

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** by Emily Becker

Plants give us so much. We even harness their power to clean up our messes. I got a chance to see this in action on a recent trip to Fairbanks as a volunteer member of the Alaska Community Forestry Council. We visited an old fuel terminal that is being cleaned up by plants and some of their microbial friends.

Since at least the 16th century, scientists have observed how plants behave differently in contaminated sites. Today, we know plants can break down harmful chemicals and remove them from soil and water. They can also store pollutants in their roots, release them into the air, or even convert them to harmless elements. Unfortunately, we spent a very long time not caring



Poplars inoculated with endophytes are cleaning up a former fuel terminal in Fairbanks. Photo courtesy Emily Becker.

about pollution, and contaminated sites are plentiful all around the world. Phytoremediation is the use of plants to remove pollution.

One of these sites is near the Fairbanks airport, an old fuel terminal where years of spills and accidents left the ground and groundwater contaminated with chlorinated solvents and petroleum

hydrocarbons, including benzene and ethylene dichloride.

Instead, the cleanup team, comprising scientists, contractors, and project managers from the site's owner, along with Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation staff, decided to plant poplars. Starting in 2018, they planted about 600 trees, and very deep, about 10 feet. They hoped the trees would take in water and contamination from the ground and clean it up.

Phytoremediation is slow and sometimes the ground and water are so contaminated that the trees die. Enter Dr. Sharon Doty, a professor of Environmental and Forest Sciences at the University of Washington. Her research discovered a crucial ingredient that radically boosts trees' ability to thrive and tackle polluted areas: microbes. Specifically, endophytes, organisms that live in plant tissues.

Dr. Doty discovered discrete, naturally-occurring endophytes that pair with specific pollutants. When

### **IN THIS ISSUE**

- » Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District Update
- » Late Season Plant Sale Report
- » Treasurer's Report
- » July/August Event Calendar
- » Last 2023 AMGA Garden Tours
- » Bird Chatter

One approach to cleaning up this mess might have

*President's Message, continued from Page 1*

trees are inoculated with the appropriate endophyte, they can use the pollution as a food source and render it harmless. The Fairbanks team inoculated their poplars with the appropriate endophytes, and according to test wells and other monitoring tools, the site is getting cleaner. Some untreated poplars they kept as a control group are struggling, proving the endophytes are an effective and vital partner.

Phytoremediation with endophytes is a strategy holding enormous promise to help clean up contaminated sites in Alaska and around the world. Some very good news. Want to read more? Check out [this NYTimes article](#) on Dr. Doty and phytoremediation. 🌱

## LATE SEASON PLANT SALE REPORT

We sold over 670 plants with a revenue of \$4,411 at the August 12 AMGA Late Season Plant Sale. AMGA profit was about \$1,100, although there will be costs deducted from this.

This is my fourth year running the plant sale and my last. Seems like everything is less every year. Other than that I have enjoyed running the plant sale and meeting all the old and new Master Gardeners.

I must add our most popular class this year was Paul Marmora making salads from the garden. Who knew he taught cooking at the University at one time? Of course we all had a healthy salad for lunch. Thank you to all who helped! — *Susan Negus*



Paul Marmora teaching how to make salads from the garden at the late season plant sale, photo courtesy Gina Docherty.

## JULY 2023 TREASURER'S REPORT

### Balances on 7/1/2023

Checking S-88	\$ 27,154.38
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 16,984.51
CD General 2 year 1.95%; 1/23	\$ 11,000.59

**Total Assets** \$ 55,144.73

**Interest/Dividends** \$ 7.93

### This month's revenue

Membership	\$ 166.80
Donations	\$ -
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$ -
State Conference	\$ -
Name Tags	\$ -
<b>Total revenue</b>	\$ 166.80

### This month's expenses

Postage	\$ -
Pioneer Home Plants	\$ 65.84
Operations	\$ 107.00
Website	\$ 195.00
Directory	\$ -
Garden Project Grants	\$ -
Newsletter	\$ 29.99
Bus to Coyote gardens	\$ -
Lifetime achievement	\$ -
2023 AMGA conference	\$ 704.64
<b>Total expenses this month</b>	\$ 1,102.47

### Balances on 5/31/2023

Checking S-88	\$ 26,218.71
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 16,992.44
CD General 2 Year 1.95%, (1/23)	\$ 11,000.59

**Total Assets on 3/31/2023** \$ 54,216.99

Prepared by Jan van den Top

# ANCHORAGE SWCD UPDATE by Jessica Sharp

The Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District (ASWCD) was officially restarted in November of 2021 after about a decade of inactivity. This summer was our first active and successful field season!

