

Borealis

the newsletter of the



October 1996

P.O. Box 141613, Anchorage, AK 99514

Anchorage Chapter October Meeting

Monday,
October 7
7:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church
2610 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
(Please use back entrance)

Pot-luck Supper & Slide Show-'n'-Tell

Fall is here, and so is the first Anchorage Chapter meeting of the 1996-1997 season. Our annual pot-luck is an ideal opportunity for sharing slides and stories of favorite plants and places, while enjoying the always delicious pot-luck offerings — if you don't know it already, there are some INCREDIBLE cooks in the group.

Please bring a baked dish, vegetable, bread or dessert in a quantity large enough to share with three times the size of your group. ANPS will provide hot and cold beverages, paper plates, and plastic utensils. Guests are always welcome, so invite any interested friends to join the party.

And remember to bring up to 10 slides from your summer activities to share with the group. Our first meeting is always tons of fun, so don't miss it!

No board meeting will be held this month.

Mystery Plant

This common plant of dry, open woodlands is particularly conspicuous in fall when its small, orange berries appear. A common name for the plant refers to the resemblance of these berries, in miniature, to a familiar vegetable that will be in great demand at the end of this month.

Our mystery plant blooms from early to mid-May, but you could be excused for not noticing the small, greenish flowers borne in clusters close to the stem. Its deciduous leaves are alternate, elongated ovals, often mottled with yellow streaks and blotches due to the plant's semi-parasitic nature of feeding on roots of other species.

Answer on Page 3.



Mystery Plant drawings by Toby Tyler, ANPS Kachemak Chapter.

Seeds Needed for 1997 Seed Swap

Last year members gathered very few seeds for the annual seed swap. Before deciding whether to hold the seed swap in 1997, Verna would like to know how many seeds are available. If you have seeds for donation to the seed swap, give Verna a call at .

Volunteer Opportunities

Newsletter Editor:

Since February 1994, Trevor and I have greatly enjoyed the challenge of putting *Borealis* together. We've learned lots in the process, both from the many contributors and from our own delvings into the botanical literature. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, and it looks as though we will be moving from Alaska some time this fall.

We are looking for a creative plant enthusiast to assume the role of newsletter editor. You'll find tremendous support from club members and a great opportunity (and excuse) to learn more about our native flora. If you think you may be interested, call Julia Ricketts at

Seed Swap Coordinator:

Assuming we have enough seeds for a '97 seed swap, we will need a Seed Swap Coordinator. If you think you may be interested in this position, call Verna ().

Plant Family Presenters:

Volunteers are needed for short plant family presentations at membership meetings, beginning in November. Our selection of a plant family plus a month-by-month schedule will appear in the next newsletter.

If you would like to give a short 10-minute presentation, give Verna a call (). You don't need slides as Verna has an extensive collection. Presenting is a great way to learn about the plants — why not give it a try?

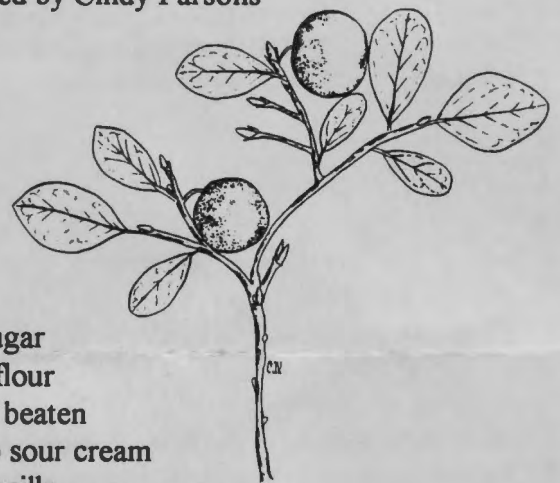
Nominating Committee

By the time you read this newsletter, the nominating committee will be considering a 1997 slate of officers for the Anchorage Chapter. If you are contacted for information, please try to be of assistance to the members. Offices for which volunteers can be nominated are: president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer.

