

April Field Trip

Join Verna for an early season field trip to McHugh Creek. Winter identification and early emerging plants will be the focus.

McHugh Creek
Saturday, April 23
1:00 p.m.
for approx. 2 hours

This will be an easy trip, although the trail may be slippery depending on the weather. Bring appropriate foot wear.

Meet at 1 p.m. at the N.E. corner of the Sears Mall parking lot (at Northern Lights and New Seward Highway), or at 1.20 p.m. at McHugh Creek. We will drive to Mile 111.8 on the Seward Highway and stop at the McHugh Creek pull-out next to the Seward Highway. If you need more information contact Verna at

Field Trips

A full list of field trips with meeting places and times will be published in May. Here is a list of trips that we know about to date. Mark your diaries!

May 15	Wishbone Hill (Sutton)
May 29	Bird Ridge
May 30	Nancy Lake
June 6,7	Kantishna Roadhouse
	(reservations by April 1 - see March newsletter)
June 8	Hillside Park
June 11,12	Tern Lake Campground
	Upper Trail Lake (Kenai)
July 9	Wolverine Peak
July 10	Crow Pass
July 15, 16, 17	Devil Lake/Devil Pass(Kenai)
August 13	Hatcher Pass

We would still like to add more field trips to the schedule. Please call Sarah or Brad Andres at if you would like to volunteer to lead one.

The Iris Family: Iridaceae

These plants are perennial monocots growing from a rhizome or corm. Their flower parts are in multiples of three: 3 connected sepals, 3 connected petals, 3 stamens, and a 3-parted inferior ovary. The leaves are long and pointed with parallel veins. Flowers are few in a terminal cymose inflorescence (the flower stems arise from the same point). Seed capsules



split down the side to release their seeds. Alaska has two genera: *Iris* (1 species with 2 sub-species) and *Sisyrinchium* (1 species). Both genera are found in moist areas. Gardeners will be familiar with two other exotic members of this family: gladiolus and crocus.

Iris setosa subsp. *setosa* is common in coastal areas from S.E. Alaska to Kotzebue. The similar *Iris setosa* subsp. *interior*, is found only in interior Alaska. Both go by the common names of Wild

Flag or Blue Flag. The flowers are showy, 2.5 - 4 inches across, and blue/purple shading to white in the center. Occasionally they may be white. The whole plant is poisonous.



Sisyrinchium litorale is less common, and found only in moist, coastal areas from S.E. Alaska to Kodiak Island. The flowers are small and open, more like a crocus. Its narrow leaves are 3 - 4 mm wide.

What's in a Name?

Heracleum lanatum (Cow Parsnip)

Members of this genus are amongst the tallest and most stout of herbaceous plants. The genus name honors Hercules, and refers to the plant's Herculean proportions. A widely naturalized species in Europe, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, may reach 16 feet tall. The Alaskan species grows to 9 feet. 'Lanatum' means woolly, and refers to the short, densely matted, soft wool on the underside of the dinner-plate sized leaves. The stem and leaf stalks are also woolly.



Heracleum lanatum (Cow Parsnip)

The common name is partly derived from the appearance of the roots, which resemble parsnips. Another common name is Wild Celery. The peeled, inner stalk has a high sugar content, and can be eaten either raw or cooked, as a substitute for celery. However, care should be taken to remove the outer layers of the stalk as they contain a chemical irritant that may cause blistering of the lips. Some individuals are very sensitive to this plant, and brushing against it will cause an increased sensitivity to the sun, resulting in blistering. Wild Celery is a common name also given to *Angelica lucida*. Care should be taken in avoiding confusion of either of these species with Poison Water Hemlock (*Cicuta* sp.).

Spring Garden Show at the Sears Mall

Saturday, April 9
10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Sears Mall at Northern Lights and
New Seward Highway.

