Cooperative Extension Service • Tanana District Office • P.O. Box 758155 • Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-8155 • 907-474-1530

Calendar of Events

Oct. 4 Master Gardener Harvest Potluck and Awards Night, 6:30 p.m., Fairbanks Community Food Bank.

Oct. 12 Cooperative Extension Service 75th Anniversary Open House, 2-5 p.m. Tanana District Office, University Park Building, 1000 University Ave., Room 154.


Nov. 1 Master Gardener Meeting, 7 p.m., Alaska Feed Co., 1600 College Road.

2006


March Potato Growers Conference, Palmer.

March Vegetable Growers Conference, Palmer.

March Organic Growers School, Fairbanks.

March Annual SARE Conference, Fairbanks.

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Prez Sez....

By Virginia Damron, President

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley

The Sourdough Gardener: The Gardener’s Library... A Wintertime Retreat

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Fall is slowly slipping in and my efforts toward fall cleanup are still dragging along. I know that I need to gather up my courage, energy and do it, but some is still in full, glorious bloom. So the equation is don’t pull flowers = slime in spring. What to do? But you don’t read this to listen to me dither, so on to news and plans.

We have joined forces for Oct. 4 with the Master Gardener awards and will have our meeting, awards and a potluck dinner. Seems that one gathering a month is better for us as we either have had a crowd for the awards and not the meeting or vice versa. The time is 6:30 p.m. since we have so much to do and the place is the Fairbanks Community Food Bank, which will hold a bigger crowd. Please come on out and enjoy this special event honoring your friends and gardening partners.

I want to thank all of the people who not only planted and took care of Pioneer Park, but also went back on Labor Day and pulled it all out. What a grand group to be associated with. You helped make Fairbanks a much more beautiful place.

We have received a lot of the honeyberry reports and it looks like they have been mostly successful in Fairbanks. Some got more berries that others, but they lived! I got quite a few--but since I ate them as they ripened and I passed the plants--I have no idea how many. Listening to reports, I wasn’t the only one who treated them like cherry tomatoes.

Well, it is time for me to either dither or work, so I will leave you with the sincere hope that you will all turn out for our October soiree.

Please have a safe and happy Halloween!
The Sourdough Gardener is 72 years young. He is from the old school and still believes in books and libraries in this modern time of computers, Web sites, e-mail and “online everything.” Do not misunderstand, I think all these new age electronic marvels are wonderful. Without our modern technology, science would not have made the giant strides we all benefit from in almost every phase of our lifestyles.

Throughout the many years I have been gardening, I have acquired a number of reference books on many of the plants that drew my interest over time. I try not to purchase anything I have no use for because that is a form of waste, which is at the top of my list of disgusting practices. Most of the books on my shelves have been read from cover to cover. I have learned a great deal from their contents and desire the ability to retain far more of the information they hold. When my need to know arises and I fail to remember, I reach for my “refresher course.”

I suppose that books are akin to tools, e.g. 80 percent of the books one has are used 20 percent of the time, while 20 percent of them are used 80 percent of the time. Unlike seed catalogs, which change and are usually disposed of each year, our reference books remain constant, continuing to be a source of knowledge from which we can depend.

Many books on every aspect of gardening have been written by many extremely knowledgeable authors. Many of the basic and proven theories, methods and practices hold true. One should always attempt to stay current with new information and materials that become available, enabling us to save time, money and, most of all, wear and tear on our bodies.

The expense of books can be overcome in several ways: used book stores, the library, shopping for the best prices, borrowing from a friend and by taking advantage of the information available at the Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Rhodale Press is one of the best and most reliable publishers of garden subject matter that I have found.

