



# Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska Newsletter ~ November 2021

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## Messages from the Presidents

I am back east visiting family—most of whom I have not seen in nearly two years. Seeing the changes both time and the foul covid have wrought, as well as with the recent passing of someone I was quite fond of, I am reminded of the turning of the seasons. I have experienced Fall this year in three locations: Anchorage, New York and Chicago. Each is different from the other, and yet the growing season is coming to a close in each location. Each will bring rest and eventually, renewal to its area. Even though what we know and have experienced this year is coming to an end, it makes way for new growth and new life, and even feeds the birth of the new season. We have to be thankful for the joy of what the year brought us and full of hope for the fresh new life bursting forth at its proper time and bringing equal or greater joy with the coming spring. I will try to build for a better spring in my life as well, and to help the new growth I come across to thrive and blossom to full potential. Life's truths are all around us—I will try to embrace it and accept what comes.

**Paul**

There are so many things I am thankful for this year. It is a time to ponder upon the many lessons we learned through the year and the continued spirit of fellowship that we took a part in sharing with each other. So, as I look back at all the good memories of the year with the 'Wildflowers', I can genuinely say that I am looking forward to another year with this enjoyable group of gardening friends. Sending you and your families my warmest wishes from home to home and heart to heart for a very Happy Thanksgiving!

**Kathy**



## What's Growing Now

The **Membership Drive** is in full swing. You have the options of joining online through the easy to use website link, with an additional \$1 per person to cover the credit card charges, or you may print out an application and mail a \$20 check to the Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska, PO Box 240563, Anchorage, AK, 99524.

**To be included in the 2022 yearbook, you must be enrolled by December 1st.**

A couple of weeks ago, we sent a poll to the club about meeting in person. The majority of people that answered wished to continue with the Zoom meetings. We will continue to do this.

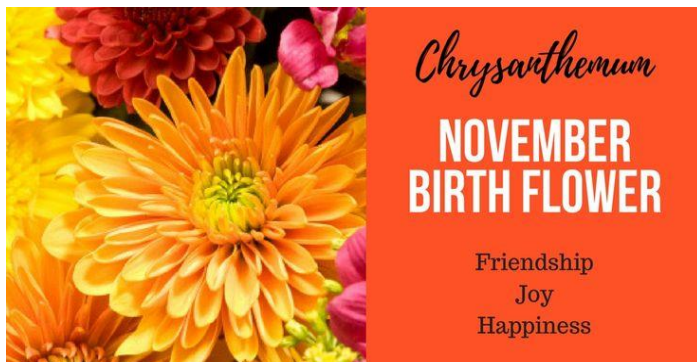
At this time, we would like to query the members to see if anyone has experience running a hybrid meeting live and on Zoom? This is proving a bit more detailed than we had thought and although we can certainly take the time to learn, it would most certainly be easier to avail ourselves of someone experienced already. So... we thought we'd ask. Our thoughts are to have hybrid meetings beginning in January.

Our monthly educational programs for 2022 have been lined up and confirmed. It promises to be an informative and inviting schedule! To get your copy (we're not telling right now), look for the yearbook being sent out in late December. Remember, you must be a member to receive a yearbook, so be sure to get enrolled!

We are adding a feature to the newsletter, hoping to get more participation. We already have a Member's Corner for pictures. We would like to add more to the corner. We are thinking sharing recipes, gardening tips about any aspect of gardening (look for bonsai and orchid tips from Paul). How about info on starting seeds, over-wintering tender perennials, or keeping your hoyas or African violets blooming. We do not need long articles, but pictures would be nice. You don't even have to write the article, but can send one on that touched you.

## Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

Marilyn Barker, Karen Edmondson, Elaine Estey, Peggy Pletcher & Annie Ronsse



Chrysanthemums symbolize friendship and well-wishes. They signify life and rebirth, too, so they are often given for birthday gifts. They also represent joy, good luck, happiness longevity, honor, and respect. Chrysanthemums are considered the **Queen of Fall Flowers**.

