

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Emily Becker

Hello, June! May was a bit cool but I am sad to see it go. Late April/early May is my favorite time of year: birch tapping season. This is my 4th year. I usually tap three trees, collect a gallon or so each day, boil slightly to sweeten, guzzle daily, and share with a couple people. I've never made syrup because I love drinking the fresh sap and it takes a lot of energy to evaporate that much water. Think of the polar bears!

This year the syrup season was long—a full three weeks-plus—perhaps because it took a while for our birch to leaf out. Two trees dripped about a gallon per day combined. The third was a veritable gusher, giving 9-10 gallons of sap per day ... for more than 20 days.

I woke up thinking about sap. I walked around thinking about sap. I went to bed thinking about sap. I was deluged with sap. I simply had to boil it down. My stove was running hours every day and I was drinking as much as I could, but sap does not keep long, even refrigerated, and I don't have much freezer space. I hung a sign in my yard, "Ring the bell for free birch sap!" and posted on social media, "Free Sap."

To my relief, people came to share the sap. Some had tried it before and were eager to relive the experience, but most had never had the chance to taste it. Many wanted to see how the whole thing worked. I gave away about 80 gallons to 20 different people. One man took 5 gallons, then came back with his family and took 5 more. One woman brought a small Mason jar. "Are you sure you don't want more?" I pleaded.

I met a lot of neighbors through this process of sharing. Though I was just happy to give it away, some sappers brought gifts in return: smoked salmon, bread, cookies, a pomegranate, even a sticker. The best, of course, was some birch sap-flavored ice cream.

I don't know why this tree gave so much sap. It's just a large, normal, beautiful birch tree. But years ago, my neighbor tied a strap around the tree to make a zip line for his children to play on. As the tree grew, the strap dug into its bark. A few days before we tapped it, my husband climbed up and removed the strap. So maybe there is a "immune response" reason for why it ran so heavy. Or maybe it was just happy and grateful the strap

was gone. Either way, the gift was enjoyed by one and all.

Thanks to Susan
Negus for organizing
the AMGA table at
the Midtown Mall
Garden Show, and
huge appreciation to
Treasurer Jan van den
Top, who stayed the
whole day to run the
cash register.

Susan also secured a date for the Late

## IN THIS ISSUE

- » May Meeting Highlights
- » PerennialVegetables
- » Haskap Essentials
- » Herb Study
- » Bird Chatter
- » Event Calendar

Summer Garden Sale: Aug. 14th in the ABG parking lot. Susan is looking for an apprentice who might like to learn how to run the sale, so please consider! These sales are an important source of revenue for AMGA. In April, we gave \$2,000 in grants for scholarships and local garden education projects! Your dues and plant sale donations make this possible. Thank you!

Cover photo: Crocuses at the Jensen-Olsen Arboretum! Photo courtesy Ginger Hudson.

## MAY 2021 MEMBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Longtime AMGA member and new Juneau resident Ginger Hudson delivered a fabulous presentation on Alaska wildflower legend Verna Pratt for our May membership meeting via Zoom. Her talk was titled, "Verna Pratt: Carried Away By Flowers," and perfectly captured the theme. Verna wanted to know where to forage and pick berries, so she taught herself to identify the flowers to better recognize prime picking locations. From there, she got quite carried away!

Verna was born in Haverhill, MA, in 1932, the 6th of 8 children. Her father, Charles, worked in a factory, but he dreamed of being a farmer and spent a lot of time cultivating the land. The region was very rural, and Verna grew up exploring, gardening, and foraging with



Verna removing Western salsify (*Tragopogon dubius*) along Turnagain Arm. Photo courtesy AK Native Plant Society.

her mother and siblings. As part of her master's thesis research, Ginger visited the area in the company of Verna's youngest sister, Sue. Some photos of the Massachusetts bogs and forests, paired with those of southcentral Alaska, show the strong resemblance and suggest the connection she must have felt.

Verna arrived in Alaska in 1966 with her military husband and immediately fell in love with the land. She constantly explored and adventured with her family. She took a wildflower identification class from Dr. Marilyn Barker, and the rest is history!

In pursuit of flowers, Verna led hikes, delivered presentations, created art, and more. She was constantly teaching and sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm through all kinds of events, organizations, and her published books. Her husband, Frank, joked that he learned how to photograph plants so that he could spend time with his wife! Along with her AMGA membership, Verna was a co-founder of the Alaska

Native Plant Society and a steadfast volunteer with the Wildflower Garden Club, and her dedication to volunteering is one reason the Alaska Botanical Garden named their Wildflower Garden Trail after her.

