



Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

October 2021 Newsletter

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Messages from the Presidents

Such a different fall this year! I keep vacillating between winter mode and end of growing season mode. There is still time for me to plant bulbs for spring, and I still have to complete the last of the “potting shed mode” removal from the garage so we can park in there when the snow flies, but we did bring the snow shovels out – in case. The early snow on the still leafed-out trees and the high winds did precipitate me into doing some tree pruning that I’d been putting off (funny how not being able to walk through the yard because of cracked and downed branches will do that), so things are brighter in the side yard.

So, it looks like Kathy and I will step into the gap again for another year. The caveat is that we must have someone to train to take over. If not, we will be forced to spend the last few months of 2022 preparing to disband the club. It would be a shame after all the strides the club has taken to modernize, get paperwork up to date, and gather new members, but this is it. My cultural tendency to be guilted into something is running out. It is now time for someone else to lead the club into the future. I think **you** would be great at it! **Paul**

We’re baacckkk!!! Paul and I decided that we are willing to stay on board for one more term. It has proved to be difficult on both of us to take that step aside that we had planned without someone ready to step in and take over the wheel. The current Board of Directors have made great strides the past 3 years to bring the club up to date in many aspects. We feel our group as a whole is in a good position, and the on the business side we have worked to have tried and true operational procedures in place that are straightforward. Now if we can just get back to a better ‘normal’ life, with the opportunity to meet again in person to share in the face to face friendships and fellowship, I think we will have smooth sailing ahead. Thank you for sticking with us and continuing to support the WGCA in these trying times.

