

# Borealis

The Newsletter of the



PO Box 141613, Anchorage, Alaska

October–November 2020

## Join us at our Next Meetings!

### Monday, October 5, 7:00 PM

Main Topic: VIRTUAL SLIDESHOW

Share your favorite photo picks (up to 10)

### Monday, November 2, 7:00 PM

Main Topic: "Did You Miss It? - Sitka & Kotzebue"

Speaker: Glenn Brown

Plant Family: *Sibbaldia procumbens*

Speaker: Joan Tovsen

PLEASE NOTE: October, and perhaps future, monthly meetings will not be held in public but via computer and teleconference. By now you may have this format figured out, but if not we have people standing by to help you.

Check our website for more information and how to contribute.



For the latest information about  
ANPS events and field trips,  
go to [www.aknps.org/](http://www.aknps.org/)

## Going Virtually into Fall 2020

This endless summer is slowly winding down and we're once again going back indoors for our ANPS monthly meetings. Unfortunately, we're not yet ready to return to in-person meetings. That means that for October, at least, we'll be holding our monthly meeting via *Google Meetings*, as we did last spring. The sad part of this is that we don't get to sample the great dishes that are always brought to the potlucks. The bright side is that people all over the state (and world) can participate!

To join the webinar and watch the presentation:

1. Click on the Meeting ID link below to open it in a web browser. The best web browser to use for this is Chrome, but Firefox or Safari will also work. Avoid Internet Explorer.

Meeting ID

[meet.google.com/wkx-nomj-kng](https://meet.google.com/wkx-nomj-kng)

2. A Google Meet window should open in your browser and your camera will turn on. You'll see an image of yourself (from your computer's camera) and "What's your name?"
3. Enter your name on the line below "What's your name?" and then click the "Ask to join" button.
4. You will be granted access to the webinar. This may take a minute or two.
5. Hover over the image of yourself and click the "Mic" icon and camera icon to mute your computer mic and turn off your camera (so we all don't see you...unless you want to be seen :), respectively.

Audio:

1. If you use the above link you can listen and talk using headphones connected to your computer, or
2. alternatively you can call the phone number below, and enter the pin and you can listen and talk through your phone while watching the live video.

Phone Number: +1 321-614-3871

PIN: 712 444 165#



# When is a Native not a Native?

Among the native plants available in landscaping and gardening centers today, a growing majority consists of cultivars, often referred to as “nativars.” Breeders have done an outstanding job selecting for a variety of characteristics such as practical uses like disease resistance or sometimes purely ornamental goals such as improved growth habit or interesting leaf characteristics.

As these new assemblages of genes are expressed, there is a growing concern that cultivars of native plants are not ecological equivalents. It has raised questions about what native means and to what level of “native” a plant must be to assert its ecological role in urban landscapes.

For a time, the answer was, ‘Who knows?’ But over time it has changed to, ‘Well, it depends.’

Some changes you can obviously tell remove an ecological function, such as a flower that produces seeds being bred to be sterile will no longer feed the birds that eat those seeds. Others are trickier, which is why studies are being conducted to determine which nativars can still fulfill their roles in a habitat.

Some traits nativars offer can be more beneficial for wildlife such as producing more fruit, having a longer bloom time or attracting more pollinators. It has been found that the purple-flowered *Veronicastrum virginicum* ‘Lavender Towers’ draws more pollinators than the native version, which has white flowers. Some nurseries turn to nativars when they are able to meet a need the native plant cannot, but it’s important to make sure the nativar still serves an ecological purpose in the garden.

On the other hand, some nativars have been bred to have double blooms that make it impossible for pollinators to reach, or the flowers produce little to no nectar or pollen for insects.

The main complaint and concern against nativars is the lack of genetic diversity. This is because nativars are cloned in order to maintain their desired qualities, removing the chance for genetic variation. When there is more genetic diversity, plant species are more likely to be able to adapt and overcome threats like pests and diseases.

Wild Ones, an organization that promotes the use of native plants and sustainable landscaping does not encourage the use of nativars. “The pervasive scale of mass-production, promotion and use of nativars is of concern to ecologists and environmentally focused gardeners, horticulturists and native plant professionals,” [Wild](#)

[Ones](#) writes. “The longer we rely on nativars – clones – that are not cross pollinating in natural populations to produce their offspring, the greater the risk that we are left with only diminished selections of native plants – the nativars instead of straight species.”

