

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Emily Becker

With several hard frosts behind us, it's time to cover our perennials and get ready for, I hope, snow. This means we are in search of mulch, and the easiest fall source in our region is leaves.

As Master Gardeners, we should, of course, be advising people to keep their own leaves for various garden uses, including mulch, compost, and building new garden beds. But on the other hand, I need lots and lots of leaves! So I'll take those bags, thank you very much! Between my own garden and my various volunteer garden projects, I need several dozen bags of leaves to get ready for winter.

Luckily, I have an excellent leaf bag connection: my neighbor, Colton Jack Powers, who owns Powers Garden Lawn & Snow, a "small fry" (his words) in the lawn care business, with about 50 customers. Each fall cleanup, he has about 200-300 bags of leaves to deal with.

A few years ago, I noticed the bags loaded up on a

trailer in front of his house and knocked on his door to ask if I could have them. His answer: of course! It prevents him from having to bring them to the dump, and he feels much better about them being used for good. Now each fall (and spring as well) he lines the bags on the sidewalk by his house and posts on Facebook in our Airport Heights gardening group. Neighbors eagerly snap them up. In fact, I didn't manage to snag enough bags and will have to head over to Yarducopia's Midtown Garden Depot to pick up more.

Because his business operates on such a small scale, Colton can handle distributing that relatively small volume of waste, and if needed, he's even taken bags of leaves to his parents' house out in Sutton to decompose out in the woods. On occasion, he reluctantly brings them to the transfer station.

Which made me wonder: what's happening with the city compost system? The big lawn companies produce so much waste they don't have time to deal with the

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R: Bags of leaves from Powers Garden Lawn & Snow, free for the taking in Airport Heights. L: Bags of leaves cover Emily's frozen garlic bed to hopefully guard against freeze-thaw. She learned this technique from Dennis and Annie Ronsse. Just toss the bags on there like a pillow!

logistics of giving them away. What can they do?

Anchorage Recycling Coordinator Kelli Toth reports that the muni piloted a program this summer with a small number of lawn care businesses. They were able to bring their organics to the Highland Rd. Regional Landfill (also the destination for the contents of our pink carts), which trucked them to a Palmer business that earned \$35 a ton to deal with our organic trash, 400 tons of it this season. Kelli says the pilot was a success and she's hoping to scale up next summer to

ALASKA MASTER GARDENER PRESIDENTS' MEETING

Leaders of the four established Master Gardener organizations met recently to share ideas, listen, and collaborate. Participating were Raina Collins of the Tanana Valley chapter, Kevin Johnson from Mat Su, Kristi Hooton of the Southeast MG Association, and from the Anchorage chapter, me.

Highlights of our discussion included the greatest need of our organizations: how to attract more volunteers for various projects and how to recruit and support these volunteers with affordable course offerings.

We need more young people and a more diverse group in general. It's tough if the Master Gardener classes are not offered frequently and consistently. We shared lots of helpful tips and made plans to meet again in another month. Fairbanks will be hosting the spring Master Gardener conference next year, and they hope to plan a great event.

One specific idea that came from this meeting was to survey our members for an estimate of volunteer hours served in gardening this year.

We want to celebrate our achievements and also remind UAF of the value we contribute to our communities. So please watch your email for this survey and fill it out to the best of your knowledge!

— Emily Becker

capture more organic waste and keep it out of the landfill. At some point, maybe we'll be scrapping over who gets to keep the leaves! 🌱

SEPT. 2023 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 9/1/2023

Checking S-88	\$ 26,773.62
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,000.38
CD General 2 year 1.95%; 1/23	\$ 11,000.59

Total Assets \$ 54,779.84

Interest/Dividends \$ 67.30

This month's revenue

Membership	\$ 59.45
Donations	\$ 25.00
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$ -
State Conference	\$ -
Name Tags	\$ -

Total revenue \$ 84.45

This month's expenses

Postage	\$ -
Pioneer Home Plants	\$ -
Operations	\$ 132.00
Website	\$ -
Directory	\$ 22.96
Fundraising/plant sale	\$ 468.75
Newsletter	\$ 29.99
Bus to Coyote gardens	\$ -
Lifetime achievement	\$ -
2023 AMGA conference	\$ -

Total Expenses this month \$ 653.70

BALANCES ON 9/30/2023

Checking S-88	\$ 26,204.37
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,008.07
CD General 2 Year 1.95%, (1/23)	\$ 11,060.20

Total Assets on 9/31/2023 \$ 54,277.89

Prepared by Jan van den Top

OCTOBER MEETING: AK PLANT SELECTION GUIDE

Editor's Note: Many thanks to Elise Huggins for going far beyond the call of speaker duties in providing this written summary of the presentation she delivered at the October 16 AMGA member meeting.

