



Anchorage Chapter



Volume 14, Issue 1

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER January 2012



Message from Jane

HAPPY 25th BIRTHDAY in 2012 TO AMGAA!

Here's hoping that your Christmas was filled with peace and the sentiments of the season and that you are all ready to move right along into 2012, in fact an auspicious New Year to come: AMGAA will celebrate its 25th anniversary on December 15, 2012! The original Bylaws were signed, formally establishing AMGA on December 15, 1987. Here's to endings, new beginnings and continuity, and all of you MG volunteers that make this association work.

It's the time to kick back by the fire while our winter weather rages on and reflect a bit on last season's gardening happenings. Perhaps even tip a toast to longer days ahead, peruse the seed catalogs and dream a little of what the new gardening season will bring.

In November, my backyard looked like a winter lollipop land with all of my pinwheels in place to keep the 1,200 lb moose from walking through my soft garden soil. December's freaky weather and wind (hurricane force in some parts of the Anchorage Bowl) turned Anchorage into a messy vista of fallen trees, birch twigs, spruce cones, parts of spruce branches, shingles, orphaned garbage cans, even mangled trampolines and a few other odd UFOs. Lots of folks lost power and many lost trees. I didn't lose any trees, but nervously watched several of my 60-65' spruce trees whip around, wondering when they would topple or whether they would take out my roof or my neighbor's if they went.

It's also time to make your gardening resolutions for the New Year. It's best to make them reasonable and not a list of tedious chores; you will have a better chance at keeping them.

This year my resolutions are more specific instead of wishy-washy things, like weed better, plant more, etc. I might actually have a chance at accomplishing some! Mine will include:

Use or give away the seeds I've saved and start seeds in a timely manner;

Do more soft tip propagating to make more plants instead of buying more;

Try two new and/or different or unusual veggies in containers;

Expend more effort getting to know my garden's beneficial critters;

Take care of the soil first since it is the number one factor impacting a plants;

Always try to minimize or eliminate negative impacts on the environment in any gardening choices I make; and look out my windows more this winter and see the beauty of the winter landscape instead of moaning about the cold and dark.

It's too late for this issue of the newsletter, but I'll bet we can talk Gina into featuring some New Year's resolutions in the February newsletter if you will send them to her (amga@alaska.net).

With the upcoming January Board elections, it is also time to pass the garden trowel on. I want to thank all of you for your support during the past two years of serving as your Association's President and the past four years on the Board. Is this my farewell front page message feature? Maybe so, but I'm sure I can find some items to share in future newsletters. There is always something new to learn and share about the wonderful world of growing!

Reminder: 2012 dues are payable now. And, speaking of elections: Don't forget to vote! If you haven't received an electronic ballot or a hard copy version, call Judy Christianson - 344-6617. Election results will be announced at the January 16, 2012 Annual MG meeting. Come join us for the evening's program and snacks. See you a little further down the garden path. Jane

Treasurer's Report

Checking Bal 11/27/11	2375.62
paid out	319.91
deposits	40.00
Checking Bal 12/28/11	2095.71
Deposits into savings: renewals.donations	1840.00



Candidates for the 2012 Alaska Master Gardener Anchorage Board of Directors:

Barbara Baker



Barbara retired in 2007 and took the Master Gardener's class that year. She became active with the MG association by volunteering to serve as the Hospitality Chair and Volunteer Coordinator, especially for the Pioneer Home gardens. She recently added keeping the membership mailing list up to date to her duties. "The association is an amazing group of generous experts who love sharing their passion of gardening. I

am excited to help strengthen the association, however I can."

Kathy Monk



I have enjoyed my interactions with all of the Master Gardeners. I am a new Master Gardener, having taken the initial Master Gardener Class in 2010, and the Plant Physiology Advanced MG Class. I am single, have a BS in Natural Science from

UAA and an MBA from the University of Phoenix and use the education and experience to keep busy with accounting and database work. Besides gardening, I like to read in my downtime, which allows my two cats to take advantage of what they believe is my sole purpose in life - providing them a place to take a snooze.

I am not new to gardening, in that I was raised around both vegetable and flower gardens in Florida, but since I moved to Alaska 30 years ago, it has only been the last three year years that I have had the space to actually have a real garden here in Alaska. I am predominantly interested in fruits and vegetables, but do maintain a flower garden - just because I love being able to look out my front window and see it thrive throughout our spring and summer.

