

BOREALIS

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ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 141613, Anchorage, Alaska 99514

December 1990

ANPS STATE OFFICERS ARE:

President-----Forrest Baldwin
Vice-President-----Jean Poor
Secretary-----Jean Tam
Treasurer-----Larry Haller

ELECTION COMING:

Now is the time to elect our State Officers for the 1991-1992 term. The nominating committee has presented the following slate of nominees:

President-----Forrest Baldwin
Vice-President-----Jean Poor
Secretary-----Jean Tam
Treasurer-----Ram Srinivasan

Your ballot is attached to this newsletter. Note that there is space for write-in candidates. In order for your vote to be counted you must mail your ballot to the Society's post office box in time for it to be received by 30 December 1990.

ANCHORAGE CHAPTER ELECTION RESULTS:

As a result of the election held at the November meeting of the Anchorage Chapter, the following officers were elected for the 1991 year:

President-----Lynn Catlin
Vice-President-----Gary Davies
Secretary-----Carol Hoblitzel
Treasurer-----Ram Srinivasan
Rep. to State Board-----Frank Bogardus
Newsletter Editor (appointed)-----Frank Pratt

MEETING NEWS:

The December meeting of the Anchorage Chapter will be held on Monday, December 3rd, at 7:30PM in the meeting room of the Muldoon Library in the Carr's Shopping Mall on the corner of Muldoon Road and Northern Lts. The library will be closed, so enter by the door at the rear of the building.

PROGRAM: Plants of Baffin Island

ANPS State President, Forrest Baldwin, who spent over two weeks on Baffin Island in the Summer of 1989, will present the program. Most of the plants seen on Baffin are circumpolar, so many of them are also present in Alaska, especially in the Brooks range.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

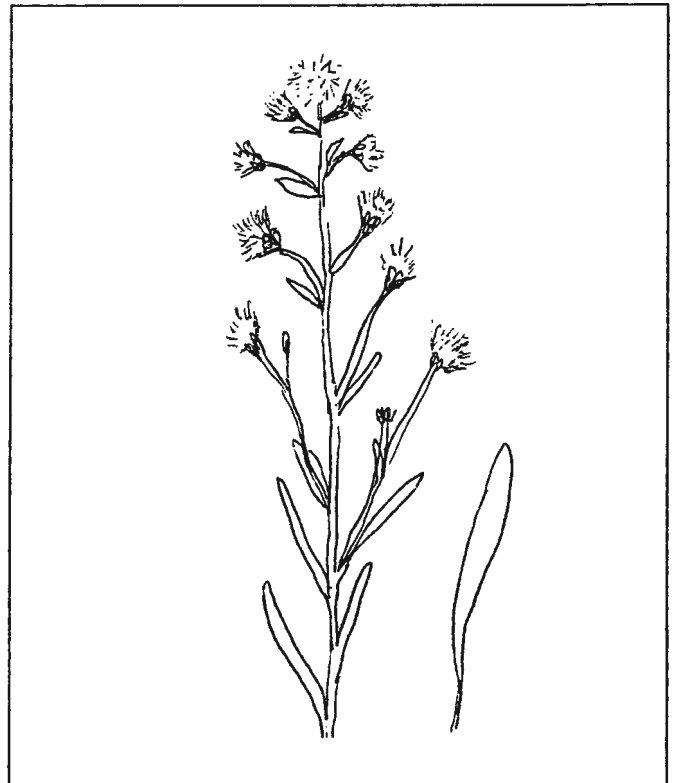
The Board of Directors will meet at 6:45PM just prior to the general membership meeting.

PLANT FAMILY:

The plant family members to be discussed are the Aquilega, Aconitum and Delphinium genera of the Buttercup or Ranunculaceae family. These genera have flowers with helmets or 1 to 5 spurs---distinctive plants. The Aquilega genus has regular flowers with 5 long spurs (2 species in Alaska). The Aconitum genus has hooded, irregular flowers without spurs. The Delphinium genus has flowers with 1 spur (2 species in Alaska).

MYSTERY PLANT:

We see an erect 12-24" tall plant with a branched inflorescence with heads of lavender flowers that resemble dandelions in seed. Leaves are narrow, spatulate and coarse feeling with hairs. This weedy plant is common in sandy soil in open spruce woods, fields and roadsides throughout most of Alaska, except near the coasts.



Mystery Plant

Picking wild raspberries is a feast for the senses

by Richard W. (Toby) Tyler, Kachemak Chapter

The rains this year were just in time to flesh out those succulent wild raspberries, and I have again found berry picking to be one of my favorite seasonal activities here in Homer.

