

# AMGA NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2017 Volume 19, Issue 9

# Message From Harry

After a rather soggy summer, I am voting that we get an extension of the season via a nice 'Indian Summer'. A lot of plants in the garden seem to really have thrived in this cool and wet summer. I must say that the emerald green moss growing on my roof is doing quite well, thank you.

It has been a very active summer for our Master Gardeners. I hope everyone had a chance to attend at least a few of the many interesting and beautiful gardens on offer during our weekly tours. Many thanks to those who opened their gardens and homes to our members. Anyone who has ever had a big group of garden visitors knows all the work that is involved.

On August 12th, we held our 4th Annual Late Season Plant Sale at a new location in the Alaska Botanical Garden parking lot. Thank you to the volunteers, plant sellers and donors who helped to make it all happen, as well as to ABG for their support. No doubt because of Cindy Walker's (no) rain dance, there was barely a sprinkle of rain to be found during the day. The monsoon-like downpour resumed shortly after final cleanup at the end of the day, so thank you Cindy!

This month begins the return of our regular fall and winter membership meetings. We have an interesting series of programs slated for the season beginning with a presentation on growing onions and garlic by MG Deb Blaylock of Palmer. Our Board of Directors will also resume meetings on the 2nd Monday of the month. As a reminder, all members of AMGA. are welcome to attend our board meetings.

And finally, most of you may know that C.E.S. will once again be offering a Master Gardening class in Anchorage starting in September. As of this writing there are still openings available. This is great news to have another course offered to Anchorage residents after the loss of the class in 2016. Classes will be held at the Anchorage Outreach Center on Bragaw Street.



Tropical vine Gloriosa lily - one of the lovely surprises found at the August 14th AMGA garden tour. Photo by Fran Durner.

# Inside This Issue....

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July 31st and August AMGA Garden Tour Photos

July 31st, Susan Negus (photos by Mike Baldwin)





August 7, Joyce Falldorf (photos by Mike Baldwin)





August 12 Plant sale (photo by Mike Baldwin)



August 14, Heather Tausche (photo by Fran Durner)



August 21, Caroll Samuelson (photos by Fran Durner)



# Treasurer's Report

Balances 6/30/17	
Checking account	5000.61
Savings account	11729.93
<u>Savings account</u>	\$16730.54
Dedicated Funds	8582.15
Interest Bearing CD	10061.05
•	\$18643.20
Revenue:	
Interest	1.49
Membership	150.58
Membership	\$152.07
Expense:	
Operations	359.99
Pioneer Home	368.25
	\$728.24
Balances 7/31/17	
Checking account	4422.95
Savings account	11731.42
Savings account	\$16154.37
	4
Dedicated Funds	8582.15
Interest Bearing CD	10061.05
	\$18643.20

# Overwintering Fuchsias Stephen Brown Mat Su/Copper River District Agriculture Agent

When we bought our house we inherited 6 porch baskets of the most beautiful fuchsias you can imagine. Going against the advice of several more knowledgeable friends, I decided not to put these baskets to bed, but to try and keep them flowering through the winter. I bought grow lights and hung them in the garage where they bloomed wonderfully through the whole winter.



When spring rolled around, I picked a beautiful May afternoon to begin hardening them off. I carefully took them down and placed them on the lawn. I went in the house for a mere 10 minutes. Well, in that time, the moose found them

and enjoyed an early spring treat. This year I've decided to just put them to bed.

Fuchsias are definitely not adapted to year-round life in Alaska...but they do love our cool summer evenings.

The contained plant can be overwintered in any dark, cool place that is 40° F and frost free. The soil must not be allowed to dry out. Crawl spaces under the house can work for this.

Bring the plant indoors before the first frost is expected. Pruning the plant back prior to overwintering will reestablish a centrally located scaffold for new growth. This will result in the formation of a full, compact plant when growth resumes. Re-move all the green and red stems, leaving the tan hardwood. Remove all the leaves. Water to keep the plant slightly moist, but not wet during the winter.

