

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Emily Becker

The first seed catalog has arrived in the mail. I plan to make a cup of tea (a home-grown calendula, chamomile, and shiso blend) and get to circling and dog-earing. Plotting and dreaming for next summer is one way I nurture my inner light on December days.

The end of the year means it's time to renew your AMGA Membership. A couple new things you may notice: you can now order an AMGA name tag for \$7. The cut-off for ordering will be Jan 15 and tags should arrive by March. Lots of people have been requesting these. They are great to wear when you are out volunteering in our community.

We also got a lot of feedback about the member directory, namely, that many people don't use it. It's also still valued by many members. This year, you will need to request the directory if you want a copy. The club will still take on the cost of printing it. Just check the box on the registration form and we'll get one to you. The AMGA Board did discuss going digital, but that requires website investment that will need time and money to maintain.

Another common feedback topic is how to respond to all the community gardening projects that need help. Volunteers are in high demand!

In many states, Master Gardeners must submit

volunteer hours each year to maintain their MG certification. They must also log continuing education hours. Did Alaska's MGs require this previously? Currently, our UAF Cooperative Extension System does not have the staff time to keep up with this kind of record-keeping project. If we had a statewide Master Gardener Program Coordinator, we might be able to implement a more robust volunteer and education program. Would you like to see this? Let me know!

Another topic where we'd love your feedback: it's time to schedule our educational programming for 2023. Do you know a speaker or have a topic you'd like to learn more about? Do you love touring gardens and want to help plan them for next summer? [Drop Vice President Troy Weiss a line](#), please!

The Statewide Master Gardener Conference planning committee continues to meet regularly! Stay tuned for exciting announcements, and please continue sending your feedback. 🌿

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New name tags can be ordered until Jan. 15.

NOVEMBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS by Nick Riordan

On November 21st, AMGA hosted a presentation by Saskia Esslinger on Forest Gardens. Saskia has been teaching gardening and permaculture for many years, including recently leading an Advanced Master Gardener course for our club.

For Monday's member meeting, Saskia presented on forest gardens as a garden space that mimics natural forest ecosystems by: being low maintenance; providing food, medicine and beauty; and leaving more time for you, the gardener, to relax!



Saskia Esslinger's former permaculture homestead in Anchorage, the Williams Street Farmhouse, photo courtesy Saska Esslinger.

Saskia included methods and many practical tips for creating and maintaining a forest garden here in Alaska. It all starts with choosing your space. Forests are lumpy, so consider adding a little topography to the landscape, or better yet, use a spot that is already irregular. Next, define your garden paths early and consider wood chips as your go-to path material. The same goes for your growing spaces—like a forest, keep a layer of mulch on the soil that will naturally break down and feed the whole garden.

With your garden beds defined, next is choosing plants. Forest gardens focus on perennials, with the goal of achieving at least three 'layers' (e.g., trees, bushes, herbs, ground cover, vines, mushrooms, etc.). Saskia also encouraged a diversity of species including nitrogen fixers, dynamic accumulators, and flowering plants with a range of blooming times that extends throughout the summer.

Saskia encouraged any forest gardener design to look five to 20 years into the future. How much space will these perennials occupy in the future? Annuals and herbs are

excellent ways to fill empty space around young trees and bushes.

To supplement your imagination, Saskia encouraged us to visit each other's gardens, attend summer tours, and check out the following books: *Edible Forest Gardens*, by Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier, and *Gai'a's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture*, by Toby Hemenway. 🌿

OCT. 2022 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 10/1/2022

Checking S-88	\$ 19,941.52
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 16,959.14
CD General 2 year 1.95%; 1/23	\$ 10,856.07

Total Assets \$ 47,761.98

Interest/Dividends \$ 2.88

This month's revenue

Membership	\$ 267.25
Donations	\$ 20.00
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$ -
Advanced M.G. course fees	\$ -
Total revenue	\$ 287.25

