



AMGA NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016
Volume 18, Issue 8

Message From Harry

I know everyone is still waiting to hear what is happening regarding the closure of our local C.E.S. office. Our AMGA working committee did have a formal meeting with the University's restructure committee when they were in Anchorage. We presented our case for preserving as many programs and staff as possible, but at this point I can only say that we are still waiting to hear what the final decision is going to be. Depending on how things shake out at the C.E.S., we will be facing many important decisions. I know that we all want the AMGA to continue to play a vital and important role as educators and volunteers in our community.

As part of our contingency planning for the impending closure of the C.E.S. office, we have reserved meeting space at the BP Energy Center for our monthly membership meetings for the coming season. This meeting space is free to our non-profit organization and we are grateful to have use of a very nice facility on such short notice. Thank you to board member Phyllis Rogers for tending to the details and making the needed arrangements.

On a more fun note, I hope that many of you are planning to participate in our upcoming AMGA plant sale on Saturday, August 13, from 10AM-4PM. This event is our primary fund raiser each year and it seems to be getting more popular each year with not only our members but with the general public as well.

We encourage members to bring perennials or houseplants for sale or if you have garden related art, crafts, or books for sale they are welcome as well. The guidelines for sellers can be found on our website at www.alaskamastergardeners.org. On the top menu bar click AMGA then select Plant Sale Guidelines from the drop down menu.

This year we are again pleased to offer a nice range of educational presentations and demonstrations throughout the day. Stay tuned for a complete schedule of

classes, times and presenters. For many of us this is a not to be missed, half day or even all-day event. Hope to see you at the sale!



Late season

PLANT Sale Plus*

plant now for spring bloom!

Sat, August 13, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Cooperative Extension Service

1675 C Street, off 16th between A & C Streets

Berries & other fruit

Perennial flowers

Trees and shrubs

Houseplants + more

* Garden art & garden etc.

* Free classes & demos

* Free pH testing

* Ask a Master Gardener



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Photos by Mike Baldwin

July 18th tour: Karen Helton's garden



Community Gardens in Alaska

By Chris Wood

How wonderful it is to see the excitement for gardening and "growing your own." In Alaska we are seeing an increased interest in the growing of vegetables, herbs and fruits within our communities, cities and in the bush.

With our short growing season, 24 hours of sunlight, and a pioneer spirit, Alaskan's are passionate about their gardening. Out of need we grow food, hunt, fish and put up our food for the Winter months.

The Cooperative Extension Service through the University of Alaska Fairbanks is an active partner in our success to gardening in this land. Through their Master Gardener's program, they have taught and graduated 1250 Master Gardeners that have been instrumental in the Community Garden movement here. Our many Garden clubs with their monthly educational programs encourage new gardeners to give gardening a try. Between these two organizations, community gardens in Alaska has exploded.

Here are some examples of active community gardens tracked by the Cooperative Extension Service.

In the Municipality of Anchorage, there are designated areas in the city of 183 plots total for rent that are 10x20 feet. These are for private use by individuals in the community.

Interestingly, Churches and faith based organizations are growing community gardens and encouraging their parishioner's involvement as a way to help each other and give to those in need.

With the help and interest of educator's, schools have encouraged involvement of children to learn about gardening and have embraced hands on training to grow, taste and share their food with others. From elementary schools to high schools, kids are involved and excitedly participating. Schools have built greenhouses and many volunteers have helped educators teach our youth the principles of gardening. Our Alaska Botanical Master Gardeners have lead an afterschool program called 21st Century. This program was set up at schools for at risk children and has been very successful. Master Gardener volunteers, through our Cooperative Extension have assisted staffing this school program.

A local high school has been growing transplants for the Refugees Farmers market project where refugees have worked an 8,000 square foot community garden plot. They sell their food at a weekly summer market in downtown Anchorage. This neat program was started by the Cooperative Extension Service and well received by our community.

Several state facilities have partnered with Cooperative Extension and started community gardens at prisons and youth detention centers to help rehabilitate prisoners. This program has been supported by our community of volunteers.