Early next spring, perhaps as early as mid-to-late February, new growth should start appearing. When this hap-pens, increase moisture and return it to the growing conditions the plant prefers with increased light and warmer tempera-tures. I think I'll put mine back under the grow lights in the garage.

When new growth starts, it will often produce single stem branches. If left to continue, this would result in a sparse, leggy plant. Pinching the grow-ing tips early will promote branching, and the result will be a plant that fills and covers the container. This time, though, they are going in the backyard where I have a six foot fence!

# Two New Charts Comparing Organic Fertilizers, Compost And Peat From Julie Riley

# NUTRIENT CONTENT of SELECT ORGANIC FERTILIZERS

	% Nitrogen (N)	% Phosphorus (P)	% Potassium (K)
Fish meal	5-10	4-7	0-1.5
Fish emulsion	5	1	1
Kelp meal	1	0.1	2
Blood meal	10-15	0	0
Bat guano	10	3	1
Bone meal	0-3	12-15	0
Alfalfa meal	2.5	1	1
Wood ash	0	1	3-4

# **COMPOST & PEAT as soil amendments**

Compost	Peat	
* Nutrients: about 1% N,P,K plus micronutrients	Nutrients: poor	
* pH: usually close to neutral	pH: often acidic	
* Rewetting: variable	Rewetting: difficult	
* Summer mulch use: good	Summer mulch use: poor	
* Compacts: can compact some	Compacts: no	
* Microbes: numerous	Microbes: few	
Weed seeds: could be a problem	* Weed seeds: none	
* Disease suppression: can suppress some plant pathogens	Disease suppression: none	
Water holding capacity: good at improving	* Water holding capacity: excellent at improving	
* Cost: free to fairly expensive	Cost: expensive	
* Origin: recycling of organic waste	Origin: mined natural resource	

<sup>\*</sup> Better



Demonstration garden at the Tanana District CES office, fertilized and planted June 15, using the organic soil ammendment recommendation presented by Julie Riley at last year's MG Conference (picture taken August 3, 2017, by Julie Riley).

# Alaska Rock Garden Society Endowment Fund By Fran Durner



Plants are labeled in the rock garden beds to help people learn what alpine plants can grow in Alaskan gardens. Photo by Fran Durner

The Alaska Rock Garden Society (ARGS) needs your help! ARGS members have been conserving and maintaining the rock garden at the Alaska Botanical Garden for twenty years since its creation. But our membership is dwindling and aging and it's becoming more difficult to keep up with. The rock garden at ABG consists of four main beds and around twenty troughs with over 400 individual plants. Robin Dublin, the Executive Director of the ABG, has said that the rock garden contains the most valuable collection of plants at ABG.

ARGS intends to establish an endowment fund for the continued research, education, preservation and conservation of rock garden and alpine plantings at the ABG. We would like to help fund a part-time, seasonal position for someone to do this work at the garden.

The rock gardens, troughs, and alpine test beds at ABG research new species and Alaskan native species for garden use. This endowment will ensure continuation of the public alpine gardens at the ABG to educate the Alaskan public and Outside visitors about rock gardens and alpine plants in Alaska.

ARGS has pledged \$5,000 seed money for this endowment project. All 2017 ARGS plant sale proceeds have been dedicated to this project.

An anonymous donor has pledged \$10,000 matching funds for new money raised and this is where we need your help. To date, ARGS has raised about half that amount. (Only new money raised can go towards the matching grant, not the seed money ARGS pledged.)

We need \$25,000 minimum in order to create this endowment. (\$5K seed money, \$10K raised, \$10K matching grant.) A professional investment company, Anchorage Community Foundation, has been contracted to manage the endowment. ARGS will determine the amount and distribution of withdrawals based on fund earnings.

ARGS is almost halfway to raising the first \$10,000. As a passionate gardener, I'm reaching out to other passionate gardeners. Will you help us reach the endowment goal? You can contact me by email, durner1@gmail. com or home phone, 276-8281.

