

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Emily Becker

I am having a hard time getting into the April mindset while looking at 4 feet of snow and temperatures in the teens. As I write this, Anchorage has just passed its 55th consecutive day of below freezing temperature, the longest stretch since 1968, and by the time you read this, we may have broken the record for continuous cold!

We've been here before, though, and this too shall thaw.

A sure sign of spring is the requests for volunteers our organization is starting to receive. Aside from our steadfast partner, Alaska Botanical Garden, there are lots of projects in need of a garden helper or teacher.

Fellow Board member Keenan Plate and I put together [this catalog of projects](#) for you to peruse. Lots of schools are seeking help for spring planting, summer maintenance, and outdoor lessons. If you love designing, both the Pioneer Home and Susitna Elementary have projects in need of some artistry, and First Congregational Church is seeking a permaculture designer! These would be great projects for the graduates of Saskia Esslinger's and Brenda Adams' Advanced Master Gardener classes.

Both Airport Heights and Rogers Park are looking for help beautifying the public "pocket gardens" in the neighborhood.

Debbie Hinchey can always use a hand at the Centennial Rose Garden--what a great chance to learn from the master!

If you like volunteering from home, the St. Francis House Food Pantry is looking for vegetable and herb starts to give to their clients in May and early June, so consider planting or saving some extra starts for them.

(Special thanks to Julie Becker for donating a bunch of lovely pots for this purpose! We will be asking for more pots, so keep them handy!)

St. Francis will also be looking for volunteers to help teach the clients how to re-pot the starts and care for them in porch gardens.

Please let us know about other projects and I can add them to the catalog.

As for plant sales, I am sorry to say I have not heard any more about the possible garden show at the Midtown Mall, but I have not given up hope. Our August sale is looking promising—just tell everyone you can to get vaccinated!

Thanks are also due to Barbara Baker and Lynne Opstad for [completing the 2020 audit](#), which found that our organization has adequate controls and accounting practices. They also offered some recommendations for improvement.

And a big welcome to Terry Turner, who will take on the Bird Chatter column next month! Let the melting commence, please! 🌿

IN THIS ISSUE

- » March Meeting Highlights
- » Not Your Garden Variety Angelica
- » Growing Lavender in Alaska
- » Bird Chatter
- » Event Calendar

MARCH 2021 AMGA MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Paul Marmora gave a talk on “Simple Tips for Flower Arranging” at our March 15 member meeting. He said flower design is a very personal thing but while no two arrangements are alike, certain principles transfer over to any arrangement. There are commercial elements and principals of design and there are garden club elements and principals of design.

Design is made up of style, color, shape, line and use.

Color draws your eye to something and light intensity plays a role in the perception of color. Paul talked about how lighting in different venues (e.g. a church vs. auditorium) can change color perception. He once worked for a florist who suggested that he step back 6 feet from the arrangement and squint, and that is what the color would look to an observer who was 20 feet away.

Contrasting and complimentary textures gives the eyes something to focus on draws out individual elements.

The use of line gives dominance in an arrangement and can be made by architectural features, empty space, color or texture. It’s where your eye is led and focused on in the arrangement.

Many Asian arrangement styles, such as Ikebana, use a lot of empty, or, negative space but western styles tend to have things tightly arranged and full with little negative space. The empty space can provide balance and can give your eyes a visual rest, he said.

What the arrangement will be used for will help guide its shape. Is it a funeral spray on an altar? Will it be against a wall where the back won’t be seen? Less is often more. If you just keep adding more, you may lose definition and detail, and be left with a big mass ... or perhaps a mess?.

During the Q&A, Paul answered questions on supplies. When asked for an inexpensive place to buy Oasis® he mentioned Alaska Flower Market on Old Seward. On additives to make arrangements last longer, he recently started using SuperThrive®, or, a couple drops of bleach, some sugar, and commercially available packets of flower preservative. He’s even heard of adding a penny or a half of an aspirin. The goal is to kill bacterial growth resulting from plant matter sitting in water.

