

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Emily Becker

A Happy New Year to one and all. The arrival of a successful COVID-19 vaccine has planted a seed of hope. It's fragile, because we have lost so much and so many, and there is still plenty of treacherous time ahead, but the hope finally feels real and not just wishful thinking.

How lucky we are that gardening was not cancelled by 2020. Of course, we couldn't meet in person, and there were no garden tours. But I was so grateful to have all the seeds I wanted and needed, I grew and bought starts, and I spent long and beautiful summer days in my backyard with my steadfast friends, my plants. I harvested so much delicious food.

Our summer weather was just about perfect, and our winter weather has been, so far, unusually complaint-free! I can't recall the last time we had this much snow this early. All our perennials are covered in a cozy snow blanket, and the skiing has been stellar.

Is it too early to think about the lessons we want to keep from 2020? Who remembers March, when seed exchanges popped up all around town, and April, when gardeners like our friend Sue Looney gave away dozens of plants instead of selling them?

Radical gifting sprouted all across town. The Anchor Gardens group, of which many MGs are members, popped up to organize the free exchange of plants, seeds, and gardening knowledge. Demand for locally-grown meat surged, and agriculture was the one sector that did not experience a drop in employment numbers.

In October and November, the Advanced Master Gardener class was taught via distance by our teacher Saskia Esslinger in Homer and was attended by 50 students from Anchorage to Juneau!

Will distance learning for adults continue? Yes, there is much I miss about face-to-face communication, and I miss socializing at our member meetings, but it's also safe to say I never want to drive across town for a simple business meeting again!

Our resilience and resolve will continue to be tested. It looks like spring 2021 will need similar cautions and have similar restrictions, but with a more optimistic feel.

The need for food in our community is unlikely to ease. Who is up for more plant sharing? For one example, new board member Keenan Plate and I have talked about new ways to distribute plant starts to the clients at the St. Francis House Food Pantry. Hit us up for more information if you are interested in helping!

Speaking of the new board members, Keenan joins Nick Riordan and Kathleen Kaiser as new AMGA board members, and Troy Weiss is our new vice-president. Jan van den Top will serve as treasurer, and Beth Norris will continue as secretary. Faye Stiehm continues as an at-large member. A million thanks to outgoing president Susan Negus, at-large members Elaine Hammes and FX Nolan, and treasurer Nancy Grant.

And to all our other members, we always welcome your help and advice.

May our hope grow heartily in 2021! 🌱

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2020 AMGA ANNUAL REPORT by Susan Negus

2020 started out with a lot of promise. As the year progressed, many things were canceled due to Covid-19, and we and other groups began to use Zoom.

We had three different conferences in February: the Alaska Forum on the Environment, the 15th Alaska Sustainable Agriculture Conference, and the ABG Spring Garden Conference, "Seeing More in the Garden." We hosted a table at the ABG conference. CES provided the handouts and we provided the volunteers. We also joined CES in having a table at the Midtown Mall for Fur Rondy on Saturday, February 29 and March 7. There were both good volunteer opportunities. A handful of AMGA members also attended the Northwest Flower and Garden Festival.

The Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners Association rallied quickly to have the Statewide Garden Conference on Zoom, "The Art and Science of Gardening" on March 20-22.

The Spring Garden Show at the Midtown Mall had to be cancelled and many people were left with plants to sell. Most of these people used Facebook or our Google Group to sell or give plants away. Some made use of Paul Marmora's Plant Garage Sale.

We had six monthly meetings with our first two in person at the Energy Center: "A Flora Carnavora" by Mike Baldwin, and in February "My Fair Lady" by Kathy Liska. The pandemic caught us a little off guard and so we canceled our March meeting, Yarducopia, by Nick Riordan, who kindly wrote a great article in the newsletter. We also cancelled our April meeting but resumed via Zoom in May with Steve Brown talking about "Tough Turf." In the fall we continued on Zoom with "Mulching Good for You and the Garden" by Debbie Hinchey in September. October was a Zoom Garden show of different MG's gardens and Garden projects. In November we changed the topic to "Stump the Expert" with Julie Riley, Debbie Hinchey and Mark Wolbers.

The CES in-person Master Gardening class was canceled in 2020. Heidi Rader taught the online Master Gardening class with 45 participants instead of the usual 25.

Our Advanced Master Gardening class on "Permaculture" taught by Saskia Esslinger was held via Zoom

in Fall 2020. Organized by Fran Pekar, Emily Becker, Gina Dionne and Don Bladow, this class drew 45-50 participants.

