

-Crocus: Youthful gladness, cheerfulness, mirth. The crocus also invokes foresight and is a symbol of renewal.
-Daffodil: Deceitful hope, unrequited love, rebirth, chivalry. A single daffodil can invoke misfortune. Several can mean joy and happiness.
-Fritillaria: Persecution
-Hyacinth: Depending on the color - faith, sorrow, sincerity, constancy, jealousy or play.
-Iris: Purity, passion, faith, inspiration, hope, wisdom. Iris was the Greek goddess of the rainbow
-Tulip: Boldness and love. The first tulip was brought to Europe from Turkey. A red tulip is said to symbolize perfect love. Yellow tulips symbolize a hopeless or unrequited love and variegated tulips are for beautiful eyes.

Some bulbs, such as allium, don't appear to have a meaning attached to them. Can't you just imagine what the message might be if you received a bouquet of the flowers of an onion?! You stink?!!!!

Here Are The Numbers:

--Of the 118 members on the AMGAA Google Group email list, 19 responded to the query. A total of 3941 bulbs were planted averaging almost 208 bulbs per person. Wow.

--Instead of planting new bulbs this fall, two MGs dug up bulbs that had multiplied, and divided and replanted them.

--Two MGs planted bulbs in pots: one sunk the pots in the ground outside and the other plans to force them indoors.

--One MG found that alliums have worked to keep moose out of her bergenia patch and is planting more alliums around the garden to further test their repellent properties - she'll keep us posted!

Daffodils won the "most popular" award with 1394 bulbs planted. Species, cultivars and varieties included: *Narcissus obvallaris*, *odorus flore pleno* (plenus), 'Gold Ducat', 'Manly', 'King Alfred', 'Barrett Browning', 'Tête-à-tête', 'Ice Follies', 'Salome', 'Mount Hood', 'St. Patrick's Day', 'Red Devon', 'Fragrant Rose', 'Sr. Winston Churchill', 'Tahiti' and Spectrum Fragrant Mix.

Tulips were a close runner-up with 1112 bulbs planted. Cultivars and varieties were 'Darwin Mixed hybrid', 'Kaufmanniana', 'Princess Irene', 'Couleur Cardinal', 'Red Apeldoorn', 'Angelique', 'Daydream', 'Marit', 'Purple Dream', 'Spring Green', 'Flaming Spring Green', 'Flaming Parrot', 'Professor Rontgen', 'Uncle Tom', 'Ice Stick' and 'Ice Cream'.

Crocus came in a far third at 430 bulbs. 'Romance', 'RUBY Giant', 'Cream Beauty' and no name mixed colors went into the ground.

Continued on page 4

Master Gardener Focus: Jo Anne Banta By Cheryl Chapman



The ground finally thawed enough on a recent afternoon for Jo Anne Banta to put in a riot of tulips to soften the black iron anchor pinning down the southeast front flowerbed, though it took vigorous whacking with a trowel. The anchor is a cherished relic of the Bantas' 40 years of Cordova herring before the Exxon Valdez sent that fishery into history.

"We struggled for five more years," says Jo Anne, "but then sold the seiner and moved to Anchorage to be closer to the grand-

children." There are 10; nine are boys.

The Bantas have lived and gardened in their gray house with its crisp white trim for a decade in South Anchorage, creating a flower-filled silk purse from a lot that backs up to the noisy New Seward Highway and is the sluice for runoff from hills rising to the east.

But Jo Anne doesn't require Eden ready-made. She grew up on a ranch in western North Dakota, "30 miles from noplac in any direction," she recalls. "If you wanted vegetables, you had to grow them, and when I was just a little thing my aunt would have me walk barefoot down the rows, tamping in the seeds. No flowers. We had to eat."

It was dryland farming in a place dampened by only 17 inches of average precipitation annually, "and then I moved to Cordova, Alaska, with a 2-year-old, to teach English and home economics, a place where it could rain up to 200 inches a year," she says.