Verna was a friend and mentor to many Alaskan gardeners and wildflower enthusiasts. It was a delight to learn more about her and spend time thinking about her history and legacy. Ginger's presentation was based on her MFA thesis, which she hopes will soon be published in book format. In the meantime, Ginger has invited all of us to come see her at the Jensen-Olson Arboretum in Juneau! — *Compiled by Emily Becker* 

AMGA TREASURER REPORT		
April 2021		

## **BALANCES ON 04/01/2021**

	\$51649.85
CD General 2yr. 1.95% (1/21)	10686.49
Savings S-19	16908.29
Savings S-1	5.25
Checking S-88	24049.82

#### **REVENUE**

	\$160.55
Donations	4.86
Membership	152.66
Interest	3.03

#### **EXPENSES**

Adv. Master Gardener	1350.00
Website	906.63
Operations	122.00

#### **BALANCES ON 04/01/2021**

	\$49431.77
CD General 2 yr. 1.95 (1/21)	10686.49
Savings S-19	16911.32
Savings S-1	5.25
Checking S-88	21828.71

Jan van den Top, 05/06/2021

\$2378,63

## BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

## Perennial Vegetables to Consider by Patricia Hartman

When I took the permaculture class last fall, perennial vegetables for cold climates seemed like an oxymoron. I grew perennial vegetables such as rhubarb, chives and asparagus and loved the idea of planting once and with a little luck, fertilizer, and TLC my plants would reward me for years to come. I was intrigued by the thought of other vegetables that could be considered cold hardy in Alaska's harsh climates.

First, I'm classifying a perennial as a plant that returns at least two years in a row and is cold hardy to Zone 4. I live in Juneau and have several microclimates in my yard: from a balmy Zone 5-6 against my rock walls to areas that can experience 50-mile-per-hour winds or more during the winter.

Explore the microclimates in your yard as you consider what perennials to plant. I have found that microclimates are the key to what can be grown even in a Zone 3 location. The big difference with growing perennial vegetables is harvesting is unlikely is to occur the first year and patience is a virtue.

Plants like Egyptian Walking Onions (Allium x proliferum), Ramps or Wild Leeks (Allium tricoccum) Sorrel (Rumex acetosa), Lovage (Levisticum officinale), Sunchokes or Jerusalem Artichokes (Hellianthus), Turkish Rocket (Bunias orientallis), Black Salsify (Scorzonera hispanica), and Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) are all perennials that can be grown at least to Zone 4 and harvested in the second season of

growing. Dandelion, sorrel, rhubarb, lovage, Turkish rocket, asparagus and Egyptian walking onions are hardy to Zone 3. Some like walking onions and ramps will expand as the years go by. Most can be purchased online from specialty seed stores.

Other interesting perennials used as vegetables in Japan are Fuki and Urui, of which in my yard are known as *Petasites Japonicus* aka Fuki and *Hosta* aka Urui. Both of these plants are harvested in the spring. Fuki is harvested after the flower blossoms and the stalk first appears. Check how to prepare the stalks as they are normally soaked in salt and pickled. Hosta can be harvested when it first appears out of the ground and cut when about 5-6" tall, before the leaves uncurl. Hosta can be harvested once during the spring season and used like asparagus or sauteed with another perennial like fiddlehead ferns.

Another vegetable, really a fruit since it has seeds, is a plant called a tomato tree or tamarillo. I first heard and tasted the tamarillo while visiting Rwanda in 2019. If you have a greenhouse that you heat during the winter months or if you have space and enough light inside your house, this might be a plant worth trying. Do your research on the variety you are planting since some seem tastier than others. This tree can be grown from seed or cuttings as well as ordered online. If only I had an inside atrium! I hope I have intrigued your interest in looking into other perennial vegetables that can be grown in our colder Alaska climates!







Left to right: Allium, flowering Fuki and Urui growing in Patricia Hartman's Juneau garden. Photos courtesy of Patricia Hartman.

# HASKAP ESSENTIALS by Mark Wolbers

Haskaps (aka "honeyberries") are a wonderful addition to the garden and are relatively care free. Unlike blueberries, they tolerate a wide range of soils and pH, and are productive if you chose your plants properly.