**Borealis**  
the newsletter of the



## ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

### State and Anchorage Chapter Officers

President	Dennis Ronsse
Vice President	Zoe Meade
Secretary	Ginger Hudson
Treasurer	Mary Stella

### Anchorage Chapter Program Coordinators

Membership	Mary Stella
Plant Family	Timm Nawrocki
Mini-Botany	Timm Nawrocki
Field Trips	Dennis Ronsse

### Newsletter (“Borealis”)

Editor Ginny Moore

*Borealis* is published bi-monthly, fall through spring. Articles may be sent to Ginny Moore, Anchorage, AK 99516. Phone or FAX: , E-mail: [elfinwood@gmail.com](mailto:elfinwood@gmail.com)



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# Evolution of a Pollinator Garden: 2017-2020

Verna Pratt, the founder of the ANPS, helped to create the gardens that grace the entrance to the CCSC. The beds across from the garden were originally designed to be a butterfly garden. Over time these beds had become overgrown and weedy. In 2017 the Wildflower Garden Club gave ANPS a grant of \$1,000 to help improve this area.

Meetings and correspondence between BLM personnel (Nancy Patterson, Luise Woelflein, Sabrina Farmer) and ANPS occurred on how best to improve the area. Originally plans were made to make it into a better butterfly garden. However its small size and significant shading made it a less than ideal area for butterflies. Hence the decision was made to make it a garden of native plants that a variety of Alaskan pollinators would use, not just Alaskan butterflies.

The beds were emptied of plants and the soil sifted. Then plants were re-added to the beds with a focus on one color of flower for each bed. Plants were obtained in number of ways: by wild harvesting at permitted harvesting sites, by people who donated from their gardens, and from nurseries who sold native plants. A small water feature was added. Mary Stella obtained rocks for bed edging from the Alaska Botanical Garden which they donated. She also obtained plastic edging material, mulch, and soil to improve the beds.

A sign is being developed with pictures of native plants and native pollinators donated by club members, Dr. Derek Sykes, UAF entomologist, and Dr. Matt Carlson, UAA botanist. The purpose of the sign is to educate young and old about native plants and their pollinators and how they can be helped by not using pesticides and by not planting invasive non-native plants.



The project was to have been done in 2 years but extended into 3 which the Wildflower Garden Club grant committee kindly permitted. Covid did not make things easier as the gates for BLM were locked all summer. However BLM kindly supplied personnel to open the gates for us every 2 weeks. BLM allowed ANPS to include the hours in the pollinator garden as part of our 40 hour per year commitment to help defray our rental costs for CCSC space for our monthly meetings.

The gardens will only improve with time as the plants spread out and more are added. Hopefully the beauty and educational aspects of the garden will be enjoyed by many for years to come. Word is out to the pollinators who have already arrived.

Like most such volunteer projects, it takes a village. ANPS wishes to express appreciation to so many which includes:

- **Wildflower Garden Club** for their \$1,000 grant and patience in extending it to 3 years
- **Alaska Botanical Garden** for their donation of rocks
- **Dr Derek Sykes, Dr Matt Carlson, Glenn Brown, and Beth Baker** for their pollinator and plants pictures
- those who donated plants (sorry can't list of our your names here)
- **BLM** for supplying personnel at the time of Covid and for helping in planning and sign development
- **ANPS members** who put in hours of work over 3 summers

And finally, to **Mary Stella** whose energy, enthusiasm, and persistence impressed all who worked with her to complete this project. Mary, we love you and will miss you!!! The pollinators and native plants in the garden thank you too!!





# Flora of Chugach State Park iNaturalist Project

The flora of Chugach State Park (CSP) project is a volunteer effort led by the AK Native Plant Society (ANPS) in collaboration with CSP to document the vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens that occur in the park. The species list is being developed using a combination of preexisting information from herbarium records, and new field work.

During the summer of 2020, volunteers from ANPS documented species using iNaturalist, and by collecting voucher specimens. Data compilation is currently underway. The Flora of Chugach State Park iNaturalist project can be accessed online via the following link: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/flora-of-chugach-state-park>.

The project is a "Collections" project which iNaturalist defines as:

"A collection project is, in essence, a saved Observations Search. When creating a Collection project, you will choose a set of requirements for the project, such as taxa, place(s), users, dates, and quality grade. Every time the project's page is loaded, iNaturalist will perform a quick search and display all observations that match the project's requirements, including observations made before the project was created."

