



Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

Newsletter ~ March 2024

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Message from the Presidents

The calendar heralds the official arrival of spring! Alaskans know that we have to add forty more days and forty more nights before daffodils or tulips grace our yards. Until then, we keep ourselves occupied with nurturing seeds under our grow lights and planning what we need to start planting next.

The recent sunshine got us all excited that spring was finally here and that all the snow would melt away. Fear not, fake spring is gone. We have taken to calling this winter the 'Winter of Extremes!' The Anchorage Police Dept's Feb. 22nd Facebook page said it best: "After a night of no sleep due to howling winds that made all of us think our houses were going to be ripped off their foundations and whisked away to the land of Oz, someone turned on the snow faucet." Truth! Oh what winds they were! Seems our new weather pattern is snow, low temperatures, and strong winds.

The weather folklore about March is: "If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb." Let's hope that's true!

Christie & Kellie

March to the beat of Spring!



What's Growing Now

The March 14th Monthly Meeting was a hands-on 'Craft Round Tables' with Kellie Staples, Sally Byrne-Flores and Kathy Liska who presented various crafts: painting strawberry rocks, making bee houses, and suncatchers. A fun time to get together, share in fellowship and be "crafty"—bringing out the artistic part of us!



Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

Ruth Bauman, Ken Blaylock, Sherlynn Fenstermaker, Tahid Gardley, Rachel Giannulis, Gail Heineman, Maurine Loopstra (101), and Susan Miller



The birth flower of March is the Daffodil. Narcissus is the botanical name given to the genus of plants commonly known as daffodils.

March is considered as the month of spring, though maybe not here in Alaska, where nature can be seen blooming with colorful, scented flowers.

Daffodils are considered the symbol of rebirth, faithfulness, and prosperity. And luckily all these character traits are what a march-born carries, all their life. Also, no other flower can ever depict the spirit of Spring season as a bright yellow Daffodil does. They are loyal flowers due to their

habit of blooming year after year.

These popular and early garden flowers originated from the Mediterranean and where the Greeks and Romans introduced it. In today's time, Daffodils are cultivated on a large scale in Holland and Great Britain. If you can believe it, there are around thirteen thousand hybrids of daffodils that are cultivated, ranging from in the hues of yellow and white, to orange and pink!

Happy Birthday!



Club Business

2024 Grants - The Board has voted to fully fund two of the seven grant requests:

Chugiak-Birchwood ABC School's submittal will introduce botany through their art curriculum. It proposes creating seed bombs, observational drawings and cultivating specimens to be transplanted to the community garden. 750 students from kindergarten to 5th grade will be engaged in the project. Other educational components will include studying environmental education like pollinators, food webs and plant identification.

Bartlett High School submittal will outfit a recently school-built greenhouse (12' X 12') to expand their Garden Club activities in growing fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Currently, there are 150 students involved in the gardening club. The Garden Club's intent is to foster a direct connection to the origins of food, consumption of locally grown healthy food and building gardening skills. The greenhouse will also enable them to serve biology classes in hands-on studying of plant propagation and growth as part of the curriculum. The school will also bring in preschool students for observation and learning about basic gardening. Older special needs students are a part of the garden club, utilizing garden activities in life skill development.

Each project will receive \$1,000.

February 2024 Treasurer Reports

Denali Federal Credit Union

Business Savings	\$7,581.41
Business Checking	\$4,755.00
CD-9 month (matures 7/30/24) 6%	\$5,099.02
Balance	\$17,435.43

Morgan Stanley Balance **\$48,736.40**

Total Funds 2/29/24 **\$66,171.83**



Upcoming Meetings, Projects, & Workshops

April 11 – ‘Rock Garden Construction’ with Jaime Rodriguez

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. in person at Central Lutheran Church and also on Zoom.

We will learn basic approaches to building rock gardens from start to finish. Fellow club member Jaime, owner of Alpine Garden Nursery, will reveal to us what has worked and what has not over his years of trial and experimentation in south-central.

A members **Plant Exchange** will also take place at this meeting! Share some of your cuttings or potted up starts, and take home something new you just have to have!!

April 18 – Tool Sharpening Workshop! Rachel Shedd of ABG has agreed to present a workshop for members on how to sharpen our gardening tools. It will take place at the **Alaska Wholesale Flower Market located at 7437 Old Seward Hwy from 10-11am.**

This class is limited to a maximum of 10 participants. Fees will be \$35 (payable at the workshop) and will include two new tools to take home -- a specific file and a sharpener, recommended by Rachel to get the job done. You are welcome to bring no more than two (2) of your own tools (shovels, pruners, trowels, etc.) to work and learn on. **Watch for a ‘SignUp Genius’ link in your email box to register.**

April 27 – Children’s Marigold Giveaway at the Midtown Mall Spring Garden Show from 9am-5pm. Our first Community Service Project in 2024. We will need a handful of growers, about a dozen volunteers for setting up, planting with the kids, helping with sales, answering questions about the Wildflower Club, and to help take down at the end of the day to make this event a success.

