

Borealis

the newsletter of the



February 1997

P.O. Box 141613, Anchorage, AK 99514

Anchorage Chapter February Meeting

Monday, BLM SCIENCE CENTER
February 3rd off of East 68th from Lake Otis Road
7:30 p.m. BOARD MEETING 7:00 P.M.

Dr. Mary Lee Plumb-Mentjes will share the slide show she has developed for garden clubs describing "A Different Kind of Garden Also Needing Your Care: The Bogs of Anchorage" to build enthusiasm for the wetlands found right here in town. In addition, she will focus on the wonder and importance of freading the small-and large-scale patterns of plant distribution and the natural sorting of the vegetation in response to these changes in topography. Klatt Bog, a strangmoor with incredible flarks and strangs (come and find out what those are!), as well as Cypripedium guttatum, is the current focus of her attention; she'll show how its patterned ground has changed the recent past. She is developing a docent training program to support schools in using neighborhood wetlands as places of instruction and wonder, so that our children may feel more at home right where they live.

Dr. Plumb-Mentjes has worked a a biologist for Regulatory Branch of the Alaska District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the last 10 years. She received her Ph.D. in Botany (plant ecology) from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1979. She is certified as a Senior Ecologist by the Ecological Society of America.

Plant Family - Unison Hubbard will discuss some key field characteristics for separating the *Arnica* and *Senecio* genera.

Mini-Botany - Daisy Lee Bitter an ANPS member from Homer will talk about two handbooks she is preparing on forest ecology

1. Background of the Wynn Nature Center
2. Teachers handbook on Forest Ecology

* The new meeting place is just great but allow some extra travel time.

Mystery Plant



This plant of bogs and wet meadows, is not as showy as some of its relatives but it is a delight to see. The dense clumps of stiff narrow leaves arise from a creeping Rhizome. The flower stalks have long white bristles to carry the seeds away to a new location. It is 5 to 8 inches tall, has triangular stems, and can be found in South-central and Eastern Alaska.

Please note new meeting place!!!

To get there go south on Lake Otis Road, turn east (left, toward the mountains) on 68th, right on Abbott Loop Road, then left onto BLM Land. When the road splits, take the left fork. For further directions, call any of the officers.



CHOCOLATE LILY (*Fritillaria camschatcensis*)

“Baby’s’ Diapers” and “Outhouse Flower” are derogatory nicknames that are applied to the Chocolate Lily because some people find its odor offensive. On the contrary, there are several people who aren’t offended by the odor and keep bouquets of a combination of Chocolate Lilies with Coastal Paintbrushes in their homes because of the beauty of the lily bells complemented by the colors of the paintbrush which accent the greenish tinges of the pistils inside the six-petaled maroon-brown bells. The unique papery appearance of their seed pods make them popular choices in dry arrangements. Chocolate Lilies are easy to transplant and are often naturalized in Alaskan gardens.

The Chocolate Lily is also known as Wild Rice, Indian Rice, Black Lily, Indian Lily, Rice Lily, Kamchatka Lily and Kamchatka Fritillary. Georg Steller, the naturalist on Bering’s voyage of discovery referred to them as Sarana Lilies in his reports. This member of the Liliaceae family and Alaska’s only *Fritillaria* is crowned by a cluster of maroon-brown pendant bells. The light green leaves are arranged in stair step whorls along the single 15-24 inch

long stem.

Although the taste is somewhat bitter, these bulbs contain sugar and starch and were a staple food for prehistoric native people. Traditionally Native Alaskans have dried the bulbs or pounded them into flour and stored them for later use. The Dena’ina Indians would usually dig Chocolate Lilies with their hands being careful not to lose the loosely attached ricelike bulblets. Before eating them, the Dena’ina broke the bulbs apart and soaked them to remove the bitter taste. Older Haida people recall that the best tasting lily bulbs grow near the beaches which are periodically covered with salt water.

Due to the starch content of the bulbs, Chocolate Lilies are valuable as a survival food. The bitter taste can also be removed by boiling and then discarding the water. Chocolate Lilies taste good in soups, stews, and casseroles or simply boiled and covered with garlic butter or Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper. For best flavor harvest the bulbs late in the season.

Humans are not alone in enjoying the bulbs of Chocolate Lilies. Red-backed Voles which are numerous in this area also find them appetizing. When the snow melts in the late spring, many Chocolate Lily bulbs are found cached around the edges of the dry grass nests of Red-backed Voles. Our local Red-backed Voles or field mice store Chocolate Lily bulbs in their winter nests under the snow. During break-up several years ago I discovered over 50 of these rice-like lily bulb in one vole nest. Weasels, which eat approximately four voles per day, and owls help us control the population of voles.

Plant Family: *Arnica* versus *Senecio*

A comment often heard on field trips is, "Those darn yellow flowers are so confusing." "Those darn yellow flowers" are probably members of the Aster family. Separating the *Arnica* and *Senecio* genera really isn't that bad after all. *Arnica* flowers have large "daisy-type" flower heads with broad ray flowers. Most species of the *Senecio* genus have smaller flower heads and narrow ray flowers that usually look somewhat shaggy. In some species the ray flowers are very small or may be completely lacking.

