

Borealis

the newsletter of the



February 1993

P.O. Box 141613 Anchorage, Alaska 99514

Plant Family - Saxifraginaceae

This month we will compare members of the Saxifrage genus that usually grow in clumps, but have longer stems than the tiny cushion type plants. All are yellow or cream colored and have small narrow leaves arranged alternately on the flowering stems. All, except Golden Saxifrage, *Saxifraga aizoides*, found only in the Yukon Territory, are relatively common and found throughout most of Alaska.

Prickly Saxifrage, *S. tricuspidata*, can be found on mountain ridges or dry rocky outcroppings. The flowers have cream colored petals with yellow spots at the base and are purple to reddish near the tips. The leathery evergreen leaves are wedge shaped and have three sharp points at the tip. Leaves are reddish in the winter.

Yellow Spotted Saxifrage, *S. bronchialis*, is similar in appearance with bright yellow spots. Leaves are in tight rosettes and have fine hairs around the margins.

Bog Saxifrage, *S. hirculus*, is found in wet habitats. Its flowers are larger and brighter yellow and its leaves are fine and narrow, looking much like a mat of moss.

Anchorage Chapter News

The February meeting of the Anchorage Chapter of the Alaska Native Plant Society will be held on Monday February 1st at 7:30pm in the First Congregational Church, 2610 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Please use the entrance at the rear of the church.

At the February meeting, Al Batten will present "Vegetation Zonation in Coastal Marshes of the Gulf of Alaska". During the late '70's, Mr. Batten worked on an Environmental Protection Agency project to define wetlands based on floristic characteristics, to tie major coastal vegetation types to tidal levels and to define other ecological factors pertinent to salt marshes. This data was to be used for regulatory purposes.

Kachemak Chapter News

At the Pratt Museum on February 23rd, Nancy Levinson will present her slides of the Pratt Museum Botanical Garden. There will be a business meeting at 7:30pm and the general meeting will begin at 8:00pm.

New officers for the Kachemak Chapter have been elected. Congratulations to Joanne Popham, the

new Chapter President; Josie Bills, the Vice-President; Nancy Levinson, Secretary; and Jane Middleton, Treasurer. A special thanks goes out to Mike Gracz for taking on the role of new Program Chairman.

Book Review

"A Child's Book of Wildflowers"
Illustrated by Joyce Powzyk.

This book was written by the adult children of M. A. Kelley. She was a farmer's daughter who instilled in her children a love of nature and particularly

plants. This book contains 24 common North American wildflowers, some known to us as weeds.

The format of this book is excellent and the inclusion of information on plant lore, edibility and toxicity makes it a very good book. I do feel, however, that the writers failed to reach a child's level in some of the vocabulary. Words such as indigenous, acrid, perforations, etc. should be accompanied by some explanations, if a child is reading this by him or herself. I put this to a test with my granddaughter who is nearly ten. I must say she loved the last portion of the text, "To Do". Anything with hands-on experience seems to have a lasting effect.

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Borealis is published monthly except for May, June, July, August and September. For information on how to join the Alaska Native Plant Society or to send questions, comments and articles, please contact:

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This book is 9 x 12", hard cover and beautifully illustrated. It retails for \$15.95 and will be available through ANPS at \$13.00 plus shipping outside the Anchorage area. I definitely recommend it to parents of children ages three to thirteen.

Submitted by Verna Pratt

Mystery Plant

A conifer found sporadically in Interior Alaska, the mystery plant is limited in use as Christmas greenery simply because by winter its branches have dropped their needles after turning bright yellow.



State Election Results

Sally Karabelnikoff is the new president of the state Alaska Native Plant Society. Retaining their seats are Vice-President, Jean Poore; Secretary Jean Tam and Treasurer Yaso Guru-Singan Thiru. Congratulations!

Mystery Plant Answer

The larch, or sometimes called the tamarack, *Larix laricina* is a conifer which is not an evergreen. Our Alaskan examples are poor representatives of these stately deciduous trees found in Europe, although some tree trunks have reached a diameter as great as 13 feet in the Tanana Valley. Fossil forms have been found in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Credit: Richard (Toby) Tyler



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