All I need is a sturdy pain with a flexible handle so that I can, when necessary, hang it over a crooked finger of the hand holding up the berry-laden stalk---thus leaving the other hand free.

My pail is rigid enough to allow me to clamp it tightly between my knees when the picking gets really good. Also, my pail is not too large and cumbersome.

My favorite is a dented aluminum bucket which turned up in "The God's Must Be Crazy" fashion after spring thaw one year in what had been the best picking patch the previous season. None of my fellow pickers has ever confessed to having lost it.

Many pleasant and productive hours have I spent catching the bright aromatic drupes in my cupped hand before they fell to the ground. In a good year, it is hardly worth being concerned about those fruits that drop into the musky world of decaying horsetails and nettles below.

My first experience with wild berries was the summer when I turned nine. Our family had camped regularly in the Sierra Nevada, but no berries ripened there in July.

This particular year, I had been invited to accompany dad's mother by train back to her cabin in the Rockies above Denver. Knowing that our family adventure was over for that year and faced with the sweltering urban environment of California's central valley, I decided to go at the very last moment, and thus we left in a flurry of last-minute repacking!

It turned out to be one of those seminal periods that every child should experience. It was my first opportunity to get out and explore the natural world on my own, and I was entranced.

Every day I'd return excitedly to the cabin to share my discoveries with grandmother, who, with only a few more years to live, could not venture far. This was her home ground, however, and she must have been greatly enjoying everything anew through my young eyes. She was a wonderful source of information about everything.

Later in the season, it was I who was allowed to go down into the sweet meadow to pick the wild currants growing near the narrow-gauge tracks, where the steam engine puffed up the canyon dramatically twice a week.

Such pleasant memories are awakened every time I get out my bucket amid those magically fragrant raspberry plants.

Their spicy aroma is one that would make a fortune if it could be duplicated as an air freshener.

Times I spend in a berry patch are a delight for all the senses. I cherish the lingering fragrance that clings to my hands. I keep my ears tuned to the sounds of the bees and wasps sharing this special place.

Experience usually enables me to judge when they are innocently foraging like me, or when I am getting too close to that bulbous grey hive that often hangs on the rigid dead canes of earlier years.

I also enjoy the calls of nearby birds. This year it is the sneezed-out "grab it" of the alder fly catchers. Appropriate.

The tingling in my wrist as I write this attests to the tactile experiences beyond that of the soft red berries and their thorny stems. No matter how familiar I am with nettles or how careful I am to avoid them, I always seem to run afowl of at least one with its hair-trigger darts!

There are always myriads of fascinating insects sharing this busy little world. After the bucket is back in the kitchen, I find it alive with an assortment of aphids, beetles and colorful little spiders---with at least one thin inchworm making its way around the rim.

The other evening I stopped myself in mid-reach for what appeared to be a berry-sized brown hazelnut. In reality, it was the body of a very large spider whose web I had earlier encountered.

One dry year, when the berries were small but numerous, I tried using a method of picking that had worked well for harvesting almonds on our ranch. I spread cloths and cardboard below the canes and then shook the plants to dislodge the ripe berries.

The hordes of tiny insects, leaves and sticks that cascaded down was astounding, and I soon gave up trying to separate out the berries.

Not the least of the advantages from a spell in the raspberry patch is the opportunity to let the cares of the world fall away and to do some concentrated thinking---even if it is nothing more profound than to ponder why the raspberries always seem to be on the underside of a drooping cane.

Now if only those long-awaited rains would stop forcing me out of those Elysian fields before my trusty old bucket is completely full!

Editor's Notes:

R. W. (Toby) Tyler is a member of the recently formed Kachemak chapter of ANPS. He is a very well known wild-flower artist. His shop, *The 8 x 10 Studio*, in Homer which was established in 1962, is Homer's oldest gallery. In the historic log cabin studio, popularly priced original art works done by Toby are displayed (even on the ceiling). In front of the shop is a very charming wildflower garden. Also available at the shop is information, drawings, reproductions, note papers, and new flowers charts by seasons.

Summer hours: approximately 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Location: 581 Pioneer Avenue, Homer.



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS:

by the Editor

Seems like about every time that your editor is ready to throw in the sponge, somebody saves the day by sending in an article or two.

Many thanks to those readers who contributed to this issue of the newsletter. Now, how about some of the rest of the membership adding something. I know that the literary bug lurks in many of our readers. Come on in, the water's fine! You certainly don't have to be a Steinbeck or Hemingway to make it big in this publication. Now's your chance to get your name in print and help keep your poor old editor from getting grey hair (to match the grey beard).