*** We need your help!! ***

This year the Alaska Native Plant Society is planning to have a publicity table at the Garden Show. We hope to let people know who we are and maybe attract some new members. We would like lots of volunteers to step forward to take a two hour slot at manning the tables. We have various display materials and will also be selling some of the prints and other items that are available at membership meetings. **Please call Jean Poor at [redacted] to volunteer.**

Mystery Plant Answer



Frigid Shooting Star
Dodecatheon frigidum
a member of the Primrose
(Primulaceae) family

Anchorage Chapter March Meeting: A mouth-watering treat!

At last month's meeting Daisy Lee Bitter gave us a mouth-watering look at the plants and marine creatures of the Kenai Peninsula. Many edibles were included in the program with recommendations on how to use them. Also featured were some of the poisonous plants that we should learn to recognize, and avoid.

Amongst Daisy's edible favorites were young nettle tips boiled and served with a hollandaise sauce, Oysterleaf (*Mertensia maritima*) which tastes a little like oysters and is a rich source of beta-carotene, and algae. The latter are highly nutritious, and are fairly easy for the beginner to identify safely. The only poisonous species occurs in the tropics. Particular favorites were Sea Lettuce (*Ulva* sp.) recommended in chowders, and Dulse (*Palmaria mollis*), a very tasty reddish algae.

Toxic plants included Poison Water Hemlock (*Cicuta* sp.) and Monk's Hood (*Aconitum delphinifolium*). Daisy shared her observation that the roots of Poison Water Hemlock are not always chambered, as she has found specimens with solid roots on a number of occasions. This identifier can be unreliable, and great care should be taken not to confuse this plant with Wild Celery (*Angelica* sp.) or Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*). Poison Water Hemlock usually exudes a yellow aromatic oil which gives it a characteristic odor. Monk's Hood



contains the nerve poison aconitin. In some places natives used this chemical from the roots on their arrow tips. However, there is no evidence of it being used in this way in Alaska. Daisy Lee has found an interesting use for this plant. By making a "poisonous fence" of Monk's Hood around the periphery of her garden she deters the Red-backed Voles that are so

fond of her Chocolate Lilies. She showed us the incriminating evidence - a vole's nest containing large quantities of bulbets. The latter are edible and should be gathered in fall when they are most rich in starch.

The single most important plant to the Dena'ina Indians is spruce. The tree has many uses: logs for homes and other constructions, roots for rope or string, the pitch chewed as a gum or used for caulking boats, and the cambium as a food source.



Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*)

The Dena'ina named the different spruce species of the area according to the hardness of their wood. Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*) is so dense and hard that nails can't be driven into the wood without drilling a hole first. The knots of this tree can be used as wedges for splitting wood. Slats of Black Spruce were even used as armor. This tree is very slow growing, maybe only reaching 5 inches in diameter by the age of 75 years. Sitka Spruce (*P. sitchensis*) is much faster growing and may attain a diameter of 4 feet on the Kenai Peninsula. Its wood is softer, and is used for many things including canoes. White Spruce (*P. glauca*) is intermediate in hardness, and the wood has many uses including for building boats and platforms from which to spear Beluga Whales. The hybrid Lutz Spruce, a cross between the Sitka and White Spruces, also occurs on the Kenai.

Thanks, Daisy, for a great program. You really got our saliva glands working!

Growing for It - the Alaska Rare Plant Working Group

The Alaska Rare Plant Working Group (ARPWG) is about to hold its fourth meeting. Since its conception less than two years ago, the group has expanded considerably in its scope and goals. So, who belongs to the ARPWG, and what are its members trying to achieve? The group is open to any individual interested in rare plants/ecosystems, and their conservation. Members are drawn from many federal and state agencies, the academic community, private organizations (including the Alaska Native Plant Society), and individuals who have an interest in the conservation of the natural plant resources of Alaska.

The first meeting was held by the USFWS in November of 1992, and was hosted by Ginny Moran, the Endangered Species botanist at USFWS. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of plants on the *Category 2 list, and to identify those needing the most urgent action. Participants voted to form a permanent rare plant working group for Alaska. A follow-up meeting was scheduled in the spring to enable botanists and other field biologists to coordinate their summer field seasons, in an attempt to increase the potential for data gathering with the limited budgets available.