The Master Gardeners have been very active in the planting and maintaining the gardens of the State's senior facility called The Pioneer Home. Last year, these gardeners planted 750 flowers and cared for them Summer through Fall to the delight and appreciation of the residents. As more and more local and state funding becomes tighter, volunteers are needed to step up and help out communities in caring for our public gardens to keep them looking great. Our garden clubs are in a perfect position to lead and encourage this participation.

Another area of community gardens has been within neighborhoods and community associations. From apartment complexes to condo associations, these residents have wanted to and have planted a garden plot on site to grow food. Several private senior homes have placed community gardens in the master plan for their residents and employees to participate in the love of gardening.

In the heart of Anchorage, we have a Centennial Rose garden that is cared for by active garden club volunteer gardeners. The Blue Star Veterans Memorial Hwy marker is planted, watered and weeded every Summer by the Anchorage Garden Club members, each involved member taking responsibility for a week of the Summer Season.

The Alaska Botanical Garden has a Junior Master Gardener program to actively involve children to learn to garden. Several 8 week sessions are well attended every Summer. These kids have a great garden plot they plant and care for. As they learn about gardening, they will no doubt carry with them a love for gardening their entire lives. In the Alaska Botanical garden, the Wildflower Garden club maintains a lovely native wildflower path that weaves through this beautiful garden.

We are so blessed to participate in this incredible creation we live in. Every state with its uniqueness of flora to share and celebrate.

As Chairman of the Pacific Region Community Gardens, I would love to hear what you are doing in your states and through the sharing of ideas we can all benefit our states and promote the love of gardening.

Keep blooming,

Chris Wood
Eagle River, Alaska



Extremely industrious, new Master Gardener Don Bladow cleared trees from two acres at Lutheran Church of Hope to be able to grow fresh vegetables for the Lutheran Social Services food pantry.

Photo by Julie Riley



East Anchorage United Methodist Church invited the neighborhood to create a community garden by providing a pile of top soil and staking out locations on the lawn in which gardeners could build a bed. Garbage cans are filled with water for gardeners to use since the water spigot is across the parking lot.

Photos by Julie Riley

Continued on page 5

Aeroponics Gardening: Part II

By Amy Reed

It seems that the popular topic in the news is of alternative gardening techniques in Alaska. We live in a harsh climate with a short growing season and long shipping route. Many vegetables and fruits are overripe or rotten by the time they hit grocery shelves. The New York Times featured an article, *Closing the Farm to Table Gap in Alaska* (Jan 3, 2016), which highlighted the company, Vertical Harvest Hydroponics, here in Anchorage. The company uses insulated shipping containers with rows of LED lights as controlled climate hydroponic gardens in the attempt to bring fresher produce with a longer growing season to Alaskans. Arctic Greens has partnered with Vertical Harvest Hydroponics to establish the first hydroponic farm in Kotzebue in May.

In the May 2016 AMGA newsletter, I described how my family started a journey of gardening through aeroponics tower gardens. We assembled fourteen towers in our greenhouse, eleven pots high with the capacity of 44 plants per tower. I want to use this article to go into depth of the mechanics of aeroponics as I have learned so far.

Aeroponics is a great alternative for growing plants in small spaces, especially indoors. Aeroponics is similar to hydroponics, as neither method uses soil to grow plants; however, with hydroponics, water is used as a growing medium. In aeroponics, no growing medium is used. Instead, the roots of plants are suspended or hung in a dark chamber and periodically sprayed with nutrient-rich solution.

Seeds that we have had success thus far with germination and planting are basil, dill, watercress, squash, cucumbers, strawberries, beans, sweet peas, peppers, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, bok choy, lettuce, and tomatoes. We planted the seeds in rockwool cubes and covered them in vermiculite. The trays were then placed under lights for 15 hours a day and warming mats set at 70 degrees. The seeds were watered twice a day for the first week and then spread out to once a day. At the two-week mark we were able to plant each cube in the towers.

The Tower Garden aeroponics system we used has a 25-gallon reservoir at its base. The reservoir stores a mineral nutrient solution. Inside the reservoir is a small, low wattage submersible pump. The pump draws the nutrient solution up the center of each pot all the way to the top. From there, the solution drips down through a "shower head" device that cascades the nutrients over the plant roots. The roots become highly oxygenated as gravity tumbles it back down to the reservoir.

