

BOREALIS

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ANCHORAGE CHAPTER MEETING NEWS:

The April meeting of the Anchorage Chapter will be held on Monday, April 1st, 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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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

PROGRAM: "The Botanical Legacy of the Kotzebue Expedition" ---will be presented by Robert Fortyne, who is the author of the book *Chills and Fever*. He will speak on the Kotzebue Expedition in the early 19th century. Many of our common native species of plants were named after explorers on that trip; such as, Kotzebuei, Chamissonis, Romanzoffii, Eschscholtzii, and Wormskjoldii.

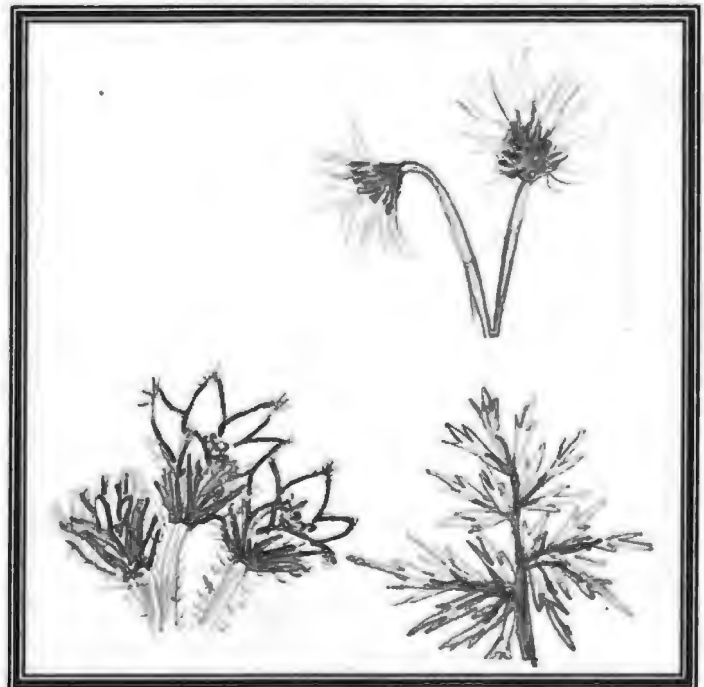
MINI-BOTANY: Program for this month will be a presentation by Denise Horton on using natural dyes from lichens, etc.

PLANT FAMILY: The *Thalictrum* genus of the Buttercup or Ranunculaceae family. This month we will continue the study of the *Ranunculus* family. This portion of the family has petaloid sepals only. This means that they have no petals, but the sepals look like petals. The flowers look somewhat like very small Columbine flowers. The plants have alternate leaves that look very much like small Columbine leaves. There are 2 species in Alaska.

MYSTERY PLANT:

A furry leaf-cluster pushes upward through the cold wet ground soon after the snow has melted. Unbranched stems, extending up to 20 inches tall after flowering, support an attractive purple flower that opens to as much as 3 inches in diameter. The flower-stem has sessile leaves that are deeply cleft into linear lobes, as are the basal leaves that are long-petioled. All parts of the plant except for the flower are covered in silky white hairs.

It is found growing on open slopes and sandy, well drained places in interior Alaska, such as the front of the log church in Copper Center.



Mystery Plant

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

Helpers are needed for the Gardening Day Display at the Sears Mall on Saturday, April 20th from 10AM to 6PM. If we are to participate in this educational event; 1) we will need help setting up a display from 8:30AM to 10:00AM, 2) we need people to "man the booth" from 10AM to 6PM, and, 3) we need help taking the display down at 6PM (about 1/2 hour). This is a very public-oriented project. If you are willing to help please contact Lynne Catlin at

CONGRATULATIONS:

To our Anchorage Chapter President Lynne Catlin and husband Mark on joining the ranks of Anchorage homeowners. You can find them now at

ALL FOOL'S DAY:

Practical Jokes

The first of April, some do say,
Is set apart for All Fool's Day,
But why people call it so
Nor I nor they themselves do know.

That rhyme appeared in *Poor Robin's Almanack* of 1760. If they didn't know then the origin of April Fool's Day, there isn't much hope of knowing now. But the first mention of the day for tricks and practical jokes goes back to 1698, so the custom must be at least 300 years old.