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# Cats in the Garden?! By Janice Berry

It's likely that you've seen folks ranting and railing on Facebook and Nextdoor.com about cats getting into



their gardens and with good reason. In a perfect world, everyone would keep their pet cats inside and there would be no feral cats roaming around.

But since this is not a perfect society and cats will do as they wish when left to wander, we gardeners must find ways to coexist with them. I just happen to

own a couple of cats and they are allowed in my fencedin backyard when I'm outside with them. It is truly the highlight of their day! Here are some coping mechanisms that I've discovered to make sure they don't go into certain areas.

Springtime is a critical time to make sure that your flower and vegetable beds do not become a litterbox. The soil has usually been freshly raked and delicate seedlings carefully planted - very tempting to cats. I have used a couple of easy methods to prevent them from going in these areas. One is to place netting that is used for climbing vines secured with rocks over the area. Some use chicken wire and just leave it, letting plants to grow through the openings. The other discovery was quite accidental when one winter I used spruce bows to mulch my raised square foot garden as I wanted to protect some garlic bulbs that were overwintering there. When spring arrived the needles fell off (good compost material for the soil) and I discovered if, after removing them to do my planting, I put them back over the area, the cats were not inclined to step on the bare branches. Twigs would produce the same result. Prickly cuttings from holly leaves, rose clippings, pine cones, or other uncomfortable material helps keep cat paws at bay. It's also environmentally friendly.

Other methods folks have used are to scatter citrus peels or hot pepper around the area. Or you could use a spray. Davidsuzuki.org offer this cat-away spray recipe: Combine 1 tsp of black pepper, dry mustard & cinnamon in a spray bottle with a few drops of citrus essential oil and a crushed garlic clove. Fill to the top with water. Apply to your garden beds. To keep cats out of estab-

lished beds, cats dislike the smell of rue, lavender & pennyroyal, coleus canina and lemon thyme — so plant a few of these throughout the garden space. As a bonus, interplanting will attract pollinators and can help to avoid pests too.

Now that you have your crucial areas secured, you might want to have some plants in another area just for your cat to enjoy. These include catnip (of course!), mint, cat grass (mine truly love the variegated ornamental grass I planted some years ago), oat grass, bean sprouts, basil, oregano, parsley, dill, rosemary, zinnias, sunflowers and marigolds.

If you don't own cats but have found them in your garden from time to time and wish to deter them, probably the best option would be to set up a Scarecrow motion detector sprinkler that would go off every time the cats enter. (Hopefully the birds won't mind the water as much as the cats.)



Save the Date
Meet and Greet Hort Agents
Sept. 12th, 2 - 4 pm
Anchorage Outreach Center
1840 Bragaw Suite 100

The C.E.S. Anchorage Outreach Center is hosting a meet and greet event with our Hort. Agent, Dr. Stephan Brown (Steve) out of Palmer and visiting Hort. Agent Daphne Richards of Austin, Texas.

Steve has been the Mat/Su Agricultural Agent for nearly 10 years and recently had Anchorage added to his area of responsibility. He will be the lead instructor for both the Mat/Su and Anchorage Master Gardener classes this fall. Steve brings much energy and enthusiasm to the group and this will be a great opportunity for many of our members to meet Steve for the first time. A fuller bio may be read in the March 2017 AMGA newsletter.

Daphne Richards serves as coordinator of the local MG program in Austin, training and managing over 200 very active volunteers. Her responsibilities include leading educational programming in the areas of home horticulture and urban agriculture. She appears weekly in the award-winning television program "Central Texas Gardener" and writes monthly gardening articles for the local Austin newspaper.



REAL CLASS . . . BC needs to thank the super MGs (and one volunteer) who taught the free classes at our August plant sale. The 50-minute sessions are aimed at the general plant-buying public -- part of our education and outreach mission. So it's always a crapshoot figuring out how many people are likely to show up.