One of the best investments for this project we found was a continuous pH meter. Many people use a handheld pH meter or strips to test their reservoir and gravity

tank, but we felt it was more beneficial to have a meter that gives us a continuous read. In our system, we have two nutrient tanks...tank A which is the base solution, and tank B that is the acid. The goal is to keep the pH between 4.5-5.5 in the gravity tank. We have found that this corresponds to around a pH of 6 in the actual tower reservoir tanks. The goal for reservoir pH is 5.5-6.5. Hot weather tends to cause a downtrend in the pH by a slight amount. Small increments of change in pH are only trended but not corrected as adding either pH up or pH down solutions can cause overcorrection easily.

Since planting the towers in April, we have had three harvests of lettuce, two of spinach and kale, and have harvested over six cups of strawberries. My child enjoys picking and sampling sweet peas off the vine, so it is hard to say how many actual pea pods we have grown. Our freezer in the pantry is stuffed with blanched and frozen greens and we are spilling over into the garage freezer.

This has been an extremely fun and educational experience for my family, and I feel that both hydroponics and aeroponics systems can be the new trend of gardening in the New Frontier. Not only will they elongate the growing season, but also they will bring the farm closer to our table.

Submersible Pump in Reservoir



July Garden Tours cont....

July 20: Sandy & Dave Harrington's Pop up Tour



Community Gardens...cont from page 3



Thanks to Catherine Shenk, UAA horticulture supervisor and MG, for tilling Fresh International Gardens. Last year's crew included Master Gardeners Steffany Willhauck (seated) and Kara Monroe. Photo by Julie Riley



The Refugee Farmers Market Project takes about 200 hours of volunteer time each season. Master Gardeners including Cheryl Chapman (center) help get the gardeners and their produce to market. MG Greg Kalal, "Raising It Up" Farm, has donated thousands of pounds of potatoes to the program since 2007. Photo by Julie Riley



Succession planting at Fresh International Gardens entrepreneurial community garden. Photo by Julie Riley



Bird Chatter

1001 WEIRD FACTS FOR CANADIAN GARDENERS

Master Gardeners Association of British Columbia

- Hydroponically grown plants and vegetables are usually more healthy and vigorous than their standard grown counterparts owing to ready availability of nutrients.
- When the first Europeans arrived in Canada, there were no earthworms - none survived the last ice age. The omnipresent Canadian worm found in all gardens is an import that has a weird relationship with weeds. They gather up weed seeds and store them deep in their burrows before birds, mice and insects consume them. Researchers at Ohio State University discovered that earthworms gather up 90% of the weed seeds around their burrow entrances. Why remains a mystery, but it helps spread invasive weed species.
- The estimated value of B.C.'s 2010 marijuana crop: \$7 billion.
- The entire world's food supply depends on around 150 plant species; of these just 12 supply three-quarters of the world's food.
- Of the roughly a quarter million plant varieties available for agriculture, only 3% are being used for that purpose.
- The largest fruit tree collection is at Brogdale, Kent, U.K. It consists of 4500 trees, including 2300 varieties of apple trees.
- Look carefully at the tiny product label on apples and other fruits. A four-digit number indicates the fruit has been grown in a conventional manner; a five-digit number beginning with '9' indicates organically grown fruit, while five digits beginning with '8' indicate a genetically modified fruit.
- Pineapples are berries, peanuts are beans and avocados have the highest caloric content of any fruit, 167 per 100 grams.

For more weird facts, visit:

<http://www.mgabc.org/content/1001-weird-facts-canadian-gardeners>



MG Mike Baldwin shared techniques for attracting moths as part of the Advanced MG Entomology course last spring. This year's official moth week July 23-31, 2016 may have come and gone, but nonetheless, check out the National Moth Week website for info on observing moths for the rest of the summer. Home page: <http://nationalmothweek.org/> On the top menu bar: Finding Moths.

Photo credit: Mike Baldwin - selfie

Ornamental Grasses in Alaska

Source: AMGA website-->Resources & Links-->Plant Culture
-->Ornamental Grasses in Alaska

Extract:

"Grasses are divided into two types based on how they synthesize their sugars: cool-season and warm-season. Cool-season grasses thrive in our climate, making their best growth with the air temperature around 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Many different species and cultivars in this group grow in Alaska with great success.

