



## Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska Newsletter ~ January 2022

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### **Messages from the Presidents**

We made it to another year! People are resilient—we will survive and make this year the best yet—the heck with the pandemic. We sow seeds all year in our minds, setting the coming season for what we will harvest. I want a positive year in 2022 (and every year), so I am going to plant seeds in my mind of hope and beauty and positivity, of friendship and love. I will try hard not to focus on the negatives and fears that plant seeds for weeds in my mind. Gardeners are people filled with hope (or why bother planting beautiful things?), so we have to share that upbeat cycle with all around us. Grow and Glow for those who come in contact with us! I am looking forward to 2022 and the blessings it will bring!

**Paul**

Welcoming January one day at a time. If we had no winter, the spring would not be so rewarding. The shortest day has passed, and whatever unkind weather we may experience in January and February, at least we will continue to notice that the days are getting longer... with every minute of extra light counting at this time of year. If I had my way, I would consider removing January from the calendar altogether and have an extra July instead!

**Kathy**



## What's Growing Now

Sure is cold this winter! Glad we have enough snow-cover to keep our little friends' roots insulated! Imagine what this would have done to them if there were no snow yet!

Member Deb Blaylock shared her techniques and some seed buying websites for growing bountiful herbs for Alaskans at our January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. Deb is an accomplished gardener and has many successes to prove her expertise in all gardening areas.



Richter Herbs - <https://www.richters.com>

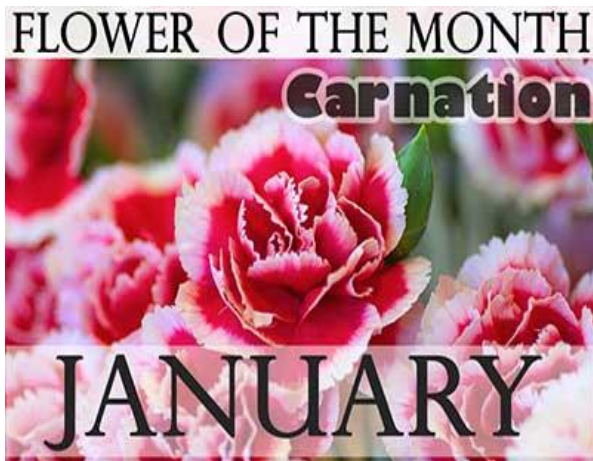
Strictly Medicinal Seeds - <https://strictlymedicinalseeds.com>

Johnny's Selected Seeds - <https://www.johnnyseeds.com>

Seed Savers Exchange - <https://www.seedsavers.org>

## Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

Alice Bethka, Sally Byrne-Flores, Gina Docherty, Christie Holshouser, Merry Johnson, Beth Terry, and Chris Wood



In January the birth flower is the Carnation or the Snowdrop. The Carnation, also known as dianthus, sweet william, pink, and gillyflower, are available in a rainbow of colors and blossom sizes. While carnations are known for their dainty ruffled petals and a sweet fragrance reminiscent of cloves or cinnamon, don't let their delicate appearance fool you, they are easy to grow, very hearty, and among the longest-lasting cut flowers around. While they all symbolize love, distinction, and fascination, you can tailor your message by the color you choose.

While not nearly as known or often as heard of as the Carnation, the Snowdrop is also a flower that symbolizes being born in the month of January. The Snowdrop, also known as *Galanthus nivalis* can grow to be 7 or 8 inches tall and traditionally flowers very early in the north. The Snowdrop is a white flower with three small petals in the middle surrounded by three larger petals on the outside. It is similar but should not be confused with the Snowflake, which also has six petals but is much larger and all the petals are the same size. The snowdrop flower has several meanings depending on the context. The most common meanings are purity, hope, & rebirth.



## **Club Business**

The 2022 Yearbooks have been mailed out and hopefully, have been received by most of the members. If you haven't received one by mid-January, please let Paul or Kathy know. In it you will find much information about the coming year's programs and calendar. The calendar is now also available on the website if you prefer an electronic copy.

### **January 2022 Treasurer's Report**

<b>Denali Federal Credit Union</b>	
Business Savings APYO .10%	\$4,999.33
Business Checking	\$3,829.15
CD - 3 month	\$2,500.40
CD - 6 month	\$2,500.80
CD - 12 month	\$5,003.22
<b>Balance 12/31/21</b>	<b>\$18,832.90</b>
<b>Morgan Stanley Balance 12/31/21</b>	<b>\$50,600.76</b>
<b>Total Assets 12/31/21</b>	<b>\$69,433.66</b>



## **WGCA Annual Report - 2021 in Retrospect**

It has been a challenging year for clubs of any kind. Covid is definitely a cold weather-loving disease. Summers were nice with being outdoors and we were able to meet a few times for service projects, garden tours, and the plant sale, but then it got cold again... Still, we were able to be innovative and had some interesting and diverting Zoom meetings and workshops.