How about some poetry. We haven't had any for some time. Or witicisms. Or recipes. Come on now, let's fill up that mailbox. It's our newsletter, let's let it reflect us, not just me.

ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?

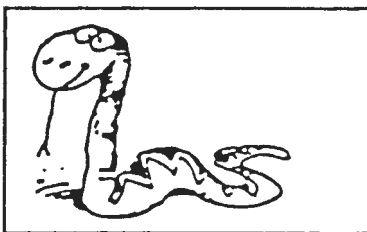
Here's the story of The Little Green Snake as told by James Roberts. It seems this fellow was explaining why he was in the hospital. He said his wife had brought a bunch of potted plants into the house to keep them from freezing, and it happened that a little green snake had hidden himself in one of the plants. When the snake warmed up, it came slithering out of the plant pot and went under the sofa. The fellow's wife saw it and let out a great scream.

He happened to be taking a bath at the time, but out he leaped and ran naked to see what his wife was screaming about. His wife told him there was a snake under the sofa. So he got down on the floor to look for it. Just then, his dog came in and cold-nosed him. He thought it was the snake and fainted. His wife thought he'd had a heart attack and called an ambulance. The attendants rushed in and loaded him on the stretcher and started carrying him out. The snake came slithering from under the sofa, and when the attendants saw it they dropped the stretcher and broke the fellow's leg, and that's why he was in the hospital.

Well, with her husband in the hospital with a broken leg, and a snake under her couch, the wife went next door to enlist the aid of a neighbor who had the reputation of being an outdoorsman, having camped out with the Cub Scouts last summer.

His wife was at the grocery store, and he volunteered to corral the snake. Armed with a rolled up newspaper, he took a few swishes under the couch and declared that the snake had vacated the premises. "Thank goodness," declared the woman, plopping down on the sofa. As her hand dropped between the cushions, it brushed a small scaly skin, which she immediately realized was the snake. Screaming, she fainted dead away on the sofa as the snake slithered quickly back to the floor and under the sofa.

The outdoorsman knew about mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, so he pushed the woman's head back into the proper position. Just as he started the first breath, in ran his wife carrying a sackful of canned goods. She saw her husband going mouth-to-mouth with the neighbor on the couch so she immediately slammed the heavy sack of canned goods across the top of his head.



The crash and scattering cans brought the fainted woman up with a start. When she saw the neighbor lying on the floor; and his wife bending over him, she was sure he was snake bitten. She ran to the kitchen for a bottle of medicinal whiskey which she started to pour down the poor fellow's throat. His wife, beginning to regret hitting him with the sack, was subdued but did manage to wrestle the whiskey bottle away from the other woman, sloshing some on both of them.

About that time, two policemen, summoned by a neighbor, walked in. After a sniff of the whiskey aroma, the officers listened disbelievingly to the two women, both talking at the same time, trying to explain about the snake that had caused it all. The officers left with the ambulance that took the still unconscious husband and his sobbing wife away to the hospital, leaving the first woman alone with a very, very scared little green snake hidden far back under the sofa.

---Contributed by Jean Poor, as taken from the *Chiasto-Hi-Lites*, taken from *The Rockhound Scoop*, taken from the *Deming Rock Chips*.

ANNUAL SEED SALE:

Since there was insufficient contributions of wildflower seeds, and nobody volunteered to organize the project, the Annual Seed Sale project has been cancelled for this year!

1991 FIELD TRIP PLANNING:

Now is the time for us to start planning the 1991 Field Trip Schedule. We had a very successful season last year, so let's start working on 1991 now! If you would like to lead a field trip, please contact one of the officers. If you know of a nice area, but don't feel qualified in botany, just let us know and we will arrange for a qualified botanist.

We are looking for ideas on all sorts of trips ranging from 2-3 hours hikes to 4-day trips. We specifically need a plan for the 4th of July weekend, since we try to plan a special event for that time. We will try to schedule another Kachemak Bay Kayak Trip, as last year's trip was enjoyed by all. We need ideas for new and interesting areas and activities.

In order to make field trip planning easier, we will have Field Trip Planning Forms available at meetings in the near future, or you may request them by addressing the Society's Post Office Box.

QUIZ ANSWER:

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a Spirit is manifest in the Laws of the Universe---a Spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we, with our modest powers, must feel humble.

---Albert Einstein

(Thanks, Al)