They are not sexed plants but you do need to plant at least two different compatible varieties with closely related bloom times for pollination. For example, the "Boreal" series are later blooming and may not pollinate with an early Russian variety. You can consult

a pollination chart for the U. of Saskatchewan varieties (https://gardening.usask.ca/documents/Haskap-bloom-ripe-charts.pdf) and a general bloom time chart (http://



Haskap berries in an Anchorage garden. Photos courtesy Elizabeth Bluemink.

www.honeyberryusa.com/honeyberrybloomtimes.html).

In Alaska, the very early to mid-bloom time varieties are suited to our climate. It is also recommended that you buy cloned plants. Plants resulting from seeds are not true to either parent and may not produce quality fruit. Haskaps should be planted 5-6 feet apart, but can be planted closer if a hedge is desired. They will grow to be 3-6 ft in height depending on the variety.

Haskaps are often the first plants to bloom in the spring. In years with more traditional weather, I have seen them flower when there was still some snow on the ground. They are a preferred flower of bumble bees who are looking for food to start their colonies and will fly at much cooler temperatures than honeybees. Bumble bees never fail to provide good pollination for our haskaps.

In our garden we have 5 Russian/Czech varieties (Berry Blue, Svetlana, Smokey Blue, Cinderella, Blue Sky) and 2 varieties from the U of S breeding program (Tundra, Aurora). Within each category the plants are compatible pollinizers and overlap in bloom time. Fruit set is heavy

and it is not uncommon to pick more than a gallon of fruit from one bush.

The fruit of each variety vary in size and flavors range from complex and tart to simple and sweet. While reminiscent to blueberries, they differ in a number of ways. First, haskaps are higher in antioxidants. When baking with the more acidic haskaps it is not necessary to add lemon juice as one would do for a blueberry recipe. Haskaps readily sauce and do not retain their



structure when heated or thawed. Consequently, we often mix blueberries and haskaps when baking so some fruit is still intact.

The berries are easy to juice and the juice can be canned for storage.

For variety, we often sweeten and add flavors like ginger, or cinnamon to the juice to use with our Soda Stream. Because the fruit does not last more than a couple of days in refrigeration, we generally pick the fruit and put it directly into the freezer in containers marked with the variety name. During the winter, they are my choice of fruit with cold cereal. For a simple desert, there is nothing better than some of the smaller tart-variety haskaps thawed and heated with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

For good fruit size, the plants should receive 1–1.5 inches of water each week. Once the fruit is on the plants, I water under the plant early in the day to reduce mold.

The skin of the fruit turns blue weeks before the berries are fully ripe. When ripe, the berry should no longer be green inside. The birds however do not care. So, if you want to harvest any fruit, you had better cover your haskaps with bird netting. I like the netting

Continued on next page

# HERB STUDY HURTLES INTO SUMMER by Elaine Hammes

This year's first Herb Study Group work party at the Alaska Botanical Garden's Herb Garden was May 17 with about seven masked gardeners!

The main focus began with trimming last year's plants,

cleaning up mulch and getting the beds ready

to plant annuals and new perennials as soon possible.

soon possible.

The Herb Study Group is happy to welcome Taylor Way as Volunteer Coordinator at Alaska Botanical Garden.

We also appreciate Stacey Shriner, ABG's Program Director, for providing our annual safety briefing, held during the May meeting.

Will Criner, Gardens & Facilities Manager, has a milelong list of herbs to be planted in the Herb Garden this year. Herb Study volunteer crews will help maintain the ABG Herb Garden through September.

mixture of spices, nor to the tree that produces curry leaves.

Other herbs to be planted include a wide variety of mints, pineapple sage, perilla, French tarragon,

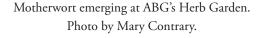
Good King Henry, Calendula 'Oopsy Daisy,' horseradish, thyme, Golden Feverfew and

many more.

Herb Garden volunteer hours are currently scheduled for Mondays and Fridays, 1-3 p.m.

Anyone who wants to volunteer who has not yet attended ABG's safety briefing this season should contact Stacey at ABG.

The <u>Sign-up Genius webpage</u> is used for scheduling volunteer time for those who have completed ABG's briefing.



Many plants already coming up include two varieties of angelica, caraway, rhodiola, Lady's Mantle, chives, Artemisia, rhubarb, and motherwort. The European Pasque Flower has already been blooming.