Despite the crummy weather, we were pleased to see an enthusiastic little crowd at each session -- anywhere from eight to 15 people. So, big thanks to Gina Docherty, Marya Morrow, Emily Becker and Jennifer Sharrock (of the Permaculture Society.)

This year's classes were on wintering over dahlias, saving seeds, lasagna gardening and paver making. If you have ideas for classes at next year's sale, tell Harry.

STALKING JULIE... What was that thing poking out of Julie Riley's bag as she walked through Ted Stevens International Airport last week? It drew more attention than a box of puppies.

A vegetable stalk, you say? Yes, a single stalk of Dennis and Annie Ronsse's rhubarb. Weight: 1.3 pounds!

NARROW ESCAPE... One recent Friday MG Board member Cheryl Chapman woke to a busy carpet of little birds working their way across the backyard (chickadees, juncos, nuthatches and what may have been white-throated sparrows, plus two downey woodpeckers banging on the side of the house); she figured out they were scooping up corn gluten pellets put down two days earlier (for weed control).

Cheryl went from coffee to panic at having possibly poisoned every bird in Muldoon.

The Anchorage Bird Treatment and Learning Center responded instantly to her shrieks (Thanks, Amy!) with reassurances that the corn gluten was harmless and the birds were just laying in reserves for their long trip south. Cheryl returned to coffee, the free nature show, and relief at being spared the morning headline: "Anchorage Birders Lynch Elderly East Side Master Gardener."

Whew!

WE'RE SPECIAL... BC stopped to check out the new location of Southside Garden Supply -- its four previous Anchorage locations now consolidated in a huge warehouse at Benson and Arctic -- formerly a discount carpet outlet. There, just outside the front door, is a standard street sign that says, "Master Gardener Parking Only. All others will be towed."

At last -- recognition! Love?

Although much of his stock inside seems geared towards large-scale indoor hydroponic commercial growers (wink wink), owner Rob Martin told BC he loves all gardeners. He stocks a range of different brands/mixtures of soils

and fertilizers than other stores in town, plus all kinds of lights, so is probably worth a visit. And even if you're too small to need his equipment, it's awesome.

A MYSTERY . . . What's up with the Primula glut? Scores of them were available at the plant sale, most very attractively priced. Hardly any sold. What's that all about?



Monthly Garden Calendar for Alaska Organic Gardening Month-to-Month Almanac by Linden Staciokas December 20, 2010

www.rodalesorganiclife.com/monthly-garden-calendar-alaska [Reprinted with permission from the author.]

## SEPTEMBER

Could there be a better month than September in interior Alaska? Our average temperature is 44.3 degrees. The first official day of fall is on September 22, one of the two days a year when the day and night are of equal length (the other is March 22). The horizon is solid yellow with birch trees leaves, the mountains are tipped with snow, and there isn't much in the garden for the moose to vandalize.

Rest Your Roses. Dormant roses may be overwintered in an insulated garage. Drive your roses into dormancy by exposing them to a few light frosts and then trimming them back to about a foot in height. Do not expose them to temperatures in the upper 20s or lower.

Outdoor Plant Care. Protect plants that you plan to overwinter outdoors, such as perennials. Mulch the crowns of the plants with leaves, straw, and hay to insulate them from temperature fluctuations that can bring them out of dormancy at an inconvenient time. When the snows really start, pile the excess from your sidewalks and driveway right on top of the organic mulches to provide further insulation from wind and extreme cold.

**Pull Your Potatoes**. Pull your potatoes on Labor Day weekend. Be sure to brush off—not wash—each spud and lay them all on newspaper; cover with multiple sheets of more newspaper. This prevents the potatoes from turning green, which happens when they are exposed to light.

Tomato Talk. Before frost, pick off any remaining light green tomatoes (the dark small ones will just rot) and wrap each one in newspaper. Put a single layer of tomatoes in boxes or trays and store them in a dark room or closet. Check frequently for ripe tomatoes and discard any rotting fruit.