Asked when to pick colors and contrasting and complimenting shades, Paul said he first picks the focal flowers, decides what shades would complement each other, and then sees what supplies and flowers I have on hand.

Paul cuts all stems at an angle. If they rest flush against the bottom of the container, they might block water from moving up into the plant.

On using an odd number of stems in an arrangement, Paul said even numbers are rare in nature. In certain cultures, four is a number of death and should be avoided.

—Compiled by Beth Norris

AMGA TREASURER REPORT February 2021

BALANCES ON 02/01/2021

Checking S-88	24223.25
Savings S-1	5.25
Savings S-19	16902.88
CD General 2yr. 1.95% (1/21)	10659.51
	\$51790.89

REVENUE

Interest/Dividends	2.59
Education AMG	1621.36
Membership	465.81
Donations	548.63
	\$2638.39

EXPENSES

Hospitality	400.00
Operations	52.99
	\$452.99

BALANCES ON 03/01/2021

Checking S-88	26406.06
Savings S-1	5.25
Savings S-19	16905.42
CD General 2 yr. 1.95 (1/21)	10659.51
	\$53976.24

Jan van den Top, 03/06/2021

ANGELICA: NOT YOUR GARDEN VARIETY

By Elizabeth Bluemink

The Alaska Botanical Garden Herb Study Group discussed various species in the genus *Angelica* at its meeting in March. The most common one found in local gardens is garden angelica, *A. angelica* ssp. *archangelica*, which towers over most of the other plants at ABG's herb garden. We know this plant well and spent more time talking about other angelicas.

Many gardeners enjoy angelica as an ornamental. However, recipes abound for all parts of the plant except the flowering stalk. This author has used garden angelica root sparingly in teas and liqueurs.

Gardeners who go hiking may have noticed a couple native angelica species in Alaska. Like garden angelica, these native plants have a long history of use for food and medicine. However, many current-day Alaskans are afraid to use them because they don't want to mix it up with water hemlock (*Cicuta* spp.).

Both *Cicuta* and *Angelica* are in the *Apiaceae* family. In general, the *Cicuta* species grow "with their feet in the water," unlike angelica which thrives in wet soils. However, there are many other methods of distinguishing the two genera, including the shape of their flowering heads, leaves and seeds, and their odor. But that requires study. Even some experts don't feel confident with these identification methods. If you really want to eat angelica, it probably makes sense to grow it yourself and leave alone the sparse patches of wild angelica for serious, knowledgeable foragers and our native pollinators.

During our meeting, we reviewed some traditional food and medicinal uses of angelica. We also talked about some ceremonial uses of the plant that were recorded before missionaries began to stifle Alaska Native spiritual practices and beliefs.

The rest of the herb study discussion was on non-native angelica that are not *A. angelica* ssp. *archangelica*.

One also found in local gardens is *A. giga*, known as Korean angelica. This is also a very tall angelica with purple-flowered umbels. Like garden angelica, this plant can provide structure or a focal point in a garden. However, *A. giga's* flowering umbels are not nearly as large and awesome as garden angelica's whitish-green umbels. Note: *A. giga* has been referenced many times in our ongoing Advanced Master Gardener course on garden design.



Angelica astropurpurea growing in the Lower 48.
Photo © mergirl22 via iNaturalist.

At least one Master Gardener, Cathy Sage, has grown *Angelica stricta purpurea*, which she purchased as a plant. This plant is spectacular, with purple foliage and large umbels of lavender-hued flowers. It is not rated hardy below Zone 5, but angelica is a short-lived plant that perpetuates by self-sowing. A Lower 48 native angelica rated to Zone 3 is *A. astropurpurea*, with purple stalks and large white-flowered umbels. This is a common wild plant in the Lower 48. Before trying new angelica species that grow wild in the Lower 48, it may be wise to consult with an invasive species specialist. 🌿

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

Want to contribute to your community, learn more about gardening, or complete your volunteer hours?

