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★ WANTED! ★
APGA Newsletter Editor
Are you interested in helping APGA communicate between members? Do you like to write? Perhaps you should consider volunteering to edit the APGA Newsletter this year. The Newsletter is published quarterly during the months of January, April, July, and October. The members contribute many of the articles and the work consists primarily in laying out the newsletter and preparing it for publication. If interested, contact Harry Davidson hdavidson852@gmail.com.

2013...

Looking back over the year just ended, we see lots of growth and many changes in the Alaska peony industry.

Membership in APGA grew to over 185 members with 39 commercial growers! Membership increased primarily in the Interior region closely followed by the Anchorage/Mat-Su region.

APGA welcomed two new Directors to their Board, Patti Floyd from Kenai and Sue Lincoln from Willow. Ron Illingworth finished his term as President of the Board, and Harry Davidson was elected as the new President. Richard Repper and Jan Hanscom terms of office come to close this month, but both are running for re-election. Regrettably, Rachel Christy and Sue Kent resigned from the Board, and their terms will be finished out with Board appointees.

We also received sad news this year. Ed Pincus, owner of Third Branch Peonies, passed away last November, and Lavon Hollingsworth, wife of Don Hollingsworth with Hollingsworth Peonies, passed away in December.

2014 Winter Pre-Conference Class Offerings

Two pre-conference classes are being offered to help new growers and potential peony growers plan their business. A registration form is included at the end of the Newsletter.

Financial Risk Management. Thursday Jan 30 (Registration at 2:00, Class from 2:30—5:30 pm). This class, designed for “thinking about growing peonies” people, will help you make the right financial decision. The focus is on defining your potential start-up costs and conducting profitability analyses. You’ll go home with tools to help you make decisions.

Beginner Growers School. Thursday Jan 30 (Registration at 6:00, Class from 6:30—8:30 pm). This class, designed for beginning peony growers, reviews the basics of growing peonies in Alaska to give attendees an idea of what it takes to become a successful peony farmer, large or small. Topics include field preparation, equipment considerations, peony root planting techniques, determining the best time to plant, and over-wintering practices.
APGA’s 2014 Winter Conference Schedule
(registration form at end of Newsletter)

Thursday, Jan 30.
2:30—3:30 pm Financial Risk Management (registration starts at 2:00)
6:30—8:30 pm New Growers School (registration starts at 6:00)
6:30—8:30 pm Early conference registration (try to register early if you can)

Friday, Jan 31.
7:45 -8:30 am Conference Registration
8:30 am - 5:00 pm Conference Sessions (lunch provided)
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm Reception
6:00 pm - 6:30 pm Membership Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 1
7:45 -8:30 am Conference Registration
8:30 am - 4:20 pm Conference Sessions (lunch provided)

Conference Speakers You Don’t want to Miss

Alaska’s own Jeff Lowenfels, author of two important books, Teaming with microbes and Teaming with Nutrients, and garden editor for the Alaska Daily News, will present on both conference days. A most entertaining speaker, you won't want to miss Jeff’s talks!

Josh Volk, owner of Slow Hand Farm (slowhandfarm.com) and frequent contributor to Growing for Market (growingformarket.com), will talk about equipment for small farms (like ours!) and another on organic weed management.

Richard Currie is the owner of Styers Peonies (styerspeonies.com) which includes 7 cut-flower peony farms in Connecticut, upstate New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Richard will give talks on growing (including new organic methods they are testing out), harvesting/production, and marketing/distribution.

Dr. Gary Chastagner, plant pathologist with Washington State University who many of our growers met this last summer, will tell us the good, bad, and ugly about our peony fields.

Andy Anderson, is the Executive Director of the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA). WUSATA is a non-profit organization that promotes the export of food and agricultural products from the Western region of the United States. In conjunction with its 13 Member States, WUSATA provides a wide range of exporting services to facilitate trade between local food agribusinesses and importers around the world. See www.wusata.org for more information about this important organization.
Conference Schedule
ALASKA PEONY GROWERS 2014 WINTER CONFERENCE

THURSDAY
02:00 – 05:30 pm  Financial Risk Management for Peony Farm Investment, Jeff Tranel, RightRisk LLC
06:30 – 08:30  New Growers School, Mike Williams, Eagle Song Family Peony Farm
06:30 – 08:30  Early Conference Registration