Lynne Opstad



Lynne has been gardening since her mother gave Lynne her own garden to weed. She spent 30 years in the air transportation industry in management and sales. Lynne became a Master Gardener in 2008 and an Advanced Master Gardener in 2011.

She is part owner of Garden Snaps LLC which produces the Garden Snaps Map and gardensnaps-map.com. Lynne likes to spend as much time as possible outdoors, loving the fresh air and serenity that nature brings us. She has volunteered at the Alaska Botanical Garden and helped with the Pioneer Home gardens. And even though she keeps saying "no more gardens" somehow they just keep appearing in her yard.

Jill Shepherd



After graduating in 1952 from Anchorage High School, I went to Fairbanks to attend college. I spent 27 years in the Interior, where I married and raised three children, lots of sled dog puppies and big vegetable gardens. Back in Anchorage in 1980 with a new bachelor's degree, I worked as a cub reporter for the Anchorage Times, then moved to Alaska magazine where I worked for 23 years as an editor/writer/photographer, retiring in 2004. My work took me all over the state, and I wrote several articles on gardening and agriculture.

One of the first things I noticed about Anchorage in the '80s was an abundance of flowers, but very few vegetables. So I enrolled in the Master Gardener program to learn about flower gardening. I got my certificate in 1984 and was a charter member of the Alaska Master Gardeners Association, doing a hitch as secretary. While I've never owned a plot of tillable land in Anchorage, I've found some place to garden every summer for the past 30 years. For example, I rented space at C Street Community gardens for a couple of years, borrowed space in other people's gardens, adopted a park, helped people garden, and filled my surroundings with containers of plants and vegetables.

Master Gardener Focus: Camille Williams by Cheryl Chapman



Could have been direct orders from Earth goddess Gaia or too much spicy food too close to bedtime that pulled Master Gardener Camille Williams out of a sound sleep more than a decade ago with a vision of a backyard filled with flowers instead of damp shade. And the woman whose motto is "Do it now" thought, "I need a chain saw."

Husband Barry went along, though the clerk at Costco put up a fight. It was, after all, Mother's Day, and the clerk did her best to nudge him to precious gems ("She's a pretty woman. She should get diamonds."), but Barry threw down the money, picked up his purchase, and said, "After 50, if they want them they get chain saws."

And Camille retired to her backyard and lopped away in pursuit of her dream vision, which came to her entire. Now there are 27 theme gardens and counting in the Williams' yard - among them the Japanese Garden, the Primula Garden, the Peony Garden, the Fern Garden, the Sunshine Garden for granddaughter Katie LaFever, the Monet Garden for Camille's mother, the first garden, which was the Frog Garden and its reflecting pool - all separated and linked by winding bark paths and matching rock edging muscled in by Katie and brother, Joshua.

"We built the moss garden new this year," Camille says. "It took about a week. I got a five-day collecting permit from Parks & Rec, took a little shovel and plastic bags into the woods, and harvested all different kinds of moss until I had as much as I needed."

"It took longer because I was careful not to leave footprints."

Until the snow stopped her, Camille was working on identifying exactly what she had in her new 14 x 22-foot moss plot. Where possible, she moved what the moss appeared to consider home directly into its new domicile, be it a single branch or a 300-pound chunk of concrete.

"This has been my favorite project," she says.

A new rock garden that mimics a glacier mountain stretches along the side out front, waiting for spring planting. "White flowers at the top will be snow, and there'll be blue spilling down, and meadow wildflowers all along each side," she says.

Camille was "born gardening" on a big ranch in Montana but diverted briefly to steamy Hilton Head, S.C., on an accounting assignment before heading "onward, upward and outward" to Alaska, "which I thought would be as different as I could get from the South."

She opened a successful accounting firm where she met Barry, her husband of almost 21 years, and eventually represented Mary Kay cosmetics as well, "because in my own business, I worked with all men." Camille enjoyed the ladies so much that she rolled the dice and opened a wedding service, Jackie O's Bridal Boutique, Jackie O's

Florist and BW Catering.