The CES has moved to a new office, 219 E. International Airport Road, Anchorage, AK. 99518. CES Program Assistant Gina Dionne has been very helpful getting us up on Zoom and taught many classes throughout the spring, summer and fall about gardening and harvesting our bounty.

We managed to have one garden tour in late February at Anchorage Greens, where herbs, lettuce and kale are grown hydroponically. In lieu of summer tours, we suggested people show their gardens on Zoom. We had one brave soul, Linda McCarthy Beckworth, with the help of her grandson. The saving grace was Ginger Hudson, who filmed many gardens and posted them on YouTube.

The Late Season Plant Sale was canceled and once again Master Gardeners were left with plants to sell. Paul Marmora's garage yard sale proved to be very busy this summer.

A new native plant garden was designed and put in at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center. This was sponsored by the Wildflower Garden club, but many MG's volunteered for this project. Paul Marmora was the brains behind this operation. All the plants were donated and planted by mid-September.

We tried to have "Ask a Master Gardener" at ABG again this summer, but few people signed up to volunteer, so we canceled it in August. That said, a small number of MG's did volunteer at ABG this year.

Pioneer Home had another successful year. This is an AMGA service project with dedicated volunteers. The people who live at the Pioneer Home really appreciated the garden since all their activities were canceled due to Covid-19.

All the newsletters were published and starting in November, Elizabeth Bluemink began taking over as editor. Ginger Hudson is moving to Juneau to run the Jensen-Olson Arboretum.

The AMGA Board held 10 meetings in 2020 including

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IN MEMORY: ROSEMARY SHINOHARA

Rosemary Shinohara, an Anchorage Master Gardener and long-time coworker and friend to many in our group, died in mid-December of complications from COVID-19.

One of Rosemary's retirement goals was to become a Master Gardener. She achieved that in 2014, not long after retiring from four decades as a journalist, mostly at the Anchorage Daily News.

Along with her husband Vincent, Rosemary really enjoyed growing food as well as dahlias. She especially liked potatoes, strawberries, and tomatoes, and really got into composting. She wrote a great article in the [July 2015 newsletter](#) about Asian cucumbers and Asian greens, inspired by Vincent, who grew up in Japan and liked to experiment with growing new varieties at their Anchorage home.

As Vincent said recently, Rosemary also really liked

digging. We naturally assume he meant both as a journalist and a gardener.

Elizabeth Bluemink visited the Shinoharas many years ago, as a neophyte gardener, to see their outdoor deck tomato and cucumber growing operation. Rosemary's deck was overflowing with tomato seedlings. Somehow Elizabeth escaped with only one Early Girl.

"She was so gentle, so bright, she will be missed in our AMGA world," says Nickel LaFleur, who remembers going to the UAA Consortium Library with Rosemary and other AMGA volunteers to help preserve newspaper articles in binders. "I would be absorbed in reading an article just to notice that either she or Sheila Toomey had written it," Nickel says.

Rosemary was born in Cordova and grew up in Anchorage. She is survived by her husband, two children, and one grandchild, with another on the way. 🌱



Rosemary Shinohara (right) with her daughter-in-law harvesting potatoes earlier this year.

Annual Report, continued from Page 2

one extra short meeting in June where it was decided to cancel the Late Season Plant Sale.

New board members were elected at the November monthly meeting by Zoom and board officers were selected at the December meeting. The new President will be Emily Becker, Vice President will be Troy Weiss, Secretary will be Beth Norris, and Treasurer will be Jan Van Den Top. At large will be Kathleen Kaiser, Keenan Plate, and Nick Riordan. Faye Stiehm will continue to do broadcast e-mails. Board members leaving are Susan Negus, Elaine Hammes, Nancy Grant, and FX Nolan. FX has agreed to stay on as the agent of Non-Profit Status.

The AMGA Grant Committee coordinated three awards to various projects. Emily Becker secured \$200

for the Waldorf School middle school students gardening project to grow and donate plants to clients of St. Francis House Food Bank at Catholic Social Services. Don Bladow secured \$500 to help sustain the mission of the Harvest Hope Memorial Garden to provide fresh produce for Lutheran Social Services Food Pantry, Tudor Rd. Gospel Rescue Mission, and Beans Café. Cook Inlet Housing Authority received \$300 for the Loussac Place residences to manage 12 garden boxes. This helped them to purchase hoses, garden fencing, soil, herbs and vegetable starts.

Hopefully 2021 will get better with more in person meetings. Maybe mix it up with in-person meetings and Zoom? 🌱

30 YEARS of GROWING HARDY KIWI by Debbie Hinchey

I first planted hardy kiwi vine about 30 years ago for a client who sent me a picture from *Sunset* magazine of a male Arctic Beauty plant with colorful white and pink variegated foliage.