FRIDAY
07:45 – 08:30 am  Registration
08:30 – 08:40  Welcome, Announcements
08:40 – 09:20  Programs for Identifying and Developing International Ag Markets, Andy Anderson, WUSATA
09:20 – 10:00  The Basics of Growing Healthy Peonies, Richard Currie, Styers Peonies
10:00 – 10:20  BREAK
10:20 – 11:20  One Grower’s Approach to Organic Weed Control, Josh Volk, Slow Hand Farm
11:20 – 12:00  Local Flower Markets and Opportunities, Rachel Lord, Alaska Stems
12:00 – 01:00 pm  LUNCH
01:00 – 01:40  Harvesting and Producing High-Quality Peonies, Richard Currie, Styers Peonies
01:40 – 02:00  Using High Tunnels to Provide Peony with a Longer Growing Season, Jan Hanscom, Polar Peonies
02:00 – 03:00  Botrytis and Other Pathogens in Alaska Peony Fields, Dr. Gary Chastagner, WSU
03:00 – 03:20  BREAK
03:20 – 04:20  Teaming with Microbes for the Peony Grower, Jeff Lowenfels
04:20 – 05:00  Alaska Peony Pest Surveys, Todd Steinlage & Mia Kirk, Alaska Division of Agriculture
05:30 – 07:30 pm  RECEPTION
06:00 – 06:30 pm  MEMBERSHIP MEETING

SATURDAY
07:45 – 08:30 am  Registration
08:30 – 08:40  Welcome, Announcements
08:40 – 09:40  Tools for Growing on a Small Acreage, Josh Volk, Slow Hand Farm
09:40 – 10:00  Weeder Geese in the Peony Field, Wayne Floyd, Cool Cache Peony Farm
10:00 – 10:20  BREAK
10:20 – 11:00  Marketing and Distributing Peony Flowers, Richard Currie, Styers Peonies
11:00 – 11:40  Alaska Peony Nutrient Requirements, Dr. Mingchu Zhang, UAF
11:40 – 12:00  Growers Cup Award
12:00 – 01:00 pm  LUNCH
01:00 – 02:00  Horton Heard a Who and You May Too, Jeff Lowenfels
02:00 – 03:00  Selling through Alaska Peony Packhouses, Amy Pettit (panel moderator)
03:00 – 03:20  BREAK
03:20 – 04:20  Round Table Discussions
Arctic Alaska Peonies Cooperative News

Arctic Alaska Peonies is now a fully formed cooperative complete with by-laws, and all those business things that have to happen when a new organization forms.

Arctic Alaska Peonies Cooperative has 18 Founding Farms, and 10 Associate members (those with less than 500 roots in the ground). Of course, membership is open so more will be joining soon.

Our founding board is complete with five regional representatives, Wanda Haken, Nenana/Healy; Carolyn Chapin, Fairbanks & north; Kim Herning, Chena Hot Springs; Ron Illingworth, North Pole/Salcha; and Frank Borman, Delta/Tok.

The Cooperative is advertising in several publications and putting together group orders for irrigation supplies, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides for this spring.

As our peony crops begin to mature in greater numbers, we anticipate the need for skilled peony pickers, so this summer Arctic Alaska Peonies Cooperative is planning a Picker Certification Program. We will invite members of our future labor pool as well as cooperative growers who want more training in picking their crop. If there are additional openings, we will open the program to others in the state.

We will see you at the APGA Conference at the Pack House Roundtable.

Arctic Alaska Peonies Cooperative!

Time to renew your APGA membership!

Our 2014 membership drive is underway. The annual dues remain the same with $200/grower member, $50/associate, and $50/supporter (non-Alaska resident). You can pay by check, credit card, or PayPal. A membership application form is at the end of the Newsletter or you can register on-line at alaskapeonies.org.
Ramping up APGA

There is more than one way to skin a cat, there is more than one road to get where you are going, etc. etc., and if you read this entire article, you'll understand this statement and how it relates to APGA. I've got 3 ideas!

Last June I was elected as President of the Kenai Peninsula Farm Bureau Chapter and last month was honored to be elected as a State Director. The Farm Bureau (FB) is over 95 years old in the USA and is a very stable organization representing their members. They partner with entities that provide dividends back into their treasury providing a reliable income stream for successful budgeting way beyond membership dues. You may be familiar with how AARP is always sending us information about car insurance or cell phone service. There is a reason for this. AARP partners with Hartford Insurance or whomever, and receives a dividend from Hartford or whomever for all their referrals. First idea—maybe APGA could work a partnership with an Alaskan entity to increase our income base.

While I think I know a bit about agriculture from 18 years of exposure, I certainly didn’t know anything about cattle ranching, spinning wool, raising sheep or hogs or bailing hay. In other words I knew very little about the members of my new position. So my first goal as President was to learn about what they do and to share that with others in our Farm Bureau Chapter. How to do that?