Pumpkin Prep. Here's how to cure pumpkins for storage: after the first light frosts, carefully cut each one off the vine, leaving a stem about an inch long. Let the pumpkins sit for a few days to toughen up and wipe each one down with a bleach solution of 1 part bleach to each gallon of water. Then line up the pumpkins in the coolest part of your home or garage (where it usually stays between 45 and 60) and check each week for signs of rot.

Haircuts for Houseplants. Geraniums and fuchsias can be overwintered as houseplants. Cut them back by half and put them in bright, direct light. Water sparingly and pinch back new growth to prevent the plants from becoming spindly. Absolutely do not fertilize until spring.

**Tuber Tip.** Since tuberous begonias are very expensive when purchased as transplants, work hard to save them. After a very light frost, dig them up, bring them inside and set them on newspapers to dry for two days. Then brush them off and bury them in sawdust or cat litter. I make sure the tubers are not touching and I put them in an area that stays around 45 degrees. I check them once a month for spoilage.

Compost Care. Finally, don't forget to continue composting this winter. The contents of your food scrap collection bin will freeze and be odorless this winter. Come spring you will have plenty to add to your compost heap. Don't be afraid to experiment with your composting technique in the winter.

## Editor's note:

Winter composting tip: Keep a bag of dry shredded leaves near your compost bin. When adding kitchen wastes to the pile, cover it with a layer of shredded leaves. This will save a lot of shoveling and mixing in the spring when it thaws out.



# August 12, 2017, AMGA Plant Sale Notes

\$4944.05 - total proceeds from checks, cash, and credit cards

\$1540 - AMGA proceeds - 25% from sellers, 100% donated plants, \$42 donation

2016 plant sale total proceeds \$6641.50; AMGA proceeds \$2144.75

2015 plant sale total proceeds \$6853; AMGA proceeds \$1922

2014 plant sale total proceeds \$4342.50; AMGA proceeds \$1280.37

# Garden Event Calendar

# MEETINGS and EVENTS

Tuesdays and Fridays, September 1 - September 29

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 - 3:00 pm at Alaska Botanical Garden (ABG), 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage.

Tuesday, September 5

Valley Garden Club Monthly Meeting: Caring for Your Dahlias by Misty Vanderwelle of All Dahlia'd Up. 10:30 am at the First Baptist Church, 900 Leatherleaf Loop, Wasilla.

Thursday, September 7

Anchorage Garden Club Monthly Meeting: National Garden Club 2017- 2018 Goals by Chris Wood, Alaska State Garden Club President. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at Pioneer Schoolhouse, 437 E 3rd Avenue, Anchorage. Details at: http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchorageclub.htm.

Monday, September 11

Mat-Su Master Gardeners Monthly Meeting. 7:00 pm at MTA Building, 480 Commercial Drive, Palmer.

Tuesday, September 12

Greater Eagle River Garden Club Monthly Meeting: Growing and Storing Dahlias by Rob Wells, The Persistent Farmer. 7:00 pm at the Community Covenant Church, 16123 Artillery Road, Eagle River.

Tuesday September 12 and 26

AK Rock Garden Society: Weeding and Cleaning the Rock Garden at Alaska Botanical Garden. September 12, 10:00 am - 11:00 am and September 26, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm at 4601 Campbell Airstrip Rd, Anchorage. Details at: http://www.akrockgardensociety.org/calendar.html.

Thursday, September 14

Wildflower Garden Club Monthly Meeting: The Alaska Wood Frog by Janet Hartmann. 10:00 am - 11:30 am at Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova St, Anchorage.

Saturday, September 16

Alaska Rock Garden Society Monthly Meeting: Plant Exchange. 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm at Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova, Anchorage. http://www.akrockgardensociety.org.

Monday, September 18

Anchorage AMGA Meeting: Growing Onions and Garlic by Deb Blaylock, Master Gardener. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at Anchorage Cooperative Extension Service, Chugachmiut Building, Room 116, 1840 Bragaw Street. Details at: http://alaskamastergardeners.org/AMGA\_Programs\_2017-2018.pdf.