"I loved it," she says. "Each person was like painting a picture, each person was a princess. I brought out the princess, and when you think about it, gardens aren't that different. You've got to find the princess in your garden."

She retired from her businesses to garden in 2001 but that turned out to be a practice run for her real retirement in 2008, though in Camille's case, retirement seems to mean "Now I have time to learn and do new things." Today she's busier than ever with flowers and custom accent pieces for inside and out.

For the holidays, she created glorious themed Christmas trees: a blue Bon Voyage tree of silver, whales, parrots and butterflies; a gleaming red and white Santa tree; and a Barbie tree for a little girl with a dozen Barbie dolls, princess accessories and My Little Pony toys, every one of them removable for play. In the garage awaiting delivery were six holiday centerpieces for neighbors. "Always, I have fresh flowers everywhere," she says.

She's adapted to the shade remaining in her backyard. "No point in fighting it," she says. "I put a garden wherever I see the sun shine through, but other than that, I just go with the flow and embrace it. A lot of things do well in shade: Impatiens, pansies, maidenhair ferns, and there's a shade-loving forget-me-not. I also have 150 flower baskets that I move around to balance the composition when something's season is over. And I planted 2,000 tulip bulbs this year."

Most of her plants come from her own greenhouse but she has a hard time picking a No. 1. "My favorite flower is flower," she says. "But among them, I'd have to have Little Gem marigolds, which are fabulous - they bloom like a doggone shrub, and there's no deadheading - and lupines, and Rudbeckia and cream-colored Osteospermum, the African cape daisy, which flowers all summer long."

Herbs and vegetables make good flower neighbors, she's found. A 14-foot-plus stalk of her Angelica holds the state record, and her arrangements are regularly honored in competitions such as those at the Alaska State Fair, where this past year she won blue ribbons in every division she entered, including the Flowers-in-a-Basket grand championship for her lilies, chrysanthemums, Ligularia, foxgloves and tansy daisies.

She has been in the Anchorage Garden Club for years, and is an ardent Master Gardener and member of the Wildflower Garden Club.

"When you start gardening, you realize quickly how little you know and that you need to be around people who really like to garden so you can learn and grow," she says. "So many are humble and sharing, loving and caring and I love them with all my heart. There's not a one of them who couldn't call and ask me for anything."

Camille generously opens her gardens each year to share her dreams with other gardeners. "It's good to look," she says, "but my best advice to other gardeners is to garden with your heart. The experience will come later."

"Some people dream and that's as far as it goes. It's better to dream, and do it."

2012 AMGA Candidates cont. from page 2...

I also completed the Community Tree Steward course and have worked around town pruning and planting trees and shrubs. Garden photography is a hobby, and I've got a garden history book project on the back burner.

I would enjoy serving as a board member of AMGA and believe I could make a good contribution.

Cindy Walker



Cindy Walker became a Master Gardener in 2002 and is currently working on her Advanced Master Gardener status. Her first passion was annuals for the vibrant colors but has evolved to include perennials for their staying power. Next spring

will be the 3rd year at growing vegetables. Cindy was the operations manager for a stock brokerage firm. She has served many years as treasurer on boards in organizations where her two children were involved. Now that the kids are grown, she would love to volunteer her time on the master gardener board. She lives in Stuckagain Heights with her husband, moose and bears where she is trying to harmonize flora and fauna.

Daylight Hours and Sunrise/Sunset Tables for 2012 By Jane Baldwin

I've been pondering what duration of supplemental light I should be providing for optimum plant growth for my 'in-the-garage-winter-primula cuttings'. The object is to try to keep them on the same growth calendar as the perennials in my garden, flowering in June instead of January. This year, instead of setting my timer for the usual 12 on, 12 off period all winter long, I'm trying to more closely match the daylight hours to where the plants grow naturally. In the late fall I decreased the amount of light, and plan to increase the length of light as spring approaches. And, no I'm not paying attention to the fact that in the latitude/longitude where these plants grow naturally they are probably covered with snow and don't actually see the daylight during the winter months! Stay tuned.

Here's the website for the U. S. Naval Observatory. From this site you can compute tables for Daylight Duration and/or Sunrise/Sunset times for specific locations: <http://www.usno.navy.mil/USNO>

Click on 'Astronomical Applications' - then click Data Services "Duration of Daylight Table for One Year" and "Table of Sunrise/Sunset, Moonrise/Moonset", or "Twilight Times for an Entire Year". There are many fascinating computations to be made!