Recipe of the Month:

Blueberry Cream Pie

Submitted by Cindy Parsons



- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup flour
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 1/3 cup sour cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 cups fresh or frozen (thawed) blueberries
- 1 unbaked 9 inch pie shell
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup chopped pecans
- 3 tbsp. butter, softened

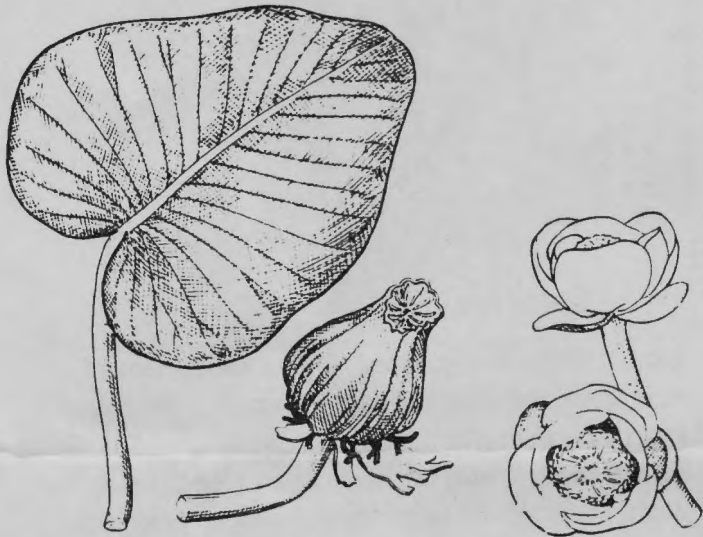
1. Pre-heat oven to 400°F.
2. Combine first five ingredients, stirring until smooth.
3. Fold in blueberries and spoon into pie shell.
4. Bake at 400°F for 30 - 35 minutes, or until center is set.
5. Combine last four ingredients and sprinkle over hot pie.
6. Bake at 400°F for 10 minutes more or until golden.

For a variation, substitute raspberries for the blueberries.

What's In A Name?

Nuphar polysepalum (Yellow Pond Lily)

On a recent ANPS canoe trip to Nancy Lakes, we paddled through many lakes rimmed by the floating leaves of Yellow Pond Lily. The waxy leaves and stems squeaked as our canoes passed over them, then instantly rebounded to the surface behind us, buoyed by the large air spaces within them. The flowers had long gone, but we could imagine their



Drawing by Toby Tyler, ANPS Kachemak Chapter

bright blooms sitting on the surface of the water. *Polysepalum* refers to the plants' many sepals, the showy yellow part of the flower that attracts our attention. In this species the petals are inconspicuous, hidden inside the flower near the stamens. *Nuphar* is simply a Greek word for "water lily."

Nymphaeaceae, the Latin name for the water lily family, translates as "water nymph" or "water virgin." According to Greek myth, nymphaeaceae was born of a nymph who died of jealousy over Hercules. As a result, water lilies were believed to have anti-aphrodisiacal properties. In *Historia Naturalis* Pliny explained "... therefore those

who have taken it in drink for twelve days are incapable of intercourse and procreation." A quote from Rabelais in a botanical digression at the end of his *Third Book of Pantagruel* states that: Pantagruelion (hemp) "... has proved more fearful and abhorrent to robbers than doddergrass and chokeweed are to flax ... than nenuphar, lotus or water-lily to lascivious monks." In coastal Alaska, the Tsimshian ate the boiled heart of the rootstock or used it to make infusions for bleeding of the lungs and as a contraceptive. Water lilies are still frequently depicted as symbols of virginity. *The Herb Book* says "... the plant has often be used as a symbol of purity and chastity, for the water lily flower holds itself erect as if disdaining to touch the murky water surrounding it."

Anti-aphrodisiac or not, seeds of yellow pond lilies were a staple food source for some native groups, particularly the Klamath and other coastal indigenous groups of California and Oregon. For them, the ripening of the seeds was a time of thanksgiving and celebration, greeted with feasts, dances and religious ceremonies. The bitter rhizomes were also harvested and used to treat many illnesses, including colds, tuberculosis, ulcers, rheumatism, heart conditions and cancer.