This month's expenses

Grants (scholarships)	\$ -
Pioneer Home Plants	\$ -
Operations	\$ 107.00
Website	\$ 140.00
Plant sale	\$ 460.50
Public Relations (State Fair)	\$ 25.00
Newsletter	\$ 19.99
AMG speaker fee	\$ -
Lifetime achievement	\$ -
Total Expenses this month	\$ 752.49

BALANCES ON 8/31/2022

Checking S-88	\$ 19,476.28
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 16,962.02
CD General 2 Year 1.95%, (1/23)	\$ 10,856.07

Total Assets on 9/30/2022 \$ 47,299.62

Prepared by Jan van den Top

WINTER STEPS FOR GROWING NATIVE PLANTS by Lili Naves

December is a good time to sow seeds of Alaska native plants. Outside during winter these seeds will follow their natural life cycle and will be ready to germinate next spring. Native perennials take up to three years to mature and flower, so now is an excellent time to get yours started.

Native plants are essential for our wildlife, are low maintenance in local environments, and give a special sense of place to Alaskan gardens. Our beautiful native plants offer great options for formal and informal garden designs.

Sources for acquiring Alaska native plants and their seeds can be limited. Commercially-available seed mixes labeled as “Alaska wildflowers” often include non-native species, some of which will not thrive in Alaska or, on the other hand, can be invasive in Alaska. An updated directory of native seed and plant sources is forthcoming.

The Alaska Native Plant Society offers seeds donated by its members in an annual fundraiser. Seeds become available in the winter and are advertised on the Society’s Facebook

This learning would allow you to procure required seed harvesting permits, research potential harvesting sites, and be ready to gather some wild seeds when they ripen next year.

The book “[Wildflowers for Northern Gardens](#)” (Holloway & Gauss 2021) and the [website](#) of the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society are among top resources on propagation of native plants. Some Alaska native species easy to grow from seeds include the common and the dwarf fireweeds (*Chamaenerion angustifolium* and *Ch. latifolium*, formerly known as *Epilobium*), Alaska and Portage poppies (*Papaver alaskanum* and *P. alboroseum*), shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*), lupine (*Lupinus nootkatensis*), and common harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*).

Thinly sow seeds on moistened potting soil. Water gently for good contact between soil and seeds. Write species names on plastic plant labels using pencil for long-term



Alaska native seeds can be sown in winter and then covered by snow in a location protected from excessive wind, photo courtesy Lili Naves.

page and member announcements. You can learn more by contacting seeds@aknps.org.

Networking with local gardeners who have established native plants and harvest seeds is another way to get some seeds in your hands. Reach out and join local plant societies and gardening clubs.

Winter is also a good time to get familiar with [federal and state regulations to harvest seeds](#) of wild plants.

identification. Plan for adequate drainage of pots and trays during spring snowmelt. Place pots outdoors protected from excessive wind and keep them covered with snow. Do not let seeds to dry as this induces dormancy. Sow small batches so you can attend to the young plants. Wish your potted seeds a safe winter and a vigorous spring as you tuck them in their snow blanket! 🌱

HERB STUDY: TURKISH BAY LEAF by Rebecca Ligler

The true bay leaf come from a small tree, *Laurus nobilis*, known as bay laurel, native to the Mediterranean region.

While bay laurel trees and shrubs thrive in hot, arid climates (USDA Zone 8-10) and cannot survive Alaska winters, they can survive indoors and be propagated from cuttings.

Per advice from Herb Study Group member Susan Miller, cuttings (at least 6 inches long) should be taken in summer when the wood is green and pliable. All but the top two or three leaves of the cutting should be stripped, and the cutting should be kept in a bucket of water, then planted in a small flowerpot filled with



Bay leaf cuttings, courtesy Susan Miller

coarse sand. Keep cuttings moist by enclosing the pot in a clear plastic bag. Keep the pot on a heating mat in indirect sunlight. It could take a month or two to root cuttings.