Kathy



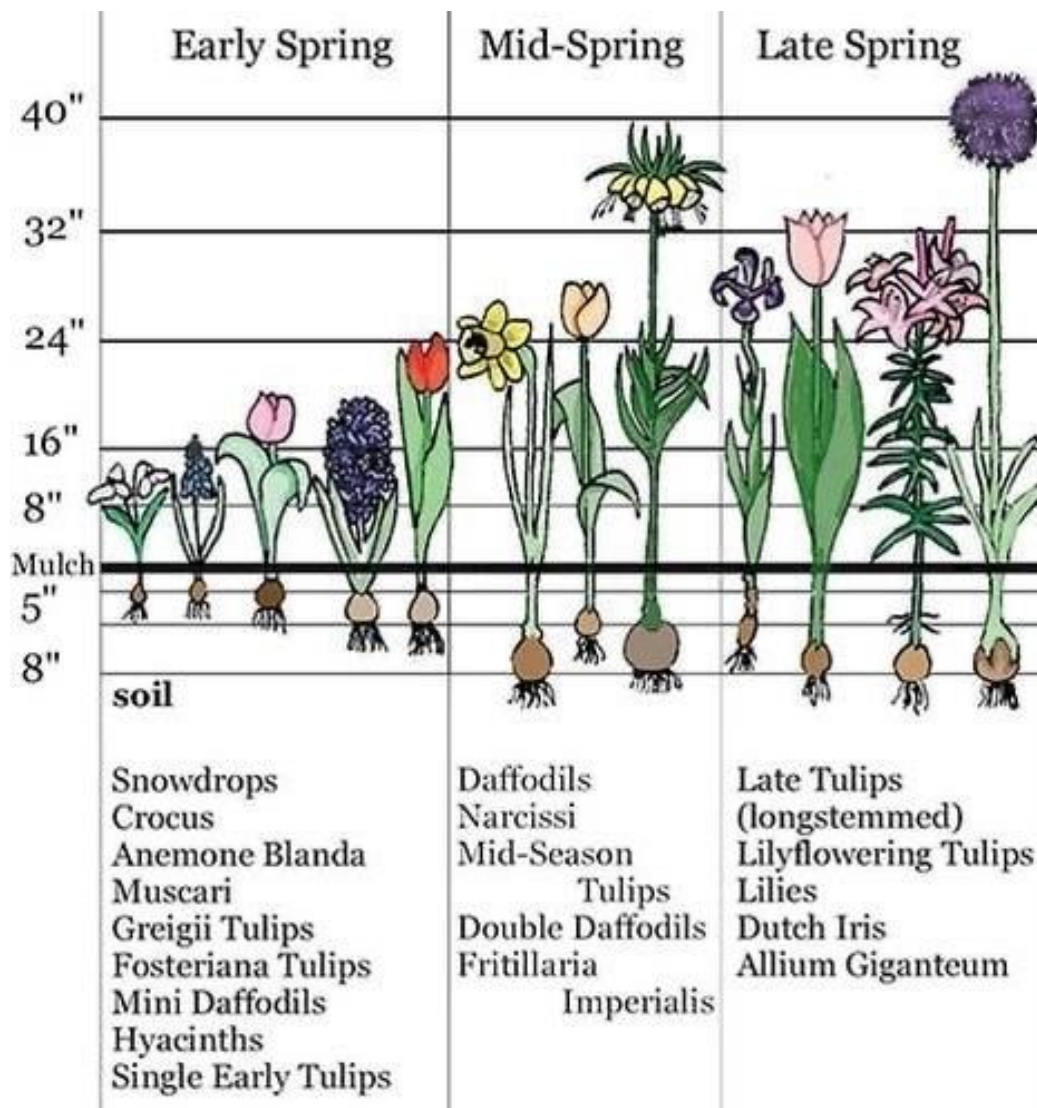
What's Growing Now

Many, many thanks go to presenter Debbie Hinchey for stepping in on short notice to be the speaker at our October meeting. Debbie presented on Spring bulbs, which are planted at this time of year for early spring color. Debbie had previously spoken about summer bulbs, so this was a nice addendum to the earlier topic—we now have information for both spring and summer bulb cultivation.



The reason we plant bulbs like tulips, daffodils, hyacinth, crocus, and snowdrops in autumn is because these cold-hardy bulbs need a period of dormancy during the winter to provide flowers in spring. Without that cold chill, they may not have what it takes to grow and bloom.

You must get it done before the ground freezes when digging is impossible. So, once most trees are losing their leaves, get those bulbs out and start planting. Pick a fine fall day, dig a hole deep enough to bury the bulbs, toss them in, cover them with soil and call it a day!



Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

Paul Marmora and Kathy Zins



October's birth flowers are the Marigold and Cosmos. With its golden blooms that match the color of autumn leaves, it's no wonder the marigold is fitting for this fall month. Marigolds symbolize fierce love, passion, and creativity. In addition to their beauty, marigolds also have a long tradition of being used medicinally to heal inflammation and skin problems.

Cosmos flowers represent peace and tranquility. They come in bright colors like orange, pink and purple. They also attract bees, so are a great flower to grow to draw pollinators to your garden!



2021 Member of the Year



Sally Byrne-Flores has been selected by majority vote as the 2021 Wildflower Member of the Year. Sally is an extraordinary lady and asset to the WGCA. She brings many talents to the table and is always willing to help. She is an active member of the Board of Directors; for years she has (almost single handedly) tended to the Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail at ABG on a weekly basis; she has contributed articles for the newsletter and wildflower of the month; she participates in the Children's Marigold Giveaway by growing plants and working at the booth; and has volunteered at the Plant Sale since she became a member. In 2021 she led a mask making project for our group, as well as worked with others to create a new banner for the club; and researched and helped select the best storage unit for the club. She is also willing to step up in her position on the 2022 Board of Directors by accepting the nomination for the Secretary position.

Many thanks Sally!!!



Club Business

The website design with SPOON FROG Graphics is moving along in a timely manner and promises to be quite dynamic and exciting. Included on this new website will also be features such as newsletter archiving and a photo album that should be quite interesting and somewhat interactive. We are very excited about the prospect!