Coming soon! A new, online plant finder specific to plants that will grow in Alaska is being created using the Alaska Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects database (<https://www.akasla.org/alaska-plants>).

The UAF-funded project was envisioned by members of the Alaska Community Forestry Council who wanted to create an online plant finder useful to both experienced gardeners and people with limited experience in plants.

Meg Burgett and M. Elise Huggins, both with the Alaska Community Forestry Council, are leading the effort to create a search engine that will allow users to find plants suited to basic site conditions in Alaska.

Spoon Frog Graphics is providing the website design and organizing the data. It's taken awhile and the process

has been interesting: combining the talents of a website designer with a couple of plant lovers.

Who would have known that not everyone knows a plant suitable to Zone 4 includes most plants from in Zones 1 to 3 as well (with some exceptions of course)?

Checking and double checking the [preliminary site](#) is in process now. And we know there will be lots of changes once gardeners and plant lovers review the site. It will be fun sorting through people's experiences and revising the data and adding photographs. Ideally, it would be a local version of Wikipedia. For now we are hoping to get



it out there and give the Alaska community something to start with.

Thanks to the Alaska Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects, which has hosted the plant database website for two decades. And special thanks to the original team of folks, some of Alaska's well known experts who built the database using the 1996 UAF Cooperative Extension Service publication, Landscape Plants for Alaska. 🌿*

HERB STUDY WINTER MEETINGS by Elaine Hammes

The Herb Study Group had its first Zoom meeting Oct.13. The following meeting dates and topics were determined (2nd Friday each month, noon – 1:30 p.m.), subject to changes as needed.

- Nov. 10: Herbs: potted plants indoors and outdoors
- Dec. 8: Discussion with ABG Staff and ABG Herb Garden slide show summer 2023
- Jan. 12 (2024): Yarrow (2024 Herb of the Year)
- Feb. 9: Slide show: Herb Gardens seen in England during May 2023

- March 8: Book review and discussion: wild foods and medicinal plants
- April 12: Herb seedling exchange (no Zoom)
- May: Transplanting plugs at ABG (dates to be determined)

Anyone interested in participating in the Herb Study Group discussions is welcome and should contact anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com to receive meeting announcements. There are no membership dues or requirements other than your interest in herbs. 🌿*

AMGA BOARD CANDIDATES (2024-2026 TERM)



Rich Ervin

I am an avid gardener and plant enthusiast who completed the Master Gardener class in May 2023.

Gardening began with my mother in Iowa when I was very young. Her garden of tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, and corn was fantastic and delicious, and I have never stopped planting or growing things since.

My indoor greenhouse, outdoor greenhouse, vegetable garden, bonsais, fruit trees and berry bushes keep me busy and enthused. I want to do it better and it seems I have found the place in AMGA. The knowledge gained from AMGA and the Master Gardener class can help individuals and organizations achieve their goals for their gardens. Volunteering is an essential ethic that AMGA promotes and encourages, and I want to be a part of that.

Since completing the Master Gardener course, I have helped with arranging the Monday night tours for AMGA. The tours have been inspiring, rewarding and I have added many new friends, new plants, and new ideas to my life. The knowledge and camaraderie are amazing, and I want to be a part of that.



Rebecca Ligler

I am delighted for the opportunity to serve on the AMGA Board.

I have a lifelong love of plants (house and garden) which was encouraged by my grandparents as a child.

Since moving into our home in Chugiak, we have been able to expand our small garden as well as incorporate chickens, ducks and bees into our life. I work as one of three Emergency Preparedness Nurses for the State of Alaska. I enjoy preserving our harvest and adding it to our family's preparedness lifestyle.



Jan van den Top

I was born and raised in Barneveld, a small town near Arnhem (A Bridge too Far), the Netherlands.