Join our Pioneer Home service project!

AMGA has provided beautiful gardens for the residents at the Anchorage Pioneer Home for almost 30 years.

Sign up for as many hours as you like, at times convenient for you. Training is available. We also need someone to update the garden maps and are looking for a garden designer to join our team. To be added to our email list of volunteers, contact Julie at jkginder@gci.net or contact Lynne at Lynne.Opstad@gmail.com for more info.

GROWING LAVENDER IN ALASKA by Gina Docherty

Remember the little sachet bags filled with lavender your grandma used to give you to put in your underwear drawer? This is one of the many ways we can appreciate the lovely scent of lavender. Fortunately, lavender can be successfully grown in Southcentral Alaska if we plant the right variety in the right spot.

Lavandula or Lavender is a small aromatic sub-shrub that belongs in the mint family (*Lamiaceae*). It has a distinctive scent said to help reduce stress, anxiety, and possibly even mild pain. English lavender (*L. angustifolia*) has the sweetest aroma of all varieties. In most species the leaves are covered in fine hairs or *indumentum*, which contain the essential oils. The leaves are evergreen in temperate climates.

All plants in the *Lavandula* genus are considered to be “lavenders.” Within this genus are at least 20-40 species of lavender, all native to the Mediterranean (Southern Europe and Northern Africa) and the Middle East. Of these many species, the ones most used in producing essential oils are *L. angustifolia* and *L. x intermedia* (a.k.a. *L. hybrida*). These are the hardiest, the best smelling, and the most common lavender grown.

Other species that are not winter hardy and will not be discussed here, include:

- *L. dentata* – French or Fringed Lavender, blooms all season long
- *L. latifolia* – Portugese Lavender or Spike, strong pungent smell, blooms all season
- *L. Stoechas* – Spanish Lavender, also called French Lavender or Butterfly lavender; only the foliage is fragrant, not the flowers.

Lavandula Angustifolia – English Lavender

This is the most commonly-grown species. There are many varieties but the most common are:

‘Munstead,’ a dwarf, 12 inches tall, named after [Munstead Wood](#) in Surrey, which was the home of [Gertrude Jekyll](#).

‘Hidcote.’ a semi-dwarf, 15-20 inches tall, named after Hidcote Manor in England.



Lavandula x intermedia “Phenomenal.” Photo courtesy National Garden Bureau

Lavandula x intermedia - Lavandin

Also called *L. hybrida*, Lavandin is an interspecific hybrid between *L. angustifolia* and *L. latifolia*, notable for its outstanding cold hardiness and tolerance to heat and high humidity. The plants have intermediate characteristics (*angustifolia* = narrow; *latifolia* = broad) and can grow up to 3 feet tall. Lavandin is a sterile hybrid and must be vegetatively propagated. Lavandin varieties typically bloom 3-4 weeks later than English lavender and have significantly higher essential oil concentrations.

Varieties of Lavandin are Grosso, Provenance, Phenomenal, and Giant Hidcote.

Lavender and Lavandin have slightly different scent profiles: **LavENDER** is sweet and floral, **LavANDIN** is strong and herbal.

L. angustifolia is rated Zone 4b: -25°F to -20°F and has been hardy here in Anchorage. *L. Lavandin* varieties are relatively new to me, and I have one planted out beside the *L. angustifolia* ‘Munstead’ to see how it does. I hope it’s hardy, especially since it’s buried under 3-4 feet of snow from the snowplow.

Lavender Cultivation

Lavender has the same needs as many rock garden plants. Trying to grow them in rich, organic soil is not

Continued on next page

GROWING LAVENDER, CONT.

Continued from previous page

the best practice.