For WGCA members interested in selling plants or garden related crafts, please contact Barbara Baker, our Chairperson for this event at barb.baker1951@gmail.com or 907-274-6385 to sign up as a vendor and to let her know items you would like to offer for sale.

Watch for a ‘SignUp Genius’ link coming soon to your email box.

REMINDER – April 11th is the last month of monthly meetings until September 12th.

From May through August we have planned two Service Projects including the Alaska Botanical Garden Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail spring cleanup on Thursday, May 9, and some continued summer maintenance to keep it looking good for visitors.

Alaska Wildlife Conservation Centers AK Native Plant Garden spring cleanup, scheduled for Saturday, May 18 if the weather conditions are good.

A couple of fun, hands-on Workshops in June & August with Willow Trellis making and Flower Bouquets in the Ronsse’s fabulous gardens.

Exciting Garden Tours in Palmer on Thursday, July 11.

An opportunity to volunteer in the Crops and Flowers Departments in August during Entries and Judging on Wednesdays, August 21 & 28 and Thursdays, August 22 & 29 at the Alaska State Fair. Contact Kathy Liska at akliska@aol.com or 907-301-0317.

More information about all the above will be delivered to you via club emails and the upcoming monthly newsletters.

Know It and Grow It

‘How to Get African Violets to Bloom’ – From the Garden Lover’s Club

While they are not difficult to grow, they do require a specific growing condition in order to produce those stunning flowers. Failure to provide them with their ideal growing conditions will result in poor growth and no blooms.



Light is Important

Even though they can bloom in lower light than most other types of flowers, they still need adequate lighting in order to flower. More light is typically needed for a plant to produce flowers than is needed to produce foliage. The ideal location for African Violets to obtain the right amount of light for flowering is a west, south, or east facing window where they can receive indirect but bright light.

Just the Right Amount of Water

Water is another factor that can greatly impact whether or not the African Violets produce their stunning blooms. Too little water and you have a dry plant that produces no flowers and has wilted leaves. Too much water, on the other hand will give the plant water-logged roots that lead to fungal diseases which can quickly kill the plant. The best method for watering is to wait until the top two inches of the plant’s soil is dry and then water deeply.

Do not Forget the Nutrients

Just as with any living creature, African Violets need adequate nutrients in order to thrive and produce their colorful blooms. In most cases, a balanced liquid fertilizer, such as 20-20-20 works well to provide the plant with the much needed nutrients. Make sure to follow the application instructions on the back of the fertilizer, and only apply during the plant’s active growing season, which is spring, summer, and early fall.

Increase the Humidity and Check the Temperature

African Violets are tropical plants native to the cloud forests of eastern Africa. They need about 80% humidity and temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit to keep them healthy. If they do not get these higher humidity and temperature levels then they cannot produce their much desired blooms. Placing a humidifier near the plant or using a pebble tray will help increase humidity levels. Furthermore, avoid placing the plant in an area where there are sudden temperature fluctuations, such as near doors or vents.

Growing in the Wrong Soil

Dense soil with poor drainage can spell disaster for African Violets. Not only does it prevent the plant from flowering, but it can also stunt the plant’s growth and even lead to fungal problems such as root rot. The ideal soil for African Violets is well-draining, loose, and porous. A good general soil mix is equal parts of peat moss, perlite, and garden soil.

Promote Flowering with Pruning

According to the Missouri Botanical Garden, you can stimulate flowering by pruning the African Violet. The plants produce rows of leaves that will only flower once. When the rows have more than 5 leaves, the size and amount of blooms the plant produces decreases. Using a clean and sanitized pair of pruning shears, carefully remove the outside leaves of the plant. This gives the inside leaf row a chance to produce blooms.

The Worm Moon – Monday, March 24



The full Moon names used by *The Old Farmer's Almanac* come from a number of places, including Native American, Colonial American, and European sources. Traditionally, each full Moon name was applied to the entire lunar month in which it occurred, not only to the full moon.

March's full Moon goes by the name **Worm Moon**.

For many years it was thought this name referred to the earthworms that appear as the soil warms in spring. This invites robins and other birds to feed -- a true sign of spring!

However, more research revealed another explanation. In the 1760's when Captain Jonathan Carver visited the Naudowessie (Dakota) and other Native American tribes and wrote that the name Worm Moon refers to a different sort of "worm". It was beetle larvae which begin to emerge from the thawing bark of trees and other winter hideouts at this time.

A Magical Day

A magical day of luck and cheer,
May you have a leprechaun near!
Wear your finest green attire,
As the Irish truly do inspire.
No matter where you may be,
On St. Patty's Day may you see
A shamrock - that four-leaf clover,
May your pot of gold never be over!

Catherine Pulsifer



Happy St. Patrick's Day!

