

## **Blossoming Gardens**

*by Sue Patterson*

I've really been getting into gardening lately. I'm amazed at the bold colors and the lush flower arrangements all over town, a town barren just a couple of months back. Being new to Alaska, I don't really know a lot about which flowers grow well here.

All my gardening knowledge dealt with plants indigenous to Texas and North Carolina--clearly bluebonnets and azaleas aren't going to work out. Well, actually, I could plant them in pots, regulate their sun time, heat, and watering to be more similar to the South. While the plants would grow, they wouldn't really thrive---not to mention how exhausted I would be---all because I only wanted to grow what I was familiar with!

I'm struck by the similarity between my gardening experience and my homeschooling experience. Prior to this year, all I knew about education came from what and how I had learned in schools. Some good, some bad. What worked, what hadn't. The only thing is, that environment is not what I want to duplicate in my home. "School-ish" materials seem to really be aimed at the center of that bell curve and a lot of the repetitiveness is due to so many children in one classroom. Certainly, it doesn't take 12 years to cover that material! So, probably, just as with my gardening, I'm going to have to learn new ways.

Forcing a familiar school-type approach at home is like forcing bougainvillea to bloom in Alaska.

I look out the window and see the Alaska Shasta daisies, lobelia, and the Forget-Me-Nots growing like mad. They're not root-bound in pots (and the gardeners seem to be thriving well too). All it took was to find what these little flowers needed and provide it. And allow Nature to provide the rest. That, too, requires a certain amount of trust. I have to hold myself back from interfering, trying to force my old ways of gardening and learning upon my gardens. I guess I'll just try to relax and enjoy my little flowers' unfolding. I hope you're enjoying your gardens too!

From Chart & Compass  
May 1997