Gardening: Twelve Months of the Year By Jane Baldwin

January - February are for seed ordering.
March - April are for seed starting & tending.
May - June are for transplanting & jumping into growing.
July - August we water, weed & enjoy the fruits of our labors.

September is for seed gathering, harvesting, bringing in plants to over winter; starting our collection of leaves, cleaning and stacking pots for spring use, and planting spring bulbs.

In October we are collecting the final leaves, putting away the lawn mowers, hoses & garden tools, cutting back our gardens, putting our plants to bed with a layer of mulch and putting up our winter moose deterrents. November finds us tending to the plants we brought indoors in September, making notes of the past season before we forget all the reasons for our successes and failures; and we start the dreaming and scheming for next year's growing season.

December we're watching out our windows and feeling anxious without at least 15" of snow cover while the temperatures keep dropping, worrying about plant survival when there are winter thaws or the wind blows away the snow, but we're happy when we start receiving the first of the next year's seed catalogs.

Somewhere in December our attention is diverted a bit with Christmas, but while our plants sleep in dormancy, our minds begin to kick up their activity level and before you know it: it's January and time to start all over again! It is amazing that we get all these "do-over" opportunities for a really spectacular and successful summer grow.

As gardeners we do tend to reckon time by our gardening seasons. I'm wondering who said that our gardening season was only 3 months long!

Congratulations to the New 2011 MG Class Graduates!



Thirty new MGs completed the Master Gardener Class in December. Martha Shaddy will be taking her exam soon. We welcome all 30 new MGs and hope they will be attending AMGAA monthly programs and our summer garden tours in the coming months.

Tim Barr, Kim Burgess, Michael Burke, Rachel Christy, Ina Cloud, Stephanie Cone-Early, Mollie Crittenden, Bonnie Getter, Harry Deuber, Lorna Maresh, Pamela Eldridge, Jodie McPhie, Brittany Messman, Susan Moeller, Marya Morrow, Erik Ohm, Amy Reidell, Michael Reidell, Marilyn Roth, Carroll Samuelson, Melanie San Angelo, Martha Shaddy, Wanda Sutterer, Bob Taganahan, Joanne Thomas, Sheila Toomey, Dee Dee Van Vliet, Lisa Wharton, Dohnn Wood, Bill Yeagle.



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News By Rosemary Kimball

Turnaround day has come. Even if we started out with just a few seconds a day and working up to a few minutes at the end of this month the psychological benefit is there!

I believe in November I said nothing was happening down here on the gardening front. I said that again last month too. Guess what's happened this month? A little more than nothing, but not much. Turnaround day or not, rain, cold and snow do not make for active garden work.

MG Kathy Wartinbee is going through a computer crisis. She has catalogs here, catalogs there and my desktop computer with the all my gardening notes is broken. It's at the computer doctor getting fixed but I won't be able to pick it up for a week or so. When it gets back I'll be able to order some seeds. They usually get ordered now. As soon as my computer is fixed I can look at the notes I have stored in there as to what I want to grow this season. Then I can print out a planting chart on a calendar. A broken computer is a serious 'pain in the sit down'".

And she went on to say that "last year Margaret (Simon) grew some pineapple tomatillos and I got seeds from Tomato Growers (www.tomatogrowers.com). Have to figure out where to put them. The last time I tried tomatillos in the greenhouse they drew more aphids than the praying mantis cared to eat. OOO ... have to order some of those puppies too."

Janice Chumley, our resident bug scout, sent out a note about interviews for the new Cooperative Extension person which will be January 4 and 5. I'm looking forward to those. Also, in another note she sent, was information about a garden design class Brenda Adams is giving in Homer, which is a two-day, in-depth, how-to class. Registration is through the Katchemak Bay Campus of Kenai Peninsula College. If anyone is thinking about coming down from Anchorage, My house can be a halfway stop for continuing on the next day but you need to book in advance. The oldest woman gets the bed but I have two camp cots and two comfortable futons and lots of sleeping bags...