Invasive Species Program Leader Hannah and her Technician Ryan surveyed over 6,100 acres for invasive plants. They mapped the results in GIS and will be sharing the results via the statewide mapping portal [AKEPIC](#). They also treated over 15 acres of invasive plants and helped coordinate several weed pulls.

Dana, our Native Plants Program Leader, took the

lead on growing almost 4,000 native plants to be used in restoration projects this fall and next summer. She worked cooperatively with our neighboring districts including Palmer SWCD, Wasilla SWCD, Knik Tribal Conservation District, and Eklutna Tribal Conservation District to build native plant nurseries at each of their sites.

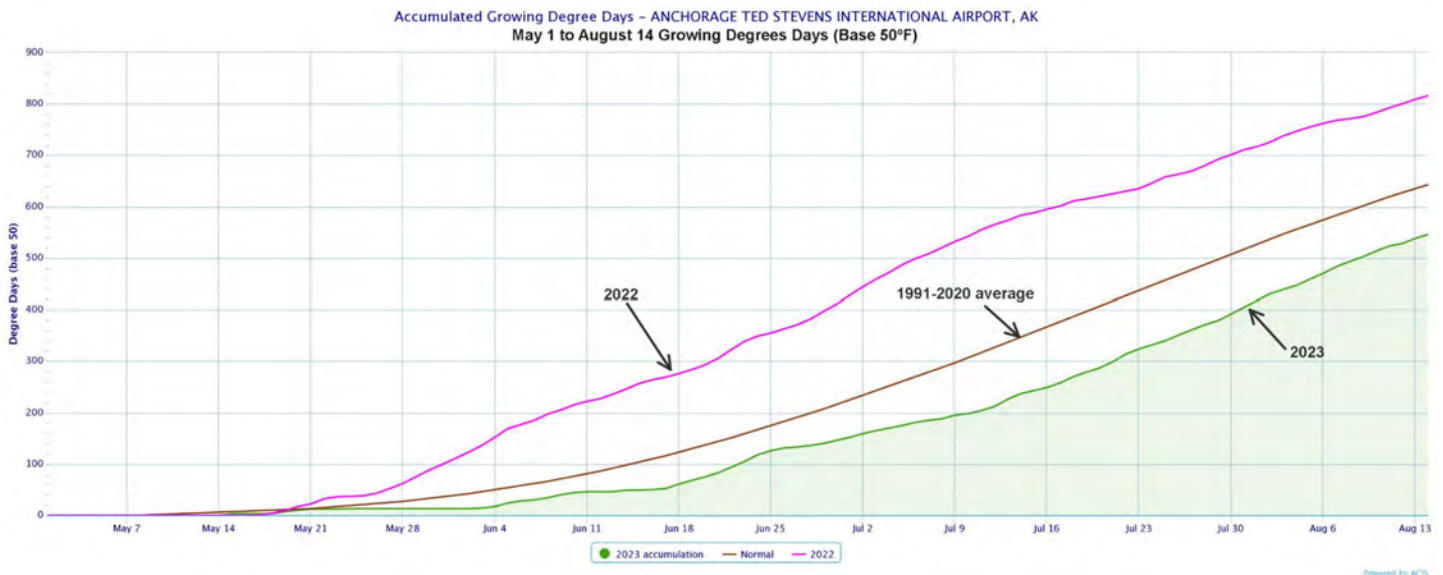
District Manager Jessica kept the money flowing and the ducks in a row while also leading the JBER cooperative work and the Urban Agriculture Program (NRCS).