Since then the enthusiasm of the group has led to an expansion of its scope. This now includes the promotion of inventory projects, and the conservation of plants that fit the many definitions of 'rare' used by various agencies and the Heritage Program. The most recent meeting was held in Fairbanks, in November, 1993. There the group produced a charter defining its goals and organization. The following statement comes from that charter. "The state of Alaska covers 586,412 square miles, roughly one fifth the size of the United States. Much of this land is still relatively unspoiled but conversely, as oil revenues decline, future development of other resources in Alaska may intensify. Although botanical surveys in Alaska extend back to the eighteenth century (Georg Wilhelm Steller who accompanied Bering's expedition in 1741),

inventories of the botanical resources of Alaska are anything but complete. The primary goal of the ARPWG is to facilitate continuing plant inventories in order to identify plant species or plant communities that may be considered rare in Alaska, and, to encourage conservation of these unique or rare plant resources." Future projects include the publication of a range extension document for Alaskan vascular plants, the production of a State List of Rare Plants, the adoption of that list by the state, and an update of the Rare Plant Guide for Alaska.

The ARPWG may be young, but for those interested in the flora of Alaska it is a group with goals and ambition. To find out more about rare plants in Alaska try to attend the ARPWG meeting in Fairbanks, or come to the April meeting of the Anchorage ANPS chapter where Ginny Moran will present a program on the endangered, threatened and candidate plants of Alaska.

*Category 2 plants are those taxa for which information now in the possession of the USFWS indicates that proposing to list as endangered or threatened is possibly appropriate, but for which sufficient data on biological vulnerability and threat are not currently available to support listing.

Spring 1994 Meeting of the Alaska Rare Plant Working Group

April 7 & 8

BLM Support Building

1150 University Ave. Fairbanks

Carolyn Parker : Program Chair

The agenda will include discussions on defining a range extension, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, slide shows and presentations from the field, and workshops on computer mapping and keying.

For more information, or an agenda, call Carolyn at the University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks, at

or in Anchorage call Ginny Moran, at the Anchorage Field Office of USFWS, at

Anchorage Municipal Park Wildlife Inventory

*How does the meadow flower its bloom unfold?
Because the lovely little flower is free
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold.*

William Wordsworth.

*As the news brings reports of change in the populations of animals and in the areas where they live, the change tends to fit a pattern.....this recognition, as it affects animal life, shows the degree to which man is now calling the tune for organic evolution and is directing his own future. What neighbors he will have, and how and where they will live, can be guessed from the changes in our world today. Lorus J. and Margery Milne, *The Balance of Nature*, 1960.*

Both the above quotations are relevant today and resonate to a deeper call to understand and protect natural landscapes for future generations. Anchorage communities enjoy close proximity to diverse plant and animal wildlife as a result of a network of municipal parks, corridors and recreational trails. The importance of Anchorage greenspace is destined to grow as surrounding lands are developed. How many cities can boast of regular moose sightings in winter or enjoy the wonderful explosion of color as flowers in wooded parks and open spaces take full advantage of long days and short summers?

Individual members of the Municipal Community Planning Department are committed to the long-term protection of greenspace. The Anchorage Audubon Chapter in cooperation with other non-government groups and individuals are supporting that effort by working with city planners and managers to collect important plant and wildlife inventory data that will, over time, increase our understanding of park landscapes and city wildlife populations.

This is where you come in! Over recent weeks I have been working with Susan Redwood and Thede Tobish, senior planners with the City, to prioritize municipal parks and two Heritage Land Bank parcels into groups for inventory purposes. Group 1 consists of six parks; Beech Lake Park, Edmunds Lake Park, Far North Bicentennial/

Hillside Park, Kincaid Park, John's Park, and Bird Creek Regional Park. Depending upon volunteer support we may be able to inventory Group 2 consisting of three greenbelts; Glacier Creek, Chester Creek (and Goose Lake park), and Campbell Creek, and possibly Group 3, which includes Russian Jack Park, Section 36, and Heritage Land Bank parcels adjacent to Potter Marsh. Verna Pratt cautioned me about the increased time required for comprehensive plant surveys and we will tailor our effort accordingly.

