

BOREALIS

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ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 141613, Anchorage, Alaska 99514

Announcing

MEETING NEWS

The May meeting of the Anchorage Chapter will be on Monday, May 2nd at 8PM in the basement meeting room of the Grandview Gardens Library, 1325 Primrose (just south of DeBarr and one block west of Bragaw). Entrance is on the west side facing Primrose.

BOARD MEETING---7:15PM immediately prior to the general meeting.

PROGRAM---The program "Plants of Lake Clark National Park" will be presented by Cheryl Kline, who is employed by the National Park Service. Cheryl was the Park interpreter last season. She will be assisted by National Park Service employee Ellen Hardy.

PLANT FAMILY---ANPS Member Sally Karabelnikoff will lead a discussion on the Campanulaceae or Harebell or Bluebell family. This family is represented in Alaska by 7 species of the *Campanula* genus. They have 5 sepals, 5 joined petals, 5 stamens, and an inferior ovary with 2, 3 or 5 carpels. The fruit is a capsule or berry. Most are perennial herbs with simple alternate leaves. Some plants have a milky juice. Observation in the field on 2 occasions last season indicated that some animal (probably bears) find them tasty. A test of our own on the subject (flower tasting) supported this theory.

MYSTERY PLANT---This 2-3' shrub of dry habitats is found throughout most of Alaska in open woodlands and hillsides, except in coastal areas. The young twigs are covered with rusty scales giving the shrub a coppery look in the spring. The flowers, which bloom very early in the spring, as the leaves are starting to unfurl have 4 yellowish sepals and 8 stamens, and are borne close to the main stems. The

underside of the opposite ovate leaves have a characteristic rusty scruffiness also. The red, oval translucent berries are very bitter, but loved by bears. Whipped into a froth and sweetened they may be used as a dessert topping.



BOOK REVIEW---The book, *Dena'ina K'eruna* on Tanaina plantlore has just been republished in a Revised 2nd edition. The original book was distributed through the Adult Literacy Library, but the new edition (which includes some color plates) is a National Park Service publication. It is an excellent book, telling of the many ways the Dena'ina (an Athabaskan Indian Group) uses native plants in their daily life. This information is incorporated into the book with some color photos and good line drawings of the plants. The book will be available through the Alaska Natural History Association in the old Federal Building on 4th Avenue after June 1st and will probably be in the \$13 to \$14 range.

GARDENING DISPLAY---There will be a special Spring Gardening & Plant Display at the Sears Mall from April 25th to 30th. Anyone willing to help set up an Educational Display for the Alaska Native Plant Society on Monday the 25th at 9AM, or help take down the display on Saturday the 30th at 4:30PM please contact Verna at

1987-88 STATE OFFICERS ARE:

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HELP NEEDED---ANPS Member Ludean Marvin, who is presently working on his doctorate in botany is looking for assistance in collecting *Potentilla nivea* L. specimens from out of the way places (away from road system) in Alaska, especially on the Kenai Peninsula and on the North Slope. If anyone out there can help him, he can be reached at the Herbarium at the University of Alberta, Canada at (403) 432-5523, or write to him at: Department of Botany, B-414 Biological Sciences Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E9. If you prefer, write to ANPS at our P.O. Box, as we have a list of minimum requirement needed for a collection to be useful to Ludean.

KUDOS TO ANPS MEMBER---ANPS Member Cliff Eames who works for the Alaska Center for the Environment was awarded the Conservationist of the Year Award by the Audobon Society, and was again honored on our field trip to Russian Jack Springs Park on Saturday, April 16. Patrick Murphy, Staff Photographer for KTUU-TV (Channel 2) accompanied us on the trip and the newsclip was shown on the 6PM & 10PM news on Monday, April 18. Nice going, Cliff. This was also a very good plug for ANPS.

FLOWER PRESSES---are in. Will those members who ordered flower presses please contact Verna at

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE---The Summer 1988 Field Trip schedule is in the mail to all paid-up members.

WILDFLOWER SHOW---Saturday, June 25 and Sunday, June 26, 12 noon to 6PM, at the Pioneer School House, 3rd and Eagle.

This will be a public display of labeled Native Alaskan Plants in containers, and cuttings, and will be sponsored jointly by the Wildflower Garden Club and the Anchorage Garden Club. Anyone willing to help in any way please contact Verna at . We will need assistance in gathering materials, setting up the displays, and running the projector and commentary on wildflower slides.

FIDDLEHEAD FERN RECIPES

FIDDLENECKS & CHOPSTICKS---John Wenger

Many oldtime Alaskans look forward to wild plant dishes each spring. They seek several wild plant species, being earlier and fresher than store bought garden varieties. My favorites are the fiddleneck ferns.

Three local species of fiddleneck ferns are suitable for eating. "Fiddle-necks" are the part of the fern we pick, so named because of their resemblance to the tuning end of a violin. They must be collected early, soon after they appear above the ground.