When I grew up we always had a garden, and for some reason (maybe it was the small stipend) I enjoyed turning the vegetable garden every spring. I developed the feeling that a home is not complete with some flowers in front and some fruit and vegetables in the back. So that is what I have done with every home we owned. And over time I learned that the more you work on it and the more you learn about it, the better the results can be. That's where Master Gardeners came in, even though for me it is more about gardening than about mastering. The course gave me abundant (more than I will ever use) plant information. Volunteering work afterwards has allowed me to meet many fellow gardeners.

[On serving an additional term on the board] I found it hard to say no. I have no plans for big changes; more for keeping things going. I do feel that we spread ourselves really thin by doing some things that others already do. I am more for coordinated efforts than new additional efforts.



Brenda Adams

Brenda Adams recently sold her garden design business and has agreed to spend some time serving AMGA. Her books, *There's a Moose in My Garden*, *Designing Gardens in Alaska and the Far North* and *Cool Plants for Cold Climates: A*

Garden Designer's Perspective, have provided thousands of gardeners with the tools to achieve success in their own gardens. A sought-after speaker, Brenda has twice been invited to speak at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in Seattle, the state Master Gardeners' annual conference, the Alaska Botanical Garden spring conferences and many garden clubs throughout Alaska and Outside.

MANAGING ORANGE HAWKWEED WITH CHICKEN TRACTORS

In 2019 I had a yard full of orange hawkweed, in 2022 it was gone. I didn't dig it up, tarp it, or use chemicals. How did I get rid of it? I didn't. My chickens did.

Working with the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, we applied for funding to see if we could recreate these results on a smaller spatial footprint, in a shorter amount of time, and controlling for variables that could skew the results.

The Hickerson Cemetery on Diamond Ridge in Homer was the perfect laboratory. It has an even, flat, mowed carpet of 90% hawkweed with a handful of other species in the mix.

While it's well known that chickens will scratch and peck down to bare ground, there's little documentation of how long it typically takes, or what grows back the fastest and most abundantly.

This experiment tested different time intervals—two weeks, four weeks, and six weeks—to compare the impacts chickens have on plant regrowth. Chickens were housed in 8x3 foot tractors (mobile coops).

After two weeks in one spot, the vegetation was mostly gone, but once the chicken tractors were moved, the area regrew quickly with lots of grasses and dandelions. Happily, there was far less orange hawkweed.

After four weeks in one spot, the vegetation was completely gone and didn't grow back for four weeks. This time only a few stems of grasses and dandelions emerged.

After six weeks in one spot, nothing reemerged in the following four weeks. Looks like our feathered friends ate up all the rhizomes and seeds in this amount of time.

These results are promising, showing that regrowth in the short term is mostly grasses and dandelions, with far less orange hawkweed. However, in time, rhizomes and stolons could creep back in, and seeds could arrive from nearby flowers. We'd like to do more controlled experiments in the future, for example to see if reseeded after chickens with native plants prevents hawkweed reestablishment.



Chicken tractor vegetation plots, photo courtesy Casey Greenstein

We'd also like to study how chicken manure changes soil chemistry, and in turn, plant growth. Are there other soil amendments we can add to change species composition? What about rotational grazing, where chickens are moved on and off the same patch of ground multiple times? Stayed tuned for future studies

diving deeper into the role chickens can play in invasive species management and environmental conservation.

Thanks to the Western IPM Center for funding this project, to the City of Homer for their support and access to the Hickerson Cemetery, and the amazing staff at the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District for making this happen!

This project was funded in part by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture through the Western Integrated Pest Management Center, grant number 2022-70006-38003.

— Casey Greenstein, Homer Soil & Water Conservation District Native Plant Program Coordinator

This article originally appeared in the Homer Soil & Water Conservation District newsletter and is used with permission.