A new selection for this summer is the curry plant (*Helichrysum italicum*). Though called "curry plant" and smelling like curry powder, it is not related to the typical



#### **Contact the Herb Study Group**

If you want to volunteer, have questions or you want to be added to our email list, please email us at <a href="mailto:anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com">anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com</a> or call Elaine at 276-4295 and leave her a message.

Haskap Essentials, continued from previous page

from Plantra (<a href="https://www.plantra.com/Bird-Netting-Supplies c 86.html">https://www.plantra.com/Bird-Netting-Supplies c 86.html</a>) as it is a little stretchy and easy to work with.

The only regular insect pests are leaf rollers. As soon as the flowers drop, I spray with Bt. I also recommend inspecting for scale insects. If found, the best control is a dormant oil spray before bud-break. The remaining chore is pruning to keep the plant open for light and air.

I actively prune and train for more upright growth with branches off the ground.

I encourage you to explore haskaps. They are a dependable, nutritious and relatively carefree plant that will reward you with a bounty of versatile fruit.

Mark Wolbers is the president of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association (www.apfga.org)

## **JUNE 2021 EVENT CALENDAR**

#### **CLASSES/WORKSHOPS**

#### Wednesday, June 2, 12-1 pm

CES Anchorage Outreach Center: Fabulous Flower Design. Join Gina Dionne for the center's In the Virtual Garden bi-weekly series, filled with tips for successful gardening in Alaska. Register here.

#### Saturday, June 12 & 19, 12-1:30 pm

Alaska Botanical Garden two-session class, Hypertufa Workshop: Set in Stone." Hypertufa is an artificial stone material used to make garden planters. \$65 for the two sessions. All supplies included. Register here.

#### Monday, June 14, 7 pm

Alaska Native Plant Society webinar on "Orange Hawkweed in the Chugach Front Range" from Invasive Plant Specialist Gino Graziano. Learn how to identify orange hawkweed, where it is reported in backcountry areas, and how to report it. <u>Join via Zoom.</u> (Meeting ID: 868 7871 7470; Passcode 842431) Contact gagraziano@alaska.edu for more information.

#### Tuesday & Thursday, June 15 & 17, 7 pm

Learn how to use iNaturalist to document flora and fauna for local research projects. Aaron Wells of the Alaska Native Plant Society will lead an evening walk at Goose Lake on June 15 and a 1-hour webinar on June 17 where you will learn how to upload your observations. This is a free event. Contact Aaron at <a href="mailto:treasurer@aknps.org">treasurer@aknps.org</a> for more details.



#### Wednesday, June 16, 12-1 pm

CES Anchorage Outreach Center: Terrific Tomatoes. Join Gina Dionne for the center's In the Virtual Garden bi-weekly series, filled with tips for successful gardening in Alaska. Register here.

#### **MEETINGS & EVENTS**

#### Saturday, June 5, 9 am-5pm

The Anchorage Garden Club will hold its plant sale, mostly featuring perennials. The sale will be held at 3734 W. 35th Ave.

#### Saturday, June 5, 9 am-3pm

The Wildflower Garden Club will hold a plant sale featuring native plants, perennials, annuals and vegetables. The plant sale will be held at a new location, 1300 West Benson Blvd. (the old DMV building) in the parking lot on the east side of the building.

#### JOBS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.

AMGA volunteers will be planting the Pioneer Home gardens June 1 and 2 from 11 am to 2 pm. All are invited to join. Bring your tools, no masks required outside the building, restrooms are available inside with mask required. The Pioneer Home is at 923 W. 11th in downtown Anchorage. Hours do count towards any volunteer hour requirements. Contact <a href="mailto:lynne.opstad@gmail.com">lynne.opstad@gmail.com</a> for more information.

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 <a href="mailto:anchorgardensanc@gmail.com">anchorgardensanc@gmail.com</a>.

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,

Continued on next page

## CALENDAR, CONT.

Continued from previous page

please contact AMGA vice president Troy Weiss at <u>troydweiss@gmail.com</u>.

Check out a wide range of volunteer opportunties with local garden projects at <u>Volunteers 4 Anchorage Gardens</u>, a list compiled by AMGA and the Alaska School Garden Network.

Did you miss Brenda Adams' "Mastering Garden Design" class? AMGA will offer it again in the fall. Date/time TBA. Sign up here to make sure you get the first notice. Please note that this class will not be offered for an Advanced Certificate and will be open to all gardeners.

AMGA is surveying members on topics for the next Advanced MG class. Give your input by filling out <u>our online survey</u>.