Barb Jewell writes from her daughter's house near Seattle that she's not thinking about gardening yet as she's on vacation looking at green grass and some leaves still on trees. But on the first of December she did plant some hyacinth bulbs in a pot that she found in the garage that had sprouted. They were overlooked when she planted bulbs last fall. They will make a nice table decoration for her later this winter. She will look at seed catalogs and snow when she gets back in January.

My neighbor, Mark White said. "The only thing that I've noticed is that there were 3 rabbits killed on the road between my place and Dad's so the population must be high to get killed on that short stretch (about an eighth

of a mile). I've also seen lots of tracks and right up to my doorstep. A hawk was on one and the ravens had the other 2 covered."

Also the moose sheared the corner clematis by Thanksgiving and they usually don't get to it until February. Either their tastes have changed or the forage is poor. Nothing in the garden sense". His corner clematis is protected by concrete reinforcing wire as the vine goes up the deck floor above so the moose can't get down and dirty and it keeps the plant in check.

Margaret Simon sent this: "Lady Bird Johnson said: 'Where flowers bloom so does hope.' As I look out my window, I'm not seeing much hope! The herbs in the Aerogarden are doing well but I don't really want them to bloom! Life's a contradiction. With Christmas behind us it's time to get out the seed catalogs and/or go online to order. We do have hope after all."

She has more than I.

Alaska's Louse-y Little Secret From Rosemary Kimball

Alaska's louse-y little secret: we have lots of *Pedicularis*, commonly known as lousewort (louse=pediculosus, wort=plant) The presence of the flowers in a field were thought to give lice to the sheep. That's been disproved but the name still stands. Hultén lists 22 kinds found in Alaska and the Yukon and I know of one in our yard/woods, *P. labradorica*, a rather blah perennial. A real cutey, though, is the woolly lousewort, *P. lanata*. While the pink flowers are in bud they look like a fur ball because they are covered by nice, warming, woolly hairs.

I found several references to the fact that the fleshy root is edible and starchy, and another reference that it was used as a tea, but no reference to it in Ann Garibaldi's "Medicinal Flora of the Alaska Natives". Seed sources are available--love Google!-- but somewhere I read that the plants are semi-parasitic on other's roots.

And one louse-y story: Once a year on Guam, we had a louse check of the students' hair. One of the girls from the Air Force base had the critters and was sent home until clean. Her mother was incensed! Her daughter did not have head lice, the base doctor said she had pediculosis. Thirty years later, I still laugh.





Bird Chatter

-- "If you don't have a poodle, you can get a cotoneaster"-- quip made by Patricia Joyner with Alaska Community Forestry, while teaching the trees and shrubs class for Master Gardener.

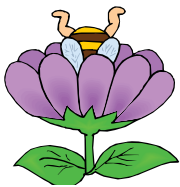
-- An abbreviated Alaska Ear appeared in the Anchorage Daily News on Sunday, Dec 11. Could it be that Sheila Toomey was studying for her Master Gardener exam instead of writing about political hijinks?

-- BOTANY TEAM Dana Klinkhart, Camille Williams, Kathy Tiede, JoAnne Banta, Amelia Walsh, Cheryl Chapman, Ginny Moore and Margaret Love won Marilyn Barker's Botany Jeopardy with 2,900 points during the first plant physiology class for Advanced MG.

-- No need to get excited when you see the big Bloom sign at Dimond and the Seward Highway. It's only a hair salon, not a gardener's toy store.

-- Gina Docherty had some help getting her garden trimmed up & put to bed for the winter - 3 moose cut back her iris plants & peonies for her; and accidentally thinning out some small gentian plants while walking through her garden.

Did You Know...?



Bees favor blue, yellow, or purple flowers, and appreciate structures like nectar guides that many flowers provide. For example pansies (viola), some iris and many orchids display lines of contrasting color that radiate from the throat of the flower. Bees and other pollinators use these as signposts to help them find nectar and pollen.

Some bee-pollinated flowers have a region of low ultraviolet reflectance near the center of each petal. The ultraviolet patterns are invisible to humans since our vision does not see ultraviolet. However bees can see it and it helps them quickly locate the flower's center. Snapdragons have landing platforms; only bees of the right size and weight can trigger the flower to open.

Fun Fact

Many insects such as flies and wasps mimic true bees. True bees have two sets of wings. Flies have only two wings. Wasps although they look like are only closely related to bees. Next time you see a pollinator in your garden check to see if it is a bee.