At the state FB meetings, Joni of the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) talked about Ag in The Classroom. She asked for monetary help with the program. Alaska FB has now donated $15,000 to this program. So how could I use this program to further my goal? We’re now working on a program to team up with the AV programs within the schools on the Peninsula, Kenai and Homer SWCD, Cooperative Extension, hopefully Farmers Markets and our FB chapter to make videos of our members on their farms. We’ll use these videos in Juneau when lobbying, selling them to tourists at Farmer’s Markets etc. — and yes — peonies will be one of the subjects of the videos providing another exposure. Of course during this project, I will learn what my FB members do. One immediate benefit to partnering with other organizations is access to their e-mail lists. Second idea—partnering with other Alaska organizations

While my brain is now in the ‘new learning’ mode, being exposed to another organization and how they do it, I've once again been reminded of ‘what else’ everyone does. By that I mean when I started learning about the sheep growers, I learned both owners either now or in the past have been legislative aids in Juneau. Down the yellow brick road I went with my thoughts.

I started inventorying skills of my new friends at FB, I found each had talents beyond the obvious. I’m sure that is the case with APGA. I know some of you have ‘secrets’ you haven’t shared or been asked to share that could be a great asset to APGA.

For example, as many of you know I have strong opinions (😊) on many subjects and one is Co-ops. I’m a strong supporter of private industry. I’ve shared that I think APGA needs to be very careful about supporting co-ops over private ownership. I believe one of the romantic parts of Alaska peony is folks can purchase direct from the farm. Know Your Farmer and all the other programs floating around out there support that thought. The buyer knows they will get the same quality flowers and personal service from that farm. I do
believe however there are other ways we can work together. Promotion or marketing is one way. My background of 30 years in marketing has led me to start efforts for a marketing co-op with a few farms here in our area.

I think it really makes sense to take advantage of each member’s strengths beyond the obvious. If you have a ‘secret’ you’d like to share, no matter how unrelated it seems, now might be a great time to ‘confess’. Third Idea—Inventory our members for ‘secret’ skills.

Working with all these other related organizations reminded me of another ‘free’ opportunity for public display for our peony. In fact, I sort of got a bit of a chastisement from several folks including the State Department of Ag, (a source for many of APGA’s grants) because peony was not at the State Fair in Palmer this year. Our Farm entered a bouquet at the Kenai Peninsula State Fair in Ninilchik and won for our category and also took Grand Champion for the entire 26 related categories. We landed a nice picture in our local newspaper and of course coverage at the Fair. Marketing doesn’t have to be expensive.

I think APGA is at a crossroads. The folks that started the organization are now tired plus getting really busy with their farms. The new Administrator is a great step in moving the organization from a nice group of people to a professional organization. ••

Her study consisted of measuring soil and air temperature, soil moisture, relative humidity, and precipitation in field-grown and high tunnel-grown plants throughout the years 2012 and 2013. Other data she collected included flowering phenology, number of cut stems per plant, stem length, and spring emergence dates. In the fall she measured the biomass of plant samples collected from inside and outside the tunnels to assess the ability of high tunnels to increase plant size more rapidly than in field-grown plants.

She will present the results of her study at the APGA winter conference, and her report is available on the SARE website, APGA website, and directly from her (hanscom@mosquitonet.com).
After no Spring and a crazy Summer, Fall lasted forever! We got all the fields prepped and irrigation lines are in for next Spring’s plant. If we learned anything from 2013’s chaos, it was that preparation can save your bacon! With that done, we took advantage of the extra nice days to address some drainage issues, add additional soil to some of the older rows, and double check all the new plantings to make sure that the extra irrigation needed for the long hot summer had not eroded their soil!

Finally December brought several snowy days. I was out today and the snow was 2 ½ to 3 feet deep. The peonies are happy!

Now that the farm is truly tucked in, we are planning for a busy spring and summer. We have a good order of new roots to go in in early June. Then with several plants reaching that 3-4 year point, we expect a good harvest in July!

So here’s wishing all a happy and prosperous New Year! ☺
APGA 2013 Board Members

Harry Davidson, President
Rachel Christy, MATSU
Patti Floyd, SOL
Jan Hanscom, FBX
Ron Illingworth, FBX
Sue Kent, Secretary
Sue Lincoln, MATSU
Richard Repper, SOL
Shelly Rainwater, Vice President
Virginia Young, Treasurer

Alaska Peonies! 2014 Calendars

For Your Calendars

Jan 9 (6:30 pm) - Kenai Farm Bureau meeting (Ninilchik Fairgrounds)
Jan 14 (11:30-2 pm) - Record Keeping & Taxes for Agricultural Businesses (FBX or by videoconference)
Jan 21-23 (9am-4:30 pm) - State Pesticide Certification Classes (FBX, ANC, Delta Junction). Cost is $30 plus additional fees for study materials. Registration and the order of study materials are available at bit.ly/ces-workshops.
January 30 (2:30-5:30 pm) - Financial Risk Management class (ANC). Registration at alaskapeonies.org.
Jan 30 (6:30—8:30 pm) - New Grower’s School (ANC). Registration at alaskapeonies.org.
Jan 31 & Feb 1 (all day) - APGA Winter Conference (ANC). Registration at alaskapeonies.org.
Feb 24 - Value-Added Producer Grant application deadline. Grants to help producers create new products, expand marketing opportunities, support further processing of existing products or goods, or to develop specialty and niche products. For working capital and planning activities. Maximum working capital grant is $200,000; maximum planning grant is $75.00. For more information see our November newsletter, in the November 25th Federal Register on page 70260 or by contacting any USDA Rural Development Office. Alaska offices are listed at: http://www.ruraldev.usda.gov/AKOffices.html.
March 11-13 - Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Fairbanks. Agenda and registration at http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ah/sare/conference/