**Happy Birthday to you!**



## Club Business

WGCA's new website at [www.wildflowergardenclub.org](http://www.wildflowergardenclub.org) has successfully launched, and we have had many compliments. We have set up an Instagram account to give us the ability to control the sharing of pictures directly through this app which will also save the expense of paying the webmaster do this task. We are in the process of adding pictures to the **Photo Gallery** so be sure to take a look. Members are encouraged to share photos they would like to share too. We are also using **Google Calendar** to keep everyone informed of upcoming meeting and events. It's as simple as clicking the link on the website to be in the know!

### **October 2021 Treasurer's Report**

<b>Denali Federal Credit Union</b>	
Business Savings APYO .10%	\$14,998.89
Business Checking	\$4,214.18
<b>Balances 10/30/21</b>	<b>\$19,213.07</b>
<b>Morgan Stanley Balances 10/30/21</b>	<b>\$49,874.60</b>
<b>Total Assets 10/30/21</b>	<b>\$69,087.67</b>



## November Election

### **2022 WGCA Board of Directors**

The Official Ballot was emailed to all current members on November 11th.

Voting is open Thursday, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> until Monday, Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> at 5pm  
via email to [akwildflowers@gmail.com](mailto:akwildflowers@gmail.com)



#### Final Slate of Nominees

**Co-President: Kathy Liska**  
**Co-President: Paul Marmora**  
**Vice President: Barbara Baker**  
**Secretary: Sally Byrne-Flores**  
**Treasurer: Cindy Walker**  
**Member at Large: Ruth Bauman**  
**Member at Large: Barbara Carrick**

# 2020/2021 Grant Progress – Susitna Elementary School

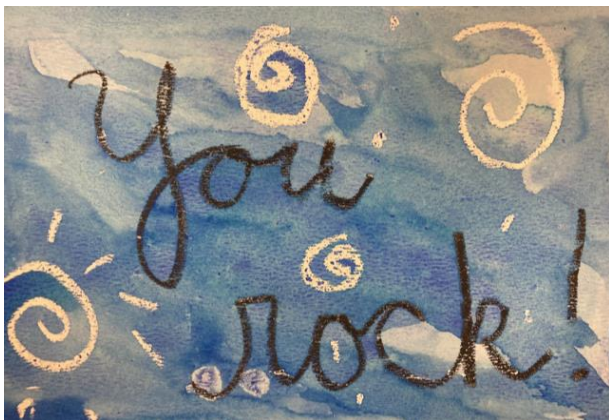
From Jennifer Harmon – 4/5 Grade Teacher

"We had a big work party this weekend and got the benches installed as well as the nature path outlined. We were able to install the benches, clean up the apple tree, tidy up and winterize our garden beds, and start on the nature trail. It was a wonderful turn out!

We would love some expert advice on what plants we could add and how to procure them. It was lovely to meet with you last week and walk through our nature path and show you the benches. We are thrilled that the outdoor classroom and phase one of the interpretive path are complete! We are looking forward to spring when we can plant and make signs.

The cost of building the benches used up the \$1,000 (and then some-- we are covering the extra cost through our student council's candygram sales.)

PS- We are truly grateful for your generous grant! The students have painted this thank you collage".



## Announcements

We have received almost a handful of 2022 grant applications already. The deadline has been moved to the end of January, from its previously held date in November. Please continue to spread the word to students, teachers, schools, or foundations that work in the area of horticulture that might benefit from a little fiscal help and have them apply. The application process is available via our website, [www.wildflowergardenclub.org](http://www.wildflowergardenclub.org) which is now open.

### **In Remembrance -**



Longtime club member Verna Mathews has left us. She is at rest after a long struggle with illness. We will miss her fun and cheerful presence in our meetings.



## Upcoming Meetings & Workshops

We still plan to have the annual **Wreath and Centerpiece Workshop at Dimond Greenhouses on December 2<sup>nd</sup> starting at 10am**. We have not heard any news from Darryl (which might be considered good news in itself) regarding the supply availability, but we are proceeding as if there is no problem. We will need people to let us know if they are coming to the workshop by **November 26th** to let Darryl know how many people to expect. The cost for this workshop is \$30 per creation.



### **December 9, 2021 – Annual Holiday Luncheon – ~~CANCELED!~~**

Of the few members that were willing to meet in person, through response of the recent poll, a number were unwilling to have food at an in-person meeting.