My client wanted the kiwi to grow up the south-facing wall of her home. I had not planted kiwifruit before and purchased a male plant from the late Dick Green, who introduced us to Arctic Beauty and sold them from his Anchorage home in Anchorage.* I planted it in a small bed, and it took off. The family named the big fellow “Louie” when they had to hire a carpenter to build a substantially larger and stronger trellis. Years later, they asked for a female plant, so “Louise” joined the family. Once Louise started flowering, she produced a lot of fruit. Females do not have the colorful leaves, however.

Soon after Louie was planted, I was gifted a male and female kiwifruit pair. I put them along the six-foot fence on the north end of my downtown property. That location almost never has sunshine but usually stays moist enough to grow stuff with only rain. I did not worry much because the first place I saw a kiwifruit growing was in Fairbanks, on the north side of the late Claire Lammers’ home.**

I was too busy to pay any attention and the vines grew all over the place. The female latched onto a crabapple tree about five feet away, which I had to rescue twice. The second time I cut four dozen or more vines, which had grown six to ten feet long, to uncover the crabapple and enable me to walk past the north end of my house.

After retiring from my horticulture business, I spent more time pruning the vines. In 2019 the female started climbing the neighbor’s lilac and caught a low-hanging telephone line. Oops! I became ruthless in my pruning. *The Pruning Book* by Lee Reich says to prune them much like grapes. I have found they can take an extremely hard

pruning on each long vine, leaving only two nodes for next year’s fruit.

Hardy kiwi berries taste like the hairy ones in the store. They are green, about an inch long and half-inch wide. Luckily they are smooth skinned so you can just pop into mouth like grapes. I put about ten into my smoothie. Twenty makes you stay close to home!

Sources say a male plant is needed to pollinate the flowers of the female vines to produce fruit, but the female vine in the Alaska Botanical Garden Herb Garden has produced fruit for years without a known male plant



Louie is on left and Louise is the smaller one in back. See Adirondack chairs for size comparison.



Louie’s diameter at maybe 20 years old. Shown with Felco pruners for scale.

nearby. Several males were planted but none survived. The ol’ gal is doing fine.

Julie Riley and I have talked about this for years. To us, it looks like the male flowers only have male parts (anthers for pollen production), but the female flowers seem to be “perfect flowers,” having both male (anthers) and female (carpels) parts, making fruit production possible.

I find that the stems easily root in water or just pushed into the soil. I have not tried to start them from seed, but I find seedlings under my mother plant. It will take a while before I know how many are girls and boys.

* *Dick Green is the same guy who brought us Red Wiggler worms for indoor vermiculture and vermicomposting. A true gardening pioneer!*

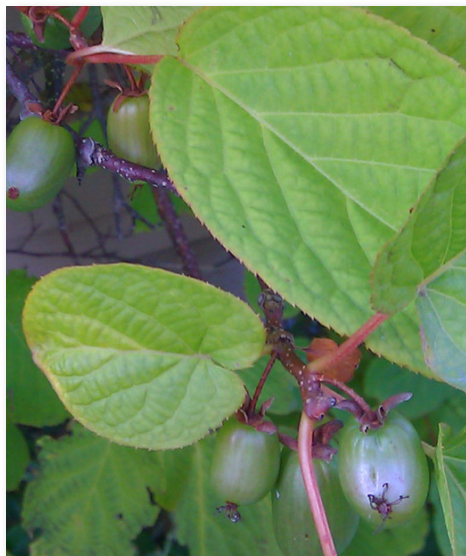
** *Claire Lammers also was a gardening pioneer. He once told Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers members he’d ripened over 300 varieties of apples on his south-sloped orchard outside Fairbanks.*

HERB STUDY GROUP: Origins of Hardy Kiwi

I intended to just write about my experience with growing hardy kiwi. Then I went online to see what else I could find out. Well, I hope you are willing to follow me down a “rabbit hole.”

I knew of at least several species but found out there are about 60! It seems they all originated in areas of China, Siberia, Korea, and Japan.

In the early 1900s some species were brought to New Zealand and grown in private gardens. Later they were trialed, bred, and grown, then advertised with a new name.



Arctic Beauty kiwi berries.

Early varieties were described in a 1904 nursery catalogue as having “edible fruits ... and flavor of ripe gooseberries,” leading to the name *Chinese gooseberry*. In 1962, New Zealand growers began calling it “kiwifruit” for export marketing, a name commercially adopted in 1974. In New Zealand and Australia, the word “kiwi” alone refers to the kiwi bird or is used as a nickname for New Zealanders; it is almost never used to refer to the fruit. Kiwifruit has since become a common name for all commercially grown green kiwifruit from the genus *Actinidia*. (Wikipedia)

Actinidia deliciosa varieties are the brown fuzzy ones commonly found in grocery stores. Some other species available in other parts of the world sound delicious. If anyone sees them available here, please let me know.