She and Bud met and married, "and I taught and we fished and raised rhubarb and raspberries and slugs. We did well with slugs." Also chickens, though they had to be penned with protective wire over the cage tops. Cordova's eagles liked chickens, too.

Cordova's climate is slightly milder than that of Anchorage (which, like North Dakota, has only about 17 inches of precipitation annually), thanks to the warm Japan Current that sets in close to the shore of Orca Inlet. Pods of orcas cruise the inlet, a whale-way from the Gulf of Alaska to Prince William Sound.

"(Master Gardener) Dana Klinkhart was in my very first home ec class in Cordova as a senior, and we've been friends ever since," says Jo Anne. Indeed, Dana and husband Ed live just to the southeast of the Bantas.

"We seem to fight more pests here than in Cordova," Jo

Anne says. "The winters seem to be getting warmer and that may have something to do with it, but this is the first year we've had currants here off our bush, the imported currant worms have been so bad, and delphinium defoliators can strip a bed overnight."

The leading edge of the wave of giant black slugs - giant meaning up to 8 inches long, stretched -- has not reached Anchorage, though they are a trial and a misery in Cordova. The Bantas lived next to the ocean, and friends brought her one in a 2-pound coffee can to identify. "It was so humped up I thought it was a mouse," she says. The black Arion slug seems to have originated in Northern Europe and is sliming its way north from the Pacific Northwest. As temperatures drop, the slugs get darker. When one of the creatures is touched or picked up, it sucks itself into a ball and starts rocking back and forth, possibly slug body language for "Beat it, creep." They are omnivorous: They go after everything from dog doo-doo to prize roses. And they are of dubious moral fiber even for slugs, pursuing illicit liaisons with the Spanish slug, *Arion vulgaris*, to produce progeny more resistant to cold.

"The high school problem-solving team took on the black slug as a project, and they passed out paper bags for slug collection," Jo Anne says. "It turned out that the only way to get rid of them was to take them to the city burn pit."

"I would set out circles overnight cut out of black tarpaper and in the mornings, turn them over and hit the slugs underneath with ammonia and water. Where we lived we had the small pink or black slugs, and I'd get a hundred every morning. Here, I'll get around 25."

Now, Cordova is grappling with a new menace, the so-called "cheetah slug," so named because it slip-slides away in a wink.

One of Jo Anne's favorite peonies, an antique peony, came with her from her Cordova home. "I was given it by a dear, dear old lady who used to be a hooker in old Katalla," she says. "Her father sold her when she was 12 years old to a prospector, and she often said, 'Everybody else drank and smoked, and I just gardened.'"

Katalla's a ghost town now about 47 miles southeast of Cordova, but in the early 1900s it was a rompin', stompin' oilfield burg, site of Alaska's first oil strike. The gardener married a metal worker there, and they dug up her plants and moved to a hillside above Cordova. She gave Jo Anne the peony, a dark-wine beauty, and honeysuckle, which promptly succumbed in the salt ocean winds.

Dana helped her get her garden here started with marigolds, the old *Tagetes tenuifolia* "Lulu," now called Lemon Gems. "The first thing I did here was start gardening," Jo Anne says. "The first year also was the breast cancer. The next year I signed up for the Master Gardener class to get back to reality."

Continued on page 6

Bulb Survey cont. from page 2

Chionodoxa: 280 bulbs of forbesii, 'Gigantea White' and 'Pink Giant'.

Allium: 234 bulbs of atropurpureum, ostrowskianum, christophii, moly, 'Globemaster', 'Purple Sensation', 'Gladiator' and 'Mount Everest'.

Iris reticulata: 154 - Not a bulb but we'll count them here anyway. 'Harmony', 'Katherine Hodgkins', 'J.S. Dijit' and 'Joyce' were planted.

Scilla: 115 siberica and campanulata mixed and 'Excelsior'.

Frittilaria: 57 meleagris and michailovskyi - keep an eye on those.

Muscari armeniacum: 60. Also known as grape hyacinth. I'm surprised more are not planted as they naturalize well and are long lasting.

