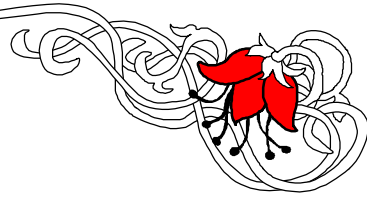


Anchorage Chapter



Volume 8, Issue 1

ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER December 2005

The President's Corner by Dana Klinkhart

Your Alaska Master Gardeners Association continues to grow. With the graduation of 50 new members from the Master Gardening course this month, we look forward to a 'booming' attendance in the coming year. The Master Gardeners Board is investigating numerous meeting locations. Each inquiry seems to bring both positive aspects as well as those features that are not so desirable. Some places are not available on Mondays or more specifically the third Monday of the month. While some are free, others charge a rental fee. Parking is an issue at some locations or the conference room is too small. Others do not provide for our hospitality requirements. So, while we forge ahead, let's continue to gather ideas. The brainstorming session we held at our last meeting has created additional leads. We will be checking on every idea.

It is already time to re-new our membership as 2006 is just around the corner. The postman will deliver a computer generated renewal form to each of us this year. All we need to do is review the current information, make appropriate changes, attach the check and mail it to the AMGA. It has been designed to be easy for us, thanks to our membership chairman, Blythe Campbell. This process has been created to provide a more efficient system for our association. Your AMGA Board has just recently elected to raise the dues to twenty dollars. The rising cost of postage and the anticipation of a rental fee for a new location were just a couple of reasons for this increase.

Have you recently developed that Seasonal Gardening Disorder? Cure it! Attend the AMGA meetings and keep your green thumbs up and running this winter. Are you searching for a gift for those special friends who love to garden this holiday? An AMGA membership might be exactly what you are looking for. Twenty dollars will place them on the mailing list, the e-mail bulletin board and in the annual directory. Your gift affords a friend with the opportunities we enjoy with our membership ... i.e. programs, tours, newsletters and announcements. Sharing with a great network of gardeners in the community and the Cooperative Extension Service are on the list of valued 'perks', too.

So, even though we are as busy as the elves in December, let's mail our renewal form now so that you can take it off that list of reminders. Enjoy the holiday season with family and friends. I look forward to seeing you in 2006.





Pruning, Grooming and Saving Your Trees By Jo Anne Banta



Bring on the loppers! Haul out the saw! Come next fall, AMGA members will be trying their hands at pruning after attending arborist Mike Post's presentation at November's meeting. Mike is the owner/operator of Tall Trees, one of Anchorage's leading tree trimming and removal businesses. He has been doing tree work since 1994 and has owned Tall Trees for the past five years.

Post says that 15 to 20 per cent of his work is pruning; the remainder is tree removal.

He loves trees and suggests pruning to save them whenever possible. Trees are pruned for many reasons: to reduce hazards, to clear power lines and walkways, to improve a view, and to promote their general health – a healthy tree lives longer.

What we want in a tree, be it evergreen or deciduous, is a single trunk with lateral branches. Choose the right tree for the right location; and when planting, visualize what it will be like in 15 years. Keep studying, for you should determine which will be the lowest permanent branch between its tenth and fifteenth year.

There are several types of pruning:

Crown Thinning – removing broken, diseased, rubbing or stressed branches.

Crown Cleaning – removing dead limbs and moose browse.

Crown Reduction – cutting back limbs (only to a lateral branch) to reduce wind resistance.

Crown Raising – removal of lower limbs. (Do not wait till they are too big. We were cautioned not to cut back any lateral more than 1/3 the size of the main trunk.)

Pruning is best done in the fall during dormancy when the trees have pulled sap and nutrients into the root system. Spring trimming causes sap to drip and hinders healing. Lilacs, of course, should be pruned after blooming; if you prune them too late, you may be taking off next year's blooms. Pruning removes feed for the roots, so go carefully, and never remove more than one-fourth of the living branches.

Loppers or snips give the best cuts, but should be used only on limbs ½ inch or smaller. Use a good saw for anything larger. If you are cutting a larger branch, make a first cut (and undercut) further out on the branch to remove the weight so the bark doesn't tear when you make the final cut. All these wonderful tips and more came from Mike Post's delivery. He brought brochures from International Society of Arbor Culture and gave us wonderful handouts – fact sheets from the University of Florida done by Edward Gilman, pruning guru, illustrating the real "how to."

