



Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

Newsletter ~ February 2024

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Message from the Presidents

According to the calendar, March 19th marks the first day of spring in 2024. That is six and a half weeks away (although actual outside planting is right around 16 weeks away if you use Memorial Day as your planting date). We have been counting. Surely you have too! Something about the sun peeking out from behind the mountains makes one count the days ...

At Christie's house the sun has finally peaked out between the two mountains. It is a really, really big deal at the Holshouser house (it has been hidden since early November)! Never mind that we finally have a reprieve from shoveling but are so bundled up when we venture outside that we could be mistaken for the Pillsbury Dough Boy.

February marks the time to start marigolds for our Children's Marigold Giveaway service project April 27th. Gardeners young and wise flock to the event. It's always a delight to see the excitement of the children when they're planting their own marigolds, and to talk gardening with our friends and fellow gardeners again. We hope to see you there.

The countdown to spring is real and has begun!

Christie & Kellie



Happy Valentine's Day!

What's Growing Now

Our February 8th meeting took place at the Central Lutheran Church and on Zoom with a 'English Gardens Slideshow' presented by horticulturist Debbie Hinchey. Debbie has been touring gardens around the world in recent years, bringing her camera to document and memorialize outstanding gardens, plants, and landscape features. She shared photos of some of the wonderful things she witnessed on her trip to England in 2023. What started out as a fascinating presentation, full of inspiration and innovation took a turn with internet problems and the loss of connection for those on Zoom. Hopefully, the bugs will continue to be worked out so we do not have these problems in the future. Apologizes to our online guests and many thanks to Debbie for giving us her best possible under the circumstances.



Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

Barbara Baker, Scott Cameron, Billye Goff, Kat Karabelnikoff, Annita Magee and Judy Pendleton



The February birth month flowers are violets and primroses. In warmer locations, both bloom in February.

The **violet (viola)** is native to the northern hemisphere, and widespread in Europe and Asia. Alaska has a number of native violas as well: Alaska violet, Dog violet, Viola biflora, Marsh violet, Stream Violet, Selkirk's violet.

The violet symbolizes modesty, innocence, remembrance, everlasting love, and faithfulness. Greeks believed it symbolized fertility and love and used it for love potions. Most violets are edible and have been used medicinally for centuries. The Christian church considered it a sign of humility, and it was often included in portraits of the Virgin Mary.

Primroses (primulas) originated in Europe and the name derives from the Latin Primus, meaning first, relating to the early appearance of the primrose before almost all other flowers. It was believed to be a gateway to the Fairy realm, and eating one was thought to allow you to see a fairy. The primrose symbolized love, safety, and protection, and was also thought by some to ward off evil spirits.



Club Business

The **2024 Approved Budget** was emailed to members on January 10, and presented at the January 11 monthly meeting.

The **2023 Financial Review** was completed on January 8, 2024, with all WGCA accounts found to be in good order and balanced. The final report was emailed to members on January 10, and presented at the January 11 monthly meeting. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Christie Holshouser at holshouserfamily@gmail.com, Kellie Staples at kellie_staples@hotmail.com or Cindy Walker at cynthia.ann.walker@gmail.com

January 2024 Treasurer Reports

Denali Federal Credit Union

Business Savings	\$7,580.81
Business Checking	\$5,080.95
CD- 9 month (matures 7/30/24) 6%	\$5,075.53
Balance	\$17,737.29

Morgan Stanley Balance **\$47,829.65**

Total Funds 1/31/24 **\$65,566.94**



Upcoming Meetings, Projects, & Workshops

March 14, 2024 – ‘Craft Round Tables’ with the Board of Directors
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at Central Lutheran Church. **IN PERSON ONLY!**

A perfect month to busy our hands with crafts for the garden. Join in and create your own bee hotel, experiment with rock painting, and/or make a driftwood & bead suncatcher.

Announcements

April 27th is the planned date for the Midtown Mall Spring Garden Show. Our first service project is the Children’s Marigold Giveaway. We will need a handful of growers, and about a dozen volunteers to make this event happen. Watch for a ‘SignUp Genius’ email coming soon.

To have marigolds of blooming size in time for the show, marigolds need to be started no later than February 28th. ‘Petite Mixture’ (found on Fred Meyer seed racks) works best for small hands that will be planting.

“Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream.”

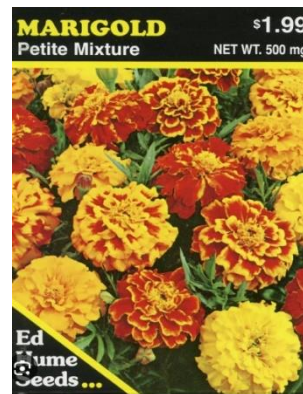
~ Barbara Winkler



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, soilless 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 warm soil temperatures: 65 degrees or 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 16-18 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 second set of true leaves, thin out any that are slow to develop – about one-third of the seedlings. This allows light and air to reach the seedlings which encourages more robust development.



Once plants are 3-4 inches tall, transplant the seedlings into jumbo 6-packs to give the roots room to grow. This is the time to adjust down to **12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness to stimulate the buds to form**. 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 it 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 is simple and rewarding!

The Snow Moon – Saturday, February 24

The explanation behind February's full Moon name is a fairly straightforward one: it is known as the **Snow Moon** due to the typically heavy snowfall that occurs in February. On average, February is the United States' snowiest month, according to data from the National Weather Service.

February's full Moon is also a "Micromoon" this year. Think of this term as the opposite of a "Supermoon." It simply means that the full Moon is at its farthest point from Earth (not the nearest point). In astronomical terms, we call this "apogee." Specifically, February's Micro full Moon is about 252,225 miles from Earth!

