



# Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

## September 2020 Newsletter

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### Messages from the Presidents

We have almost made it through another growing season, as strange as it was. I did not get nearly as much done as I thought I would (gasp!), but I did get quite a lot done. Most amazing to me was the amount of plants people purchased this season. My belief is that there was nowhere to go and little else to do, so people decided to take up gardening. There were almost no plant sales this year, and many of the nurseries emptied out early, so people were on the prowl for plants most of the summer. I sincerely hope this will be a hobby that these new or expanding gardeners will keep up, and people will be more interested in basics of horticulture. It would be a real pleasure to see some younger folks take up the banner of garden clubs and plant hobbyists. We are into our new meeting cycle at end of summer. Seeing a number of you on the 10<sup>th</sup> on the Zoom meeting with Kristen and Gandalf the Great Grey Owl was so warming to me. I cannot wait until we can actually get together in person again, but until then, these Zoom meetings at least let us see and speak to each other. I miss you all and am so thankful we can stand together until we can get together.

Paul

We are aware that these uncertain times are limiting many aspects of life as we all practice social and physical distancing. We have begun our monthly meetings again with the use of Zoom and hope that you will try the simple log in procedure (just click the link in the email sent to you), to participate in the programs with us. Currently, this is still the only option for us as a club to continue and provide our presentations, share in some WGCA fellowship, and socialize with familiar faces. People are social beings, and this is a feasible way to fill a bit of the void we are all experiencing. I have really missed seeing you all in person and hope we can be back to our 'old normal' get togethers sooner rather later in the future. Until then I will be looking forward to seeing you on Zoom!

Kathy



# What's Growing Now?

The **October 8th** presentation will be by Mike Baldwin on our native and other carnivorous plants. This has been a life-long interest for Mike, and he has written and presented often about these little gems. This will be another Zoom presentation, so if you need assistance, please let us know, we can set up another practice session for people to get accustomed to it. **This program is a change from the yearbook information;** the water feature presentation was turned into a workshop and held in June.



## Announcements



The presentation by the Bird Learning Center at our September meeting was quite interesting, not only to find out more about Great Grey owls, but also about the Center, how it operates, and how to volunteer and sponsor there. This was one of the first Zoom bird presentations they have put on and they were quite pleased at how **Gandalf the Great Grey owl** handled the process. Kristen was quite informative and entertaining, and members' interest was piqued to pursue volunteering with them.

Remember the **November 12th** meeting will be a slide show presentation of members' photos of their garden triumphs or challenges, Alaska trips, wildlife, etc. Show the rest of us what you have been doing relating to your gardens or to Alaska. Please send photos to Kathy Liska at [akliska@aol.com](mailto:akliska@aol.com) by **October 15<sup>th</sup>** for her to prepare the slide show. **Flowers, yard art, water features, landscapes, or wildlife. Anything garden or Alaska nature related is welcome!**

We are coming up on the time to **renew membership**. Remember, to be included in the next yearbook's list of members, you will need to send in the paperwork and pay your **dues by December 1<sup>st</sup>**. Your options are to print a copy of the form and send in a check, fill in the form and pay in cash at a meeting (unlikely this year), or we are finalizing a way to fill in the form online and receive an electronic invoice via Square, and pay electronically—just like Uptown! We would like to recognize members' birthday months, so there will also be a spot on the membership form to include that information. Month—not year!

It is the time of the year when we ask for your consideration of someone in the club to be our **2020 Member of the Year**. If you would like to nominate a member for this honor, please email your choice to [akwildflowers@gmail.com](mailto:akwildflowers@gmail.com) with a name and a short paragraph to support your nomination **by Monday Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>**.

Replies to this email address only come to the Wildflower Club. The nominator's name will not be mentioned when the info goes out to everyone. This year will be an electronic (email) vote since we still cannot meet in person. We will officially announce the name of our 2020 Member of the Year, the nominee who receives the most votes, on the Thursday Oct. 8th Zoom meeting and by email to all members.