I can't begin to cover everything here, so if you missed the presentation and are seriously considering trying your hand at pruning, be sure to get a copy of Mike Post's handouts; or, better yet, call Mike himself – we were told he has a great, good-looking crew. Tall Trees also does systemic pesticide soil injection for leaf miners and aphids. He feels this is relatively safe but cautions that it should be done early, when the birch leaves are the size of a dime, to be effective. Of course, Tall Trees will remove trees. Mike recommends thinning, in particular, to promote the health of the larger trees.

AMGA exchange tidbits: from Judy Christianson, cheers for Plantskid as a moose deterrent; from Julie Riley, a tip for stump removal – drill holes and fill with nitrogen to feed bacteria and rot the stump; and from many, suggestions for a possible larger AMGA meeting place. Remember our 2006 dues will be \$20 and, in order to have your name printed in the directory, they should be paid by January 31.

No meeting in December. Merry Christmas to all!





Before the Blooms Return– Reading Your Way Through Snow and Ice Fog By Kathy Tarr

When the sun disappears by 3:30, and our favorite gardening departments have shrunk to a non-descript back corner with a few clay pots, and some small bags of houseplant soil, what can a gardener do? We take refuge by poring through seed catalogues for a quick, psychological boost.

Alaska MGs spend many winter evenings huddled on their couches flipping through glossy pages of seed catalogues, pleasantly lost in their wildest botanical fantasies.

In the off-season (for those of us who don't have tiled sun rooms with grow lights), you can indulge your need to daydream about flowers and vegetables beyond reading and re-re-reading the latest lettuce variety list in Morgan & Thompson's.

For pure information, inspiration, and storytelling, here's some gardening-related titles– old and new– that I recommend you check out, or to buy as holiday gifts for your fellow gardening maniacs. Thanks to those very astute, literary-type MGs and experts who have also made suggestions.

Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World (Michael Pollan); Random House (2001)

Pollan, a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker*, divides his book into four plant stories framed in the idea of desire. He writes about the apple (sweetness); the tulip (beauty); marijuana (intoxification); and the potato (control). Each section covers the history of the plant and its domestication. But the botanical question of the day comes down to this: Who is really domesticating whom? "Though we self-importantly regard domestication as something people have done to plants, it is at the same time a strategy by which the plants have exploited us and our desires– even our most idiosyncratic notions of beauty– to advance their own interests...Mutations that nature would have rejected out of hand in the wild sometimes prove to be brilliant adaptations in an environment that's been shaped by human desire."

In the Land of the Blue Poppies: The Collected Plant-Hunting Writings of Frank Kingdon Ward; Modern Library Edition; (2002)

Stories about Ward who was a professional plant collector and explorer for 40 years and author of more than 25 books.

We Made a Garden (Margery Fish);

First published in 1956, and recently re-issued by Modern Library Gardening, this is the story of how one of Britain's most esteemed gardening writers created her famous cottage garden in Somerset, England.

(Above two titles recommended by Linda McCarthy)

Cold-Climate Gardening (Lewis Hill); Story Communications, Inc. (1994)

The Border in Bloom (Anne Lovejoy); Sasquatch Books (1990)

(Recommended by Kathy Wartinbee)

New Pronouncing Dictionary of Plant Names (American Nurseryman Publishing Company) 1989

Dictionary of Plant Names (Allen J. Coombes); Timber Press (1999)

(These reference books are recommended by Rosemary Kimball, an MG who speaks fluent binomial nomenclature, and who usually corrects all my Latin translations and pronunciations.)

Botany for Gardeners, Revised Edition (Brian Capon); Timber Press (2005)

(This easy-to-understand, highly illustrated introduction to botany is especially useful if you've shied away from taking a botany course.)

Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and Alaska. (Pojar & Mackinnon); Lone Pine Publishing; (1994).

(During summer months, I keep this book, along with Verna Pratt's, in my car at all times.)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



"Thyme of Death" Mysteries in the Garden

A listing of Gardening related mysteries
compiled by Anchorage Municipal Libraries 5/2003
Submitted by Linda Klinkhart