Only one species of *Senecio* has large flowers. This large coastal species is *Senecio pseudo-arnica* (meaning false-arnica) and is very easy to recognize. It grows on beaches and rocky shores and its flower buds are encased in a tangle of unique hairs. If all else fails and you need something more technical to ease your confusion, consult the key on page 21 in Hulten's "Flora of Alaska" that states:

1_a Leaves (at least the lower ones) opposite - *Arnica*.

1_b Leaves alternate - *Senecio*.

Try using these diagnostic characteristics next summer on "those darn yellow flowers" and see how easy it is.

Arnica sp.



Senecio sp.



Seeds donated to the annual seed swap will be available at the February meeting of the Anchorage Chapter. All packets will cost 50 cents. No seeds have been stratified. See individual species for recommendations. There is a limited supply of some seeds. Please list your second or third choices in case some are sold out.

ALASKAN WILDFLOWERS (all perennials)

1. *Aconitum delphinifolium*(Monks hood) - 18-24" tall with dark blue flowers. Shade or meadow.
2. *Aconitum maximum*(Monkshood) - 2-5' tall with dark blue flowers. Shade or meadow. Stratification recommended.
3. *Androsace septentrionalis*(Northern Jasmine)- 3-4" tall with a very small white(forget-me-not like flower.) An early bloomer. Charming in a rock garden.
4. *Aquilegia formosa*(Western Columbine)- 18-24" tall with red and yellow flowers. Tolerates sun or shade. Reseeds easily. Good garden plant.
5. *Aster sibiricus*(Siberian Aster) - 5-7" tall with 1 1/4 - 1 1/2" lavender flowers. Mat-forming, spreads by rhizomes but is non-invasive. Plant in sun or shade. Very good for holding banks, walls, or borders. Excellent garden plant.
6. *Campanula rotundifolia*(Bluebells of Scotland) - 8-14 " tall with lavender bell-shaped flowers. Plant in sun or shade. Reseeds well, a sprawling plant that is good for banks, walls, or borders. Very good garden plant.
7. *Claytonia sibirica*(Siberian Spring Beauty) - 6-12" tall with small pink flowers. Shade or sun. Reseeds very readily. Plants survive if there is snow cover.
8. *Draba incerta* (Whitlow Grass) - forms small clumps, 3-5" tall with yellow flowers. Dry soils or rock garden.
9. *Epilobium angustifolium*(Common Fireweed) - 30-60" tall with white flowers. Excellent showy plant but spreads by rhizomes. Meadows.
10. *Epilobium angustifolium*(Common Fireweed) - 30-60" tall with pink flowers. Excellent showy plant but spreads by rhizomes. Meadows.
11. *Geranium erianthum*(Wild Geranium) - Large specimen, 15-30" tall with lavender flowers. Reseeds easily. Sun or shade. Very good garden plant.
12. *Geranium erianthum*(Wild Geranium) - Large specimen, 15-30" tall with white flowers. Reseeds easily. Sun or shade. Very good garden plant.
13. *Melandrium apetalum* 3-6" tall with small white to lavender flowers. A unique flower for rock gardens. Stratification recommended.
14. *Oxytropis campestris*(Northern Oxytrope) - 10-15" tall. White variety, likes dry soil.
15. *Papaver lapponicum*(Lapland Poppy) - Small clumps to 8" with yellow flowers. Needs dry soil and space around plants to prevent mold.
16. *Potentilla villosa*(Villous Cinquefoil) - 3-6" tall with light yellow flowers. Forms 6" mounds. Good rock garden plant.
17. *Saxifraga hirculus*(Bog Saxifrage) 4-6" tall with bright yellow flowers. Needs dampness. Damp stratification needed.
18. *Veronica grandiflora*(Aleutian speedwell) - 2-4" tall with blue flowers. A mat-forming plant good for rock gardens and borders. Damp stratification recommended.

Non-Natives Plants: "Hortus Third" and Wyman's Garden Encyclopedia were used for descriptions and zone classifications. These are not always correct for us. Generally, we're a zone 3 or 4. Note: Numbers 21-24 are European plants donated by Alan Flack of Great Britain. Hardiness unknown. Number 25- 36 were sent by ANPS member Greg Williams who owns a nursery in Wolcott, Vermont.

19. *Anemone sylvestris* - Large white flowers, very aromatic, 8-12" tall. A great hardy perennial for Alaska. Looks like a tall *Anemone parviflora*.

20. *Polemonium caeruleum* - 18-24" tall. Similar to our tall Jacobs Ladder, *Polemonium acutiflorum*. Hardy for Alaska.

21. *Aster alpinus* (Dwarf) - 6-8" with white to lavender flowers. Zone 2 or 3. Probably hardy.

22. *Aster alpinus Vahl* (Dwarf) - No information found on this one. From Falkland Islands.

23. *Diarrhena* - C. Drakensberg Mts. from South Africa. No information found on this one.

24. *Phygelius capensis* (Cape fuschia) - Purple to Scarlet 2" tubular flowers. Probably a container plant. From C. Drakenberg Mts. South Africa.