Thankfully Zoom is a platform that can at least keep us in touch with other club members. Face to face is best, but it was too dangerous to risk members' health just for some socialization.

We started off in **January** with a presentation by Wayne Toups, of the Alaska Orchid Society, telling us basics about growing and caring for orchids and showing lots of tropical lovelies.

In **February**, Kathy Liska led us in making birdseed ornaments in a fun workshop over Zoom on the 9th; and Art Nash and Deshana York (our friends from the Cooperative Extension) presented on AgrAbility—the practice of making things easier on us in the garden as we grow older—in case we need the information many years in the future. Many of their suggestions are quite handy.



**March** brought us a presentation by longtime Alaska gardener Debbie Hinchey on Summer bulbs and her trials and successes (and others') over the years. It was so nice to see pictures of blooming gardens in mid-winter!

In **April**, we were once again anticipating being at the Midtown Mall for the garden show, but covid precautions moved it later into May. Our program for the month was a delightful presentation by member Donna Dewhurst about Urban Wildlife, attracting pollinators and repelling large mammals. The picture of the bear family climbing straight up the walls of that house was sobering.

**May** allowed us a couple of opportunities to meet: The annual clean-up of the Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail at ABG on the 13<sup>th</sup> (we did forego the lunch gathering), the AWCC clean-up on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and the re-scheduled Midtown Mall Spring Garden Show on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was wonderful to see so many of the club members, as well as gardeners from other clubs.

On **June 5<sup>th</sup>**, we enjoyed a very popular club plant sale. People renewed an interest in gardening due to the pandemic, and I think plant sales were a little hard to find in the last year or so. Everyone seemed so very happy to be out and buying plants. We finished out the month with a special tour of the Botanical Gardens with Pat Ryan on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**July** brought us adventures at the Centennial Rose Garden on the 15<sup>th</sup> with Debbie Hinchey. Many of our members had never been to the garden before! Carroll Samuelson stepped in last minute with a tour of her spectacular gardens, so we ended that very pleasant day with a pot-luck among the splendors. Carroll is moving this year, so it was our last chance to see her lovely work of art. Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center hosted us for a tour with director Trish Baker—an unusual honor. They really appreciate our effort in making the wildflower garden, so they made a tour just for us and the other participating garden clubs.

The club voted to cease affiliation with the National Garden Clubs in early **August**. There are many worthwhile programs offered by the National Garden Clubs, but the interest of the members had waned and almost no one was availing themselves of the offerings of the national club, so it was deemed best to withdraw from our affiliation.

Annie and Dennis Ronsse invited club members to wander through their gardens with clippers (imagine that!) and we had a workshop filling two vases each and learning a little about floral design. It was so popular that we are planning another couple of workshops in August of 2022 to do it again. The State Fair at the end of August and early September was an opportunity for club members to volunteer again and to be surrounded by the sights, sounds, and especially, excitement as people entered their gardening treasures.

**September 9<sup>th</sup>** brought a fascinating presentation by mycologist Christen Swearingen on our local fungi. She allayed a lot of people's fears with her words of wisdom.

In **October**, Debbie Hinchey stepped in last minute when our dahlia program fell through, and gave the sister presentation to her Summer Bulbs presentation from March: a program on Spring bulbs and her experiences with growing them and much encouragement for us. Sally Byrne-Flores was voted member-of-the-year for her numerous contributions to the club.

Kathy Liska put together a Member Share slide presentation for **November**, where fellow members sent in photos of their summer gardens or Alaskan adventures and then described them as the show featured them. It was really fun to see and hear people talking about their achievements and oddities.

The **December** wreath-making workshop was held at Dimond with instruction and humor from Darryl Leiser and 17 wreaths were made by members and families. Darryl's son Matt was there and seems to be built in the same snarky mold as his father and gave equal entertainment. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, our final workshop of the year was making lighted hanging holiday baskets. This was presented both live and on Zoom, so it was an interesting project and everyone has fun.

## **Announcements**

We are looking for input for the Member's Corner in our newsletter: share pictures, tips, recipes, and successes—or learning opportunities (problems you learned from and overcame) if they are beneficial to fellow club members. Please send them to the Club Email or to Kathy Liska for inclusion in the newsletter.

The **Children's Marigold Giveaway at the Midtown Mall Garden Show** is scheduled to take place on **Saturday, April 16th**. The marigolds need to be started in early February to be good size for the give-away!