- Susan Albert: Hangman's Root; Rosemary Remembered
 R.L. Anderson: Death in the Greenhouse
 Nancy Atherton: Aunt Dimity and the Duke
 Richard Barth: A Ragged Plot
 J.S. Borthwick: The Garden Plot
 Agatha Christie: Murder at the Vicarage; Nemesis
 K.C. Constantine: The Man Who Liked Slow Tomatoes
 Alisa Craig: The Grub-and-Stakers Move a Mountain; The Grub-and-Stakers Spin a Yarn
 Philip Crain: A Beautiful Place to Die
 Marjorie Dorner: Freeze Frame
 Richard Forrest: Death Under the Lilacs
 Frances Fyfield: A Question of Guilt
 Caroline Graham: The Killings at Badger's Drift; Murder at Madingly Grange
 Ann Granger: Flowers for the Funeral
 Joan Hadley: The Deadly Ackee; The Night Blooming Cereus
 Janis Harrison: Roots of Murder
 Reginald Hill: Deadheads
 Muriel Jackson: The Garden Club
 Graham Landrum: The Garden Club Mystery
 Emma Lathan: Green Grow the Dollars
 Mary McMullen: A Grave Without Flowers
 Jennie Melville: Murder in the Garden
 Gladys Mitchell: The Death-Cap Dancers
 Ann Ripley: Mulch
 Elliot Roosevelt: Murder in the Rose Garden
 Rebecca Rothenberg: The Dandelion Murders
 John Sherwood: A Botanist at Bay; Green Trigger Fingers
 Celestine Sibley: Ah, Sweet Mystery
 Sheila Simonson: Larkspur

Medicine for the soul.

-Inscription over the door of the Library at Thebes

Before the Blooms Return CONT FROM PAGE 3

Onward and Upward in the Garden (Kathryn S. White); Farrar Straus Giroux; (has been frequently reprinted since 1958).

A note from the jacket cover: "Kathryn S. White began working at *The New Yorker* in 1925, the year of its founding, and was editor there for 34 years. Throughout and beyond those years, she was also a gardener. Her husband, E.B. White, wrote that she simply accepted the act of gardening as the natural thing to be occupied with in one's spare time, no matter where one was or how deeply involved in other affairs..." This book is a collection of her gardening essays and includes many gardening book reviews she wrote for *The New Yorker*.

As a fellow northerner, White well understood the mental tricks played by Alaskan gardeners when she wrote:

"...After all, winter reading, and winter daydreams of what might be- the gardens of the mind- are as rewarding a part of gardening as the partial successes of a good summer of bloom..."

Ecology for Gardeners (Carroll & Salt); Timber Press (2005)
(Recommended by Julie Riley)

Anatomy of a Rose: Exploring the Secret Life of Flowers (Sharon Apt Russell); Perseus Publishing (2001)

And for a good read in more of a naturalist's approach try:

The Trees in My Forest (Bernd Heinrich); HarperCollins (1997)

Made For Each Other: A Symbiosis of Birds and Pines (Ronald M. Lanner); Oxford University Press; (1996).



Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.

-Charles W. Eliot

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket.

-Chinese Proverb



Central Peninsula Master Gardener News by Rosemary Kimball

December and June are the obituary columns. This is the time of year when I very successfully start killing plants. So far, for sure, the lavender, bay treelet, and the prostrate rosemary have gone by the wayside. In my fear of over watering I carefully under-water and the plants die of dehydration. At least they don't rot...that's the bright side. I have had one success and that was my red Christmas cactus. It's absolutely gorgeous!

After the talk in September on bulbs and getting a bulb pocket book, I liberated my neighbor's neglected Eucharist (Amazon) lily bulbs as one was starting to sprout. I read the book, fixed some potting soil with some of my very best compost, repotted them and the shoot withered and died. They still are not showing signs of growth although I haven't dug them out yet to check for roots. If I kill them, am I ethically bound to buy new ones? His newly repotted-by-me Oxalis hasn't resprouted either so I might have that on my conscience too. I haven't checked to see what else he has that I can "care" for. My caring somehow seems like the kiss of death.

On my own behalf, I grabbed the Fritillaria meleagris bulbs I was given in October out of the refrigerator where they were starting to mold, brushed them as clean as I could and put some flowers of sulfur on them and planted them. I was hoping to pot them in February for bloom in May so afterwards I could move them outdoors, but mold calls for Plan B: pot NOW. I still have my Allium molys for spring.

I have found one person who is actively gardening- Kathy Wartinbee is growing tomatoes, basil, cilantro, lettuce, arugula, and parsley in a sun room with full spectrum and metal halide lights. Her tomato varieties (Micro Tom, Patio Hybrid, Window Box, Florida Petite and Canary) are all from the Totally Tomato catalog (www.totallytomato.com) and it's easy to order a catalog on line. TT will start shipping their catalog out in December. I've had a catalog from them before and they were the only source at the time for my favorite greenhouse tomato, Northern Exposure.

No catalogs yet while we are still burping from Thanksgiving dinner. I'm not sure who is going to be sending me one since there are some catalogs I haven't ordered from in awhile. I used to be very careful to order every three years or so to not get the last catalog warning. I think

I've been tossed from several lists. I'm starting to hoard the blow-in cards to send for a catalog. Do I use my name or my middle name in case they check for duplications? If I do get an extra catalog I pass them on to new gardeners.