Mystery Plant Answer:



Pumpkin Berry or Timberberry
Geocaulon lividum
Sandalwood Family (Santalaceae)

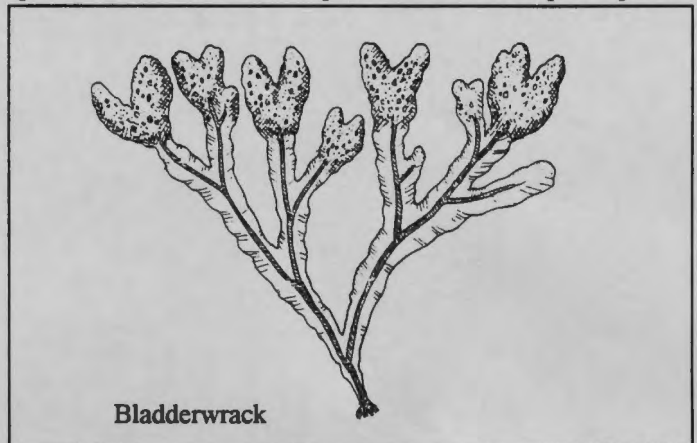
An Intertidal Smorgasbord: ANPS goes Kayaking in Kachemak Bay

The intertidal zone is one of the most productive ecosystems in the world, so for anyone interested in foraging for food the beach is an obvious place to start. In August, Dotti and Rick Harness organized a trip full of sensory delights for ANPS members. Taking advantage of a low minus tide, the group learned to identify many members of Kachemak Bay's rich intertidal community, while exploring the Herring Islands and Little Jakolof Bay on foot and by kayak. As we sampled marine algae, goosetongue, beach lovage and other marine edibles, savoring their salty taste and interesting textures, Dotti and Rick provided a torrent of information on the natural history of the area and on harvesting and cooking sea vegetables, clams, barnacles, mussels, sea cucumbers and other marine critters.

Seaweeds, or marine algae, are often the most abundant and noticeable living things in the intertidal zone. Botanically, they are primitive photosynthesizing plants that lack true leaves, stems or roots. The plants' leaves absorb nutrients directly from sea water, while the holdfast, a root-like structure, anchors the plants to rocks or the ocean floor. Most seaweeds contain 10-20 percent protein and abundant trace minerals and iodine, so eating seaweeds provides our systems with many hard to obtain nutrients.

In Alaska, following the advice of your taste buds is a good guide in deciding which plants to harvest — the only deadly species of algae occurs in warm tropical waters, although some less than appetizing Alaskan species may cause stomach upsets. Generally, plants are best gathered in spring and early summer when the blades are tender. To preserve them for year round use, rinse in cool, salt water, sun-dry and store in an air-tight container. Dotti introduced us, both visually and by taste, to several common species, including two species of Bladderwrack (*Fucus* sp.), Sea Lettuce (*Ulva* sp.), Dulse (*Palmaria mollis*), and Bull Kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*).

Bladderwracks are common algae of the intertidal zone, often covering rocks in dense blankets. The inflated bladders at the tips of the blades lead to two common names: Old Man's Firecrackers and Popping Weed. Janice Schofield, in *Discovering Wild Plants*, reports that some Alaskan beaches produce as much as 40 pounds of *Fucus* per square

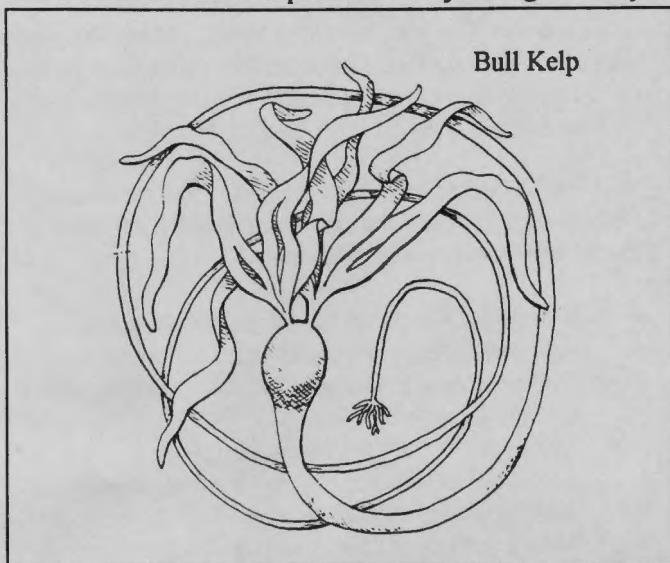


yard. Of the two species, Dotti recommended harvesting the less mucilaginous type; the high mucus content of both species can make cooked dishes slimy. *Fucus* tips are good nibbled raw, and can also be added to stir fries, soups, spaghetti sauces, omelets and other foods.