NOVEMBER 2023 EVENT CALENDAR

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Thursday, Nov. 2, 4-5 pm

Alaska Farm to School: Webinar: Learn how to apply for an Alaska Farm to School grant with Waverli Stowe, Alaska Farm to School Coordinator. [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, Nov. 7, 12-1 pm

MatSu CES: Eat Your Weeds: Join Ann Kowenstrot as she talks about the amazing uses of some of the most prolific weeds in Alaska. She will talk about plant identification as well as provide some recipes. In person at the Matanuska Experiment Farm and via Zoom. [Register here.](#)

Thursday, Nov. 16, 12-1 pm

MatSu CES: Invasive Bird Cherry and their Toxicity to Moose. We will discuss the toxicity to moose, and how that might affect how invasive chokecherry trees are in Alaska. In person at the Matanuska Experiment Farm and via Zoom. [Register here.](#)

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Thursday, Nov. 2, 7-8 pm

Anchorage Garden Club: Growing Pumpkins: From Seed to Fruit at Central Lutheran Church.

Monday, Nov. 6, 7-9 pm

Alaska Native Plant Society monthly meeting: "Aleutian Shield Fern and the Endangered Species Act," presented by Sabrina Farmer & Leah Kenney. In person at the Campbell Creek Science Center and [via Zoom](#).

Thursday, Nov. 9, 10 am-1

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska: Summer Photo Share and Luncheon. [Contact club](#) for details.

Friday, Nov. 10, noon-1:30 pm

Herb Study Group Meeting: Lively discussion on specific herbal topics. Via Zoom, free and open to the public. Email anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com for information on how to join.

Friday-Sunday, Nov. 10-12

Alaska Food and Farm Festival: Featuring local and national speakers, networking, and educational opportunities for agricultural producers and food system advocates. At the Egan Center with virtual option. Scholarships available. [Get info.](#)

JOBS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.

AMGA is seeking a **Pioneer Home garden co-leader, and a plant sale leader**. Contact Emily Becker at president@alaskamastergardeners.org for more information.

The **Alaska Farm to School Grant Program** is [accepting grant applications](#) from school districts, child care centers, and family daycare homes. Projects can include school gardens, hydroponics, buying from local producers, etc. Applications are due Nov. 17.

The **Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska** is accepting grant applications from individuals, schools and non-profits engaged in botanical education projects. [Learn more here.](#)

Seeds of Change has multiple positions open, including three youth staff positions, Participant Coordinator and Agricultural Specialist. Contact Sara Renard at srenard@akbh.org for a job description and other details.

Garden Grants for Schools

Learn how to apply for an Alaska Farm to School grant with Waverli Stowe, Alaska Farm to School Coordinator



Via Zoom • Hear from Experts • Ask your Questions

Thurs.
Nov. 2
4 pm



Alaska Tribes
Extension Program



RurAL CAP



USDA



EDUCATION
EARLY DEVELOPMENT

[Click here](#) to register for Nov. 2 Farm to School webinar.

NOVEMBER 10-12

EGAN CENTER, ANCHORAGE, AK



2023 Alaska FOOD & FARM FESTIVAL

Better Together: CELEBRATING OUR ABUNDANCE & DIVERSITY

BIRD CHATTER



PIONEER PRINCESS ... Member Susan Miller has volunteered to organize maintenance of the Anchorage Pioneer Home gardens.

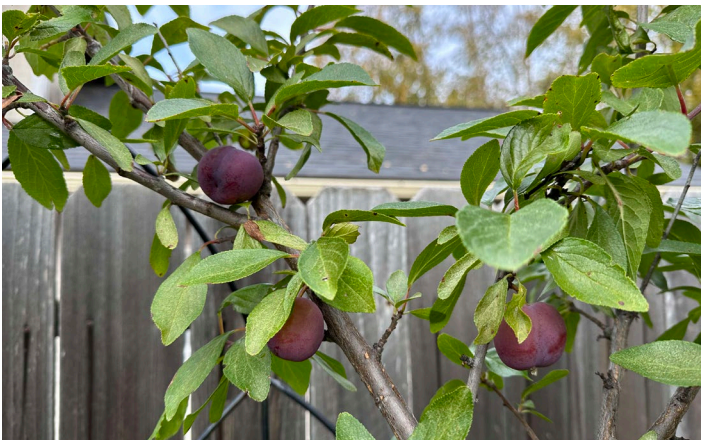
We should all thank her. This is a huge task, but we get more compliments for that very public—and beautiful—display than almost anything else we do. And not just from residents, who are effusive in their gratitude, but from the neighborhood and even people driving by.

Susan is looking for a co-manager. It's a big job for one person—much pleasanter with a partner.