And 'new gardener' reminds me that the Master Gardener classes start here in January. What a perfect time to take the class. When you are through, it is time to start planning for summer and just think of all those new ideas and enthusiasm running around. I got a top-of-the-world e-mail from a friend in Anacortes who is ready to start the class down there and she's so excited she glows in print!

We MG's haven't had our Pad Thai this fall to plan for the spring lecture series down here...but we're thinking about it. I suggested a talk on home greenhouse management as my neighbor, MG Mark White, said he'd enjoyed puttering in my greenhouse while we were gone last spring and that he's going to get a big one. He's been threatening to get one for the last 3-4 years but this time I think it will happen. Soon.

And I won't go away without leaving my sauerkraut salad recipe with you: Dissolve 1/2 cup of sugar in 1/2 cup of cider vinegar. To your sauerkraut that you've washed to a tolerable salt content, add "some" of what's on hand: diced onion, celery, bell pepper, radish, grated carrot. Pour the sugar/vinegar over all and mix it up. Technically, it should stand for a day to let the flavors marry, but by that time ours is half gone. Bon apétit.

...and this just in: Stokes, the first catalog of the season, arrived 11-25 and within two hours was full of highlighted neat things to get...



Tiny Tim
9" tall with tomatoes

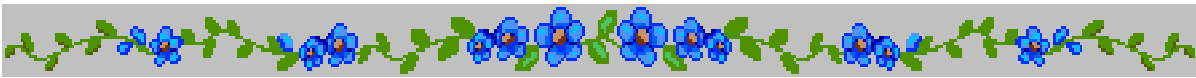


Yellow Canary
9" tall with tomatoes

Central
Peninsula
Master
Gardener
Kathy
Wartinbee's
Winter
Tomato
Crop



Micro Tom
In a 4" pot



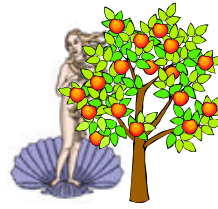
Bird Chatter

- New Master Gardener Chloé Renshaw's paperwhite narcissus did a stint on the Norma Goodman Show (Channel 11) Thanksgiving week.
- The Cooperative Extension Service's wildberry recipe book is available for half-price during the month of December. For \$5 you can get a stocking stuffer.
- Another holiday gift idea is a calendar of beautiful, close-up flower photography done by MG Annie Nevaldine. Calendars sell for \$12 with a percentage going to AMGA. They are available at the CES office (see Julie Riley) or by contacting Annie.
- Poinsettias are only toxic when eaten by highly sensitive people. The Poison Control Center says you'd have to eat quite a lot of plant material to be affected.
- Huge flocks of Bohemian waxwings were seen swooping around Anchorage in November. These early birds seemed to prefer Mayday tree fruits over those of Mountain ash.
- G. Gordon Pyle is the grand champion of the most Master Gardener hours for 2005. He completed 82 hours, most of it at CES answering the Horticulture Hotline. THANK YOU, Gordon!
- In 2005 Master Gardeners answered 162 phone calls on gardening. In 2004 they answered 160. How's that for consistency?
- MG Theresa Geiger's husband Arnie makes beautiful ornaments from recycled Christmas tree trunks, 345-3077 or atgeiger@gci.net. [They make great gifts for tree lovers- I bought three. JR]



2006 ALASKA GARDEN FLOWERS CALENDAR Photography © Annie Nevaldine

Would you like to support your Alaska Master Gardeners Association while at the same time using a calendar comprised exclusively of flowers grown and photographed in Alaska? Then Annie Nevaldine's 2006 ALASKA GARDEN FLOWERS CALENDAR is just the answer! Following a cover with a deep red Asiatic lily come twelve months of other flowers, including delphinium, blue poppy, yellow iris, gentian, and tulip. Calendars cost \$12 each; when purchased directly from Annie, 25% of the price goes to the Alaska Master Gardeners Association. Please contact her at 333-2100 or at alzina@acsalaska.net.



Gardening Au Naturel

We are members of the Master Gardener Foundation of Kitsap County, located in Washington State. As a fundraising project this year we created a 2006 calendar entitled *Gardening Au Naturel – Secrets of Kitsap County Master Gardeners*. We want to spread the word about the calendar to Master Gardeners across the country while there's still time to order for the holidays.

Gardening Au Naturel is a full-color wall calendar measuring 11"x 17" when open. The images for the calendar were captured by Winifred Whitfield, a nationally-acclaimed photographer living here in Kitsap County. Please check out a bit of the calendar at our website, www.kitsapgardens.org. Click on the red "online" to see a few of the images.