We now have full insurance again—we had to replace our insurance that we had through the National Garden Clubs—and we found a local State Farm office that matched our coverage at a lesser price, which is a bonus.

The club has obtained a 5x10' storage unit at A Sentry Mini Storage on Boniface parkway, and we now have nearly everything moved there from the various peoples' homes where they were previously kept. It has easy access the entire year (except for some holidays) so the accessibility will be a great asset.

September 2021 Treasurer's Report

Denali Federal Credit Union	
Business Savings APYO .10%	\$14,998.25*
\$10,000 transferred from Morgan Stanley*	
Business Checking	\$4,033.48
Balances 9/30/21	\$19,031.73
Morgan Stanley Balances 9/30/21	\$48,216.90
Total Assets 9/30/21	\$67,248.63

The **Membership Drive** started on OCT 1. We sent out a note recently with the membership form, which was a change from the original plan, as we opted not to have an in-person meeting this month. You may mail a \$20 check to the Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska, PO Box 240563, Anchorage, AK, 99524. If you prefer to pay by credit card, write to Paul at pmarmora@aol.com, and we can send you an electronic invoice, with an additional \$1 per person to cover the credit card charges. **Remember, to be included in the 2022 yearbook, you need to be enrolled by DEC 1.**

We have shifted the **Grant** application deadline to January 31, 2022, from its previously held spot of November 1, 2021. Please look for 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 will be available via our website, which is under construction at the moment, so we have extended the deadline to ensure there is enough time for applications to be received and evaluated.

November Election

The November 11th monthly meeting will be the start date of the WGCA Election time frame for the 2022 Board of Directors. Electronic (email) votes will be accepted from **Thursday, November 11 - Monday, November 15 at 5pm.**

All members were emailed the Voting Procedures, Slate of Nominees, and Election Timelines on October 12th.

The Official Ballot will be emailed to all members on the November 11th.

Currently the slate is as follows:



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

Upcoming Meetings

Our **November 11th** presentation is a member slide show of our gardens and Alaskan adventures, which can work well as either a zoom or an in-person meeting. Remember to gather your summer photos and send to Kathy at akliska@aol.com **no later than November 1st** for our **November 11th “Share Pictures of Your Summer Gardens and Alaska Adventures”** slideshow. Our Motto: “Show, Share & Tell”.

The **Annual Holiday Luncheon** and spirited gift exchange is tentatively planned to be held at Central Lutheran Church on **December 9th from 11am-1pm** if people are interested and willing to attend in person. More info coming soon!

Announcements

We still plan to have the annual wreath and centerpiece making workshop at Dimond Greenhouses on **December 2nd at 10am**. The only consideration is that they are trying to confirm the suppliers being able to deliver on their commitments what with all the upheaval in the delivery systems. We will know more details as we get closer, so stay tuned.



Wildflower (Tree) of the Month

Kathy Liska

Populus tremuloides

Quaking Aspen, Trembling Aspen, American Aspen

Family: Willow / Salicaceae

Populus tremuloides is a deciduous tree native to cooler areas of North America, one of several species referred to by the common name aspen. It is one of the most widely distributed trees throughout North America, ranging from Alaska as far north as the northern foothills of the Brooks Range, east across all provinces and territories in Canada to Labrador and Newfoundland, south to the Northeastern United States, and south in western mountains to central Mexico.



Commonly called Quaking Aspen, is perhaps most noted for its beautiful whitish or greenish gray bark, its deep, glossy green foliage (dull beneath), that quakes in the slightest breeze, and its bright tones of golden yellow (sometimes reddish) fall foliage color. Interestingly, the leaves have a flat petiole which is stronger in one direction than the other which allows the leaves to flutter. It is this fluttering that gives this tree its common name quaking or trembling Aspen.

Fast growing Quaking aspen is generally found in well drained fertile soils in open woods and woodland edges, yet it can grow in areas with heavy clay soils (but the trees are much smaller). Quaking aspen also tends to be a disturbed habitat species, meaning it often lives where avalanches, mudslides and fires occur frequently. Growth will continue for 80-100 years before the stands begin to deteriorate.

