

# Borealis

the newsletter of the



March 1997

P.O. Box 141613, Anchorage, AK 99514

## Anchorage Chapter February Meeting

Monday, BLM SCIENCE CENTER  
March 3rd off of East 68th from Lake Otis Road  
7:30 p.m. BOARD MEETING 7:00 p.m.

(NOTE: Due to some vandalism at a daytime meeting the gate to the Science Center the gate may be closed during our meeting time. It will be unlocked, however, so if you come late or leave early and find it closed, please close it behind you. It will be open from 7 to 8 p.m., and when the meeting is over. Please also pay strict attention to STOP signs at the dog mushing crossings and look both ways. (Yes, they do mush at night, so no "California" stops please).

### PROGRAM:

"After a Fire — What Then?" — Speaker and ANPS member, Ed Berg, who is an ecologist for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge will enlighten us. Ed has studied plant disturbance on the Kenai Peninsula and will explain how natural succession takes place with different plant stands; such as, Black Spruce Bogs, Birch, Alder, Aspen and White Spruce habitats.

### MINI-BOTANY:

Presenter Tom Choate will discuss the Composite/Daisy/Aster flower of the Asteraceae family.

This family has made a few changes over the years. It was originally called the Composite or Compositae family because the flower heads are composed of many flowers — not just one as many people tend to believe. What we once thought of as the petals of a Daisy (another common name of this family) are, in fact, a type of flower of this family called the ray flower. The "center" of the flower is composed of many tubular flowers. No wonder a Dandelion flower (actually a head of flowers) is such a prolific seeder. Tom will expand more on this at the meeting.

## Mystery Plant

This semi-prostrate shrub is quite different from other members of the same genus in that its leaves are thick and leathery. Although it can grow up to one foot tall, it usually is flat on the ground due to its harsh habitats of wind-swept and flooded glacial riverbars and sandy banks. The leaves are 1 to 2-1/2", oblanceolate to obovate and serrated with rounded tips. Although slightly hairy when



young, they become smooth and glossy with age. The leaves are bluish-green on the top surface and light green to whitish beneath. The seed capsules are very reddish, which can quickly catch one's attention. The flowers are borne on leafy twigs — the male and female on separate shrubs. This

is a species endemic to our area — see map. This is a very distinct species. The Matanuska, Tolsona and Teklanika rivers are some of the places where it can easily be seen.



## MUSHROOM CLUB:

A mushroom club is being started in the greater Anchorage area. An organizational meeting will be held at 7:30 PM, Tuesday, March 11th at the Cooperative Extension Service's 2nd floor meeting room in the Carlton Trust Building on the northwest corner of Lake Otis and Northern Lights. For further information contact Phyllis Kempton at

## FIELD TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT:

It's that time again. Yes, now in the middle of winter, it's time to turn our thoughts to the coming summer flowers and field trips.

Of course, we can't have field trips without leaders — so, where have you been that's fun & flowery? Surely you want to share it with the rest of us! Where have we been that was so good we just have to go back again?

Call Kathy Burke ( ) and sign up to lead a Field Trip, or just suggest a great area to visit.

## PLANT FAMILY:

Aster — versus — Erigeron

Presenter — ANPS Member Charlu Choate will help dispell the mystery of separating these 2 genera of the Asteraceae family. Taxonomically speaking, the Erigeron genus has one row of bracts supporting its head of flowers. The Aster genus, in contrast, has multiple rows; somewhat like shingles on a roof.

To save confusion and to keep the talk short Charlu will limit the discussion to only a few of Alaska's species.

*Aster sibiricus* (Siberian Aster) a common branched, lavender species well known and easily recognized by most people is found throughout the State. It spreads by rhizomes, so forms large (sometimes loose) mats on river flats, roadsides, dry slopes, and open woods reaching a height of 12" in protected areas. its flowers are 1-1/4 to 1-1/2" across. Leaves are broad and coarse looking with a few teeth. The only confusing species might be *Aster subspicatus* which is a less common species of coastal areas of Southcentral and Southeast Alaska. A variable species, found in meadows, it can grow to 20" high. Stem leaves slightly clasp the stem and the bracts are large and leaf-like below the flower head. Another less common species of Interior Alaska is *Aster junciformis* or Rush Aster. It has numerous smaller, white flowers and narrow leaves with no teeth. It is usually found in damp lowland areas and can be 1 to 2-1/2' tall. Its distribution in Southcentral Alaska is very limited, as it is found only in the upper Cook Inlet area. It has been found near 6-Mile Lake (Elmendorf AFB) and northeast of the Palmer hay flats.