The wafer-thin (two cells thick), lime green sheets of Sea Lettuce are also easily identified. Dotti recommended hanging sheets on a clothes line until dry, then crumpling into a powder. Store sea lettuce in a shaker and use as an attractive garnish on baked potatoes, stir fries, soups and other dishes. The flavor is salty but relatively bland compared to some other marine algae.

You can obtain packages of dried Dulse from health food shops, but the hand-like fronds of this reddish algae are readily available on Alaskan beaches. Although its texture is rather rubbery, the raw plant has a great flavor. Eat dried fronds of Dulse like "jerky," deep fry them as a potato chip substitute, or garnish cream cheese, sandwiches, soups and other foods with them. Fresh Dulse is good in soups and other dishes.

In sub-tidal zones, the long, cylindrical stems of Bull Kelp can form dense underwater forests, providing a favorite resting place for sea otters and other creatures. The plant is easily recognized by



its bull-horn like bladders that keep the plant afloat with the aid of methane gas. It is the fastest growing marine algae, capable of extending 18 inches in one day. Plants typically root in water 30-50 feet deep, so harvest them either by boat or immediately after a storm. Rick peeled off the stem's tough outer layer, then sliced it for an instant snack as we paddled. Kelp rings can also be used in stir fries, on pizzas, or turned into kelp pickles. For the musically inclined, the plant makes a great instrument, reminiscent of a Swiss Alpine Horn. Thanks, Rick!

In between times spent munching and learning to identify marine plants, we enjoyed many wonderful wildlife sightings. Near the beach where we launched the kayaks, a floating fishing platform provided a hiding place for a curious river otter. As those of us new to kayaking mastered paddling skills and rudder control, the otter played hide-and-seek from beneath the platform's cover. We saw tracks of these playful animals several times during the day, and can only conclude that the various aquaculture sites in these sheltered bays provide an abundant food source for otters as well as humans.

All too soon it was time to paddle back to base. As we left Little Jakolof Bay and headed for the Herring Islands, six Dall Porpoise provided the finishing touch to a beautiful, blue sky day. Their soft, breathy exhalations helped us visually track them across the bay, and we gazed in awe at their graceful, arching backs and the synchrony of their movements.

Dotti and Rick's contagious enthusiasm for the area and its wildlife resulted in an inspiring day full of experiences I won't forget. I came away with a greater appreciation for the bounty of the coast, and a desire to return and spend time foraging along its shores.

Julia Ricketts
Drawings by Toby Tyler

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 aim 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, then clip and mail this application with the appropriate remittance to: Alaska Native Plant Society, Membership Dept., P.O. Box 141613, Anchorage, AK 99514.

Select the membership category you desire:

Full Time Student	[] \$5	Name: _____
Senior (over 65)	[] \$10	Address: _____
Individual	[] \$12	City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Family	[] \$18	
Organization	[] \$30	Telephone: (Home) _____ (Work) _____

Membership is on a calendar year basis. Any renewals before the end of 1996 will be valid until December 1997.

ANPS State Officers

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Vice-president Ginny Moran
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Plant Family Verna Pratt
Mini-Botany Marilyn Barker
Field Trips Kathy Burke

Borealis

Editors Julia Ricketts
Trevor Ricketts
Circulation Martha Hatch

The newsletter of the ANPS is published monthly except for June, July, August and September. Material for the November issue should be mailed to: Julia and Trevor Ricketts, Anchorage, AK 99516 to arrive by October 15.

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

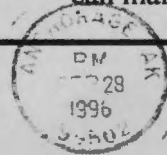
Newsletter Contributions

Trevor and I have been continually impressed and cheered by the membership's support of *Borealis*. Many thanks to everyone who contributed information, recipes, articles and botanical trivia over the last two years. We hope that the next editor's mail box will be equally full!

Now that the longer evenings are here, why not support *Borealis* and its new editor by jotting down a few lines. The following are always welcome:

- Write-ups of summer field trips, or botanically interesting places in Alaska that you have visited.
- Medicinal or culinary uses for native plants, either traditional or contemporary.
- Native plants for the garden.
- Explanations of botanical terminology/taxonomy.
- Descriptions of individual species.
- Poems, reflections and observations about native plants.
- Reviews of relevant books that you think other members would find interesting.
- Good quality pen & ink drawings or cartoons.
- Recipes of the month.
- Details of events that other members may find interesting.

Please try to think of one contribution that **YOU** can make to *your newsletter* this year!



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