- Soil: Well-drained soil is essential. A sandy or rocky soil with low to moderate fertility is best. Lavender does not like soggy roots. Well suited for a rock garden, it needs a rock mulch rather than organic matter.
- Exposure: Lavender requires good air circulation and at least 6 hours of full sun; more is better. The plant can grow in some light shade if established, but will be a little leggier.
- Winter protection: Mulch with leaves in the fall & rake them out in the spring. The leaves can be evergreen, but usually shrivel up during winter and look dead in the spring. New leaves will emerge from the axil.
- Fertilizers: Requires little to none; organic mulches can rot the woody stem.

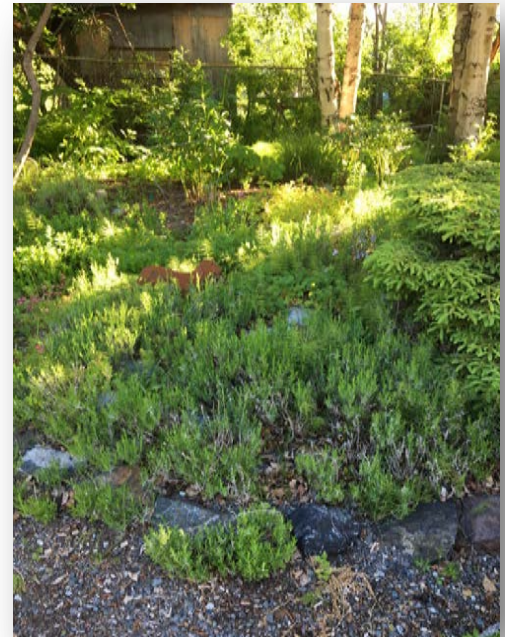


L. angustifolia in Gina Docherty's garden.

with valleys being less desirable. Heavy mulching and/or adequate snow cover is necessary to protect lavender through severe winters. But excellent drainage is the key to survival.

I have not had good luck at wintering lavender inside. Years ago I planted a *L. angustifolia* outside on a south

facing bank, (zone 4). Surprisingly it made it through the winter. It has survived the harshest of conditions, from snowless winters to glaciated ice, and is happy enough to self-seed. A windstorm once blew seeds up in a semi-shaded location, and they are doing fine. I suspect it was a Munstead, but alas, on the half tag found, only the species name was readable.



A large patch of *L. angustifolia* in Gina Docherty's garden.

Confession: I have always erroneously called this plant '*aUgustiolia*' when in fact the name is '*aNgustifolia*', which is Latin for 'narrow leaf.' I stand corrected. (Although to be fair, a 'u' is just an upside down 'n'.)

Lavender seeds germinate easily. Seeds can be collected in the fall and planted in the early spring. Spring-collected seeds are also viable, but the snow doesn't often melt until April and the seed pods can be home to baby spiders during the winter. If you bring them inside to collect the seeds, the spiders will escape into your house.

Sources:

Lavandin Plant Care: Lavandin Vs. Lavender In The Garden (<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/herbs/lavender/lavandin-plant-care.htm>)

Lavender: History, Taxonomy, and Production (<https://newcropsorganics.ces.ncsu.edu/herb/lavender-history-taxonomy-and-production>)

Lavender Production, Products, Markets, and Entertainment Farms (<https://www.wnc.edu/files/departments/ce/sci/atralavender.pdf>) 🌿

APRIL 2021 EVENT CALENDAR

CONFERENCES

Saturday, April 3, 1-4 pm

Winter Plant ID workshop with Dr. Marilyn Barker at the Alaska Botanical Garden. By observing woody plants in their skeletal form, you will begin to identify familiar plants by their bark pattern, buds, habitat and more. Class size is limited to 10 people, pre-registration required. [Details.](#)

Friday, April 9, 8:45 am-5 pm

Alaska Farmers Market Summit. Program includes workshops and networking opportunities. Keynote speaker will be Qiana Mickie, a food systems and equity consultant based in Harlem, NY. [Registration is free but required.](#)

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Tuesday, April 13, 6:30-7:30 pm

Yarducopia is hosting a Perennial Propagation Workshop. Cuttings and other materials available for pickup prior to the event. [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, April 6, 12-1 pm