Survey teams of specialists will target plants, animals, and birds; a smaller program will address insects. Volunteer observers need not be experts. We plan to provide training sessions for those wishing to brush up their knowledge, and opportunities will exist to team up with more experienced people. The only requirement we have is that you are interested in wildlife, and can commit a minimum of three mornings to the project. Surveys will not only provide valuable wildlife information but offer an opportunity for each of us to learn more about our surroundings. We intend to work hard, gather useful information and have fun along the way.

If you would like to be involved please contact Malcolm Ford at . (h), or (w).

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

REVEGETATION PROJECT IN CHUGACH STATE PARK

6 - 12 volunteers are needed for a project at Glen Alps. It will involve revegetation of spur trails, alongside the main trails, from the Glen Alps parking lot to the Anchorage overlook viewing platform. Anyone with expertise in plant species for revegetation/restoration of scarred and impacted alpine areas would be particularly valuable. The following skills would be useful: restoration/revegetation, transplanting techniques, and the ability to recognize alpine grasses, trees and shrubs. Training in the identification of existing species and transplanting techniques will be provided.

If you are interested in this project, or would like more details, call Frank Wesser, of Chugach State Park, at .

REVEGETATION PROJECT AT GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE

Have you ever wanted to visit Glacier Bay National Park? This summer 2 - 4 volunteers are needed for a revegetation project around the Park headquarters and housing area. Native species will be used. Volunteers will need to be able to work in isolated conditions and inclement weather. Some knowledge of local plants would be useful, but not necessary. Work gloves and good rain gear are essential. Training on local plants, transplant techniques, and Glacier Bay natural and cultural history will be provided.

If you are interested in this project, or need more details, contact Mary Beth Moss or Wilmer Cannon of Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, at .

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL

The Alaska Native Plant Society was organized in 1982 by an enthusiastic group of amateur and professional botanists. It is a non-profit educational organization with the aim of uniting all persons interested in the flora of Alaska.

Membership is open to any interested individual or organization. If you wish to join us, please indicate the category of membership you desire, then clip and mail this application with the appropriate remittance to: Alaska Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 141613, Anchorage, AK 99514

Select the membership category you desire:

Full Time Student	[] \$5	Name: _____
Individual	[] \$10	Address: _____
Family	[] \$15	City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Organization	[] \$25	

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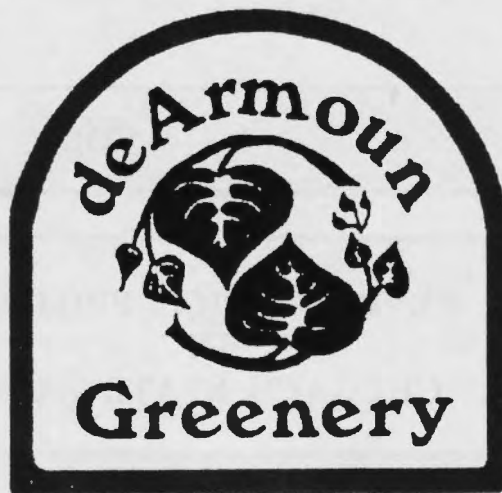
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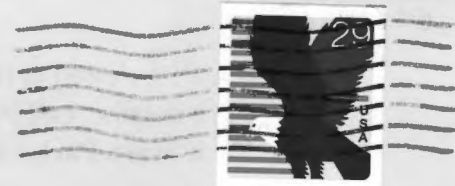
The newsletter of the Alaska Native Plant Society is published monthly except for June, July, August and September. Contributions for the May issue should be mailed to: Julia and Trevor Ricketts, Anchorage AK 99516 to arrive by April 15.



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