

Borealis

the newsletter of the



PO Box 141613, Anchorage, Alaska

DECEMBER 1997

JOIN US AT OUR JAN. MEETING

Monday, January 5, 7:30 p.m.
at the Campbell Creek Center

MAIN PROGRAM

"Surviving Nomenclature,
Taxonomy, and Latin -
Relax, we can still enjoy our Alaskan
flora despite it all!"

Presenter: Carolyn Parker
Research Assistant, UAF Herbarium

Using stories and examples from arctic
Russia to Wrangell, Alaska, we will try to
understand the value of having
nomenclaturists and taxonomists studying
out flora and writing to each other about it
in a dead language. And we can learn how
to live with, or ignore, the consequences.
Beautiful flower and scenery slides plus
some very useful handouts!

Plant Family Study

ARACEAE/Arum Family

Presenter: Marlena Mooring

PLANT FAMILY STUDY

ARACEAE/Arum Family By Verna Pratt

Most plants in the ARACEAE or Arum family are tropical or semi-tropical where it is frequently called the Philodendron family. Although it is a monocot family, leaf veinage is sometimes pinnate. Stems and leaves are usually thick, fleshy and juicy, and the plants often grow in wet areas. Although some members are an edible source of starch (e.g. poi), some contain needle-like crystals of calcium oxalate, which can cause painful injury to the throat and mouth if ingested.

Eight genera are native to the U.S., only 2 genera (one species each) exist in Alaska. Both genera have rhizomatous roots, grow in wet areas, and are completely hairless. The tiny (sometimes petal-less) flowers appear on a thick fleshy spike (axis) called the spadix. It is surrounded by a colored bract (modified leaf) that attracts the pollinators. The berry-like fruit becomes greenish to red when ripe.

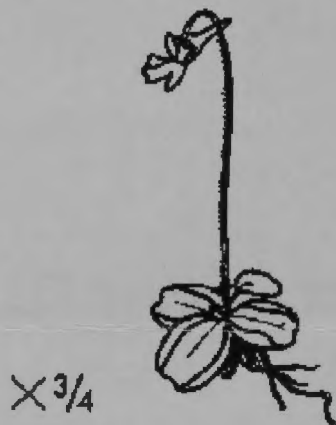
Calla palustris (Wild Calla) can be seen in much of South Central and Interior Alaska, its large heart-shaped leaves erect above the shallow water it grows in. The long peduncled, white spathe appears in June and continues into August and is very showy. All parts of this plant (especially the red berries) contain poisonous acids and saponin-like substances, which are destroyed in cooking.



MYSTERY PLANT

by Verna Pratt

This very small plant can be found throughout most of Alaska but it could easily be overlooked. It prefers wet peat bogs near ponds or creeks at low to mid-elevations. It is 2-3" tall, with one violet-colored, spurred flower. It is frequently mistaken for another common bog plant with heart-shaped leaves. This plant has a tight rosette of light green, glandular, hairy, oval leaves that have a revolute (turned up) margin. It is the smallest member of its genera in Alaska. Although it feeds on tiny insects, it also absorbs some nutrients from the soil.



ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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Mini-Botany	Verna Pratt
Field Trips	Kathy Burke

Newsletter ("Borealis")

Editor	Ginny Moore
Circulation	Martha Hatch

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NEWS From

The Alaska Rock Garden Society

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!
Don't Miss These Renowned Speakers!!

Saturday, January 17, 1997, 7:00 PM

Daniel J. Hinkley , Speaker
Upper Elevation Perennials of Asia

Daniel J. Hinkley is a plant collector, horticulturist, and co-owner of *Heronswood*, a mail-order nursery in Kingston, Washington, specializing in rare and unusual perennials and woody plants. A graduate of Michigan State University, he lectures throughout the country, and writes for numerous publications. His first book, *Winter Ornamentals*, was published in 1993 in the Cascadia Gardening Series. *Heronswood* is featured in the Nov. 1997 issue of *Horticulture Magazine*.

Saturday, January 31, 1997, 7:00 PM

Helen Dillon, Speaker
Twenty Tasty Plants

Helen Dillon is a garden writer, lecturer, and a passionate gardener who has transformed her town house garden in Dublin into a spectacular series of small gardens. She is the author of *Garden Artistry: The Secrets of Designing and Planting a Small Garden*; *The Flower Garden, a Practical Guide to Planning and Planting*, and co-editor of *In an Irish Garden*.

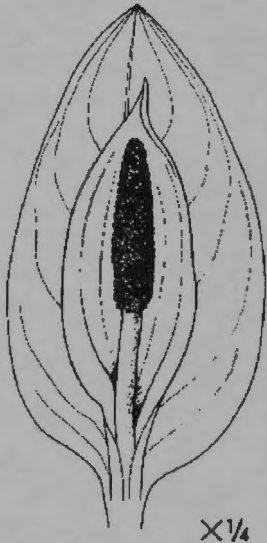
Both lectures will be held at
The Anchorage Museum of History and Art
121 W. 7th Avenue.

