



# Wildflower Garden Club

## January 2020 Newsletter

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## Messages from the Presidents

We have more daylight!! The catkins on my gardening instinct are starting to swell! The fact that the temperatures have risen by almost 15 degrees may help as well. Can you imagine what our friends and family in the lower 48 think when we say we are getting excited for spring, even though we do know we have 3-4 more months of winter? That is alright, the more they fear our climate, the more room for us to turn into gardens up here. I find it quite refreshing that we do not have people on top of us all the time like they do in other parts of the world.

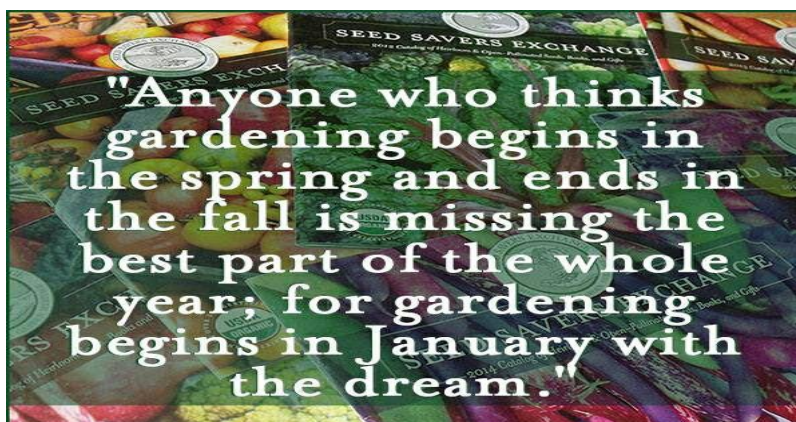
I am so looking forward to the new year with WfGC, and the project at AWCC, as well as the workshops and fundraisers we will be doing. It should be a very fun year, and I look forward to working hand in hand with all of you during the next months!

**Paul**

We've had one of the longer spells of cold weather in a few years this month and I am overjoyed that we are finally above the zero mark ... at least for the past few days. It sure feels good to get outside and take a walk around Baxter Bog, get some fresh air, and not have my eyelashes freeze! I also must admit that one of the best rewards we get for enduring these temperatures is the captivating hoar frost that takes my breath away on every jaunt around town. Aahhh yes, it is January and we are gaining minutes more of light each day, which is always a good thing for my frame of mind and spirit. So are the seed catalogs that have arrived. I absolutely love ogling over the pictures every chance I get. It brings happy smiles to see the old familiar favorites and excitement for the new plants to add to my ever-growing list of 'must haves'. Ooh ... all those brilliant hues for these color-starved eyes!

2019 was a learning curve when it came to running a garden club for both Paul and me. Now that we have that behind us and a bit more experience under our belts, we are feeling confident in the direction the WfGC continues to move forward. With a new service project at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, some fun hands-on workshops and the undertaking of a few fundraising projects planned in 2020 ... this will be a year of clearer vision for all of us.

**Kathy**



# Introduction to the 2020 Board of Directors



## **Kathy Liska: Co-President**

Kathy is an Advanced Master Gardener and part of the Alaska State Fair Crops Department for 25 years, 16 in the position of Superintendent and Horticulture Manager. She has been a professional gardener in home and commercial properties, and for many years she was a Coach, Judge, Board Member and Chairperson for State and Regional Figure Skating competitions.

Kathy likes spending free time in her greenhouse & garden, with friends, and enjoying summer and winter family outdoor adventures.



## **Paul Marmora: Co-President**

Paul is a founding member and long-time president of the Cook Inlet Bonsai Study Group. He is a Master Gardener and member of numerous local garden clubs and as a retired instructor for both FedEx and the UA Adult Ed program, he is often asked to speak at various garden club functions. He currently teaches classes in American Sign Language, Floral Design and, occasionally, in Cooking.



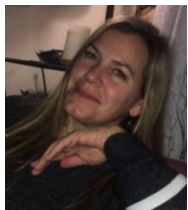
## **Barbara Baker: Vice President**

Barbara has been active in local gardening clubs for the past thirteen years, including former Co-president and board member of Alaska Master Gardeners. In addition to the volunteer opportunities through WfGC, she volunteers at the Pioneer Home Gardens, her church and has recently joined in the fun of assisting horticultural judges at the Alaska State Fair. She has a background in grant writing and management, as the retired director of Planning at Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and will be using these skills to assist in the club's goals.