Visit alaskapeonies.org to order your calendars today! Great gifts for you, your family & friends, and your customers.
$15 + shipping & handling
APGA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

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☐ Check here if your contact information has changed since last year.

☐ Check here if you do NOT want your contact information posted on the “Member’s Only” area of APGA’s web site.

Check the type of membership you are paying for:  ☐ NEW  ☐ RENEW  ☐ UPGRADE

☐ Commercial Grower - $200/yr.
A Commercial Grower membership is for a farm in Alaska growing peonies for a commercial purpose. The farm must have a minimum of 500 peonies planted in Alaska and have an agricultural business license issued by the state of Alaska. Each farm may obtain only one Commercial Grower membership, but each farm may have an unlimited number of individuals accorded the benefits of commercial grower membership with the exception of voting privileges. Each farm is allowed a single vote for any open seat on the Board of Directors.

Alaska Business License No.: __________________________ (required)

Second email address (for newsletters & other notifications): _________________________________

☐ Associate - $50/yr.
An Associate membership is for an individual who is a resident of Alaska and interested in the Alaska commercial peony industry. Associates do not have voting rights.

☐ Supporter - $50/yr.
A Supporter membership is for an individual who is not an Alaska resident. Supporters do not have voting rights.

☐ Organization - $25/yr.
Organization memberships are for private organizations, companies, or government agencies wishing to support the Alaska peony industry. Organizations do not have voting rights.

Make check out to: **ALASKA PEONY GROWERS ASSOCIATION, INC**

Mail to: APGA Membership
P.O. Box 54
Willow, AK 99688

For APGA use:

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☐ SECRETARY  ☐ TREASURER  ☐ ROSTER  ☐ RECEIPT  ☐ WEB
Growing Peonies in Alaska

A Profitable Opportunity?

• Start-up costs
• Annual expenses and revenues
• Profitability analysis
• Take-home tools

Thursday, January 30th 2014
Registration: 2:00 p.m.
Workshop: 2:30-5:30 p.m.
BP Energy Center
900 E. Benson Blvd., Anchorage, AK
Contact Alaska Peony Growers Association to Register
www.alaskapeonies.org

Women-in-Agriculture Education Focus
USDA - RMA Spokane RO Project
Presenters: Rod Sharp and Jeff Tranel – Colorado State University

Partners:
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Alaska Farmland Trust
Alaska Peony Growers Association
RightRisk, LLC
USDA – Risk Management Agency
# Registration Form

## Alaska Peony Growers Association
January 31-February 1, 2014

### Registration Information

- **Name(s):**
- **Company/Farm:**
- **Address:**
- **City / State / Zip:**
- **Email:**
- **Contact Phone No.:**

### Conference Registration Fees

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<td>$30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Growers School</td>
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<td>$125*</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entire Conference</td>
<td>$150</td>
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<td>Friday Sessions Only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday Sessions Only</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$125*</td>
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<td>Late Registration (after Jan. 10 &amp; at the door)</td>
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* Includes APGA 2014 Associate Membership

**TOTAL PAYMENT:** $

### Payment by Check

- **Make checks payable to:** APGA
- **CHECK NO:**
- **AMOUNT:**

### Payment by Credit Card

- **CARD NUMBER:**
- **EXPIRATION DATE:**
- **CARD TYPE:**
  - [ ] VISA
  - [ ] MASTERCARD
- **AMOUNT:**
- **NAME ON CARD:**
- **ZIP CODE FOR CARD:**
- **SECURITY CODE:**

**MAIL Checks & Registration Form to:**
APGA Conference Registration
Division of Agriculture
Attn: Jacquelyn Schade
1800 Glenn Hwy Suite 12
Palmer AK 99645

**EMAIL Registration to:**
jacquelyn.schade@alaska.gov

**For INFORMATION, contact:**
Jacquelyn Schade
jacquelyn.schade@alaska.gov
907.761.3858

**CONFERENCE LOCATION:**
BP Energy Center
900 East Benson Blvd
Anchorage AK
(map attached)

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Notes:
- Registration is per person
- Refund Policy: 50% refund until Jan 10
- Late Payment: Per person after Jan. 10 and at the door