Known as Turkish bay leaf in cooking, bay laurel has been part of the culinary and medicinal world for thousands of years, at least since ancient Roman times, flavoring soups, stews, and other Mediterranean recipes.

Contrary to popular belief, whole bay leaves are removed before consuming a dish due to their choking hazard rather than toxicity. Make sure to use true bay leaves as some similar-looking species can be toxic when consumed. Seasoning foods with crushed bay leaves is the best way to gain their full nutritional value due to full ingestion.

Bay leaf has an extensive list of purported health benefits. The leaves contain small amounts of many vitamins and minerals, including calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, Vitamin A, B6, C, riboflavin, and zinc.

It is said to improve digestion and relieve symptoms of stomach-related ailments such as abdominal pain, gastro-intestinal infections, flatulence, bloating, constipation, diarrhea. With its antibacterial properties, bay salves and poultices can be used for relief of respiratory conditions.

HERB STUDY GROUP Winter Meeting Schedule 2nd Friday of the month, 12-1:30 pm, via Zoom

December: No meeting

January 13: Ginger (Susan)

February 10: Oregano (Debbie)

March 10: Nigella (Elaine)

April 14: Poppies (Shirley)

Request Herb Study notifications by emailing anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com.

Bay leaves can be steeped in water to use as scalp rinse after shampooing to help eliminate dry skin or dandruff.

A phytonutrient in bay leaf called parthenolide has been shown to quickly reduce inflammation and irritation when applied topically. A plant pigment in bay leaf called rutin improves or protects heart health by strengthening capillary walls in the heart and body extremities. Another compound in bay leaf, caffeic acid, has been shown to help eliminate LDL cholesterol. Like lavender but in smaller quantities, bay leaf is said to reduce anxiety and stress due to linalool. Linalool is known as a sedative, anticonvulsant, and pain reliever.

Bay leaf also has tremendous antimicrobial, insecticidal and repellent properties. Adding dried leaves to rice and flour can prevent tiny bugs and weevils—an all-natural insect repellent. The leaves also inhibit the growth of *Staphylococcus aureus* and *E. coli*, and an early lab study also showed bay leaves fight off *Helicobacter pylori* (a bacterium that causes ulcers and even cancer).

Spiritually, bay laurel is believed to attract abundance and positivity. The plant has been used for centuries in protective and aura-cleansing smudge rituals. Uses include writing burdens on a whole leaf and letting it burn, allowing the smoke to extract negative energy from your space and body. People put a whole bay leaf under their pillows, seeking to develop psychic abilities, lucid dreams, clairvoyance, astral travel and heighten their extrasensory abilities. In feng shui, bay laurel is grown to attract good luck and raise your home's vibration, strengthen the energy of any room and balance emotions. 🌿

DECEMBER 2022 EVENT CALENDAR

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Thursday, Dec. 8, 10 am

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska: Holiday Wreath and Centerpiece Making Workshop at Dimond Greenhouse. This is a members and family-only activity. The cost is \$30 to make a wreath & \$20 to make a centerpiece. [Contact club.](#)

Thursday, Dec. 14, 1 pm

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska: Two gnome workshops: one at 10 am (already full) and one at 1 p.m. These workshops will be at Alaska Wholesale Flower market at 7437 Old Seward Hwy. The cost for the gnome is \$35. All supplies are provided. This is a members only activity. [Contact club.](#)

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Monday, Dec. 5, 7 - 9 pm

Alaska Native Plant Society Monthly membership meeting: Plant Pathology at the Alaska Plant Materials Center presented by Todd Steinlage. [Zoom link.](#)

Friday, Dec. 9, 4-6 pm

Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center hosts a Holidays at the Farm open house. All are welcome. Hot chocolate, cookies, crafts, a caribou, and more. Caroling at 5:15 and tree lighting at 5:30 p.m. Located at 1509 S. Georgeson Drive, Palmer.