Poet Frederick Harvey thinks God showed a sense of humour when he created the animals---and us!

When God had finished the stars and whirl of
coloured suns

He turned his mind from big things to fashion little
ones,

Beautiful tiny things (like daisies) he made, and then
He made the comical ones in case the minds of men
Should stiffen and become

Dull, humourless and glum:

And so forgetful of their Maker be

As to take even themselves -- quite seriously.

Caterpillars and cats are lively and excellent puns:

All God's jokes are good -- even the practical ones!

And as for the duck, I think God must have smiled a

bit

Seeing those bright eyes blink on the day he fashioned

it.

And he's probably laughing still at the sound that
came out of its bill!

Submitted by Dave Dolese

SPRING'S A'COMIN'

With Spring closeby, we can begin to think about early edible plants. This article should get you excited and help you reacquaint yourself with an old standby -- the dandelion.

M. Grieves in *A Modern Herbal* writes:

"The leaves are shiny and without hairs, the margin of each leaf cut into great jagged teeth, either upright or pointing somewhat backwards, and these teeth are themselves cut here and there into lesser teeth. It is this somewhat fanciful resemblance to the (feline) teeth of a lion that (it is generally assumed) gives the plant its most familiar name of dandelion, which is a corruption of the French Dent de Lion -- tooth of the lion."

As a medicinal drug, dandelion enjoyed quite a reputation dating back to the 10th century. With the coming of synthetically derived drugs, its popularity has diminished. The exceptional characteristic of dandelion is that, besides being medicinal, it is tasty and nutritional. As far as medicinal plants, this is seldom the case.

The parts of the plant used medicinally are the roots, fresh or dried, and the young tops. The root is perennial and tapering, simple or, more or less, branched. They can easily exceed a foot in length. Only large, fresh, and well-formed roots should be used, not slender, forked ones. They would be of plants, at least, two years old. Dig the roots carefully, so not to break or slice them. Shake off the excess dirt and rinse until clean.

John Lust in *The Herb Book* states, "dandelion is a aperient, cholagogue, diuretic, stomachic, and tonic. It has two particular important uses: to promote the formation of bile and to remove excess water from the body in edematous conditions resulting from liver problems. The root especially affects all forms of secretions and excretion from the body. By acting to remove poisons from the body, it acts as a tonic and stimulant as well. The fresh juice is most effective, but dandelion is also prepared as a tea. Lukewarm dandelion tea has been recommended for dyspepsia with constipation, fever, insomnia, and hypochondria. An infusion of the fresh root is said to be good for gallstones, jaundice, and liver problems." Both Lust and Grieves give exact preparations and dosages at the end of their section on dandelions. At this point, I would suggest to anyone suffering from a chronic illness and contemplating using herbal medicines to first consult with a medical doctor.

In the *Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants* by Bradford Angier, the nutritional value of dandelions are given. He notes that the raw greens are 85% water, have an abundant 14,000 international units of Vitamin A per 100 grams, plus .19 milligrams of thiamine, .26 mg riboflavin, and 35 mg of ascorbic acid. All this helps explain why the lowly dandelion was so highly regarded as a tonic and general remedy by frontiersmen and early settlers long before the

days of vitamin pills. This same portion of greens is further enriched with 198 milligrams of calcium, 76 mg of sodium, and 397 mg of potassium. Most important is that this pill is plentiful and free for the picking.

Dandelion is useful on a more pleasant side also. In *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* by Euell Gibbons, no easier recipe could be found for making dandelion wine. Gather one gallon of dandelion flowers on a dry day. (Make sure to remove the green involucre). Put these in a 2-gallon crock and pour 1 gallon of boiling water over them. Cover the jar and allow the flowers to steep for 3 days. Strain through a jelly cloth so you can squeeze all the liquid from the flowers. Put the liquid in a kettle, add 1 small ginger root, the thinly pared peels and the juice of 3 oranges and 1 lemon. Stir in 3 pounds of sugar and boil gently for 20 minutes. Return the liquid to the crock and allow it to cool until barely lukewarm. Spread 1/2 cake of yeast on a piece of toasted rye bread and float it on top. Cover the crock with a cloth and keep in a warm room for 6 days. Then strain off the wine into a gallon jug, corking it loosely with a wad of cotton. Keep in a dark place for 3 weeks, then carefully decant into a bottle and cap or cork tightly. Don't touch it until Christmas or later!