Crocsmia: 40 'Lucifer'. Not considered hardy here but we'll count 'em anyway and check on them next year to see if they made it through the winter.

Erythronium: 25 'Pagoda'. I predict these will become much more popular!

Leucojum: 25 'Gravetye Giant'. They look something like a very tall snowdrop.

Bellevalia pycnantha: 15. Formerly called Muscari pycnantha, it was reclassified into a different genus.

Neighborhood demographics:

Lower and mid Hillside planted an astounding 1854 bulbs. Perhaps, with extended snow cover at their elevation, spring bulbs have immediate impact and importance.

Girdwood planted 880 bulbs.

Northwest Anchorage, 555.

East Anchorage, 471.

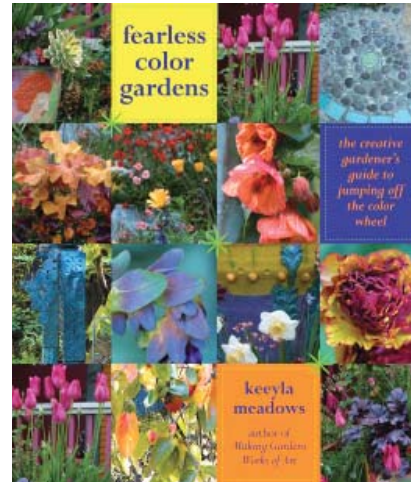
South Anchorage, 386.

A big thanks to everyone who participated in this informal and very unscientific survey on spring flowering bulbs planted during the fall. I'm sure that more bulbs than noted were actually planted by MGs especially with the extended and unseasonably warm weather we have experienced. However - we are all winners for getting these bulbs planted - no matter how anyone cares to project or extrapolate the numbers!



Fearless Color Gardens: The creative gardener's guide to jumping off the color wheel

by Keelya Meadows. (Timber Press, hardcover, \$27.95)



Book Review by Fran Durner

Looking out my window at the seasonal drabness of my backyard, I want to surround myself with the pages of this book that are bursting with a cacophony of saturated colors and leap into the photos of gardens and artwork that the author has designed. I am really needy for color right now.

Fearless is the best way to describe Meadows' uninhibited rainbow approach to gardening and with this book she'll show you how to fearlessly get in touch with your inner color palette as well. You'll meet her muse, "Emerald," who helped guide her on her own personal journey.

Meadows urges you to think outside the box, shake yourself up, even get downright playful, as you try different ways to approach color in your garden. Her method is to get physical: Instead of offering tips, she sets out assignments for you to tackle with "Try This:" suggestions throughout the book.

Exercises such as keeping a journal to draw, paint and write about the colors you like and dislike are important to unveiling your true colors. How do you respond to certain shades and tones emotionally and physically - is pale green a calm color for you or does a certain shade of yellow give you a headache? Write poetry, go to a museum and look at artwork - whatever it takes to discover how you truly feel about the colors in your garden.

Meadows introduces you to the color wheel, although in her case it comes as a color triangle festooned with blossoms. She suggests making bouquets of flowers from one color spectrum or filling a plate with similar colored foods as a way to see the different shade possibilities of one color.

A section on hardscape shows how Meadows incorporates colors in ways you may never have considered before and she tells you how she makes some of her favorite pieces.

The book is also sprinkled with stories from Meadows' childhood - stories about her parents, brothers, grandfather and uncle and how they all contributed to the colorful artistic journey Meadows has been experiencing. The book is an open and intimate peek into the creative process of this extraordinary gardener and artist and her willingness to share it all with you.



**Central Peninsula
Master Gardener News
By Rosemary Kimball**

Snow is certainly coming down here---some day. October has been quite a month with temperatures in the mid-40s many days.

Mind you, I'm just remarking, not complaining. It makes it easy to gather moss for Christmas wreaths. I used reindeer moss behind shiny balls last year and it really perked up the wreath. I also cut mountain ash berries for the wreaths this year.