Thursday, Dec. 15, 11 am

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska: Annual Holiday Luncheon. This is a holiday potluck luncheon with optional gift exchange at the Central Lutheran Church. Members only. [Contact club.](#)

Thursday-Sunday throughout December, 5-8 pm

The Alaska Botanical Gardens 'Brighter Winter Nights' is an exciting winter walk amongst the glowing garden featuring botanical-themed light displays, ice luminaries, fire pits to warm up by, a kicksled trail, and model train. You can purchase tickets for \$10 on the [ABG website.](#)

JOBS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.

Homer Grown Radio: Tyonek Grown. In this episode Desiree Hagen visits the Native Village of Tyonek, and talks to Tonya Kaloa, programs coordinator for Tyonek Tribal Conservation District. Check out what the folks in Tyonek across Cook Inlet have been growing and how they're including the local school. [Listen here.](#)

Big Cabbage Radio's AG Matters: Flowers at the Fair - Cody Beus interviews the Alaska State Fair's head gardener, Becky Myrvold. [Listen here.](#)

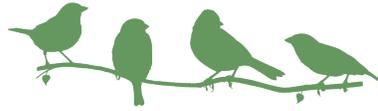
It's time to renew! Use our [online form](#) or [fillable PDF](#) to join or renew your **AMGA membership.**



Growing a Productive, Sustainable Garden in Alaska
UAF NRM 194, 3 credits, Spring 2023, CRN 37376
with Heidi Rader

Find out more here:
<https://itgrowsinalaska.community.uaf.edu/learn/>

BIRD CHATTER



TREE? WHAT TREE? ... BC hears the local chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects is partnering with the Alaska Community Forestry Council, among others, to invent an Alaska Plant Finder website where you can look up trees and shrubs based on size, form, and other factors. They expect to have it ready in late spring.

How will it work? You put a description of what you want and it gives you some selections that will work in your specific location. A garden designer's dream tool if it happens.

YIKES! ... Speaking of trees, imagine BC's surprise at encountering the following info on a web site titled "10 Trees That Grow Well in Alaska (Plant One Today!)"

"The Mayday tree is a scented, flowering tree and an important food source for many birds." The blurb goes on to extol the virtues of this dangerous invasive.

The 10 Trees offering is part of an elaborate, obviously professionally designed site called treevitalize.com. Some one needs to tell this guy *Prunus padus* grows way too well in Alaska. (BC has alerted MGers Elise Huggins and Debbie Hinchey).

CHANGELINGS ... What do garden artists do when ice and snow turn the green world to white? Yes, they cry a lot. And many of us drink. But some morph into

fabric artists—where green is just another color in the mix. MG Ruthe Rasmussen was one of the stars at the recent Alaska Log Cabin Quilters show.

GOOD NEWS ... Long-time member Margaret Love, who abandoned Alaska for North Carolina a while ago, is back home there and doing well after her stroke. Word is she'd like to hear from us so give her a call. And no, it won't cost you anything. Along with her AMGA membership, she's kept her Alaska phone number—it's in the directory. (Is that a hint about where her heart is?)

DECORATE THE DIRECTORY ... Our AMGA annual directory editor Janice Berry is looking for members to send along their favorite 2022 garden photos to include in the directory. Email Janice at jberry6634@gmail.com.

'TIS THE SEASON ... of special days, so make sure you include Dec. 12th, National Poinsettia Day on your calendar. Personally BC is more inclined to celebrate National Cat Herders' Day (Dec. 16th) and National Whiners' Day (Dec. 26th). But to each her own.

What's new, interesting, confounding and delightful? Send your bits of interesting garden news to stoomey@ymail.com.

MASTER GARDENER CONFERENCE UPDATE by Sharon Schlicht

On April 8, 2023, Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage will host a Statewide Master Gardeners Conference, with a kickoff social gathering and silent auction the evening of April 7.