See the U.S. Forest Service website, Celebrating Wildflowers, for more information on plant pollination strategies. <http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/plantstrategies/index.shtml>

Plan on attending the AMGAA's January 16th Meeting to learn more about bees:

"Our World Full of Bees", presented by Colette Marshall and MGs with summer hives.

Garden Tips From Master Gardeners

-One of my fav garden tools is my clam shovel - light, sharp & easy to dig up weeds, plantings, etc. Much more ergonomic for me than big shovels. Joyce Palmer

-I used grass clippings as mulch on a bed that dries out easily and liked the results. It looked okay as the grass turned yellow. It didn't need weeding and it didn't dry out. Win! Win! Mary Jo Burns

-I found "The Pot Latch" on the internet this past summer. The "Pot Latch" will hold terra cotta pots on almost any flat vertical surface and requires only two screws to be drilled to hold the "Pot Latch". I was able to start using some of the painted terra cotta offered by Walmart and Fred Meyer this past summer. Check the internet and eBay for this great item. Needless to say prices and shipping varies.

For those that want some reading material, I would suggest the GARDEN GATE magazine. This magazine is all gardening, no ads, just pure gardening information. The magazine cost varies as to their current promotion. It is published bimonthly. Also this magazine is punched with 3 holes for storage in a binder. The greatest feature is the magazine only uses great color photos. Plants selected for an issue will show picture/information on that plant and suggested plants that will look great with the featured plant. Check out GARDEN GATE on the internet. This is the gardener's magazine. Richard Sanders

-Plants get dusty, just like your furniture. If at all possible, give your plants a nice shower to wash off the dust, & simulate a refreshing rain. This will not only improve your plant's ability to respire, it will also wash out all the buildup of fertilizer salts in the soil. If your plant doesn't fit under the sprayer in your sink or your shower, give it a good misting. It will also help prevent getting spider mites in a dry household environment. Suggestion for keeping Rosemary (the herb) alive during the winter: plant rosemary in a terra cotta pot, put it in a high light window & water when dry. It seems to respond well to monthly showers too. Gina Docherty

Lessons Learned (From Julie Riley)

- 1) Plant spinach September 1st and harvest beautiful heads of spinach mid-May (as long as there is good snow cover to protect the young plants through winter). I'm trying the same thing with mustard this winter.
- 2) Radishes must be thinned right away. They start making little round roots when the stems are less than two inches tall. Leonard Grau says radishes will bolt unless they're kept evenly moist and I believe him. Radishes should be ready to harvest in 4 weeks, not six.

Belated Christmas Wish Lists

[found in some old email messages....sorry!!!]

From Kathy Wartinbee, Soldotna

I would like one of those really cool garden benches I see on various garden tours. Then I'd like the time to sit on the bench. Most of the benches I've seen are wonderful but all of them look new and unused.

From Julie Riley

Felco pruner. I only need some parts.

Another Article on Fungus Gnats
From "A Face Full of Fungus Gnats" by Ingrid Hoff
Gardens West Prairie Edition Magazine
Vol.25, No.9, November/December 2011
By Gina Docherty

Gnats are annoying. They hover in front of your face & are hard to swat. Fungus gnats are small black flies in the family Sciaridae with long legs, clear wings with a Y shaped vein on each wing. The adult flies don't bite, & don't harm your plants. It's their juvenile larval stage that causes plant problems (teenagers!). They feed on fungi and decaying organic matter in the soil, but they can also munch on root hairs as well. Leaves can turn yellow and drop and stunted growth can occur. They can also act as a vector of pathogenic fungi such as botrytis and fusarium.

Adult females lay eggs on the surface of the soil. The eggs hatch in a few days & the larvae emerge; they are small, milky white, semi transparent, legless wormlike grubs with black heads. (ew)

After feeding & growing for a few weeks, they spin a silken cocoon in the soil. After a week, the adult fungus gnats will emerge, seek out a mate & start the cycle all over again, taking less than a month for the whole process.