There is one more source of information I would like to bring to your attention. It is free for the asking and contains more great facts on fertilizers, soil amendments, IPM, tools, water distribution and monitoring instruments than any other catalog I have ever seen. It is the main catalog for Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply. Contact them at:

Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply
P.O. Box 2209
125 Clydesdale Court
Grass Valley, CA 95945
888-784-1722 (phone)
530-272-4794 (fax)
www.groworganic.com

One final tip this month. Not only can a magnifying glass be used in your library for fine print, but also in your garden or greenhouse. Gardeners deal with all kinds of micro-miniature critters constantly, which are sometimes not visible to the naked eye. Do yourself a big favor and get a pocket magnifying glass; you will be amazed at what it can find on your plants! ✿
Noxious and Invasive Plants Management Workshop Comes to Fairbanks

The Sixth Annual Statewide Noxious and Invasive Plants Management Workshop will be held Oct. 25 and 26, 2005, in Fairbanks at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge, 4477 Pikes Landing Road. This year’s workshop, which has been held in Anchorage the past couple of years, will give Interior gardeners an opportunity to attend and learn more about the spread of invasive weeds.

Among a panel of speakers at local, state and national levels, national guest speakers include Jeff Connor of the Rocky Mountain National Park and Tim Prather of the University of Idaho. Representatives from the following agencies are also expected to make presentations:

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- Alaska Railroad
- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District
- Upper Su Soil and Water Conservation District
- UAA Alaska Natural Heritage Program
- UAF Cooperative Extension Service
- USDA Agricultural Research Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forestry Service
- USFS State and Private Forestry

The workshop begins at 8 a.m. both days with a continental breakfast and check-in, and wraps up about 5 p.m. Lunch is on site. In addition to a full schedule of speaker presentations, there will also be exhibits featuring educational literature, posters and tabletop displays. To reserve a table for an exhibit, please contact Janice Chumley at 907-262-5824.

Registration fee is $75 for both days or $55 for one day. Registration deadline is Oct. 14. For registration materials or more information, contact:

UAF Cooperative Extension Service-
Anchorage District
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99508
Phone: 907-786-6300
Fax: 907-786-6312

For accommodations, please contact the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge at 1-800-777-1725, Ext. 2, and provide the following code: TNB/L5297. The special meeting rate is $65 single,double and $10 per additional person. There is an additional 8 percent bed tax.

The Sixth Annual Statewide Noxious and Invasive Plants Management Workshop is sponsored by NRCS, USFS, AACD, Salcha/Delta SWCD, NPS, BLM, Fairbanks SWCD and UAF CES.


Master Gardener
Harvest Potluck & Awards Night!

Tuesday, Oct. 4 ■ 6:30 p.m. ■ Fairbanks Community Food Bank

Please bring your extra garden produce or a can of food to donate to the food bank...

And a potluck dish to share with others:
- A to G, breads or chips
- H to N, desserts
- O to U, main dish
- V to Z, salads or vegetables

RSVP to Michele at 474-2423 or ffmah@uaf.edu.
Gardenfresh
Recipe Ideas:
Tomatoes
By Petra Jennen
Master Gardener
Tok, AK

Tomatoes are most definitely my most favorite fruit (yes, they are a fruit!). There is nothing better than a tomato fresh off the vine, plump and bright red. Every gardener just has to grow tomatoes and enjoy that vine-fresh taste at least once! It usually is not the last time because going back to the store-bought bland tomatoes, which look great but taste like not much of anything, can be pretty difficult after having the real thing.

Luckily, tomatoes do very well in a greenhouse in Interior Alaska. I’ve also found that a warm house wall heated by the summer sun can almost replace a greenhouse at times. My house is lined with big pots each and every year that just about doubles the number of tomato plants I can grow. To me, tomatoes resemble the taste of summer and they are so versatile and offer so many amazing ways of preserving that great taste.

I really had a hard time picking the recipes for this issue because there are just too many to choose from. I decided to skip the usual tomato sauce that’s so simple to make and instead opt for more rare recipes like the ketchup and barbecue sauce. I hope your tastebuds will get a tingle out of these great recipes!

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**Barbecue Sauce**
*Delicious with beef or pork!*

24 large red tomatoes
3 stalks celery, chopped
2 medium onions, chopped
1 tsp. whole black peppercorns
2 jalapeno peppers (or other hot peppers), seeded (or not if you like it hot) and chopped
1 cup packed brown sugar
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 Tbsp. dry mustard
1 Tbsp. paprika
1 Tbsp. salt
1 tsp. Tabasco
1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 cup white vinegar

Drop tomatoes in boiling water for 1 minute or until skins split. Transfer to cold water. Remove skins, core and chop. Combine tomatoes, celery, onions and peppers in saucepan. Cook until soft, 30 minutes. Press through a food mill or fine sieve and return to pan. Cook on low heat until reduced by about half, 45 minutes. Stir often to prevent burning. Tie peppercorns in a cheesecloth bag and add together with remaining ingredients. Cook slowly until mixture is consistency of ketchup, about 1 1/2 hours. As it thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking. Remove spice bag. Ladle into sterile hot jars, leaving 1/4 inch head space. Process in a boiling water bath canner for 20 minutes. (Adapted from the “Ball Blue Book.”)