Cooperative Extension Service: Soils: How better to celebrate Earth Day than to learn about earth? Come ask all your soil questions as you get ready to start your gardens and flower beds. [Learn more/Register here.](#)

Wednesday, April 7, 12-1 pm

UAF CES Anchorage Outreach Center: Spice Up Your Garden. Join Gina Dionne for the center's *In the Virtual*

Garden bi-weekly series, filled with tips for successful gardening in Alaska. [Register here.](#)

Wednesday, April 21, 12-1 pm

UAF CES Anchorage Outreach Center: Pollinator Gardens. Grab your lunch and join the center's *In the Virtual Garden* bi-weekly series, filled with tips and tricks for successful home gardening in Alaska. [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, April 27, 6:30-7:15 pm

Yarducopia is hosting a discussion on Neighborhood Composting Programs. On deck are local composting programs – old ones, new ones, and ideas for designing something in your neighborhood. [Register here.](#)

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Monday, April 5 @ 7-9 pm

Alaska Native Plant Society monthly meeting: “Verna Pratt’s MA roots and their glacial connection to AK,” presented by Ginger Brown. Also, Glenn Brown will give short introductions to Lovages (*Ligusticum calderi* and *L. scothicum*) and Podistera (*P. macounii* and *P. yukonensis*). Via Google Meet. Contact president@aknps.org for meeting link.

Thursday, April 8, 10 am-12 pm

Wildflower Garden Club Regular Meeting and Program: “Urban Wildlife: Both Sides of the Coin” by Donna Dewhurst; contact [Paul Marmora](#) for details.

Saturday, April 17, 10:30 am

Alaska Rock Garden Society monthly meeting via Zoom, topic TBA. [Get the link.](#)

Thursday, April 29 @ 7-8:30 pm

Alaska Common Ground’s Climate Action Plan Series continues with Consumption and Solid Waste. [Learn more/Register here.](#)



In the Virtual Garden

Grab your lunch and join us for a bi-weekly series hosted by the UAF CES Anchorage Outreach Center filled with tips and tricks for successful home gardening in Alaska.

Continued on next page

CALENDAR, CONT.

Continued from previous page

JOBS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.

The Alaska Botanical Gardens is advertising for several 2021 garden positions. [Read more here.](#)

Anchorage Community Garden sign-ups are open for renewals until April 5, and will open for new gardeners on April 10. [More info on their website.](#)

The Alaska Native Plant Society has an online seed inventory including dozens of Alaska native plant species available for distribution. [Find out more.](#)

[Anchor Gardens](#) is recruiting neighborhood garden coaches. Coaches serve as community mentors for those interested in learning about growing food in their own neighborhoods and assist in linking people to resources. Reach out to anchorgardensanc@gmail.com.

AMGA is seeking program topics for future monthly member meetings. Most of the spaces are filled for 2021 but we are looking for 2022 topics. If you have ideas, please contact AMGA vice president Troy Weiss at troydweiss@gmail.com.

GARDEN TOUR HOSTS NEEDED!



With COVID-19 restrictions relaxing, AMGA is planning ahead for garden tours. Tours are Monday evenings from 7-8:30 pm. Tour gardens don't have to be perfect. We are looking for all types of gardens: old gardens, new gardens,

rock gardens, vegetable gardens, greenhouses, orchards, farms, nurseries, water features, oriental designs, permaculture, shady, sunny, natural, etc,

Tours are meant to share with other gardeners and get those creative inspirations going. If you can host a garden tour, please contact Vice President Troy Weiss at troydweiss@gmail.com.

Beth Norris is leading a group to develop COVID plans so all AMGA gatherings will be safe and fun!

BIRD CHATTER

Get hygge with it The New Yorker Magazine recently featured a tongue-in-check article “Beyond Hygge,” with made-up Norwegian terminology to “make your sad pandemic life seem intentional.” It got us thinking about a possible term for the trance induced by staring at seedlings growing (or not growing) under lights. Err, *grønntanse*?