I asked around to find out what's happening down here and it isn't much. No catalogs yet and someone said "bare ground". That bare ground isn't in my garden, that's for sure. The height of the weeds shows me where the areas of highest fertility are. The rows of strawberries are somewhere under them and next year they will get a dose of Ornamec, that grass-specific herbicide and no tilling to dig up more poa annua seeds!

It was such a cool summer that many things just didn't do well. A friend complained she only got two zucchini this year and last year she was looking for unlocked cars. Some people had carrots that did well, others didn't really get any. Ditto beets, cabbage, whatever.

My crop of sea buckthorn berries did very well. Since we needed to lower one of the trees, we just cut out the branches, tossed them in the freezer and the berries came off without squooshing. At some time in my life, I know not when, I got the cutest little garden gadget--an orange nylon pouch on a metal ring and with a leather strip with three holes in it. I finally figured out what to do with it. I slipped my fingers in the three holes, picked the fruit and the pouch caught the berries. I tried to find more but even with the brand name, I couldn't find it on the internet. The currants all got picked and not by me. That's what friends are for. The birds got my four-cherry crop. The quince set one fruit that didn't want to live.

I monitored soil temperatures in the greenhouse growing bed and in the tomato pots over the summer. I was planning to get rid of the center bed and just do pots. I found that when it was cloudy and cool the center bed soil was several degrees warmer because of the mass but when the sun deigned to shine the pots were warmer because of the lack of mass so I guess I'll just maintain the status quo.

The banties are ensconced in the greenhouse for the winter along with a friend's chicken. To our surprise one night, the remaining guinea (the female got "hawked") was in there too! I guess he got tired of ducks and ducked out of the lower garden's coop.

I am having even more fun with the electronic fly swatter. I brought my worm composter in from the greenhouse to the laundry room and of course it had its quota of those wee flies about 1/8 inch long. Raise the lid and out they fly--zap zap zap. The swatter would make a wonderful gift for 10-year-old kids, husbands and old ladies. What's really fun is getting three or 4 "snaps" when you were just aiming at one fly.

It doesn't take much to amuse us in Sterling, does it?

**Garden Haiku
from MG Botany Class
(Taught by Ashley Grant, UAF
Cooperative Extension Service)**

Sun, rain, bright colors
Soil, rocks, make things work together
Pretty flowers grow.
Marge Quick

Flowers bloom all summer
Vegetables that fill my freezer
Fighting weeds till Fall.
Joyce Stenberg

It's lush, green, alive
And a place where I can go
To change and be changed.
Ellen Farrell

Wild green mounds spilling
Outside lines of wood and rocks
Color carousing.
Karen Leis

Put my hands in Earth
To grow my own food for Life
know from where it came.
Nicholette Gross

Challenging garden
Flowers, weeds, flowers or weeds
Which of these will win.
Patty Deren

Connecting ages
Ancestor's food and color
Dreaming and breathing.
Martna Steinmetz

Open space that frees
the mind and spirit. Colors
in soft harmony.
Margaret Klatt

Moose in my garden
Destroy my beauty and food.
I'll shoot them later.
Liesa Crowley

To nourish the Earth
Because it nourishes me
I give what I take.
Nicholette Gross

Gardening Song . . .

I'm a gardener and I'm OK
I sleep all night and I plant all day!
I dress in grubby clothing, and hang around with slugs.
Oh I'm happy in the garden
With dirt and plants and bugs . . .
(to the tune of Monty Python's "I'm a Lumberjack")



Bird Chatter

-- The Anchorage District CES office has moved! The new address is 1675 C Street. Located between A Street and C Street, the office has easy access, good parking and its own classroom.

-- AMGAA Board of Directors meetings will currently be held the second Monday of the month from 11:30-1:00 in the new CES conference room.

-- MG Barbara Baker sighted a black bear in one of her birch trees. You'd think he would have looked for an apple or cherry tree to climb.

-- From a greeting card, quote by Marcel Proust: "Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the CHARMING GARDENERS who make our souls blossom".