We set the requirements for this project to include plants and fungi observations located within Chugach State Park based on the park boundary that is in iNaturalist. So basically, if you make a plant or fungi observation within the boundary of Chugach State and post that observation to iNaturalist it will be included in the project. You don't need to become a member of the project to contribute, but we encourage everyone to join so we can readily see who is contributing to this summer's efforts.

## Plants and Fungi of Alaska Project

When uploading your observations to iNaturalist please consider adding your observations to the [Plants and Fungi of Alaska project](#) which is linked to the University of Alaska Fairbanks new Flora of Alaska project. "Research Grade" observations contributed to this project will be included in the new Flora of Alaska. For an observation to be research grade at least 2 people need to agree on an ID. To contribute to this project you'll need to join the project. Then go to the above link and click on the red "Add Observations" button.

## Identifications in iNaturalist

We will only include "research grade" iNaturalist observations in our final tally of plant and fungi species in Chugach State Park. As mentioned above, for an observation to be research grade at least 2 people need to agree on an ID. Therefore, in addition to needing people to post observations to iNaturalist, we also need people to go into iNaturalist and identify other people's observations.

## Best Practices for iNaturalist Observations

To improve the chances that your observations will be identified (and thereby become research grade) please follow the best practices listed below:

- Take at least 3-5 photos, ideally with good lighting
- Take photos of all plant parts required for identification to the species level using a dichotomous key.
- Take photos that capture the entire plant, and also take close up photos of important plant parts necessary for making an accurate ID.
- Include something in your photos for scale (e.g., leatherman or ruler).
- Record notes on habitat (e.g., soil moisture status), approximate number of individuals in the population, and associated plant species



Sparrow's-egg Lady's Slipper  
(*Cypripedium passerinum*)  
from a calcareous fen,  
Chugach State Park, Alaska

Photo by Aaron Wells

If you have questions regarding the Flora of Chugach State Park iNaturalist project or about iNaturalist in general please feel free to contact Aaron Wells at [awells1977@gmail.com](mailto:awells1977@gmail.com)



## Wildflowers of Indianhouse Ridge

A self-guided tour  
Alaska Native Plant Society  
May 17 thru May 25, 2020

Plants have been identified with small wooden markers along the first 1/2 mile of the trail to Indianhouse Mountain. For more information visit [aknps.org](http://aknps.org).

Thanks to Chugach State Parks for allowing the placement of temporary markers along the trail.

Special Park Use Permit No. 20-301 (1) AAC 38.01B



Indianhouse Mountain © Dennis Ronsee

# Field Trips In a Time of Covid

Hosting a plant tour during a pandemic took a little creativity. Remaining socially distant – would have been difficult along the narrow trail – so we decided to go with a self-guided tour. Still outside, looking at plants, just without fellow hikers. My goal in co-hosting a plant walk was to have a little extra incentive to learn the plants and to help others learn the local plants. A self-guided plant walk, with plants labeled, seemed like a workable solution. My co-host, Lies Packer, and I

hiked the Indianhouse Ridge trail a couple of times and found 42 plants that we decided to include in the tour. Plants were numbered with small wooden markers and their common name. A corresponding list of the numbered plants, with their scientific name and family, was available from the ANPS Facebook page or via e-mail. ANPS members could also request an eBooklet of ID notes and photos.

The first Self-Guided Plant tour, hosted by Alaska Native Plant Society, was well received. It attracted a wide range of people, some of whom don't normally go on field trips, such as families with kids in tow, and people who like to hike at their own pace, instead of keeping up with a group. There were several requests for information, favorable comments, and a few new memberships after the tour. Missing was the chance for group interaction and group learning of additional plants.

Putting in the self-guided walk was relatively easy. A call to Chugach State Park was all it took to get a free, special use permit granting permission to set up the walk and leave it in place for a week. We used small, bamboo plant tags for the plant labels. A sign at the start of the walk, described who was hosting the tour, and how people could get more information about the tour or the club. The most important detail we learned was to make the labels very visible. My, initial, discreet tags were way too difficult to find. Surveyor's tape solved that problem. To help participants find the plants we added notes to the Plant List describing where the ID'd plants were located and letting hikers know when there was a gap between the plants.



If you are considering hosting a tour I encourage you to just do it! Prepping for a tour is great incentive to increase your plant knowledge. One benefit of a self-guided tour is you can check your work before the tour. Thanks to Dennis Ronsee for confirming my plant identifications. Especially when I was sure it was *Pyrola grandiflora* and he politely pointed out *P. grandiflora* doesn't grow along Turnagain arm. As I said – this was a great learning experience.