Warm-Season grasses enjoy and are adapted to summers with high air temperatures, from about 80-95 degrees F.

Our cool summer climate makes these types of grasses challenging to grow. If you wish to try a warm-season grass, you will increase the probability of success by locating it in a place that gets all day sun and perfect drainage.

"Ornamental grasses increase in size by "running" or "clumping." Clumpers increase their diameter a little each year, just like most other perennials. The running types increase by rhizomes or stolons and must be scrutinized before (and meticulously maintained after) planting, as they can be quite difficult to remove once established".

Check out MG Christine Bingham's "Ornamental Grasses in Alaska" page on AMGA's website for more information on growing these easy care plants. Christine offers suggestions for hardy grasses in Alaska borders, beds and containers as well as non-hardy grasses that do well in containers.

Treasurer's Report for August Balances 5/31/16

Checking	13815.18
Savings	<u>11710.81</u>
	\$25525.99
Dedicated Funds	8451.91
Revenue:	
Interest	<u>27.22</u>
	\$27.22
Expense:	
Operations	249.99
Pioneer Home	<u>962.92</u>
	\$1212.91
Balances 5/31/16	
Checking account	12602.25
Savings account	<u>11712.25</u>
	\$24314.50
Dedicated Funds	\$8477.71



Garden Event Calendar

MEETINGS and EVENTS

Monday, August 1

****Mat-Su Master Gardener's Monthly Meeting.** Times and Details at: <http://www.matsumastergardeners.com/calendar-of-events.html>.

****Meadow Lake Bloomers Garden Club Monthly Meeting:** Finalizing Plans for the August Perennial Plant Sale. 10:30 am at Meadow Lakes Senior Center, 1210 N Kim Drive, Wasilla.

Tuesday, August 2

Valley Garden Club: Fair Entry Changes by Kathy Liska. 10:30 am at Lady Gray B & B, 1151 E Glenwood Avenue, Wasilla.

Thursday, August 4

****Anchorage Garden Club Monthly Meeting:** Mushrooms of Alaska's Southern Coast by Kate Mohatt, USDA Forest Service. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at Pioneer Schoolhouse, 437 E 3rd Avenue, Anchorage. Details at: <http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchorageclub.htm>.

****Dandelion Removal for the Lowenfels Trail:** Led by Verna Pratt. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at Lowenfels trail, Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage. Helpful tools to bring: Dandelion digger, kneeling pad and a 5-gallon pail or plastic bag.

Tuesdays and Fridays, August 2 - August 26

Herb Study Group: Join the Herb Study Group in the Herb Garden at Alaska Botanical Garden. Learn to care for the 100 different species of herbs. Bring tools, kneeling pads and a bucket for weeds. 1:00 pm at Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage.

Tuesdays, August 9 and 23

Tragopogon Pull: Led by Verna Pratt. 6:30 pm at Potter Marsh Section House Parking Area. Adults only. Bring garden gloves and dandelion digger. Details at: verna@acsalaska.net.

Thursday, August 11

Alaska Botanical Garden: Wine in the Woods with Local Wineries, Hors D'oeuvres, and Music. 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm. Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage. <http://alaskabg.org/event/wine-in-the-woods/>.

Sunday, August 14

Eagle River Nature Center: Wildflowers and Berries: One to Two Mile Plant Walk with Verna Pratt. 2:00 pm at Eagle River Nature Center, 32750 Eagle River Rd., Eagle River. Details at: <http://www.ernc.org/calendar/august.html>.

Wednesday, August 17

Campbell Creek Science Center Midsummer Night's Science Series: Mushroom Fair: Learn About Local Mushrooms from Local Mushroom Enthusiasts. Bring Your Specimens to Identify. 7:00 pm at Campbell Creek Science Center, 5600 Science Center Drive, Anchorage. Details at: http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/science-center/ccsc_calendar.html.

Thursday, August 18

Willow Garden Club Monthly Meeting: Preserving Food by Marsha Von Able. 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm at the First Baptist Church on Leatherleaf and Bogard Road. Details at: <http://willowgardenclub.blogspot.com/>.