Kiwi berries are the generic name given to the smaller, grape-sized, and hairless fruit of several species.

You would think that “hardy kiwi” (*Actinidia arguta* from northern China, Japan, Korea, and Siberia) would be the one commonly grown in Alaska, but no, we grow

a plant native to temperate eastern Asia called “Arctic Beauty” (*A. kolomikta*).

In my research I learned about another species called Silver Vine (*A. polygama*) which grows in mountainous areas (up to 6,200 feet) in China and Japan. The young leaves start out silver and white until flowering and then turn green. The fruit seem to be the about the same size as Arctic Beauty but are orange rather than green. Another name for this species is Cat Powder. It elicits a response in cats like catnip does but more intense. Made only from dried fruit galls (fruit misshaped by midges that exit the fruit), this is the most popular treat for cats in Asia.

Due to this research, I am going to try and call our “hardy kiwi” kiwifruit or kiwi berries instead.

- By Debbie Hinchey

November 2020 Treasurer's Report

Balance 11/07/2020

Checking S-88	15492.09
Business MBR Shares	5.25
Business Premium Shares	16894.31
CD Education 5yr. 1.650% (12/20)	5414.65
CD General 2yr. 1.95% (1/21)	10606.24
	\$48,412.54

Revenue:

Membership	1379.82
Perm. Class	339.22
Interest/Dividends	2.78
Donations	92.22
	\$1,814.04

Expenses:

Operations	149.99
Perm. Class	1350.00
Programs	55.00
	\$1,554.99

Balance 12/01/2020

Checking S-88	15748.36
Business MBR Shares	5.25
Business Premium Savings	16897.09
I 60 Certificate 5yr. 1.650% (12/20)	5414.65
I 24 Certificate 2yr. 1.95% (01/21)	10606.24
	\$48,671.59

Nancy Grant 12/12/2020

PERMACULTURE CLASS REFLECTIONS by Julie Becker

Many of us have been drawing designs to transform our own gardens after finishing the Intro to Permaculture, Advanced Master Gardener Training this fall.

Our teacher, Saskia Esslinger, a certified Permaculture Designer who lives in Homer, taught us that permaculture includes reflecting on whether our own gardens meet our goals and needs.

Does your garden fulfill how you want to feel in your garden and how much time you want to spend in it?

If it doesn't, you may want to write your own permaculture garden goal. Write your goal as if the garden you imagine already exists. It might be an achievement goal. "Our garden provides enough produce for our family and a row for the hungry." It may be a preservation goal. "My garden preserves my perennial cutting garden, a play space for the grandkids, and a birch forest view." Your goal may be an elimination goal. "My garden masks the septic pipes and stacks of building materials." An avoidance goal might be, "My garden does not have any invasive plants."

You may want to consider a winter permaculture garden goal during this time of Covid-19. Many of us have heard of hygge (hue-gah), the well-being that comes from creating a warm feeling with family and friends. What we may not have thought of is that this feeling can be created in our own yard this time of year with ice candleholders.

There is another Scandinavian word that we are starting to hear about, friluftsliv (free-loofts-liv), which refers to spending time exploring and appreciating the nature all around us. In our permaculture class we learned to spend time in our gardens before designing our projects.

Go outside in winter to observe and reflect upon your garden. You might want to take some hygge with you (a down throw, mug of warm tea, a household member). Observe where the sun shines, consider if your garden

was primarily self-reliant last summer or if you spent too much time maintaining it. Look for wind barriers and evaluate available resources that can be repurposed.

See if you can mentally solve any garden problems you had last summer, turning them into garden solutions.

I had the problem of a leftover staging area from a house addition that had to be changed in order to close out a muni permit (too many "driveways"). By creating a smokeless fire pit, sitting area, I was able to accomplish

a permaculture goal and solve a problem. "My winter garden gives me a feeling of hygge (coziness) where family can friluftsliv (enjoy outdoor life) as we socially distance during this time of Covid-19."

Perhaps you don't know what your goal is and need some inspiration. The late Caroline Jensen of Juneau, a horticulturist and Master Gardener, said we find creativity and self-expression

when we design a garden. Merrill Jensen (no relation) said Caroline "took something that was pretty functional and pretty basic and kind of waved a magic wand over the years and transformed it."