**Wildflowers of Indianhouse Ridge** – An Alaska Native Plant Society self guided tour, prepared by Phyllis Rogers and Lies Packer, in partnership with Chugach State Park.  
**Dates:** May 16 - 25, 2020  
An eBooklet of matching photos and ID notes for this walk is available to ANPS members at [dennis.ronsee@gmail.com](mailto:dennis.ronsee@gmail.com). For membership information and much more visit our website, [aknps.org](http://aknps.org).  
Scientific names used are consistent with the 2020 Flora of AK Project.  
Thanks to Phyllis & Lies for providing the first ever self-guided ANPS field trip! Comments and suggestions for future self-guided field trips may be sent to [dennis.ronsee@gmail.com](mailto:dennis.ronsee@gmail.com).  
Dennis Ronsee, President Alaska Native Plant Society.

Plant #	Common Name	Scientific Name	Family
1	Western Columbine	<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	Ranunculaceae
2	Rattlesnake Root	<i>Prenanthes alata</i>	Asteraceae
3	Devil's Club	<i>Oplopanax horridus</i>	Araliaceae
4	Hemlock Parsley	<i>Conioselinum pacificum</i>	Apiaceae
5	Wild Licorice	<i>Osmorhiza depauperata</i>	Apiaceae

We all look forward to when we can again meet in groups, without worrying about masks, hand sanitizer and staying 6' apart. Until then let's enjoy creative ways to keep studying and conserving Alaska native plants.

- Story and photos by Phyllis Rogers

*Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed this self-guided hike, and the helpful e-booklet! I wouldn't have seen either the Boechera or the orchid without the stakes/flagging, they were both delightful. Thanks again! Sue*

## Curry Ridge Field Trip

The Fairbanks and Anchorage ANPS groups met for a joint outing to Curry Ridge in Denali State Park on the weekend of July 10-12. Six people from each group were able to come. We stayed at the group campsite at K'esugi Ken Campground at the base of Curry Ridge. We arrived in unsettled weather on Friday afternoon, but as the evening progressed the once-threatening clouds evaporated and we were treated to stunning views of Denali and the rest of the Alaska Range across the Chulitna Valley. We discovered a nice little loop trail that runs about a mile through environments adjacent to the campground. Although the weather was fine, we took the precaution of setting up a tarp over the cooking/eating area to be prepared for sudden changes.



Photo by Ginger Hudson



Social Distancing Lunch Break  
Photo by Marilyn Barker

Saturday morning dawned bright and clear, so several of us went out early to revisit the campground loop trail for photos of Denali in the morning sun. After breakfast we started up the Curry Ridge Trail. The trail traverses a steep slope via a few long switchbacks through birch (mostly) forest with lots of alder on its way to the ridge crest. After about 2 miles the trail reaches a break in slope marking the beginning of the more rolling topography of the broad ridge crest. From here the trail makes a large loop of two or three miles through a patchwork of open spruce forest, alder thickets, low willow thickets, subalpine heaths, tussocky meadows, peaty wetlands, and a windswept fell-field at the high point. A side trail leads to a lake and its surrounding thickets. The day was quite warm and several of our group couldn't resist jumping in. We were treated to spectacular views of the Alaska Range and the Chulitna Valley, though by the time we got up to the

higher elevations clouds were moving in and playing hide and seek with the mountains. That only meant that every time we looked out we saw something different. The elevation gain is 1100 feet from the campground to the high point.

There were lots of flowers out in both the forest and in the more open vegetation of the ridge crest. We didn't see anything spectacularly rare or exciting, but did add two species, Brook Saxifrage (*Micranthes nelsoniana*) and Timberberry (*Geocaulon lividum*), to the checklist that had been developed from fieldwork done in the area in 2010. Starflower (*Trientalis europaea* subsp. *arctica*), Nagoonberry (*Rubus arcticus*), Trailing Raspberry (*Rubus pedatus*), and Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*) were flowering prominently in the forest. Arnicas (*Arnica frigida*) and harebells (*Campanula lasiocarpa*) were prominent among the flowers welcoming us to the fell-field on the ridge crest. Northern water carpet (*Chrysothamnium tetrandrum*), always a treat to find, was growing in seepy areas along the trail.



*Trientalis europaea* subsp. *arctica*)  
and *Rubus chamaemorus*  
Photo by Marilyn Barker

The evening found us enjoying appropriately socially distanced dinner and conversation around the campfire. Jeff Mason brought his guitar and treated us to music—a preview of what would be on offer at this year's annual Fourth of July folk festival at the "Lodge at Black Rapids" on the Richardson Highway.