Here's the cure: stop overwatering your plants. Allow the top surface of your plant to dry out between watering, or apply decorative rocks or sand that quickly dries out & prevents the female from finding a place to lay their eggs. You can monitor & trap adults with yellow sticky traps. Or use Mother Nature's sticky trap: a sundew. (I'll bet Mike Baldwin doesn't have a fungus gnat problem!)

To trap juvenile larvae, try this - slice a potato & stick the cut side down into the soil a few centimeters. Leave it for a day or 2 and then dig it up & see what's there: potatoes are supposed to be like cheesecake to fungus gnats. Remove the infested potato slice & put it in the garbage disposal. (So satisfying.)

To prevent getting fungus gnats, use only sterile soil; avoid outdoor potting mix with moisture retaining crystals in it. Or remove the top inch of soil & replace it with sterile soil.

There are beneficial insects that will seek & destroy fungus gnats - microscopic spiders about the size of dust called hypoaspis, a predatory mite. Another 'last resort' method is BT. Since it is not being used outside, the effects on moths & butterflies won't be an issue. "Unless you have a pet fly, there should be no concern about 'collateral damage'."

Or you can do as I once heard Man Liser (late owner of Alaska Greenhouse on Muldoon and DeBarr Rd.) once recommend: "Put the plant outside in the snow for a few days; that will kill 'em.... and the plant too!"

Garden Event Calendar

Thursday, Jan 5

"New Plants for 2012"

A presentation by Julie Riley, Extension Horticulturist, at the Anchorage Garden Club meeting, , 7 p.m. Anchorage Pioneer School House, 437 E. Third Ave, public is welcome, AGC hotline, 566-0539.

Friday, January 6

Herb Study Group, Garlic & Chives, 12-1:30 p.m.

UAF Cooperative Extension Service, 1675 C Street, Anchorage, 786-6300. The Herb Study Group meets the first Friday of the month to discuss a selected herb. Meetings are open to the public. May through September the group 'learns by doing' at the Alaska Botanical Garden where, as volunteers, they plant and care for almost 100 different culinary and medicinal plants in the herb garden.

Monday, January 16 (Martin Luther King Day)

Alaska Master Gardener Association-Anchorage meeting - "Our World Full of Bees", presented by Colette Marshall (and MGs with summer hives). This is also the AMGA annual meeting; election results will be presented, 7 p.m. UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Anchorage, 1675 C Street.

Jan 25 & 26

Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference, Alyeska Resort, Girdwood. The event brings together industry representatives, horticultural vendors and support agencies from within and outside of Alaska. Includes trade show and presentations on new Proven Winner bedding plants, using perennials and bulbs in the landscape, Rhodiola as a new crop for Alaska, and merchandizing ideas. Cost: \$125; register and pay on-line this year at <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/gardening/hort2012/>.

Jan 26-27, (28)

Alaska Peony Growers Conference, Alyeska Resort, Girdwood. The conference's focus is on the business-side of cut flower peony production, but soil testing, fertilizer, weed control and sustainable growing techniques are also on the agenda. Includes a silent auction to benefit the Alaska Peony Growers Association, trade show, and pre- and post-conference workshops. Cost: \$125, register and pay on-line this year at <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/gardening/hort2012/apgc/>.

Thursday, Jan 26

New Grower School: Starting a Peony Farm, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m., Alyeska Resort, Girdwood. Instructors: Marji Illingworth, North Pole Peonies & Jan Hanscom, Polar Peonies, LLC Cost: \$30; <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/gardening/hort2012/apgc/>.

Saturday, Feb 18

Alaska Rock Garden Society meeting, 2:00 p.m. MTA building, Palmer - "Factors Affecting Cold Hardiness" presented by Julie Riley, CES. www.args.org



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)

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

If you have questions or want to make address or email corrections, please contact Barbara Baker at: bbaker@alaska.net

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For information about membership or
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Inside this issue....

Message From Jane
Candidates for the 2012 AMGAA Board of Directors
Master Gardener Focus: Camille Williams
Daylight Hours and Sunrise/Sunset Tables for 2012
Gardening: 12 Months of the Year
Congratulations 2012 MG Graduates
Central Peninsula MG News
Alaska's Louse-y Little Secret
Bird Chatter
MG Gardening Tips
Another Article on Fungus Gnats
Garden Event Calendar



AMGA Memberships Expire
December 31st. If you haven't
done so, send in your dues now!