25. *Alcea rosea nigra* (Black flowered Hollyhock) - Biennial 3-6' tall. Zone 2 or 3, but give it a choice location.

26. *Anthericum ramosum* - 12-18" tall with white 1" star-like flowers. Native to Western and Southern Europe. Treat like gladiolus or grow in a greenhouse.

27. *Aquilegia atrata* (Columbine)- 2" tall with dark violet flowers. Native to Europe. Should be hardy here.

28. *Aquilegia William Guinness* (columbine) - Stunning hybrid with dark violet and white flowers. Should be hardy here.

29. *Nicandra physaloides* (Shoofly Plant) - 4' tall with blue and white 1" flowers. Zone 8. Annual.

30. *Plantago septentrionalis* - Narrow twisted leaves. Interesting plant.

31. *Primula yuparensis* - 8-10" tall with purple flowers. From Hokkaido.

32. *Saponaria caespitosa* (Soapwort) - Dense cushion, perennial, 6" tall with evergreen leaves and large pink flowers. Found in gravelly soil from Pyrenees Mts. Listed as Zone 6.

33. *Scabiosa Japonica alpina* - Biennial 8-12" tall with 2" heads of blue to lavender flowers. Start early and grow as annual.

34. *Scabiosa lucida* - Biennial 18-24" tall with rose to lavender flowers. From Central Europe.

35. *Sisyrinchium idahoensis* (Blue-eyed grass) Large 3/4" blue-violet flowers. Leaves often twisted.

36. *Vaccinium myrtillus* (Whortleberry, Bilberry) 2' tall with black fruit. A native of Finland. Listed as Zone 4 or 5.

FOOTNOTES ON STRATIFICATION

Some seeds require special treatment for good germination. This occurs naturally outdoors, but if you are starting your seeds indoors or plan to scatter them outside in the spring, you will need to read further.

Our ANPS seeds have not been stratified this year. Some do not require it. For those requiring stratification, it is accomplished by treating seeds with a cold treatment for a period of about 45 days. Some prefer brief thawing periods, so this is recommended for all seeds requiring stratification. Some also require dampness during this time.

Some Methods of Stratification

Method #1: Place packets of seed in a box or plastic bag in a freezer. Remove to thaw about every 10 days, and return to freezer. Repeat this cycle for the full time period. Those seeds that require dampness should be sprinkled with water before returning to the freeze each time.

Method #2: Scatter outdoors if you can locate where you want them at this time.

Method #3: Plant in flats, put outside, and cover with snow. Be aware that it is difficult to keep trays moist once the snow leaves. Moisture is crucial at that time, especially when your plants start growing.

Method #4: Put seeds in a plastic bag so they don't get continually soaked and place in a somewhat protected area, where they won't blow away. Seeds that require dampness should not be in plastic bags. Bring them indoors about every 10 days to thaw, then return them outside for the duration of the stratification period. After this, you may plant them indoors and enjoy watching them grow, or plant outside as soon as possible. Drying winds sometimes make it difficult to keep them moist. If you plant them inside, be sure they have adequate light for growth by locating seedlings next to a window for good natural light, or placing them under an artificial light

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Newsletter Contributions Wanted

The newsletter of the ANPS is published monthly except for June, July, August, and September. Material for the March issue should be mailed to ANPS BOREALIS P.O. Box 141613 Anchorage Alaska 99514 by Feb. 15, 1997. We welcome articles, book reviews, jokes, trivia, recipes, announcements and just about anything else you can think of concerning the flora of Alaska.

Rare Plants Forum

The Alaska Rare Plants Forum will hold its annual spring meeting April 2-4 at the Chugach National Forest 3rd floor conference room in Anchorage. If you have any agenda items you wish to present or wish further information contact Deborah Blank, BLM District Botanist, 6881 Abbott Loop Rd., Anchorage AK. 99502, phone (907)267-1227 fax (907)267-1267.

Potluck Leftovers

Some cookware was left at the last pot-luck and is waiting for its owner(s) to claim it. Let us know if you're the missing owner!

It's Field Trip Planning Time Again!

The days are getting longer and soon we'll be seeing green again! Please help ANPS out by volunteering your time or information. We need leaders for all types of field-trips and ideas for long and short trips. Perhaps you and a friend can co-lead a field-trip. Let's try to visit as many different habitats as possible and really sleuth out some interesting plant communities within the Anchorage Bowl during this coming season. If you have only a few evening hours available maybe you can lead an evening field-trip near your neighborhood.

Make a commitment and fill out the attached worksheet and send it in to FIELDTRIPS ANPS P.O Box 141613 ANCHORAGE AK. 99514

**Mystery Plant Answer:
Trichophorum alpinum
Sedge/Cyperaceae Family**

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP LABEL CORRECT?

Please take a moment to check your mailing label and make sure that your name, address and your renewal date are correct. If your mailing label says "96" your dues are due.

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
- Senior (over 65) \$10
- Individual \$12
- Family \$18
- Organization \$30

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (Home) _____ (Work) _____

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