Bee aware In various recent Zooms, local bug experts have encouraged gardeners to wait to remove the dead material from our perennial beds to protect emerging native pollinators. Also, apparently some native bees will lay their eggs in large hollow stems. Let's not throw our native bees away!

In case you missed it last month, please read now ... AMGA has a grant program that could help you improve our town. Last year we had some money left over. [Check it out on our website.](#)

Hipster houseplants Have you visited That Feeling Company on Dowling? If you enjoy shopping for tropical plants, macrame hangers, and nifty pots while waiting for a specialty espresso coffee drink order, this might be the Portlandia trip of your dreams. Next door is Johnny's Produce which has an assortment of Made in Alaska items (mostly shelf-stable) and some Alaska cookbooks sprinkled among the the produce counters.

What to do when you've planted all the seeds and the snow is still 4 feet deep We watched a few award-winning movies related to plants to keep us motivated for gardening. Highly recommended is Minari, a semi-autobiographical account of a Korean-American family starting a produce farm in the Ozarks in the 1980s Also recommended is Farmageddon, because ... it's funny. And it stars mischeivous sheep and a cute baby alien.

What's new, interesting, confounding and delightful? Send your bits of interesting garden news to birdchatter@alaskamastergardeners.org.





Become a Member

AMGA memberships are based on calendar year. If you have not renewed, [you can pay online](#) or you can print and mail [the form on our website](#). Questions? Contact Alexis St. Juliana at astjuliana@hotmail.com

Next AMGA Meeting via Zoom!

April 19, 7 pm

**Preparing and Managing Soil
with Troy Weiss**

Check your email, our website or Facebook page for connection instructions.

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

Meetings are held at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, accessed through the BP tower parking lot. The Energy Center is just south of the main building.

NOTE: Meeting location may change
2021 meetings are currently being held online
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 at: newsletteramga@gmail.com

AMGA, Newsletter
P.O. Box 221403
Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

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 (400-600 words ideal), Bird Chatter, calendar items and announcements are always welcome.

Connect with AMGA

Website: www.alaskamastergardeners.org
Facebook: [facebook.com/Alaska-Master-Gardeners-Anchorage](https://www.facebook.com/Alaska-Master-Gardeners-Anchorage)
Youtube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCvZehJprKkjQzivQvND-KopQ
Google Group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!-forum/AkMGA>
Mail: AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

If you have questions or want to make address or email corrections, please contact Alexis St. Juliana at astjuliana@hotmail.com



AMGA Board of Directors

Emily Becker	President
Troy Weiss	Vice President
Jan van den Top	Treasurer
Beth Norris	Secretary
Kathleen Kaiser	At Large
Keenan Plate	At Large
Nick Riordan	At Large
Faye Stiehm	At Large

Committee Chairs, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Emily Becker	CES Liason
Steve Brown, Gina Dionne	CES Master Gardener Program Liaison
Faye Stiehm	Broadcast Email
Vacant	Calendar of Events
Don Bladow, Troy Weiss, Emily Becker, Fran Pekar, Gina Dionne	Advanced MG Course
Janice Berry	Directory Editor
Kathy Liska, Cindy Walker	Facebook
Troy Weiss	Meetings & Educational Programs
Troy Weiss	Garden Tours
Mary Rydesky, Gina Docherty, Jane Baldwin	Google Group Managers
Troy Weiss, Jan van den Top, Beth Norris	Grants Program
Lynn Hansen, Ruthe Rasmussen, Sharon Schlicht, Wendy Willie	Hospitality
Alexis St. Juliana	Membership Database
Elizabeth Bluemink	Newsletter Editor
Gina Docherty	Website
Lynne Opstad	Lifetime Achievement
Lynne Opstad, Julie Ginder	Pioneer Home Garden
Emily Becker, Keenan Plate	Volunteer Coordinators