Ostrich ferns (*Matteuccia struthopteris*) prefer rich-soiled river banks. The fertile fronds of this plant form circular clumps. They are pinnately divided and are not unlike ostrich plumes, a likeness which has given the plant its name. The sterile fronds are quite different and can reach a height of 8 to 10 feet. Ostrich ferns are very much favored by the Japanese for flavoring soups and salads.

The lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) are up to 60cm. tall. The light green fronds have a "lacy" or delicate appearance to them due to the finely segmented pinnae. They are convenient to use for edibles since they normally have very little brown "fuzz" on their fiddle-necks.

The most plentiful, locally growing fern is *Dryopteris dilatata*, the Woodland fern. It prefers moist, shaded areas. Sloping birch forests are a good place to look for this species. The fronds easily reach 3 feet.

Fiddleheads are edible just as you pick them, so simply clean and eat, as any fresh vegetable.

As a cooked vegetable, remove the fuzz by rolling in your palms quickly, put in boiling salted water for 10 minutes, and serve with butter and seasonings. Here are a few of my favorite recipes:

FIDDLEHEADS WITH CHEESE AND BLACK BUTTER

24 fiddleheads Black Butter
Parmesan cheese

In a 3-quart saucepan place the fiddleheads with a little salt and enough water to cover, and boil for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and drain thoroughly. On a long buttered dish sprinkled with grated Parmesan cheese, arrange fiddleheads in layers and sprinkle cheese between the layers. When ready to serve, cover the cheese-sprinkled ferns copiously with black butter and set to glaze under the grill in the oven.

BLACK BUTTER

1/2 cup butter chopped parsley

Put 1/2 cup butter in a saucepan and cook until it is brown and begins to smoke. Add the chopped parsley and spread the mixture over the cheese-covered fiddleheads.

FIDDLENECK OMELET

1-2/3 cup fiddleheads 1/2 lb Jack cheese
1 clove garlic, minced 1/4 tsp nutmeg
3 eggs 1/2 tsp basil
1 thick slice French bread (crumbled)

Mix together, put in cast-iron pan and bake at 350 degrees until done.

So what about the chopsticks? Well, several years ago, a friend and past student learning wildflowers wanted to experiment with wild plants for food. She was Tiawanese and cooked oriental style using a wok. I suggested trying different flower blossoms and other plant parts dipped & fried in tempura batter. While several types were o.k., fiddleheads were superb.

Simply follow the directions for tempura fried vegetables except use fresh fiddleheads. Use a wok, if possible. Flash them quickly (minute or 2) in hot oil, drain well on absorbant paper, and enjoy. The only problem is that you cannot make them fast enough! Chopsticks are fine but not really necessary. (Note--beer batter also works well!)


WHEN FIDDLEHEAD SEASON IS SUBSIDING---Peggy Pletcher

Now in the time to think ahead and garner fiddleheads to savor during the long winter ahead. Fiddleheads may be pureed with a little water in the blender, poured into small freezer containers and frozen for later use, thus adding variety to the winter cuisine. Frozen vegetables lack the color, texture and versatility of fresh ones and can be a challenge to prepare in a creative and attractive manner. No problem with Fiddlehead Soup. Frozen or fresh fiddleheads work equally well in the recipe. Just use the puree in place of whole fiddleheads and follow the recipe. No need to puree the soup in the blender unless you want to puree the bits of onion.

FIDDLEHEAD SOUP

Once a year, in early spring, the fiddleheads come out. This soup is subtle, pale green, and delicious. Garnish with a few more fiddlehead ferns. It is best served as an appetizer, either hot or cold. (cont'd next page)

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FIDDLEHEAD SOUP (cont'd)

4 tablespoonfuls (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1 large yellow onion, chopped
5 cups chicken stock
1 cup dry white wine
1 lb cleaned fiddleheads (3-4 cups packed)
1 cup half-and-half (or milk)
1 cup heavy or whipping cream
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Several lightly steamed fiddleheads (garnish)

1. Melt the butter in a large stock pot over low heat. Add the onion and saute until soft and transparent, 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Pour in the stock and wine. Add the cleaned fiddleheads and simmer uncovered over medium heat for 45 minutes.

3. Let the soup cool slightly and then stir in the half-and-half, cream, nutmeg, and lemon juice.

4. Puree the soup in batches in a blender or food processor fitted with a steel blade until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

5. Gently heat the soup until hot and garnish with the lightly steamed fiddleheads.

Makes 6 to 8 portions.

QUIZ ANSWER --- *Shepherdia Canadensis*,
Soapberry.

THE HEART'S GARDEN

(as printed in the Wildflower Garden Club Gazette)

The heart is a garden

Where thought flowers grow.

The thoughts that we think

Are the seeds that we sow.

Every kind, loving thought

Bears a kind, loving deed;

While a thought that is selfish

Is just like a weed.

We must watch what we think,

Each minute of the day;

And pull out the weed thoughts

And throw them away;

And plant loving seed thoughts

So thick in a row

That there will not be room

For weed thoughts to grow.

The next newsletter will be the October issue, which will be mailed in September. Next meeting is October. The newsletter staff hopes that you have a great Summer. See you in the Fall, if not on the Field Trips.

