

# Borealis

the newsletter of the



PO Box 141613, Anchorage, Alaska

March 2003

## Join us at our Spring meetings!

**Campbell Creek Center**

**Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> , 7:30 p.m.**

**Topic:** "Vegetation Recovery at Simeonof Island in Southwestern Alaska"

**Speaker:** Steve Talbot  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup> , 7:30 p.m.**

**Topic:** "The use of plant distribution to map Beringia from Russia to the Yukon Territory"

**Speaker:** Bruce Bennett

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### Plant Family Study

#### "THE IMMIGRANTS"

**March:** Brassicaceae/Mustard "weeds"

**Presenter:** Kira Besh

**April:** Plantaginaceae, Boraginaceae and Caryophyllaceae Families

**Presenter:** Anjanette Steer

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**Look inside for  
Field Trip Worksheets!  
Sign Up SOON!**

## Alaskan "Weeds" Are Popular!

*By Verna Pratt*

Little did I know when I started the plant family sequence on weeds this year that it would stir up so much enthusiasm. The Alaska Native Plant Society has voted to allocate \$500 to printing a weed brochure for Alaska. Connie Kison is attending meetings on the subject. The purpose of the brochure is public awareness and education.

A short list of common weeds in Alaska is included below. Some of these plants are rampant spreaders and a danger to native vegetation. Some (like dandelions) are probably beyond hope and some are little threat in most areas.

Those we have identified as most troublesome include:

- Vicia cracca* – Bird Vetch
- Melilotus sp.* – Sweet Clover
- Trifolium sp.* – Common Clover
- Matricaria matricariades* – Pineapple Weed
- Linaria vulgaris* – Butter and Eggs
- Taraxacum officinales* – Dandelion
- Plantago major* – Plantain
- Anthemis cotula* – Mayweed
- Rumex acetosella* – Sheep Sorrel
- Polygonum ariculare* – Knotweed
- Galiopsis bifida* – Hemp Nettle
- Hordeum jubatum* – Squirrel-tail Grass
- Crepis sp.* – Hawksbeard
- Medicago sp.* – Luzerne/Alfalfa
- Brassica rapa* – Bird's Rape
- Capsella bursa-pastoris* – Shepherd's Purse

Help us decide which are the "10 Most Unwanted". E-mail us your votes ([verna@alaskacrafts.com](mailto:verna@alaskacrafts.com)), or vote at the March meeting.

## Polygonaceae/Buckwheat Family

Presenter: Kira Besh

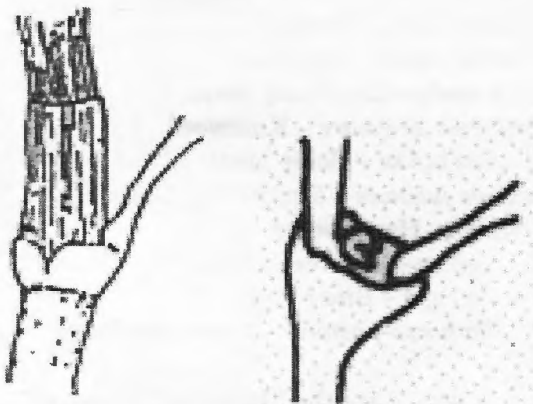
Some of the very first weed species that emerge in spring belong to the smartweed (Polygonaceae) family. The smartweeds and their relatives make up one of the larger plant families, totaling about 800 species. There are five genera and about 30 species of the Polygonaceae family in Alaska, thirteen of which are introduced, including Red Sorrel, Sour Dock and several other kinds of Dock.

Most of them, however, bear the scientific name *Polygonum*, meaning "many knees", because their stems have swollen knots or joints and often make zigzag bends where the leaves are attached.

One key characteristic that all members of the Polygonaceae family have is that of swollen nodes. In fact, the genus name *Polygonum* means "many knees." These nodes are covered with a clear or whitish membranous sheath called an ocrea. (See Figure 2. below.)

Ocrea pubescence and size often help distinguish many of the smartweed species from one another.

The long racemes of sequential blooms allow for



**Figure 2. Ocreae are characteristic of the Polygonaceae family.**

production and dispersal of seeds nearly year-round. The leaves are simple, usually entire and usually alternate on the stems. The small flowers usually have 5 sepals and no petals. The sepals or bracts subtending the sepals are sometimes colorful and could be mistaken for petals.

Many of the introduced species look so much like the native species that they are difficult to tell apart.

The *Rumex* (dock) genus has eight introduced species. These plants are related to rhubarb and have a distinct sour taste. Most grow in wet roadside ditches – probably introduced by roadside reseeding. Probably

the most easily recognized and most common species is *Rumex acetosella*. This 8-12 inch plant with spade-shaped leaves can be found in many gravelly waste areas and along trails. There are however similar native species that grow in sandy or gravelly areas on



**Figure 1. *Polygonum ariculare* (Knotweed)**

Illustration by Cara Wardlaw-Bailey

the tundra.

The remainder of the introduced Polygonaceae belong to the *Polygonum* genus. The most common weed here is *Polygonum ariculare* (Knotweed). This plant is also found in gravelly waste areas and has small bluish-green oblong leaves. The flowers are tiny and have pinkish sepals. Some features that make this species tough to control are slender and wiry stems and leaves that are tiny and oblong, providing very little surface area for herbicide interception

Other early-emerging, annual *Polygonum* species include Pennsylvania smartweed (*Polygonum pennsylvanicum* L.) and ladysthumb (*Polygonum persicaria* L.). These two species are very similar in appearance and are generally distinguishable from one another during early vegetative growth by examining the ocrea.

# ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

## 2003 FIELD TRIP PLANNING WORKSHEET

Chairman: Anjanette Steer E-mail: [sheepmt@alaska.net](mailto:sheepmt@alaska.net), Tel: \_\_\_\_\_, FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-Chairman: Verna Pratt E-mail: [verna@alaskakrafts.com](mailto:verna@alaskakrafts.com), Tel: \_\_\_\_\_, FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Field Trip to: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Allotted: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Driving Distance/Car Pooling, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Reservations by (date): \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Difficulty \_\_\_\_\_ Minimum Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Trip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Special Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Plantaginaceae/Plantain, Boraginaceae/Borage, Caryophyllaceae/Pink Families

Presenter: Anjanette Steer

The Plantaginaceae, Boraginaceae and Caryophyllaceae families were grouped together for the April Plant Family Study, because, although they may have multiple species that have been introduced, usually only one in each family is a significant problem.

In the Plantain family, *Plantago major* can be seen along most trails, roads and in lawns throughout most of North America. It was introduced from Europe into North America, probably as a medicinal plant, as the macerated leaves stop bleeding.

The most obvious weed species in the Borage family is *Myosotis palustris*, Brook Forget-me-not, which is also a garden flower. Although it is probably most common in Southeast Alaska, it is fast becoming apparent in South Central. Sometimes, well meaning gardeners either throw this fast-spreading plant out of their yards or deliberately plant it in the wild.

There are five other genera of the Borage family that can be found invading dry roadsides throughout

Alaska, Lappula probably being the most common. These all look something like our state flower, *Myosotis*, but have smaller, paler blue flowers. None are attractive, and most have prickles on they calyx or seeds,

which aid in distribution. All seem to prefer dry habitats and were probably introduced in seed mixtures for roadside revegetation.

There are four species of introduced plants in the Pink family. Most show up sporadically and usually are not persistent, but any gardener knows what a terrible pest *Stellaria media*, common chickweed, is. Although this plant is a lover of good damp soil, it now can be found along many hiking trails throughout Alaska.



Figure 3. *Plantago major*

Illustration by Cara Wardlaw-Bailey

## MYSTERY PLANT

The Mystery Plant for this month grows mostly on stony slopes in the mountains north of the Yukon River. It can also be found in extreme northwest Canada, and northern Asia and Europe.

The large yellow, five-petal flowers bloom early in spring, soon after the snow melts. The yellowish-green pinnately divided leaves are glabrous on top but have long hairs on the underside. These hairs stand out in little tufts at the end of the sharp tips of the leaflets. Seed heads are covered with a tuft of twisted hairs.



## 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

- |                          |                   |      |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full-time Student | \$ 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Senior Citizen    | \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual        | \$12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family            | \$18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Organization      | \$30 |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership is on a calendar year basis.**

## MYSTERY PLANT ANSWER

Answer: *Geum glaciale*/ Glacial Avens

Rosaceae/Rose family



to our guest speakers for  
January and February:

**Michael Fleming and Nancy Moore**

### ALASKA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY State and Anchorage Chapter Officers

President	Leonard Grau
Vice President	Connie Kison Keeney
Secretary	Cara Wardlaw-Bailey
Treasurer	Sue Jensen

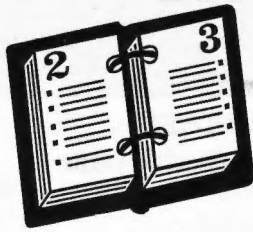
### Anchorage Chapter Program Coordinators

Main Program	Susan Klein
Plant Family	Verna Pratt
Mini-Botany	Marilyn Barker
Field Trips	Anjanette Steer

### Newsletter ("*Borealis*")

Editor	Ginny Moore
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*Borealis* is published bi-monthly October through May. Articles may be sent to Ginny Moore, Anchorage, AK 99516. Phone or FAX: or E-mail: [mooretg@alaska.net](mailto:mooretg@alaska.net)



## UPCOMING PLANT EVENTS

### March 3

**Alaska Native Plant Society:** 7:30 p.m., Campbell Creek Science Center off 68<sup>th</sup> and Lake Otis

### March 6

**Anchorage Garden Club:** "New Perennial Introductions From Around the World" presented by Rhonda Williams; Pioneer Schoolhouse, lower level; located at 3rd and Eagle Streets; 7:30pm  
Programs are free and open to everyone.

### March 15

**Alaska Rock Garden Society:** "Stepanie Cohen Rocks Alaska" - 2pm at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art; there will be a \$10.00 donation at the door. Stepanie is from Penn. and a frequent writer for Hort and other magazines. She is a hort professor at the U.

### March 17

**Alaska Master Gardener Meeting:** "Living Wreaths" by speaker Dana Klinkhart; 7 p.m., Cooperative Extension Service, Conference Room 130, Carlton Trust Bldg., 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Call Mary Shier, Chapter president, for info:

### April 7, 2003

**Alaska Native Plant Society Monthly Meeting:** 7:30 p.m., Campbell Creek Science Center.

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P.O. Box 141613  
Anchorage, AK 99514