Caroline gifted her homestead near Juneau and it became the Jensen-Olson Arboretum. AMGA member Ginger Hudson is leaving Anchorage to put her talent and heart into this arboretum, but we can view the wonderful garden videos she made in Anchorage to gain additional ideas.

Spending time in your garden during winter will provide greater understanding of interrelationships as you make site lists, observe animal tracks/behavior, and consider your garden layers.

In the meantime, just imagine Anchorage with winter gardens that give a feeling of hygge all over town, drawing people outside to live the outdoor life, bringing happiness and light to all. 🌿



Garden ice luminaries lit for winter solstice. Photo by Julie Becker

BIRD CHATTER

SEEN ON FACEBOOK... Did you hear about the Alaska gardener who wanted to grow bird vetch indoors to feed their bunny? Apparently the seeds get “cooked” ... so you don’t have to worry about invasive poo.

PANDEMIC GARDENING ... Bought too many plants to cope with the pandemic? There’s a sticker for that. Tlingit artist Stephanie Tripp of Juneau designed a “plantdemic” sticker available for \$5 from mtjuneaustickers.com.

FYI, PLANT NERDS ... Gardeners didn’t rub elbows this summer due to COVID. Botanists from around the world kept their distance, too. The BOTANY 2020 conference originally set and then cancelled for Anchorage in July is now supposed to come here in 2022.

BIPOC IN THE GARDEN ... That stands for Black, Indigenous & People of Color. A musician named DJ Freedom has a [website](#) and [Instagram account](#) to connect white people who have plants with Black people who want them. Also, a few catalogs—Fedco and High Mowing Seed, for example—are providing “seed royalties” for documented Native American heritage seed.

DON'T FORGET THE GINGER ... Ginger Hudson is crossing the stormy Gulf of Alaska via ferry to Juneau in early January, getting ready to start her new job at the Jensen-Olson Arboretum. Bon voyage!

ANOTHER HAT FOR STEVE BROWN ... The new state lead for the Master Gardener program is Steve Brown of Palmer. We know Steve as a recent Master Gardener instructor, and through other roles, including ag agent for the CES Mat-Su/Copper River district. Steve was elected by his colleagues in the CES Agriculture and Horticulture program to lead the MG program for a three-year term. He takes over from Heidi Rader of Fairbanks who had the role for nine years. She will continue teaching the online Master Gardener course.

WHERE'S JULIE R. THESE DAYS ... Last spotted at our Stump the Expert talk, Julie is reportedly kicking back at a beach hotel in sunny California, recovering from knee surgery. We're looking forward to seeing her back in Alaska in the new year!



EVENT CALENDAR

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

January 3-February 20 @ 6-7 pm

CES Online Course: Preserving Alaska’s Bounty. Learn to preserve food safely through boiling water-bath canning, pressure canning, pickling and fermenting vegetables, dehydration, smoking fish, making sourdough and yogurt, and making sausage. Classes will be via Zoom on Saturdays. The cost is \$128. Register [here](#).

January 25 @ 12-12:30

CES Anchorage Outreach Center: Waking Houseplants from Winter Dormancy. Gina Dionne will present the best techniques for helping your houseplants spring back. Register for this free 30 minute program via Zoom at [this link](#).

MEETINGS & EVENTS

November 29-January 5 @ 4:30-8 pm

Alaska Botanical Garden’s Holiday Lights in the Garden on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. \$6 members, \$8 non-members, children six and under free. Tickets at www.alaskabg.org.

Monday, January 4 @ 7-9 pm

Alaska Native Plant Society monthly meeting, Lorene Lynn presents “The Heritage Tundra Garden in Utqiagvik, Alaska.” Debbie Hinchey presents Strawberries (*Fragaria chiloensis* and *F. virginiana*) and Erika Wolter presents Beringian endemics (*Douglasia alaskana* & *D. beringensis*). Via Google Meet and open to non-members. Contact president@aknps.org for meeting instructions.

Friday, January 8 @ 12-1:30 pm

Alaska Herb Study Group, Kiwis, by Debbie Hinchey and Lynn Hansen. Contact anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com or call Elaine at 276-4295.

Thursday, January 21 @ 7-9 pm

Anchorage Garden Club monthly meeting. TBA. alaskagardenclubs.org

Thursday, January 14 @ 10 am–12 pm

Wildflower Garden Club monthly meeting. Orchid Care 101. Contact: Akwildflowers@gmail.com.



BONUS PHOTO: Debbie Hinchey shared this photo of Arctic Beauty male kiwi flowers in bloom!



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
Teresa Stephenson	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	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

Time to Renew!

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!

January 18, 7 pm, The Seedy Side of Gardening

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

AMGA Google Group:

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

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

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



COOPERATIVE
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