Done in the same vein as the "Calendar Girls" in England, each month's picture features one or more of our own Master Gardeners involved in an over-the-top gardening pursuit, generally under-attired, usually hilarious, always tasteful. 25 Master Gardeners are featured, ranging in age from 35 to 85.

Gardening Au Naturel is a fundraising project by our Master Gardener Foundation of Kitsap County, a 501C3 public charity located across Puget Sound from Seattle. As with all Master Gardener foundations, proceeds from this project will benefit community gardens and horticulture education, including elder outreach at our local veterans' home and nursing homes, 4-H gardening clubs, and youth programs.

How to order?

- Calendars retail for \$12.95 US each, \$15.95 Canadian, and they're available on Barnes & Noble online.
- They may be ordered from our website, www.kitsapgardens.org, for \$15.45 (\$12.95 + \$2.50 shipping and handling).
- You can order by snail mail by sending your check, made out to MGFKC (Master Gardener Foundation of Kitsap County), to:
Master Gardener Foundation
PO Box 504
Port Orchard, WA 98366
- For bulk orders (6 or more), or for expedited shipping, email info@kitsapgardens.org for pricing information. All orders are shipped out the day they are received. Thanks for your interest and your support, and happy gardening!



Advanced Gardening Class
Leaves in Our Lives: Diversity

A class with five meetings will be available in early 2006 at Anchorage CES office.

Dates: January 23 to February 20, 2006
 Time: noon - 2 PM on Mondays
 Instructors: Roseann Leiner UAF AFES Palmer Research and Extension Center
 email Roseann.Leiner@uaa.alaska.edu
 website <http://www.matsu.alaska.edu/pfrrml/>

Julie Riley will be the local contact for class meetings.

General Description: Learn to appreciate the plants in your life. No science experience is expected for these introductory lessons. Plant biology will be covered from the ground up, with enthusiasm. Plants are often overlooked in their impact on the daily life of humans. These lessons serve to relate the basic biology and diversity of plants to their use by human civilization. Topics include plant resources encountered in daily life such as food, fiber, shelter, energy, medicine, and aesthetic value.

The objectives are to teach students
 1) to understand the basics of plant science
 2) to appreciate the complexity and diversity of plants used by humans, and
 3) to see the forest and the trees.

Cost: \$8.00, paid to Cooperative Extension Service
 Text: (suggested, not required): Plants and Society by Levetin and McMahon, 3th edition © 2003 (Students can purchase this book from the publisher at <http://books.mcgraw-hill.com> for approximately \$85. plus shipping)

<u>Schedule:</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Chapter</u>
1-23-06	Review of Plants in our Lives	1
	Review of Agriculture	11
1-30-06	Fruits and Seeds of Plants	6
	Cloth, Paper, and Wood	18
2-6-06	Basic Plant Genetics	7
	Legume Plants	13
2-13-06	Plant Classification and Names	8
	Medicinal Plants	19
2-20-06	Moss, Ferns, and Cones	9
	The Algae	22

This class is based on a college course called NRM F108 Leaves in Our Lives: Diversity. One college credit is available. For credit, students attend additional class time from 2:15-3:30 PM each meeting day, complete assignments, and register with **UAF**. Ask CES Anchorage for further information on college credit.

Gardening Calendar

January 16, Monday

AMGA Program: "Smart Gardening" – Six minute spots done on Channel 7 with the featured local gardeners speaking about the experience.

April 27 - 29, 2006

Southeast Alaska Gardening Conference
 Presented by the Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners
 Centennial Hall, Juneau Alaska
 Details to follow.

Message From the Editor

This is the beginning of the 8th year of publication for the AMGA newsletter. Thanks to all who have contributed!

Why not consider writing something for the newsletter this next year? Any gardening related topic (however distant) will be considered. Bird Chatter is always welcome: thoughts, ideas, experiences, news, whatever.

Please send in your 2006 calendar of events for your group so it can be posted on the internet on the MG Calendar of Events, and listed monthly in the AMGA newsletter.

Don't forget to renew your membership in order to be listed in the Annual Directory and to continue to receive the newsletter. Unrenewed names will be dropped after January. And send in your ideas for programs and garden tours for 2006 too!



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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 Anchorage, AK 99516
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 Email: amga@gci.net
 AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org
 (The Newsletter will be on-line in living color!)

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:

Cooperative Extension Office
 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
 Anchorage, AK 99508
 Phone 786-6300
 Fax Line 786-6312



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Snowmen fall from heaven... unassembled.

-Author Unknown

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