## **Cindy Walker: Treasurer**

For the last 30 years, Cindy has served as Treasurer on many boards with the last duty as Master Gardener Treasurer for 8 years. Her happy place is her greenhouse. She enjoys gardening in her zone 3 garden, playing games and puzzles (especially with her 7-year old grandson), baseball, reading, and being with her family and friends.



## **Tobi Harvey: Secretary**

Tobi is a long-time lover of playing in the dirt! She has spent the past 20+ years living in Alaska raising three daughters and teaching them to love all that nature has to offer. Her love for her family, gardening, the arts and fuzzy critters are all things she strives to enjoy and share with others daily. Tobi has been a member of the Wildflower Garden Club since 2007 and recently became a Master Gardener.



## **Annita Magee: Member at Large**

Annita moved to Anchorage 50 years ago and joined the Wildflower Garden Club about 12 ago. She did bookkeeping, and was a real estate agent briefly, but her passion has been weaving for many years: weaving and teaching everything from rugs, scarves, shawls, tapestries, especially with flowers or birds. For her 70th birthday, she climbed the Chilkoot Trail with her daughter and grandson, and an African Safari is still on her bucket list!

**The goal of the 2020 Board is to make our club more solvent,  
so we are not starting each year in the red.  
We are intent on fundraising to make the path easier.**



# What's Growing Now?

The big news is the Kokedama Workshop coming up on the January 18. It filled up completely after only a few days! There were a few people that could not make the time/date, so we are looking at hosting another one in mid-February. There are a few people already on a waiting list, so if you are interested in participating in a future workshop, write to the club at [akwildflowers@gmail.com](mailto:akwildflowers@gmail.com) and include your name on the waiting list. We will run another class for each 15 interested participants.

An especially nice part of the workshops we are offering is that they are open to members of other garden clubs, which helps to build bridges to other gardeners in the area, establishes WfGC as a vital and upward moving and thinking club and makes sure our workshops can be full—to great success.

When we combine clubs, we are a group of a few thousand gardeners.

Our January meeting was presented by Jen Bersch on **The Difference Between Hemp and Cannabis Products and Their Uses**. A lot of us have been hearing about these new “Miracle” remedies and it was quite interesting to have myths dispelled and to hear what treatments and items are Federally approved and State regulated and which have side effects and which do not.

Paul was dying to ask what the hosts had brought for “Munchies,” but he admirably held himself in check.

## Club Business

The 2020 Yearbooks have been compiled; we handed them out to those present at the meeting on January 9. The rest have been mailed out to you and should be at your home by the end of the week of January 13-18. Congratulations to Yearbook chairperson Tobi Harvey for her wonderful effort. She has produced a lovely piece of memorabilia for us all.

Our **Plant Sale** is scheduled to occur on **JUNE 6**, which is a slight departure from the Saturday after Memorial Day, which was our norm. Remember the ‘Craft Corner’ was a great success last year, and we encourage crafters to make any garden inspired crafts they excel at available for the sale.



We are planning on the club selling **hanging baskets** as a WfGC fundraiser. We will make available any leftover basket plants for individual purchase as well.

Plan on details for a work party to build the baskets, proceeds of which will be completely for the club. We are working on making the baskets available at cost for those participating in the assembly work party.

## Announcements

We are pleased to announce that the Wildflower Garden Club has been awarded the **Plant America Grant** from the **National Garden Clubs** to assist in our effort at developing the Native garden we are planning at the **Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center**. We received the email announcement a little more than a week ago and are anticipating their letter officially notifying us of the fact. Barbara Baker was instrumental in drafting the grant application and we give her kudos and our gratitude for her work. In fact, we are so thankful we have asked for her assistance in applying for the **Ames Tool Grant** and the **Espoma Soils Grant** also sponsored through NGC. This is a wonderful opportunity for our club to be involved in a high-profile garden and these grants will help us achieve that end.