The most common large-flowered Erigeron species in Southcentral and Coastal areas is *Erigeron peregrinus* (meaning coastal). Its leaves are somewhat spatulate, slightly hairy, have no teeth, and follow up the stem. The flowers are about 1-1/2" and vary from whitish to pink or mauve, and are solitary atop a stem that is usually 10-16" tall. This species is found in Alpine or Coastal meadows. *Erigeron glabellus ssp. pubescens* (now figure that one out—glabellus means smooth and hairless, while pubescent means covered with soft short hairs!) is a similar looking species that grows in dry areas of Interior Alaska. Its leaves are mostly basal and quite hairy, inflorescence is branched

and ray flowers narrow and many, giving it a fuller somewhat frilly look.

Because the meeting is held in Anchorage we are limiting the smaller species to those most likely to be seen there.

*Erigeron acris*, Blue Fleabane, is a weedy, 12 to 20" plant of roadsides and dry fields. The oblanceolate leaves follow up the stem, inflorescence is branched and flower heads are small and lavender. This species is probably noticed more when it goes to seed and displays its many buff-colored fluffy seed heads.

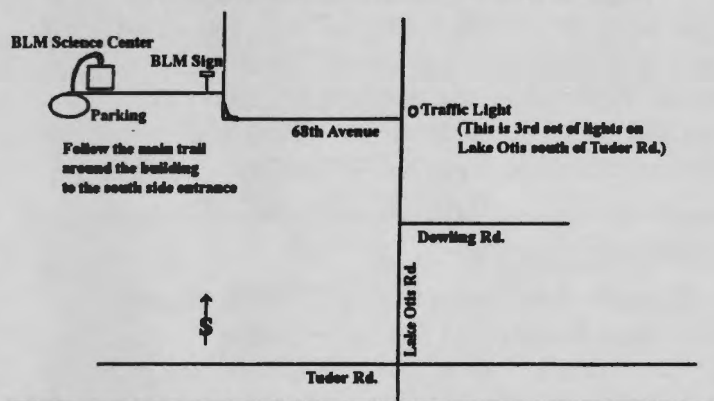
*Erigeron compositus* is a small species with hairy leaves divided into segments. This species might look like a Poppy when not in bloom. The pale pink flowers are solitary on 3 to 5" stems. These are found in dry rocky exposed areas usually at low elevations. A taller white variety is found in the Yukon Territory.

Other small erigerons that might be seen in Soouthcentral Alaska are : 1) *Erigeron humilus*, a very small alpine species found in snowbeds. The leaves are small, mostly basal and flowers are singular, small, with narrow white ray flowers with purplish bracts. 2) *Erigeron eriocephalus*, a plant of dry gravelly areas usually having many flower stems.

**Please note new meeting place!!!**

**To get there go south on Lake Otis Road, turn east (left, toward the mountains) on 68th, right on Abbott Loop Road, then left onto BLM Land. When the road splits, take the left fork. For further directions, call any of the officers.**

## Map to New Meeting Place



## MYSTERY PLANT ANSWER:

Setchell Willow

*Salix setchelliana*

Willow / Salicaceae family

# NOTICE OF PROPOSED CHANGE OF BYLAWS

## ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (ANPS)

At the January 22nd meeting of the executive board of the Anchorage chapter of ANPS, Treasurer Unison Hubbard indicated there will be a shortfall of Chapter funds before this term of office is completed. At this time, all dues monies go to the State organization, with 30% of the dues monies sent back to the local chapter(s). In addition, the local chapter does not receive any money from merchandise sold at Chapter-sponsored events, if the State organization or some other organization has purchased the merchandise for resale at Chapter functions.

On January 29th, a joint meeting of the executive board of the Anchorage Chapter and the ANPS State Board of Directors was held to discuss this problem. Anchorage has the only local Chapter of ANPS that is currently active. A change in the bylaws of the ANPS State Constitution will give more money to the individual Chapters. If these proposed changes to the bylaws pass, the changes will be retroactive to January 1, 1997.

When the ANPS bylaws were adopted in 1982, those members present, assumed that 30% of dues would be adequate to meet expenses for Chapter activities. Chapter expenses were minimal at that time, but a few things have changed including our membership numbers.

#1 We have found that serving refreshments is very beneficial as it encourages people to mingle, get acquainted; and, therefore, become more active.

#2 Meeting Room space was available on a free basis. This is no longer so for large groups.

#3 In order to obtain different speakers from out of the Anchorage Area, we are now paying some honorariums to help defray some of their expenses. As time goes on this may be even more important.

Article 10 of the bylaws: . . . "Such proposed amendments, . . . shall be mailed to the voting members (March, 1997 ANPS Newsletter). By favorable vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present at the next regularly scheduled membership meeting, (April 7, 1997) . . . , the amendment(s) may be implemented.

Portions of the proposal to be deleted will be underlined. Portions of the proposal to be added will be in bold italic type and underlined.

## ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY BYLAWS

### ARTICLE 9, CHAPTERS

#### PARAGRAPH 9

A Chapter may conduct fund-raising activities, provided that such activities are consistent with the objectives of the Society. A portion of the annual membership dues paid to the Alaska Native Plant Society by each member shall be returned to the chapter. The Executive Board shall consider each Chapter separately and determine the percentage of dues (not to exceed 30%) (not to exceed 35% (thirty-five percent)) to be returned to each chapter. Such payments shall be made quarterly, or as needed, to the Chapter Treasurer. If a chapter desires additional funds from the Society for a specific project, it shall file a written application with the Executive Board. Approval of such applications shall occur by a favorable vote of a majority of the Board. Ten percent (10%) of all ANPS sales sold by Chapter members at Chapter-sponsored activities will go to the local Chapter.



## A TROUBLING TAILPIPE FERTILIZER

By Curt Suplee (Maryland Native Plant Society)  
[Reprinted with permission of The Washington Post]

Most people probably don't regard the family sedan as a fertilizer delivery system. But it is: Coming out of the tailpipe, along with hydrocarbons and greenhouse gases, are numerous oxides of nitrogen (NOx).

They're a virtually inevitable byproduct of burning fossil fuels in air, which is 80 % nitrogen and 20% oxygen. NOx mixes with water in the atmosphere and hits the dirt as nitrogen-rich rain.

Nitrogen, of course, is a major component of fertilizer. So for years, said University of Toronto ecologist David A. Wedin, some theorists hoped NOx pollution would actually have a "silver lining" because it would encourage plant growth, which would in turn suck more polluting CO2 out of the air.

But Wedin and David Tilman of the University of Minnesota report in December 6 Science that such nitrogen "loading" is in fact "a major threat to grassland ecosystems."

They studied 162 controlled prairie plots in Minnesota for 12 years and found that increasing nitrogen by an amount approximately equal to what hits the soil in the combustion-dense Northeast United States had several adverse effects.

Indigenous grasses gave way to non-native species that store less carbon per unit nitrogen; less nitrogen was retained in soil; and the total number of species dropped.

In parts of northern Europe, Wedin said, NOx from the atmosphere deposits about half as much nitrogen per acre as U.S. corn farmers use in fertilizer.

That poses a substantial threat to ecosystem function and biodiversity, and not only in grasslands (about 20 percent of the world's vegetation) but everywhere NOx emissions are on the rise.

"The mechanisms, the way the ecosystems work, are generalizable" to many other kinds of growing areas as well, Wedin said.

## ALASKA BLUEBERRIES\“Huckleberries”

By Verna Pratt

Ever since I came to Alaska, 30 years ago, I have been puzzled by what many people call Alaska Huckleberries. These sure are not what I knew as Huckleberries in New England, but at that time I knew only common names and had no experience with plants in other parts of the country. Recently, I read an article from the Newsletter of the Maryland Native Plant Society on “Huckleberries” written by Sam Jones.

These Huckleberries belong to the Gaylussacia genus which is different from the Vaccinium genus (our Blueberries, “Huckleberries” and Lowbush Cranberries).

The Gaylussacia genus has a 10-celled ovary and the Vaccinium genus has a 4 or 5-celled ovary. Gaylussacia flowers are always on a lateral raceme (to the side of the branches). Vaccinium's are usually singular in the axil of the leaves or terminal racemes (end of branches).

Why our Alaska Vacciniums are called “Huckleberries” — I don't know, but probably because the seeds are large, like members of the Gaylussacia genus. At any rate, we won't likely see any of that genus in Alaska as it is native to the east coast of North America and South America.

### ANPS State Officers

President	Marilyn Barker
Vice-President	Virginia Moran
Secretary	Jean Poor
Treasurer	Yaso Thiro

### Anchorage Chapter Board Members

President	Marlena Mooring
Vice-President	Nancy Krieger
Secretary	Maryilyn Upton
Treasurer	Unison Hubbard

### Anchorage Chapter Program Coordinators

Main Program	Ginny Moran
Plant Family	Verna Pratt
Mini-Botany	Verna Pratt
Field Trips	Kathy Burke

### Newsletter (“Borealis”)

Editor	Ginny Moore
Circulation	Martha Hatch

The newsletter is published monthly October through May. Material for the newsletter should be mailed to: Ginny Moore, , Anchorage, AK 99516

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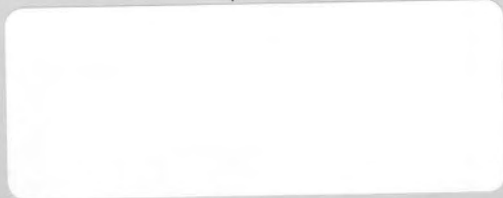


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**Alaska Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 141613  
Anchorage, AK 99514**



**1997 Dues are now due**

**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.

- Full-time Student    ( ) \$5
- Senior Citizen        ( ) \$10
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