## **Upcoming Meetings & Workshops**

**February 10<sup>th</sup> – “Upcycling Garden Treasures” – Members' Share, Show & Tell**



The term “Upcycling” refers to the process of taking something used or not useful and making it over into something decorative or useful in a new way. It is part of the Recycle-Reuse-Repurpose philosophy. With so many talented members, we should be overflowing with wonderful ideas. Please **send pictures and descriptions** to Kathy Liska at [akiska@aol.com](mailto:akiska@aol.com) to be included in the presentation. Be prepared to chat a little about what you are showing off! People will have questions!

## Plant Chat

Time to start eyeballing those catalogues and seed displays in the stores!

Remember, if indoor plants are close to the window to keep the precious light as high as possible, they may be getting rather chilled due to how much cooler that spot may be. Check to be sure the plants are looking all right and healthy. Perhaps it would benefit them to move a little farther from the glass at this time.



## Member's Corner

Shared from Hawaii by member Annita Magee -



Happy New Year from Keauhou!

Our daughter was able to come over for a few days at Christmas, and she and I went for a hike high up on the mountains above Kona and found plants that we normally see at Volcano National Park including gingers and the large tree ferns. One of the ginger plants was this **Kahili Ginger** (*Hedychium gardnerianum*), also called Kahila garland lily or ginger lily in the ginger family of Zingiberaceae. According to my plant book, it is from Himalaya and was first collected in Hawaii in 1940. The name honors the Hawaiian kahili or royal standards. It is an erect herbaceous perennial growing up to 8 feet tall with long bright green leaves clasping the tall stems. Not an Alaska wildflower, but thought it would brighten your cold days you've had!

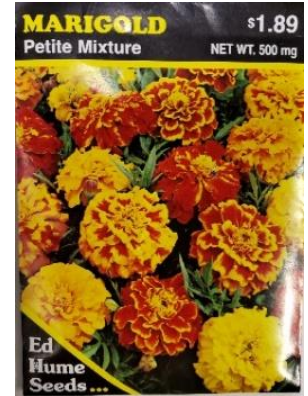




## Starting Marigolds indoors...

Shared by member Kathy Liska -

In timing your planting for a target date so plants are in bloom, the soil, lighting, and watering conditions are important. Make sure the containers you choose have enough room for adequate root growth. I use flats/trays to start my seeds indoors. Use a well-draining potting mix, such as 'Pro-Mix', that has plenty of organic material and other ingredients that allow for good drainage. Marigolds take approximately 8 weeks from germination to bloom. The '**Petite**' type works best for small hands that will be planting.



Most annuals require relatively warm soil temperatures: 65 degrees and higher to germinate. Start them on top of your refrigerator or another warm surface. You can use a heat mat to be sure your seeds get the temperature they need. I use a grow rack with the lights lowered to 3-6" above the flat. Seeds should be sown on top of the surface and then covered lightly (about 1/8") with soil. Mist the soil to dampen, then cover with plastic wrap to create a greenhouse effect. If too much moisture accumulates, pull plastic off, and let dry a bit. Check daily and mist as necessary until they begin to poke their heads up, then remove the plastic wrap for good. **For germination 18 hours of light is necessary.**



Most seeds need light to germinate. Once germinated, they need good light to grow strongly and not go all leggy. This is common when starting all types of plants, not just annuals, indoors. Even in a sunny windowsill, plants will grow leggy and weak, and are prone to stem damage. A close light source will eliminate this problem.

**T5 fluorescent bulbs** are an excellent choice for this purpose. Air flow is also extremely important to develop strong stems. A fan to keep the air around the plants moving is crucial. Another very effective technique is to gently run your hand over ('pet') the plants daily from germination until they go to bud. This helps to stunt legginess and strengthen the stem. It sounds silly but I have been doing this for years with good success!

Once most of the plants have their 2<sup>nd</sup> set of true leaves, thin out any that are slow to develop – about 1/3 of the seedlings. This allows light and air to reach the seedlings which encourages more robust development.



When the Marigolds are about 3 inches tall, **12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness will stimulate the buds to form.**

At 3 inches tall, transplant the seedlings into jumbo 6-packs to give the roots room to grow. Raise the lights gradually as they get taller so there is always 3-6 inches distance from the light source. As the buds mature, you can place them in a bright window out of direct sunlight until you are ready to harden them off outdoors - (gradually increasing outdoor sunlight and temperatures for a week to avoid sunburn and shock).

As they mature, too much watering could cause your flowering annuals to die of damping off. One way to avoid diseases that can occur from soggy conditions (like root rot or powdery mildew), is to water them from the bottom. To do this, place a solid tray under the marigold draining tray and fill with water.

They do not need special soil or fertilizer. Marigolds will actually set bud and bloom better without it. They also will not immediately die if you allow their soil to dry out.

Marigolds are forgiving, but do not like wet feet!



**... it's simple and rewarding!**