We need your support to make the April 7 social gathering and silent auction a success. There are two ways you can contribute:

- Individual, family, or company donations in any amount will be gladly accepted. Checks payable to Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage or AMGA can be sent to Troy Weiss at 6064 Kalmia Drive, Anchorage, AK 99507. Donations are tax

deductible; AMGA is a 501(C)(3) corporation and our tax ID is 92-0118582.

- Gifts in kind—such as artwork, gift cards, items preserved from your garden, or apple pie—are also gladly accepted and will be used for fundraising in our silent auction. To make a gift in kind, please contact Sharon Schlicht at 907 272-6670 or sharon@alaskamastergardeners.org. In-kind donations can also receive a donation statement for taxes.

All proceeds will be used for conference expenses or to support other garden education efforts. Please consider how you may be able to support this event. 🌿*

Next AMGA Meeting via Zoom

“TBD”

Monday, January 16, 2022

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

Member Meetings: Unless otherwise specified, **7 pm every 3rd Monday** of the month, September through May (except December). AMGA meetings are currently being **held online via Zoom**. 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 president@alaskamastergardeners.org for the meeting link.

AMGA Board of Directors

Emily Becker	President
Troy Weiss	Vice President
Jan van den Top	Treasurer
Nick Riordan	Secretary
Kathleen Kaiser	At Large
Keenan Plate	At Large
Kat Karabelnikoff	At Large
Meg O'Mullane	At Large

Committee Chairs, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Emily Becker	CES Liaison
Steve Brown, Gina Dionne	CES Master Gardener Program Liaison
Keenan Plate	Broadcast Email
Nick Riordan	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
Jan van den Top, Lili Naves, Sheila Toomey	Grants Program
TBD	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 an AMGA Member

Use our [online form](#) or [fillable PDF](#) to join or renew your AMGA membership. By joining, you support AMGA and its mission of gardening education in partnership with the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service. We provide continuing education, grants for garden projects, garden tours, and more, all in service to the community.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome letters, opinions, public event announcements, articles, ideas and inquiries. The deadline for submitting an item for publication is the 20th of every month. Educational articles (400-600 words ideal), Bird Chatter, calendar items and announcements are always welcome. Contact/send items to the editor at newsletteramga@gmail.com and send Bird Chatter items to stoomey@ymail.com.

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/UCvZehJprKkQzQvNDKopQ

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

Membership issues/address corrections: Alexis St. Juliana at astjuliana@hotmail.com.

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





ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ANCHORAGE

Membership/Membership Renewal Form for the Year _____

AMGA's membership year is January 1 through December 31
To ensure listing in the next Directory, dues must be received or postmarked by December 31

Voting Membership: \$20

Dual Membership:*\$30

Donation: \$ _____

Non-voting Membership: \$20

Dual Member Name Tag: \$7

Print Directory (upon request only)

Name Tag: \$7

Last/First: _____ Day phone: _____

Address: _____ Other phone: _____

City/State: _____ Zip Code: _____

E-mail: _____

MG Class Year: _____ MG Class Location: _____ 40 volunteer hours complete? Yes No

***Dual Membership (Two current AMGA members living at same address)**

Last/First: _____ Day phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Other phone: _____

Voting Membership

Non-voting Membership

MG Class Year: _____ MG Class Location: _____ 40 volunteer hours complete? Yes No

Cash and/or check payments can be made at AMGA meetings with completed form.
If paying by mail, send form & payment to: AMGA, P. O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1403.
Make checks payable to Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage.

Memberships, renewals and donations may also be submitted online at www.alaskamastergardeners.org
Gift membership forms are available online.

AMGA runs on volunteer power!

Needs vary, and may include such tasks as writing educational articles or postings, presenting monthly programs, Pioneer Home gardens' maintenance, photography, social media, web design, annual plant sale, workshops, etc. Volunteer opportunities will be provided as they occur for which AMGA will very much appreciate your support.

We welcome your suggestions for educational program topics and speakers:

AMGA Use: Date: _____ Check #: _____ Amount: _____ Cash: _____ Donation: _____