



P.O. Box 8-737 Anchorage, Alaska 99508

NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER 1982

DECEMBER 13 -- The December program meeting will begin at 8:00 p.m. Monday at The Pub, in the Campus Center part of the Anchorage Community College/UAA Physical Education Facility off Providence Drive. Verna Pratt will present a slide program, "Wildflowers of Eagle River Summit" (highest point on the Steese Highway, where the greatest variety of wildflowers in Alaska is said to grow.) Mini-botany: Cheryl McCaffrey will present a short introduction to grasses. A board meeting at 7:15 will precede the program meeting at 8 p.m. The public is welcome to attend program meetings -- come and bring an interested friend.

JANUARY'S MEETING -- starts 8 p.m. Monday, January 3, in the band room at Central Junior High School, 1405 E Street. NOTE LOCATION CHANGE -- we are unable to schedule a January meeting at The Pub. Program for January will be "Vegetation of Nahanni National Park" in Canada's Northwest Territories, presented by Steve Tolbert of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Verna Pratt will tell about the trials of learning to tell cagonile from the lookalikes. PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW -- you will not receive another newsletter before then.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME -- All memberships more than three months old expire at the stroke of midnight December 31. Here's a blank for your convenience. Please fill out the membership survey also if you haven't completed one recently. Mail to the Post Office box or bring it to the December or January meeting. Bring your membership card, too, and get it stamped for 1983.

SOME COURSES OF INTEREST -- Anchorage Community College offers courses in Plant Taxonomy and Alaska Flowers, a short course in wildflower identification, spring semester. Registration for new students will be January 11 & 12. Plant Taxonomy, BIOL-294, carries 3 credit hours and meets 6:45 p.m. to 9:45 p.m. on Monday January 17 through April; it includes four Saturday field trips in March, April and May. Alaska Flowers BIOL-075, carries 1 credit hour (non-transferable) and meets Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. OR Tuesdays 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. for four weeks in May. The Tuesday evening section includes one Saturday field trip. Dr. Marilyn Barker will teach all three courses.

SOME PHONE NUMBERS if you need information or want to help out:

Verna Pratt, President.....
Peggy Pletcher, Membership.....
Marianne See, Education.....

Joanne Sedgwick, Field Trips....
Jerriane Lowther, Newsletter....

PUT THIS IN YOUR PIPE AND SMOKE IT By John Wenger

Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) has been soaked as a tobacco substitute for centuries. The name, kinnikinnick, meaning "mixture," apparently originated with the Algonkian Indians who combined several plant species and soaked them in a pipe.

A. uva-ursi, throughout its wide range in North America and especially in the northern regions, was a most common smoke, used by native peoples and early Russian explorers. Kinnikinnick remained popular until tobacco, with its more powerful kick, supplanted it.

My Latin translations are miserable deeds, but from the generic and specific names, I pull out something like "bear-grapes of the north." They are commonly called bearberries. Two other closely related species, *A. alpina* and *A. rubra*, also called bearberries, are native to Alaska but are not suitable for smoking.

In view of the Surgeon General's warning on cigarettes, possibly the alternative use of *A. uva-ursi* should again be considered. In scanning the literature on the chemical derivatives of kinnikinnick, I noted that it is free of nicotine and the carcinogenic tar of tobacco. In fact, a medicinal herb tea is made from the green leaves.

Personally I find tobacco too harsh to smoke but occasionally when I'm in a polluting mood, kinnikinnick makes the mildest "tobacco" I've ever smoked. Now, mind you, I am not advocating smoking! But if you smoke tobacco and are considering quitting (or have tried quitting but couldn't) then possibly kinnikinnick could be substituted.

Is it possible that the physiological dependency of tobacco could be overcome by slowly reducing the amount of tobacco with kinnikinnick? By collecting the plentiful plant, drying the leaves and "rolling your own" with a starting mixture of, say 75% tobacco to 25% kinnikinnick and periodically changing the tobacco proportion until one is smoking 100% kinnikinnick, you just might kick a chemical dependency on tobacco. If you simply feel a need for a cigarette in your hand and are not physiologically hooked, then the switch is much easier.

The plant is evergreen and can be collected anytime for smoking. Naturally, it is now snow covered but appears quite early in spring. Simply dry the leaves thoroughly and crush fine. Get a handroller and give mother nature's brand a try.

And if you succeed in switching from tobacco to kinnikinnick, I'd like to hear how it worked out. Good luck.