Dian Buchman writes in her book *Herbal Medicine* how to make coffee from dandelion. Simply gather fresh roots (remember, use older, larger ones), wash them & allow to dry in a warm place. When it is shriveled, roast it slightly and grind it into a fine powder by using your food processor, nut grinder, or old fashioned hand grinder. To make the coffee, add a cup of boiling water to each teaspoon of the powder. This is a bitter drink, but one with no side effects and no acids. I can personally attest to the bitterness but have read that chocolate added helps a lot. I once roasted large roots in a microwave oven and was amazed how it tasted like real coffee.

As for eating, the dandelion is a three-storied food plant. The newly grown roots are tender and peel readily with an ordinary potato peeler. Slice them thinly crosswise, boil in two waters with a pinch of soda added to the first, then season with salt, pepper, and butter.

On the top of the dandelion root, which is usually two or three inches, there is a crown of blanched leaf stems reaching to the surface. This tender white crown is one of the finest vegetables furnished by the dandelion and can be eaten raw or cooked. Slice the crown off the roots just low enough so they will stay together and slice again just where the leaves start getting green. Wash well and soak in cold, salted water until ready to prepare.

To make a tasty Dandelion Crown Salad, cut the crowns finely crosswise, add a little salt, a pinch of sugar and 1 small onion chopped fine. Fry 2-3 slices of bacon cut in small pieces. When the bacon is crisp, remove it and add 2 tablespoonfuls of cider vinegar to the hot bacon fat; then as it boils up, pour it over the chopped dandelion crowns and stir. Garnish with the pieces of crisp bacon and slices of hard-boiled egg. Serve immediately.

The only food product of the dandelion root that is known to most people is furnished by the tangled rosette of leaves above the surface. These are the justly famous Dandelion Greens, and, if gathered early enough, are really fine and require very little cooking. After the plant blooms, they are too bitter and tough to eat. Wash the young, tender greens well, place

them in a kettle and pour boiling water over them. Let them boil 5 minutes, then drain and season with salt and butter or bacon fat. There are many other fine recipes for the greens. Check bookstores or be creative. This article should, at least, get you started on to the many uses of our common dandelions.

Submitted by John Wenger

SEMINARS:

UPCOMING BIOLOGY SEMINARS AT UAA.

Thurs., April 4th-4PM--Engineering Bldg--Room 228
"Coexistence and patch environment mosses of the splachnaceae (parasol moss) family. Speaker--Paul Morino.

Fri., April 4th-9AM-Engineering Bldg-Room 109
"Is there a Biological Basis for Road Limits in Denali Park?" Speaker--Don Soilcau.

Fri., April 12th-9AM--Engineering Bldg--Room 109
"Carbon Flux and Growth of White Spruce (*Picea glauca*) growing at Different Elevations in the Chugach Mts. Speaker--Bill Abadie.

Fri., April 12th-(probably afternoon)-
Time and title not known at this time
Subject-Ecosystems and Ecotypes
Speaker--Brent Danielson

Fri., April 19th--9AM--Engineering Bldg--Room 109
"Levels of Micorrhizae in Section and Root Respiration of *Picea glauca* along Elevational Gradients in Southcentral Alaska." Speaker--Alison Butler.

Fri., April 26th--9AM
"Mass Nest Attendants Patterns in Black-legged Kittiwakes." Speaker--John Syder.

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday, April 27th, Seward---Early plants such as Skunk Cabbage. Meet at 1:00PM at Benny Benson Memorial Parking Area, Mile 1.4, Seward Hiway, Seward.

MYSTERY PLANT ANSWER:

Pulsatilla patens (*Anemone patens*), Pasque-flower.

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE:

Will, with any luck at all, be published within the next week or two. It may possibly be delayed and mailed with the May Newsletter.