WGCA has Grant money to give to qualifying folks. Please tell people you know that they can look up the requirements for the grant application on the Alaska Garden Clubs website at [www.alaskagardenclubs.org](http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org) in the Wildflower Garden Club link. **The application is due by November 1, 2020.**



# Club Business

The **Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska** (our official new name—we are using **WGCA** as our initials now) is approaching board elections in November. We have formed a nominating committee. The nominating committee (Annita Magee, Marilyn Barker and Elaine Estey) will be contacting people to see if they are interested in serving. We are in need of a Secretary for the 2021 board. There are also several committee chair positions that need filling. If you would be interested in either serving on the board or as a committee chair, please let the nominating committee or Kathy and Paul know.

The Board of Directors has done our annual review of the **Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules**. Some of the updates are necessary for the 501(c)3 non-profit designation of our club, some are dictated to changing duties of the Board members and committees, and some are to remove outdated items (such as exchanging the Hosted Luncheon for Potlucks), and to formalize the ability to vote electronically. You should have received communication on September 9th about the upcoming vote. As required by the bylaws, it was sent out in writing, it was discussed in the (Zoom) meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> and we will then hold an **electronic vote during the week of the 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2020**. We have the ability to discuss and propose other issues until that time, so we have opened the club email to allow **REPLY ALL** so the entire group can see each member's input. Please make use of this opportunity if you would like to express your opinion.

AWCC has received its final plants until Spring. Most of the plants are thriving and have increased in size dramatically since the time they were planted. The signboard frame has been delivered and is awaiting our input for the information inclusion.

One item we did not foresee is the fascination for children of a big pile of rocks—it just invites a climb. There are lots of little footprints among the zones in the garden. Little feet that are concentrating on becoming “King of the Hill” do not even notice little plants in their path. We have ordered rebar stanchions that will include a rope about 20 inches from the ground to discourage young “mountain climbers.” We are also planning signage to very nicely state “stay the @\$%\* out of the garden” as well as to identify plants and participating clubs. Thankfully, the many plant donations and the Ames Tool Grant have allowed us the elbow room to meet this unexpected expense.

The Board of Directors has been busy working on scheduling programs for 2021. We have a good line up of presentations that we believe you will be happy with.

Logo – We are in the process of searching for a Graphic Designer to possibly create a WGCA logo. Cost will be a determining factor. We think it would be a good idea for the club to research this since a logo is the first thing that our regulars and the public will look for when they see any communications from the club. It would be featured on all publication materials such as email communications, applications, business cards, flyers, advertisements, newsletters, social media, etc.

Name Badges – We will also be looking into permanent acrylic name badges (hopefully with a logo), at a reasonable cost to members who would like to purchase one. Lugging the old name tag binder to each meeting has become cumbersome with having to also bring the projector and laptop for presentations and the hospitality supplies. Our plan is to hand out the name tags from the binder to all current members and have you bring it to the monthly meetings if you choose. New members will receive a printed cardstock name tag. Write on name tags for visitors and/or members who prefer this method will be supplied by the club.



Symphony Lake – Photo courtesy of Kelly Liska



# September Wildflower of the Month

Submitted by Paul Marmora

## **Cardamine purpurea**

**Common names: Purple cress, bittercress, purple bittercress**

This native mustard is found in central and western Alaska, Canada, and extreme northeastern Russia. It usually grows in moister areas on hillsides and meadows or tundra, having leaflets growing on either side of a central stem (pinnate), quite small at the base of the central stem and growing larger towards the tip of the leaf, culminating in a larger, wider leaflet. The tops of the leaves are shiny, and the upper stems are slightly hairy. The entire plant is not usually more than 4-5 inches tall.



The flowers are four-petaled (typical of the mustard family) and appear in small groups of blossoms. Blooms form on the tip of small stems, normally one per plantlet, but sometimes several stems will bloom from the same root system. Bloom time in Alaska is the end of May and June. The flower colors are variable, from purple to white occasionally pink or lavender.



Like many in the mustard family, it is considered by some to be edible, although it can be quite bitter.





## **Members Corner**

**Peaceful pastime - Gathering Beach Peat or Dead Seaweeds for Your Garden**

**Submitted by Sally Byrne- Flores**



Here in south-central Alaska we are fortunate to have access to beaches. As we amble along the shoreline, our natural tendency is to gather what we see: sea glass, shells, curious pieces of driftwood, sometimes even the odd item that has washed ashore from a ship. After a storm, you may have even noticed scattered or layered seaweeds. Here is your golden opportunity to gather for your garden. If you are interested in gathering seaweed/kelp that has washed ashore and is no longer viable you can gather at will throughout the state according to ADF&G the regulatory enforcer without a sports fishing license.