-- Does anyone have comments on the potato varieties they grew this summer? Those available from the CES office included 'Red Chief', 'Red Chief', 'Allagash' and 'Cal White'?

-- Found while moving the horticulture agent's office—a packet of seed *Gomphocarpus physocarpus*, common name Hairy balls, a species of milkweed native to south-east Africa.

-- Did you notice that Safer had changed the name on its insecticidal soap? The spray bottle now says 'Insect Killing Soap'. Twenty plus years and the public must still have thought the product contained an insecticide mixed with soap.

-- Also found on the garden center shelves, a VEGETARIAN fertilizer (5-2-2) by Grow More Research Farms. It contained cottonseed meal, kelp meal, calcium rock phosphate, alfalfa meal and no sewage sludge.

-- Noted on Craigslist—someone selling Preannual Daisy Plants.

-- Porcupines in the garden? Don't be so hard on them. Judy Christianson thinks they're lonely. Why? They whimper.

-- Ideas on what to do with your slugs: feed them to Dolly Varden (Robbie Frankevich), put them down the garbage disposal (Gina Docherty), cut them in half with a butter knife (Shane Docherty).

-- Halloween is over. Did Sue Lincoln get out her slug costume?

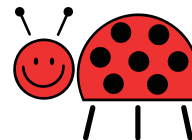
-- If you've been driving to CES's Northern Lights address for 25 years, remember not to go down that path again when you come to the monthly AMGAA meeting.

-- Lilac lovers beware! A quote from the original Batman TV series:

Batman: "Man-eating lilacs have no teeth, Robin. It's a process of ingestion through their tentacles."
Lilacs have tentacles??? Maybe in the comics...

Lovely Ladybugs

The following facts were taken from a display in the 4-H Building at the Alaska State Fair last month. Thanks to Kenai 4-Her Nicholas McConnell.



-A ladybug cannot chew up and down like people do. They chew from side to side.

-When a bug eats another bug it eats its head and flight muscles first because a they are packed with protein

-The spots on a ladybug fade as the ladybug gets older.

MG Focus: Jo Anne Banta cont. from page 3

Husband Bud grew up in Hawaii, and the Bantas spend deep winter months in their condo on the Big Island. This past year, Jo Anne completed a Master Gardener container gardening course there. "I grow hibiscus and herbs in pots, but the condo is too sunny for me to do orchids," she says. "Push a seed in and it grows: Plants love the climate. This winter I'll try tomatoes."

Her summer tomato crop was a success, tomato success being relative in Anchorage. Master Gardener Mary Shier started her off. "If you're going to grow tomatoes, you need a 5-gallon bucket, at least," says Jo Anne. "I left mine in a smaller pot and kept the pot in the garden cart. Every day, I'd chase the sun with that cart."

She and Bud grow big containers of salad greens out front, and root vegetables, plus raspberries and strawberries flanking a city ditch spanned by a wooden arch bridge to a wishing well. This year, inspired by Edward C. Smith's book "Incredible Vegetables From Self-Watering Containers," they planted Nantes coreless carrots and cherry belle radishes in modified blue totes. "Those carrots had the longest roots I've ever seen," she says. "The carrot itself would end, but the roots kept on going." She tried seed tape but won't again: "There were spaces where the seed didn't germinate, and when you're growing in a tote, you can't afford to have bare spots."

The Bantas started their lush, park-like plantings with what Jo Anne says is Step 1: A soil test. In Anchorage, soil trends toward the acidic; in North Dakota, it was alkaline; in Cordova, it was purely acid. Neighborly gardening advice and swapped plants bring riches as well, she says: Step 2. And for Step 3, she says, the Cooperative Extension Service can hardly be matched with its wealth of help and information for the asking.

Inside the Banta home, she and Bud are setting up a grow light for the first time, installing a black-and-white file counter beneath an initial pot of dainty Irish ivy from Anne Morrow Lindbergh's garden, and a splashy purple painted shamrock, *Oxalis triangularis*, whose 4-inch leaves surge from wee white tubers.