Wednesdays, August 17 and 31

Campbell Creek Science Center Work Party: Join Verna Pratt to Weed the Wildflower Beds. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at the East Entrance of the of the Science Center, 5600 Science Center Drive, Anchorage.

Saturday, August 20

Recycle Plastic Pots: Plastic Pots 2, 5 & 7. 10:00 am - 5:00 pm at The Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage. Please rinse dirt from the pots. Details at: <http://alaskabg.org/events/>.

Tuesday, August 23

Alaska Orchid Society Monthly Meeting: Tour of a Private or Public Garden. 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Location and Details at: <http://www.wayne-toups.squarespace.com/events/>.

Thursday August 25 - Monday, September 5

Alaska State Fair, Palmer, Alaska.

****Flowers/Vegetables 1st Entry:** Wednesday, August 24, 12:00 pm - 9:00 pm.

****Flowers/Vegetables 2nd Entry:** Wednesday, August 31, 12:00 pm - 9:00 pm.

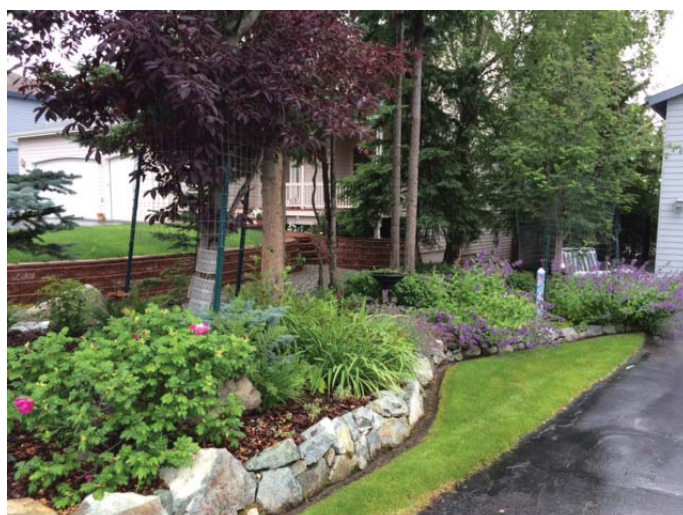
Details at: <http://www.alaskastatefair.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/FLOWERS.pdf>.

PLANT SALES

Saturday, August 13

****Alaska Master Gardener's Plant Sale:** Plant Now for Spring Bloom: Perennials, Berries, Trees and Shrubs. 10:00 am - 4:00 pm at Cooperative Extension Office, 1675 C Street, Anchorage. [See page 1 for more details]

****Meadow Lake Bloomers Garden Club Perennial Plant Sale.** 10:00 am - 5:00 pm at Meadow Lakes City Center Parking Lot, Corner of Parks Highway and Sylvan Rd, Wasilla.



July 25th: Linda McCarthy Beckworth & Dennis Beckworth's Pop Up Garden Tour
Photos by Mike Baldwin



AMGA regularly meets at 7:00pm every third Monday of the month, September through May (except for December).

Meetings are held at the
Anchorage Cooperative Extension Center
1675 C Street, Suite 100
(access off of 16th Avenue)

Monthly educational programs are free and open to the public.
Visitors and guests are welcomed and encouraged.

The Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. Contact the editor, Gina Docherty, at:

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AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org

AMGA Google Group:
<https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/AkMGA>

AMGA Board of Directors

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Grants:	Barbara Baker
Pioneer Home:	Erma MacMillan (design)
	Lynne Opstad
Volunteer Coordinators:	Julie Ginder, Joyce Smith, Lynne Opstad

To send concerns or information to the AMGA directly, mail to:
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If you have questions or want to make address or email corrections, please contact Jane Baldwin at:
ak.jbaldwin@gmail.com

Newsletter Submission Deadline

The deadline for submitting an item for publication in the following month's edition of the AMGA newsletter is the 20th of every month. Items arriving after this date may or may not be included.

Educational or garden related articles, Bird Chatter, calendar items and announcements are always welcome.

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:
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Anchorage, AK 99501
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Fax: 786-6312