In 2007, ADF&G began regulating the non-commercial (subsistence) harvesting of kelp, seaweed, and other aquatic plants. Harvesting

implies removing living seaweeds from the intertidal zone or from open waters. Cook Inlet, in our area, is considered non subsistence. Harvesting for subsistence purposes is only allowed in two areas of Cook Inlet: Tyonek just south of the Chuitna River and the Seldovia area at the southern end of the Kenai peninsula. Neither of these areas is road accessible. Additionally, in those areas you are limited to 10 pounds wet weight per day or in possession You may also subsistence harvest seaweed/kelp throughout Prince William sound except for the Valdez arm. This article is only about gathering dead seaweeds for your garden.

Just what is beach peat? Why are coastal Alaskan gardens so reliant on it? Beach peat is plant material that decomposed overtime in marshes and bogs creating peat which then becomes exposed on the beach through erosion either of the land or washed ashore when a peat layer is exposed under water. Beach peat is a good all-around soil additive. It has been soaked in salt water and is less likely to introduce disease into your beds. Normally it is rather fine in texture you will need to gather with a trowel or shovel, take it home and place it out to air, rain will rinse much of the salt from it. Then add to your garden beds. Beach peat makes a nice mulch for covering fall beds, which may help with weed control and provide an insulating layer over the winter.

Seaweeds are not true plants. They are macroalgae and found in every ocean on this planet. They are capable of photosynthesis, but they lack roots, stems and leaves. Because they are not true plants, they do not carry plant diseases. They are low in cellulose, breaking down quickly and may be added directly to your soil after gathering. Often people say seaweeds are a good slug deterrent because of the salt content, the rough edges of the drying seaweed and that slugs do not eat it because of its coarse taste. But most important is that seaweeds are full of trace minerals & potassium, phosphate, and magnesium. Seaweeds help to aerate your soil. There is information that supports the use of seaweed in your garden to prevent fungus and disease.

Gathering seaweeds is a fun day activity. As you wander the beach you may note three fairly distinct lines of seaweed that has washed ashore. You want to gather seaweed that has not been mixed up with a lot of plant material, decomposing or volumes of living insects. As a general rule, seaweed found along the high tide line is not choice because of the number of animals and insects in the debris. I like to gather the middle range of seaweed it is drier, lighter, and easier to carry. Pick your way down the beach selecting lightly along your route, this leaves behind an ample quantity for those animals and insects that reside in the washed ashore debris. Pick up a piece and give it a shake to encourage displacement of sand or any other items you do not want to drag home with you. Place your selections either in breathable bags or sacks or as I prefer in a 5-gallon bucket without bottom drainage, then you can put it right in your car to transport home. The benefit of the bucket is that you do not need rain gear on a nice day, the wet bags generally get

you wet as you try unsuccessfully to carry too much. There is also a low tide line of wet seaweed this is often choice but if you are away from your skiff or car it can be heavy to carry back.

When you get home, as soon as is convenient; you will want to spread your seaweed out onto your beds. Aim for 3-4 inches depth as it will quickly dry down to less than an inch. It can be placed directly around Potatoes with good success as they like lots of nutrients. You do not need to rinse the salt off but if you are concerned it is okay to rinse it with a hose in your driveway or put it out on a tarp and leave it over the winter for rain and snow to naturally rinse it. If you chose to leave it out over the winter it is easy to dig into spring beds prior to planting.

If you forget about your seaweed for a few days in its sacks and buckets the smell is not compatible with life (worse than bear bait) and the consistency is alarming. I have made this mistake one time when gathering and using a plastic garbage bag to get my found treasure home. I still put it out to air - separately on a tarp; after several weeks it was a mass of insects, awful aroma, and a sort of slimy sludgy mass so I tried rinsing which did not correct any of the problems. It is best to pick your seaweed on the day you are heading home. Alternatively, it could be picked daily and laid out, then regrouped for transport on the day you are headed back to Anchorage.

For me, the smell of seaweed freshly layered on my beds is that of beach breezes and the tangy air makes my senses feel at home in Anchorage.