Admission: \$15 General; \$10 members of the Rock Garden Society

Tickets may be purchased at the door. For advance purchase tickets send checks to The Alaska Rock Garden Society, c/o Wendy Anderson, HC-04 Box 7440, Palmer, AK 99645-9706. For more information: Les Brake



Arum Plant Family (cont. from Page 1)



Lysichiton americanum (Yellow Skunk Cabbage, Swamp Cabbage, Yellow Arum, Meadow Cabbage) is a very large plant with oblong or elliptical leaves found growing in wet woods or shallow water in Southeast Alaska and coastal areas of South Central. This plant has a strong skunklike aroma - especially in flower. The other common name, Bog lantern, is derived from the large yellow nearly sessile spadix backed up by the large yellow spathe.

Very impressive especially when seen in quantity in a shady woods. All parts of the plant contain poison and should only be used as an emergency food after cooking.

Several years ago the Native Plant Society tried to relocate some Calla plants to Westchester Lagoon, but I believe the ducks liked them too much. The plants had been pulled from a home garden pond that had become

overrun with this aggressive species. It is a nice addition to a pond but must be kept in control each year.

Mystery Plant

Pinguicula villosa: Bog Violet
Lentibulariaceae/Bladderwort Family

MEDICINAL USES FOR ARUM

Janice Schofield, in *Discovering Wild Plants*, describes traditional medicinal uses for both skunk cabbage and wild calla. She tells of Athabaskan elder, Howard Luke of Nenana who collects wild calla leaves in spring before the flowers develop and dries them well. He recommends using them in a steam bath to ease aches and pains.

Janice says the rootstock of swamp cabbage is as is famed for its anti-spasmodic properties. "Taken in large quantities by itself, swamp cabbage can provoke nausea and vomiting; it is often used in combination with gentler herbs. The accompanying brew is a tonic tea for the lungs. Store remaining tea blend in double paper bags, or in a glass jar in a dark closet. This tea is an ideal beverage for smokers, as well as those with coughs, colds, or asthma. The dried rootstock has a short shelf life. It can be collected in spring for use through the summer, and in autumn for winter use. Ointment prepared from swamp cabbage rhizome is recommended for skin tumors and ulcerous sores. It's reported very effective for relieving pain and promoting healing.

Smoker's Tea

2 cups dried coltsfoot leaves
1 cup dried nettle leaves
1/2 cup dried green horsetail
1/4 cup swamp cabbage root, sliced and thoroughly dried (dry the root in 200 F oven until crisp to positively remove toxins.)

Place tea ingredients in blender for 1 minute. Steep 1 heaping teaspoon in 1 cup boiling water for 5 minutes. Strain and serve. Serves 1.

From: *Discovering Wild Plants: Alaska, Western Canada, The Northwest*, By Janice Schofield, 1989; Alaska Northwest Books

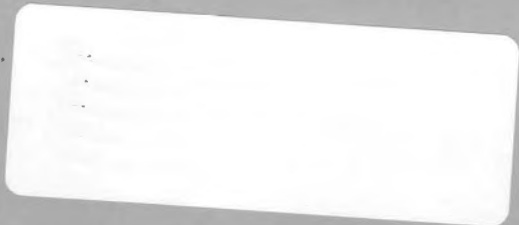
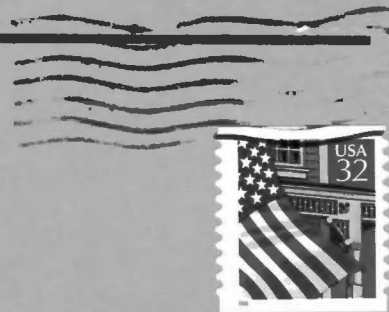


Birds in the Field and Laboratory

January 15-April 12: Tues: 7-9:15 pm
Plus 5 Saturdays (Mar7-April4) in the field
UAA Course ID: CRN 28691/BIOA126-041
2 credits * Self-support credit and lab fee: \$167
Instructor: Todd Eskelin

Are you intrigued by the local bird population? Do you ever wonder how they survive Alaska's harsh winters? Learn how to identify local resident and migratory birds, touching on rare species from around the state. Enjoy guest lectures from top bird watchers in the state. Catch more than a glimpse of the rarer species through slides. Learn about research tools.

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



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 goal 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, fill in the form below and mail it with the appropriate remittance to:

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

STATUS New RENEWAL

CATEGORY

- Full-time Student \$ 5
- Senior Citizen \$10
- Individual \$12
- Family \$18
- Organization \$30

Name _____

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Telephone: (Home) _____ (Work) _____

Membership is on a calendar year basis.