Outside, she's pulled up the annuals and put the tuberous begonias to bed in the garage but is leaving the tall perennial stalks and seedheads. "I love the perennials with the snow on them," she says. "They're a part of winter."

Roots: Where Nursery Stock and Planting Begin By Fran Durner

Six Anchorage MGs met in October to carpool to the Valley for a training workshop on bare root trees.

Presented by Jim Flott, Urban Forester for the City of Spokane, the mantra of the day was, "Plant roots, not trees."



Jim Flott demonstrates soaking and washing tree roots as MGs Debbie Hinchey, right and Cheryl Chapman, 2nd right, watch.

Flott showed a unique system where bare root trees are placed in an irrigated bed of gravel in early spring and can be held there for months until they are ready to be planted during the summer. The trees continue to grow fibrous roots and the roots are not damaged much

when pulled from the gravel before planting. The trees can be pulled and planted even when in full leaf without injury to the tree.

Some of the advantages of bare root trees are:

- No weed seed or invasives transported in the soil.
- No topsoil to weigh it down.
- More roots are revealed allowing for condition inventory
- Cheaper shipping costs.
- Can buy more trees for the money.
- Root collar is revealed so trees can be planted properly.
- Less back injuries during planting.

Flott also gave an eye-opening live demonstration on what to do when you buy a tree in a pot or balled and wrapped in burlap. Often the trees are planted too deep in the soil and therefore can be improperly replanted. Root washing - soaking the root ball in water and washing all the dirt away - will reveal the condition and even the amount of roots on the tree and also reveal the root collar. It's possible then to root prune and cut off any girdling roots and any roots growing up the trunk of the tree above the collar which you don't want either.

Next the root washed tree was planted. This was also an eye-opening demonstration. A very wide and very shallow hole, barely inches deep, was dug. The roots were spread out as horizontally as possible and then just covered with the soil to where the root flare meets the collar of the tree. The tree was braced by a stake attached with old stockings mysteriously supplied by one of the MGs. (I won't say who!)

Flott stressed that trees should be staked for as short a time as possible - just enough time for new roots to grow and anchor the tree.

This was a really worthy workshop that presented great information to the participants. It definitely changed my mind about what to be looking for in trees (and shrubs) to plant in the future.

Garden Event Calendar

November 2, 9, 16 & 23

AMGAA Advanced Master Gardener Training Course (Soils & Soil Amendments) - 11 am to 2 pm; CES, 1675 C Street, Suite 100.

November 4, 2010

Anchorage Garden Club, Program: Flutterbys - A program on the butterflies of Alaska - 7 pm, Pioneer Schoolhouse, 437 E. 3rd Ave; 566-0539.

November 7, 2010

Daylight Savings time ends, 2 a.m, Sunday, November 7th. Set your clocks back!

November 11, 2010

Wildflower Garden Club - Program: Growing Veggies in Containers, Annie Nevalidine 10 am, Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova Street (15th & Cordova);

November 18, 2010

Alaska Master Gardeners Association Anchorage - Program: Gardens 2010 - MGs Share the Best and the Worst of the past summer. 7 pm, CES, 1675 C Street, Suite 100;

November 19-20, 2010

Anchorage Garden Club 50th Annual Holiday Flower Show, Wells Fargo Bank, 301 W. Northern Lights Blvd. See show brochure "A Retrospective to the 1960s" for show hours, rules and categories for entering. <http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchorageclub.htm> 566-0539



Happy Thanksgiving
from Anchorage TREErific!



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

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

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For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:
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Inside this issue....

Message From Jane
Healthy Food From Your Own Back Yard
Fall Bulb Survey
Master Gardener Focus: Jo Anne Banta
Book Review: "Fearless Color Gardens.."
Central Peninsula MG News
Garden Haiku from the MG Botany Class
Bird Chatter
Roots: Where Nursery Stock and Planting Begin
Garden Event Calendar



Spring flowering *Fritillaria meleagris* and *Muscari latifolium*. Photo by Fran Durner
See the results of Fran's Fall Bulb Survey on page 2.

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