Tuesday, September 19

L.U.V. Garden Club Monthly Meeting: Demonstration of Canning Techniques for Canning Salmon and Discussion of Garden Clean Up and Care of Tools. 7:00 pm at 1710 Tammy Avenue, South Anchorage.

Tuesday, September 26

Alaska Orchid Society Monthly Meeting. 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm at BP Energy Center, Seward Hy and Benson Blvd. Details at: http://www.wayne-toups.squarespace.com/events/.

#### **CLASSES**

Friday, September 1

Backyard Composter Certification Class by Ellen Vande Visse, Green Earth Garden School, 10:00 am - noon, at Mat-Su Borough Central Landfill Complex, Palmer. Preregistration required. Details at http://ellenvandevisse.com/classes/?ee=182.

## Friday and Saturday, September 8 and 9

Worm Bins and Vermi-Culture by Ellen Vande Visse. Friday 10 am - noon and Saturday 11 am to 1 pm at Mat-Su Borough Central Landfill Complex, Palmer. Preregistration required. Details at: http://ellenvandevisse.com/classes/?ee=182.

# Saturday, September 16

Worm Bins and Vermi-Culture by Ellen Vande Visse. Special Clinic 2 pm - 4 pm at Willow Methodist Church, Willow. Preregistration required. To Register call Ann at 907 841 5419.

## Friday, September 22

Alaska Botanical Garden: Garlic Tasting. Stop by the Garden to Sample Varieties of Garlic, Then Purchase Your Favorites to Plant in Your Garden. 11:00 am - 4:00 pm at Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage. Cost: \$5. Details at: http://alaskabg.org/event/garlic-tasting/.

# September 21 and 28

Mushroom Walk and ID by Christin Anderson. Come with Questions and Mushrooms from Your Backyard. 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm at Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage. Cost: \$12 members or \$15 non-members. Details at: http://alaskabg.org/event/sept-21-mushroom-walk-and-id/.

# Monday, Wednesday and Friday, September 25, 27 and 29

Alaska Botanical Garden: Bulbs for Beginners. Learn the Basics for Planting Fall Bulbs for Spring Bloom. Daytime: 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm; Evenings 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm Alaska Botanical Garden, 4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage. Cost: \$125 - \$140 Includes Tulip and Garlic Bulbs. Preregistration is required. Details at: http://alaskabg.org/event/bulbs-for-beginners-fall-gardening-101-3-day-workshop/.



Lovely poppy seen at the August 14th AMGA Garden tour.

Photo by Fran Durner

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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 Office

Chugachmiut Building, 1840 Bragaw St.

Anchorage

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

#### AMGA Board of Directors

Harry Deuber President Marilyn Barker Vice President Cindy Walker Treasurer Sheila Toomey Secretary Kathy Liska At Large At Large Fran Pekar At Large Marjorie Williams Cheryl Chapman At Large

#### Committee Chairs, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

CES Liaison: Harry Deuber Broadcast Email: Fran Pekar Calendar of Events: Martha Farris Advanced MG: Ginny Moore Directory Editor: Janice Berry Programs: Marilyn Barker Field Trips: Sheila Toomey Google Group: Mary Rydesky Hospitality: Marjorie Williams Volunteer Coordinator: Harry Deuber Membership & Database: Jane Baldwin Newsletter & Website: Gina Docherty Lynne Opstaď Lifetime Achievement: Grants: Marilyn Barker

Pioneer Home: Erma MacMillan (design)

Lynne Opstad

Volunteer Coordinators: Julie Ginder, Joyce Smith,

Lynne Opstad

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

Mail: 14051 Fejes Road

Anchorage, AK 99516

Phone: 345-4099 Email: amga@alaska.net

AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org

AMGA Google Group:

https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/AkMGA

To send concerns or information to the AMGA directly, mail to:

P.O. Box 221403

Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

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:

Harry Deuber, President denali542@yahoo.com 907-440-6372