The AWCC contacted us to participate in a planning meeting to outline their landscaping development plan for the next few years. They are thrilled that we have already started the ball rolling and are calling our efforts Phase One of their plan.

## Reminders

**FEBRUARY 13**, our monthly meeting will be presented by expert Mingchu Zhang of the Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service on **Biochar**. Biochar is a natural way to enrich your soil and to eliminate many harmful residues. It should be a fascinating program.

**APRIL 11**, the Midtown Mall Garden Fair is planned. We have our Marigold Giveaway to assist children to plant their very own marigold. With this in mind, in order to have blooming plants for early April, **your marigold seeds should be planted by FEBRUARY 8**, which is just around the corner. **Best to use the 'Petite Marigolds' - any color you like, that grow only 6-8" tall.** Last year, over 200 children walked away with a prized plant. This year, in answer a growing interest, we are planning on offering some of the plants for sale as well.

### **Growing Tips - Potting Mix vs Seed Starting Mix**

A seed starting mix is the preferred option as opposed to potting mix for those gardeners who prefer to plant seed, not seedlings or cuttings. It is more desirable for three reasons:

- It has a superior germination process.
- The mix is usually more lightweight than potting mix.
- It absorbs water easily and allows for plenty of air circulation, which is very important for the seed to be able to grow and develop into a plant.

Regular garden soil can contain diseases and contaminants, which can be especially harmful to vulnerable seeds and seedlings. The main difference between potting mixture and seed starting mix is that seed mix usually does not contain any fertilizer. The seed provides the necessary nutrients for the budding plant, so it does not need fertilizer. Once the plant starts to sprout leaves, you can start to add a low ratio fertilizer for ongoing nutrients. Check daily to keep pots or flats moist. Do not allow seedlings to dry out.

Place the starter pots no more than 6 inches away from a hanging **grow light**. Keep the grow light turned on for 16-18 hours each day to give the growing seedlings adequate exposure. You'll get much stronger seedlings if you grow them under lights. The sun is at too low of an angle to supply enough light, so without grow lights your seedling will become leggy.

Another trick is to gently run your hand across the top of your seedlings daily to 'stunt' them which will form thicker stalks and a stronger plant overall. I've used this process for years and it really does work!



\* \* \*

# **January Wildflower of the Month ... Impatiens Noli tangere**

by Sally Byrne-Flores

**Impatiens - Noli-tangere** (Impatient - be unwilling to touch) originally the species name appears to have been Noli-me-tangere. Which historically was attributed to the words of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalen and has been celebrated in paintings and novels.

Common names are: Touch-me-not, Western touch-me-not, Jewelweed, snap-weed, quick-in-the-hand. A member of the Balsaminaceae Family. Native to Alaska, Canada and parts of the lower 48 states, Europe and temperate East Asia. Found between 15 -1,700 meters above sea level. Prefers shady areas with sandy or loamy, wet soil where water seeps.

The plant, an annual, can grow to four feet in height. With many bright yellow, scentless, slipper shaped flowers with a spur. Blooms from July - September.



Depending on the part of the world various insects (Bees have been studied in Japan and Moths in The Lakes region in England) assist with pollination, not able to find specifics for Alaska. Plant is also able to ensure seed production through self-pollination - via closed dwarf flowers.

Seed capsules are 5-parted and explode at the slightest touch when ripe. Seeds are hard to collect for that reason. Seed capsules ripen from August - October. Touch-me-nots can be transplanted or grown from seed. Gather the capsules with care, or the seeds will be lost. Store in a cool dry place and plant in the spring no further treatment necessary.

Best known as an itch relieving treatment for poison ivy - not an Alaskan problem. As an itch reliever it can be applied by just crushing the plant and rubbing on the area or expressing the juice and applying that to the sores, or by boiling stems and leaves and washing with the decoction. For this reason, it is also an excellent rinse for an itchy scalp.

Young greens less than one foot in height can be gathered and eaten. The plant does have a high calcium oxalate content; the greens should be boiled in a change of water and all water discarded. Young plant greens can be dried and safely eaten. The seeds may be eaten raw.

**We are still in need of members to volunteer and do Wildflower of the Month. Please contact either Kathy or Paul if you are willing to research, learn and present a short 5 minute informative talk about our native wildflowers.**