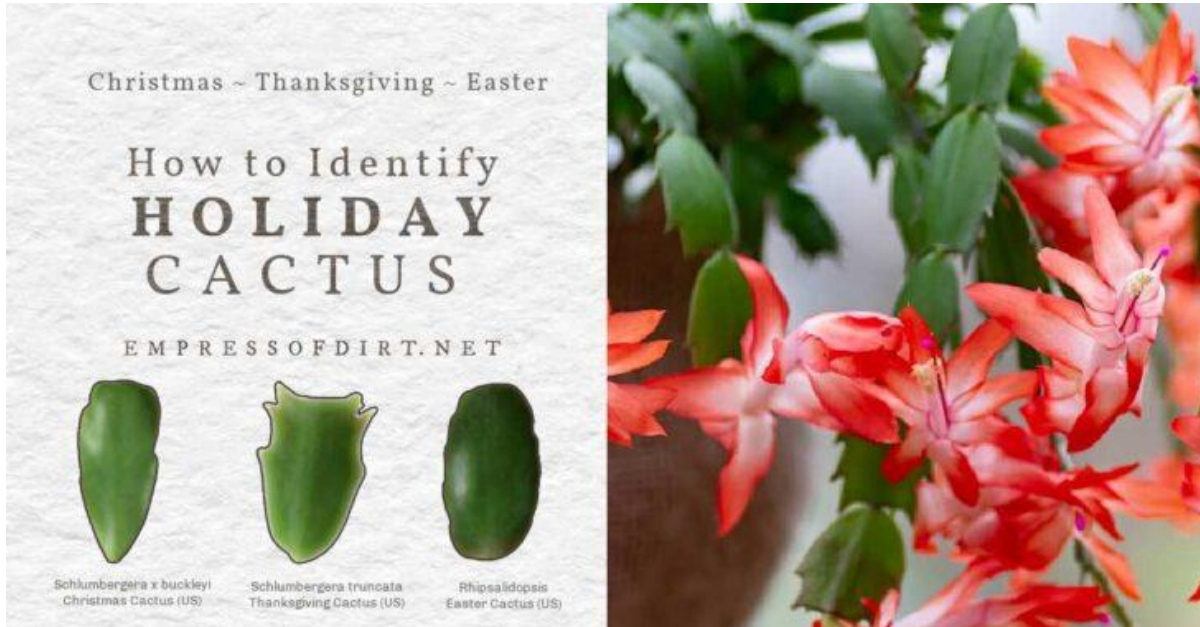


To replace the Holiday get-together on **December 9**, we will offer another December workshop in its place. A different project is to make a holiday hanging basket (somewhat similar to a kissing ball but using a hanging wire basket). It can be placed either inside or outside—inside, it will need watering. We will send details in a separate announcement.



## Plant Chat - How to Identify Holiday Cactus Plants

Need help identifying your plant? Find out whether your Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter cactus is a *Schlumbergera* or *Rhipsalidopsis* with these identification tips. (Source: Empress of the Dirt)



### Is this a Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Easter Cactus?

If you have a bet with a friend about the identity of a flowering holiday cactus picked up at the supermarket, you may just want to call a draw if you are arguing about whether it's a Christmas or Thanksgiving or (less likely) Easter cactus.

Why?

Because marketers use these names for an array of different plants depending on the blooming time and where you live. And the same plant can be tagged with any of those names depending on when it is sold.

For example, the same cultivar sold as a **Thanksgiving** cactus in the United States may be sold as a **Christmas** cactus in Canada. Why? Canada celebrates Thanksgiving early in October so, by the time these plants are budding and blooming in November, that holiday is long gone and the name **Christmas** makes more sense to consumers.

And this is why it is best, when possible, to spare your friendship and identify plants by their botanical names instead of regional common names or marketing terms. There will still be some difficult-to-ID plants and taxonomical changes and disagreements in the scientific community, but at least with botanical names we can begin to speak the same language.

Just to make the puzzle complete, I've also seen holiday cactus plants tagged with the wrong botanical name, which is not surprising when mass produced for holiday shoppers.

## Check the Leaves

The most common tip for identifying holiday cactus is to look at the **shape of the leaves**. If distinct, it's a great clue, but again there are plenty of cultivars that will confound even an experienced keen-eyed gardener. There is more on this (below).