That night, our luck with the weather broke sometime in the wee hours, and by the time we straggled out of our tents Sunday morning it was raining pretty hard. We were glad that we had taken the trouble to set up the tarp when we first arrived. After breakfast there was no break in sight, so we decided to bail on our original plan to hike on the Upper Troublesome Creek Trail. We reluctantly said good-bye and went back to our respective towns.



# FROM OUR BOOKSHELVES

## Recognizing Alaskans!



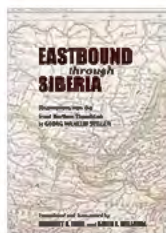
### **Grassroots Stewardship**

by F. Stuart Chapin III, ("Terry Chapin" Fairbanks, Alaska)  
Oxford University Press - July 2020

In a society more concerned with how to cope with existential dread than how to make actionable changes to save the planet, a surprisingly large number of Americans identify as environmentalists. What can individual people do to lessen human impacts on the planet? This is not an easy question. Most research is focused on large-scale changes that go beyond anything an individual can accomplish, and people are left feeling defeated rather than inspired to make changes in their everyday lives. Change starts at home, and F Stuart Chapin, III has assembled a book for people who want to learn more about global changes and, more importantly, what they can do about them, starting today.

*Grassroots Stewardship* approaches our current situation with an educated sense of hope and positivity. It emphasizes actions by individuals, rather than governmental or corporate institutions, to trigger transformational change. Readers will learn what they can do to most significantly transform their communities and the planet with more sustainable pathways.

"Professor Terry Chapin is not only a world-leading ecologist, he is also one of the world's most profound thinkers and actors on stewardship of the Earth System. Professor Chapin has built a long and productive career that links ecology and ethics in both theory and practice. His novel concepts published over the last 30 years have been widely influential in understanding biological diversity which underpins human well-being. His focus has been on the global Arctic, where ecology meets climate change in the carbon-rich expanses of tundra, permafrost and boreal forest. Professor Chapin works with indigenous groups and local communities in both Siberia and Alaska, and connects local actions and well-being to global sustainability. His overarching theme of Earth Stewardship could not come at a more pivotal time, when deep institutional and structural change is required to meet the challenges ahead for humanity. His research is tremendously inspiring, with its focus on taking responsibility for our actions, our beliefs and our economic, social and political systems. Terry Chapin's concept of Earth Stewardship as a guiding principle points to the scientifically sound and ethical management of natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations, and for the rest of life on Earth. On this 30th anniversary of the Volvo Environment Prize, there could be no more deserving and outstanding Laureate than Terry Chapin." --- Citation for 2019 [Volvo Environment Prize](#)



### **Eastbound Through Siberia**

By Georg Wilhelm Steller, translated by Margritt A. Engel, Karen E. Willmore (both from Anchorage)  
Indiana University Press May 2020

In the winter of 1739, Georg Steller received word from Empress Anna of Russia that he was to embark on a secret expedition to the far reaches of Siberia as a member of the Great Northern Expedition. While searching for economic possibilities and strategic advantages, Steller was to send back descriptions of everything he saw. The Empress's instructions were detailed, from requests for a preserved whale brain to observing the child-rearing customs of local peoples, and Steller met the task with dedication, bravery, and a good measure of humor. In the name of science, Steller and his comrades confronted horse-swallowing bogs, leaped across ice floes, and survived countless close calls in their exploration of an unforgiving environment. Not stopping at lists of fishes, birds, and mammals, Steller also details the villages and the lives of those living there, from vice-governors to prostitutes. His writings rail against government corruption and the misuse of power while describing with empathy the lives of the poor and forgotten, with special attention toward Native peoples.

What emerges is a remarkable window into life—both human and animal—in 18th century Siberia. Due to the secret nature of the expedition, Steller's findings were hidden in Russian archives for centuries, but the near-daily entries he recorded on journeys from the town of Irkutsk to Kamchatka are presented here in English for the first time.

# 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 goal 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, fill in the form below, and mail it with the appropriate remittance to:

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

STATUS     NEW     RENEWAL

CATEGORY	E-Mail Newsletter	Snail-Mail Newsletter	Both Mail Deliveries
<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time Student	\$12	\$22	\$22
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen	\$12	\$22	\$22
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$15	\$25	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$20	\$30	\$30

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RENEW OR JOIN TODAY!  
ANPS Membership is on a calendar-year basis, so  
if you renew now you'll be set for 2021!