## **BIRD CHATTER**

**Bee medicated** Who knew? Scientists have been publishing studies on how bees use certain plants, including trees, to self-medicate, not just gather pollen.

Local gardener Elisabeth Holmgren is working with Yarducopia to create a "Bee/Pollinator Medicinal Plant Garden" located in a neighborhood yard on Ingra Street, near the Chester Creek greenbelt. She is seeking donations of herbs like peppermint, thyme, yarrow, lemon balm, which have anti-viral and anti-bacterial properties.

**Tricky Chenopodium** An interesting find spotted at the Midtown Mall Garden Show: a Master Gardener trying to sell something that looked suspiciously like lambsquarters, a plant that pops up all over town that many consider a weed. Same genus, Chenopodium, different species: quinoa! Yes, quinoa is a close relative of lambsquarters. This variety, Quinoa PDQ, comes from Restoration Seeds and grows 6 ft. tall with large flower heads that turn red by late summer. Nobody bought the plant, so give Emily Becker a call if you want to give it a home!

**She's on a roll** Master Gardener Marjorie Williams sold 5 1/2 flats of African violets at the garden show.

**Book note** Susan Negus sometimes listens to podcasts while gardening and thought this item from NPR was interesting: In the "The Social Lives of Trees," ccologist Suzanne Simard says trees are social creatures that communicate with each other in remarkable ways, including warning each other of danger and sharing nutrients at critical times. Her book is "Finding the Mother Tree."

**Start potting your perennials** Now that we have a date for the late season plant sale (August 14), Sue says to make sure to begin potting up plants that you would like to sell. Three or four classes will be offered during the sale.

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



## 2021 Alaska State Fair "Seeing is Believing"





### Volunteers needed to be part of the largest garden exhibit in Alaska

Entry & Judging days at the Alaska State Fair's Crops & Flowers Departments are a fun atmosphere to meet new people & catch up with old friends.

It is a great opportunity to learn something new and to share your own gardening experiences.

You can even earn some credits for Master Gardener volunteer hours!

# ~ Entry Clerks ~ Wednesdays, August 25 & September 1 Three shifts available... 12-5 PM, 3-8 PM and 5-9 PM

Help Exhibitors fill out entry forms correctly, explain the use of the Exhibitor Guide, assist with verbal direction on preparation of submissions for judging, and placement of entries in the display area.

# ~ Judges Clerks ~ Thursdays, August 26 & September 2 from 8 AM-Noon

Record winning results, set up and place ribbons for the final display.

# ~ Extra Hands Needed ~ Tuesdays, August 31 from 10AM-2PM & September 7 from 9 AM-1PM

Looking for a handful or two of volunteers to help with 1st Entry take down, 2nd Entry set up, ribbon sorting, and final shut down of department for the season.

For more information contact Kathy Liska – Horticulture Supervisor (907) 337-2196 hm /(907) 301-0317 cell or akliska@aol.com

## Volunteers make it happen!



Bonus photo: *Petasites Japonicus* (Fuki) leaves and stalks growing in Patricia Hartman's Juneau garden. Patricia says Fuki is harvested after the flower blossoms and the stalk first appears. Check how to prepare the stalks as they are normally soaked in salt and pickled.

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

committee chairs, rrog	, and coordinators a 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

#### **Become a Member**

AMGA memberships are based on calendar year.

If you have not renewed, <u>you can pay online</u> or you can print and mail <u>the form on our website</u>.

Questions? Contact Alexis St. Juliana at <u>astjuliana@hotmail.com</u>

## **Next AMGA Meeting via Zoom!**

<u>September 20, 2021</u>

Urban Gardening in Anchorage Nick Riordan, Keenan Plate & Nick Bachman

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

Member Meetings: 7 pm every 3rd Monday of the month, September through May (except December). Meetings are 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. 2021 meetings are currently being held online. These monthly educational programs are free and open to the public. Visitors and guests are welcomed and encouraged.

**Board Meetings:** 2nd Monday of the month, 6-7 pm, anyone is welcome to observe. Send an email to <a href="mailto:president@alaskamastergardeners.org">president@alaskamastergardeners.org</a> for the meeting link.

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

Youtube: www.youtube.com/channel/

UCvZehJprKkjQzivQvNDKopQ

Google Group: <a href="https://groups.google.com/">https://groups.google.com/</a> 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 <a href="mailto:astjuliana@hotmail.com">astjuliana@hotmail.com</a>