The gardens need a lot of hands to flourish. A whole bunch of people, each doing a couple of hours for a week or two, gets it all done as painlessly as possible. And even a whiner like BC finds it satisfying to help plant that place up!

So, [get in touch with Susan](#) and sign up. To repeat: Even a couple of hours helps.

A BREAKTHROUGH ... BC editor—and definitely “master” gardener—Elizabeth Bluemink reports she got plums this year: “First time for fruit after planting this Mt. Royal plum tree five or so years ago. It is self-fertile, which is fortunate because I've previously killed two other plum trees. Never give up!”



Elizabeth's Mt. Royal plums ripening in September.

And speaking of Elizabeth's adventures, she recently returned from a trip to Nashville to attend a public relations conference held at the Gaylord Opryland hotel, which turned out to be a giant greenhouse with 5,000 rooms and 50,000 plants! She learned that diners in one

of the hotel's many restaurants can even pluck bananas off banana trees!

WORDSMITH ... The best one-liner description of this past summer, by member Ruthe Rasmussen:

“... So cold and wet this summer, I avoided most have-to's and postponed all want-to's!”

A MESSAGE... from member Nickel LaFleur, who comes to us from the wilds of Wasilla, but reminds us that we got critters too:

“(R)abbits, voles, mice, rats, etc. like to munch on trees and shrubs so it is a good idea to think of protecting their trunks/stems. You can purchase tree guards or make your own out of heavy-duty hardware screen or scrunching up tin foil. Getting this done before it snows would be best.”

IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING ... Les Brakes sold his place in Willow!

AND FINALLY ... In answer to the usual beg-a-thon for items, BC got the following from member Cheryl Chapman. It doesn't have anything to do with gardening but, really, it needs to be shared:

“On the gentle afternoon walk today, I passed a teen at a nice two-story home where Scarboro intersects Foxhall. He was skinning a medium black bear on a worktable in the front yard; he had unzipped the tummy and was taking the furry glove off the left front leg. Only in Alaska.”

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

CHEAP GARDENING BOOKS!

The Fall Book Sale at the **Loussac Library** in Anchorage will be the first weekend in November. It is a great source for a wide variety of gardening books at low prices (\$2.00 or \$3.00). Dates are Nov. 3-5.

Next AMGA Meeting: In Person at the BP Energy Center

"Western Exploration of Alaska's Flora"

Presented by Carolyn Parker

Monday, Nov. 20 at 6:30 pm

Member Mtgs: 3rd Monday of the month, 7 pm, September-May (except December), unless otherwise specified. Free and open to the public.

Board Mtgs: 2nd Monday of the month, 6-7 pm, anyone is welcome to observe. Email 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, Katherine Karabelnikoff, Jamie Lang, Meg O'Mullane, Keenan Plate At Large

Committees, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Emily Becker	CES Liaison
Steve Brown	CES Master Gardener Program Liaison
Keenan Plate	Broadcast Email
Nick Riordan	Calendar of Events

Don Bladow, Troy Weiss, Emily Becker, Fran Pekar, Deb Blaylock Advanced MG Course

Janice Berry	Directory Editor
Kathy Liska, Cindy Walker	Facebook
Troy Weiss	Meetings/Programs

Troy Weiss, Janie Munson-Odgers, Rich Ervin Garden Tours

Mary Rydesky, Gina Docherty, Jane Baldwin Google Group Managers

Jan van den Top, Lili Naves, Sheila Toomey Grants Program

TBD Hospitality

Jamie Lang Membership Database

Elizabeth Bluemink Newsletter Editor

Gina Docherty Ask a Master Gardener

Lynne Opstad Lifetime Achievement

Lynne Opstad, Julie Ginder Pioneer Home Garden

Emily Becker, Keenan Plate Volunteer Coordinators

Nick Riordan, Keenan Plate, Alexis St. Juliana, Janice Berry, Emily Becker Tech Committee

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

The deadline for submitting an item for publication is the 20th of every month. We welcome educational articles (400-600 words ideal), Bird Chatter, calendar items and announcements. Educational articles qualify for MG volunteer hours. 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

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCvZehJprKkjQzivQvNDKopQ

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

Membership issues/address updates: Jamie Lang, jamie@alaskamastergardeners.org

General emails: AskAMG@alaskamastergardeners.org

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