**Pepperonata**
*This simple recipe is from my native Germany. Needs time.*

4 cups onions, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 red jalapenos, finely chopped (with or without seeds depending on how hot you like it)
4 lbs. red bell peppers, finely chopped
3 lbs. tomatoes
6 bay leaves
6 Tbsp. olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
1 can of tomato paste
Red food coloring (optional)

Drop tomatoes in boiling water for 1 minute. Transfer to cold water. Remove peel and seeds and chop coarsely. Heat oil in a big saucepan. Sauté onion, garlic, jalapenos and bay leaves until onions are translucent. Add peppers and sauté 10 minutes more while stirring occasionally. Add tomatoes and tomato paste, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for about 30 minutes. Reseason, if necessary. If you like, you can add herbs like oregano, thyme and/or basil at this point. This is also the time to add the red food coloring, if using. Let the pepperonata come to a boil again and fill into sterilized hot jars. Cap and seal. Process in a water bath canner for 10 minutes.

(See also “Tomato Salsa” on page 6.)

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So there, now you’re all set with some great recipes and ready to go when all those tomatoes finally turn red next summer......that is if you don’t just eat them all up fresh off the vine. Because as I mentioned earlier, there’s nothing better than a plump, red-ripe, homegrown tomato!
Winter Bird-Feeding in Alaska

By Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation

Winter is a quiet season for birds in Alaska. Most migrate south to wintering areas in the Lower 48, Mexico, South America and Polynesia. But, some species remain in Alaska through winter. Even in the northernmost regions of Alaska, some ravens, snowy owls and gyrfalcons remain, and offshore, murrets and a few gulls linger near openings in the pack ice. More than 25 species endure the harsh winters of Interior and Western Alaska, and more than 100 stay through the milder coastal winters of Southcoastal and Southeastern Alaska. Diverse in form, colors and habits, Alaska’s winter birds fascinate observers. However, low numbers of birds, their secretive habits and the short winter days make bird-watching difficult. Cold binoculars and frozen fingers don’t help matters, either!

Bird-feeding is a popular way of attracting some winter birds to areas where their beauty and activities can be enjoyed. This hobby is a rewarding way to learn more about birds and other wildlife. The success of a bird-feeding station is determined by the time it is operated, the types of food offered and the placement of feeders. The following information is meant to help you operate a feeding station that will attract a variety of birds.

When to Feed Birds: Some birds will visit feeders year-round once they are familiar with the location of a dependable food supply. Birds are most easily attracted in winter, however, because natural food supplies are least abundant then. Feeders should be set up in late summer or early fall, then maintained through the winter and spring until natural food sources are again abundant.

Once you begin feeding birds in the fall, you have made a commitment. A feeder often attracts more birds to an area than natural food sources can support. Thus, if you stopped feeding them, the birds might not be able to find enough food to survive. So, if you plan a vacation, be sure to have someone restock your feeder regularly while you are gone.

Species we should be careful NOT to attract include bears and moose. Those of us interested in wildlife can help avoid conflicts, which always end up with the moose or bears as the losers. To protect wildlife and keep problems from arising, either locate feeders out of reach of moose and bears, or put up feeders after bears are hibernating (Nov. 1) and take them down before bears begin to wake up in spring (mid-March). Don’t feed birds in any way that will harm them. Keep feeders clean, and clean up the area on the ground around feeders that may attract other wildlife species to feeders.

What to Feed Birds: Most birds that can be attracted to feeders are insect or seed eaters. Insect-eating species, such as chickadees and woodpeckers, are attracted by animal fats, or “suet.” This can be obtained from the grocery store or trimmed from beef, pork, moose, caribou or other wild meat. Fats that have a low water content are best in areas with severe cold, because they freeze at lower temperatures.