Typically, a small to medium-sized tree 20-40 feet, it can also reach a maximum height of 80 feet in some areas with a trunk diameter of 18-23 inches. Trunk bark is variable, depending on the age of a tree. On a mature tree, the bark at the base of the trunk is coarse, gray, and furrowed, becoming smoother and light-colored above. On immature trees, the trunk bark is pale-green to creamy white and relatively smooth. There are usually black horizontal rings and scattered black knots along the trunk.



Winter buds, (1/4-1/2 inch long, shiny dark brown and slightly sticky), leaves, and bark supply food for snowshoe hares, moose, black bears, porcupines, deer, grouse, and beavers. New shoots and foliage are foraged by Dall sheep and Mountain goats.

Flower clusters appear before the leaves in the spring as catkins with male and female flowers on separate trees (clones). Catkins are 2-4" long, with attached light green capsules which contain many small hairy seeds. Seed pods mature along the central stem of the hanging female catkin. Flowering Dates: March-May / Seed Bearing Age: 10-20 years / Seed Bearing Frequency: Every 4-5 years.



Leaves grow alternate, simple, 1-3" long, green above and lighter below, heart-shaped to nearly round with a fine-toothed margin and a pointed tip. The petiole is flattened. The leaves of the quaking aspen and other species in the genus *Populus* serve as food for caterpillars of various moths and butterflies.

Quaking aspen propagates itself primarily through root sprouts, (these roots are not rhizomes), and extensive clonal colonies are common. Each colony is its own clone, and all trees in the clone have identical characteristics and share a single root

structure. A clone may turn color earlier or later in the fall than its neighboring aspen clones. Aspens do produce seeds, but seldom grow from them. Pollination is inhibited by the fact that aspens are either male or female, and large stands are usually all clones of the same sex. Even if pollinated, the small seeds are only viable a short time as they lack a stored food source or a protective coating.

Trembling aspen can form expansive colonies by sending up new trunks as an old trunk dies. One colony in Utah is estimated to be over 80,000 years old. This largest known super-organism is called **Pando**, Latin for 'I spread'. Pando is a tree, or not. It varies depending on your definition of a tree. Pando (a.k.a. the Trembling Giant) is a clonal colony of a single male, Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*). The trees on the surface die, the root network does not die. It constantly sends up new shoots, renews dying trees and stops supplying nutrients to those which are dead. The reason it cannot die is because the heart of Pando lies too far beneath the ground to be reached by the frequent forest fires. These forest fires are in fact a boon for Pando as it kills off the pesky invading conifers and frees up space for many more extensions of Pando to be sent up.

Fruit and Flower

Finally there is the seed-producing fruits of each tree, which may be the most distinctive of these features. The birch produces male and female flowers on the same tree in the forms of catkins, which are long pendant, flowering structures of two to four inches that hang down from the tree. Eventually, these yield heart-shaped, winged nutlets attached to tiny oval seeds.



In comparison, the aspen also produces male or female flowers in catkins, but each tree contains either all male or all female flowers. This condition is referred to as dioecious, compared to the monoecious paper birch, where male and female flowers occur on the same tree. The seeds of the aspen are very small and are born in a small capsule.

White Bark

From a distance the bark of both trees seem very much the same, but when up close, color and markings can be used to tell a white birch from a quaking aspen.

First of all the birch bark of *Betula papyrifera* is really white, while the aspen tree usually carries a distinct tint of green on its trunk exterior. Also, the birch bark often naturally hangs off the tree, like a piece of loose paper, while the aspen bark surrounds the tree tightly, like a snakeskin. Incidentally, the bark of the paper or white birch is often prized for many craft projects, including canoe-making, picture framing and decorative patches on furniture.



Paper Birch



Quaking Aspen

Happy Halloween