*Scylumbergera x buckleyi*  
Christmas Cactus (US)



*Scylumbergera truncata*  
Thanksgiving Cactus (US)



*Rhipsalidopsis*  
Easter Cactus (US)

If the leaves are not distinct, the flowers also provide clues.

## Observe the Blooms

*Schlumbergeras* (see below) produce similar flowers (in a range of colors) with some subtle differences including pollen colors.

*Rhipsalidopsis* (Easter Cactus) has a distinctly different flower formation than *Schlumbergeras* and rarely gets caught up in the debate.

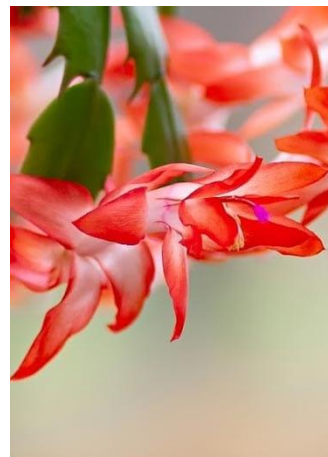
But the good news is, no matter what it is, all of these plants need the same care.

## *Schlumbergera truncata* | Thanksgiving cactus (United States) Christmas cactus (Canada)

### “Claw cactus” or “Crab cactus”

The quickest way to identify a Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) is to check the leaves for pointy edges and note the time of year it flowers.

- This is the most common holiday cactus sold in stores due to qualities making them more convenient to mass produce, ship, and display.
- They are easy to spot due to the points on the leaf edges that may resemble **little saw blades or pointed teeth**.
- These flowers grow horizontally, have differently-shaped upper and lower sides (zygomorphic), and **yellow** pollen, which you will find located on the anther (you may want to look up a diagram).



## ***Schlumbergera x buckleyi* | Christmas cactus (United States)**

- Originally a hybrid between *Schlumbergera russelliana* and *Schlumbergera truncata*, your *Schlumbergera x buckleyi* may have all scalloped leaves, or scalloped and pointed ones.
- These flowers are symmetrical, have **pink** pollen, and tend to grow downward.



## ***Schlumbergera bridgesii* | Christmas cactus (years ago)**

Years ago, this one was considered *The* Christmas Cactus, although the *buckleyi* now seems to dominate the title. You can read about the dispute/history at [Davesgarden.com](http://Davesgarden.com)

- This one tends to have more rounded leaves with **scalloped-edges**.

The **Schlumbergeras** can bloom twice a year, first between October and February, and then between March and May, with white, pink, orange, or red flowers.

## ***Rhipsalidopsis* | Easter Cactus**

### **“Spring cactus”**

- Besides the later flowering time, you’ll also notice the shape of the Easter Cactus flowers is quite different from *Schlumbergeras*.
- **Look for flat, rectangular leaves with slightly scalloped edges, and round, upward-facing flowers.**



These are sometimes also confused with **Orchid Cacti**, which are epiphyllum hybrids. The name and identification confusion never stops!



## **Members Corner**

Kathy Liska

### **Cranberry Orange Bread Recipe**

Looking for a breakfast bread to serve during the holiday season? You might like this cranberry orange quick bread. It's sweet and bursting with orange flavor, but also a touch tangy from the cranberries.

#### **Ingredients for the Bread:**

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup milk (2%)
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1/2 cup oil (canola or vegetable)
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups frozen cranberries\* or Craisins
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour



- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- In a medium bowl, stir together the sugar, milk, orange juice, zest, oil, eggs, and vanilla.
- In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking powder and salt. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir until just combined.
- \* In a small bowl, toss the frozen cranberries with a tablespoon of flour to coat so they won't just sink to the bottom.
- Gently fold the cranberries or Craisins into the batter.
- Pour the bread batter into a greased 9"x5" bread pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 55 minutes. A toothpick inserted in the center of the bread should come out clean.
- Allow the bread to cool for 10 minutes, then remove the bread to a wire rack to cool completely.

#### **For the Glaze:**

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

- For the smoothest results, run the powdered sugar through a sifter first to get any lumps out. The glaze will form just a little crust so keep the glaze covered until you are ready to drizzle it on the bread.
- Once the bread is cool, spread the glaze on top of the bread. Slice and serve.
- Freezes well!