Peanut butter, another fat, also attracts birds to feeders. Its sticky consistency occasionally causes problems for birds, so it should be mixed with melted animal fat and cornmeal or rolled oats. That expensive peanut butter will last longer if it is mixed with other ingredients, anyway.

Seed-eating birds that can be attracted to feeders include pine siskins, sparrows, grosbeaks, redpolls and crossbills. These species also eat suet, but seeds will attract them to your feeder. Unsalted sunflower seeds, thistle seeds, raw crushed peanuts, millet, scratch feed, various wild grains and canary seeds are welcomed. Commercial wild bird seed mixes can be used, but they often contain filler seeds that are not eaten by many species. Often, you can mix your own “wild bird food” more economically. Seeds can be purchased from local feed, variety and pet stores, or ordered from catalogs. When you first start your feeder, experiment with various seeds and find out which are preferred by the birds in your area.

Fruit-eating birds, such as pine grosbeaks and Bohemian waxwings, are rarely attracted to feeders, but when snow covers most natural berries, wild cranberries, blueberries or dogwood berries occasionally attract these colorful species to a feeder.

Gray jays, Steller’s jays, black-billed magpies and common ravens eat a wide variety of foods. Sliced apple halves and leftover table scraps may divert their attention from the suet long enough to give smaller birds a chance. Be careful not to give moldy food to birds, however, as it may cause illness or death.

To prevent the spread of some avian diseases, food should not be spread on the ground, and feeders should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Other Attractions for Birds: Birds do not have teeth; instead, they grind food in their gizzards. Birds eat small pieces of sand and gravel, or “grit,” to aid the grinding process. In winter, when the ground is covered by snow, suitable grit may be hard to find. You can supply grit to birds at the feeder in the form of crushed eggshells, coarse sand or from boxes of grit that are sold at variety and pet stores.

Water in a bird bath or other container often attracts birds in spring and summer, but the costs of maintaining open water through the winter are not justified. Birds survive on water derived from foods they eat and from eating snow.

Seed-eating birds, like crossbills, are sometimes attracted by salt and other minerals, which can be supplied by a salt block.

Plantings for Wildlife: If your yard has few trees and/or shrubs, birds will probably not be attracted to a feeder. Their need for shelter and protection from predators is often stronger than their attraction to an artificial food source. Also, because birds will not normally visit your yard in search of natural food if there are no trees or shrubs, they would be unlikely to detect food in your feeder. Don’t despair, however! Start planning to landscape your yard for birds. Spruce and hemlock provide excellent cover; birch, willow and alder provide natural seed sources; and some berry-producing plants attract birds that rarely come to feeders. A brush pile also can provide cover for some birds.

For more information, see “Landscaping for Wildlife in Alaska”; go to www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/dept_publications.php and type “winter bird feeding” in the search box.
Tomato Salsa
Great on chips! Add Tabasco or other hot sauce if you like it hot!

| 2 Tbsp. olive oil | 2 Tbsp. lime juice |
| 1 medium onion, finely chopped | 1 tsp. mild honey |
| 1 1/2 stalks celery, minced | 1 tsp. chopped fresh basil (or 1/2 tsp. dried) |
| 2 Tbsp. jalapeno peppers, seeded (or not) and chopped | 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro (or 1 Tbsp. dried) |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced | 1/4 tsp. ground cumin |
| 6 medium tomatoes, seeded and quartered | 1/4 tsp. chili powder |

Heat oil in heavy saucepan. Add onion, celery, peppers and garlic. Sauté about 5 minutes or until soft. Add tomatoes, lime juice, honey, basil, cilantro, cumin and chili powder. Bring mixture to a boil, cover and reduce heat. Simmer for 15 minutes. Fish out the tomato skins as mixture cools. Ladle into 1-cup freezer containers and let cool. Cover and chill overnight in the refrigerator before freezing the next day. To use, thaw in the refrigerator. Sauce will be thin, but delicious.

If you prefer to can this recipe, double or quadruple it and after you fished out the skins let it come to a boil again. Then ladle into sterile hot jars. Cap and seal. Process in a hot water bath canner for 15 minutes.