This fall, we are starting a new Soil Testing Program, August 20 – October 20, and have 100 free soil samples to offer Anchorage area gardeners and farmers. This is a first-come, first-served program and 54 of the free samples have been spoken for so far. If you would like to get your soil tested, please sign up online at: <https://forms.gle/4oWJhr44urQkXQDJ9>.

Our District is supported and energized by volunteer contributions from our board members, committee members, and volunteers who assist us with specific projects such as weed pulls or native plant nursery maintenance. If you would like to get involved, please reach out to our manager, Jessica, at [anchorageswcd@gmail.com](mailto:anchorageswcd@gmail.com). 🌱



An Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District volunteer work day at the Government Hill Orchard & Native Plant Nursery in May 2023.



Above is a graph provided by Rick Thoman with the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy, showing our below-average 2023 growing season. Growing degree days is a unit of measurement that assesses the accumulated heat energy available to plants during their growth and development, and can help you make informed decisions about whether to plant certain plants in your location. For example, in a normal year, there are not enough growing degree days near Flatop or Bear Valley to grow certain plants (like apple trees) in comparison to lower elevations in Anchorage.

# SEPTEMBER 2023 EVENT CALENDAR

## CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

### Saturday, Sept. 9, 1-3 pm

Anchor Gardens: Vermicomposting class taught by Margaret Timeerman. Contact Cindee Karns at [anchorgardensANC@gmail.com](mailto:anchorgardensANC@gmail.com) to sign up.

### Tuesday-Wednesday, Sept. 19-20

The PNW-ISA will host two days of arborist training in Anchorage with classes in tree identification, fruit tree pruning, and more. \$375 [Learn more](#).

### Thursday, Sept. 28, 12-1 pm

Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center: Ornamental invasive plants to avoid and some alternative options. Via Zoom. [Register here](#).

### Tuesday-Wednesday, Sept. 19-10, 1-3:30 pm

Anchorage Museum: Natural Dying - From Garden to Fabric. Art making starts from your garden harvest in this two-day workshop. Learn about dyeing cellulose or protein fibers using a wide variety of common Alaska grown foods. For adults, 55+. Led by artist instructor Cecilia Karoly-Lister. \$20 for materials. [Register here](#).

## MEETINGS & EVENTS

### Thursday, Sept. 7, 7-9 pm

Anchorage Garden Club monthly meeting: Processing herbs and vegetables from the garden, presented by Leif Albertson from the CES Anchorage Outreach Center, at the Central Lutheran Church.

### Thursday, Sept. 14, 10 am

Wildflower Garden Club monthly meeting: Dividing and Propagating Perennials taught by Will Criner at Central Lutheran Church.

### Thursday, Sept. 14, 5:30-6:30 pm

Virtual Garlic Workshop offered by Alaska Botanical Gardens, via Zoom. \$15 for members. [Register here](#).

### Saturday, Sept. 16, 10 am-4 pm

Alaska Botanical Garden Garlic Sale in person at the garden. Online sale begins September 18.

### Wednesday, Sept. 20

Anchorage Tree Forum at Wendler Middle School, time TBA. This is an ad hoc gathering of tree enthusiasts.

### Saturday, Sept. 23, 10 am-4 pm

Anchorage VegFest is an uplifting and fun celebration of plant-based lifestyles. This year it will be from 10 am-4 pm at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. [Learn more](#).

## VOLUNTEER EVENTS

### Friday, Sept. 8, 1-2 pm

ABG Herb Garden: Herb Study Group volunteers will meet to weed and discuss how the summer went, plans for next year, and their winter meeting calendar/topics. Learn more and get involved by contacting the Herb Study Group at [anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com](mailto:anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com).

### Thursdays, 4-7 pm

Boyer's Orchard volunteer evenings. Cherries, apples and more. Work in and outside the greenhouse on weeding, planting, harvesting, etc. Learn more at <https://alaskaorchard.org>.

### Thursday, Sept. 7, 9 am-12 pm & Saturday, Sept. 23

Campbell Creek Science Center Wildflower Garden Work Parties. Join Alaska Native Plant Society volunteers who maintain the Campbell Creek Science Center's wildflower gardens. Equipment is provided. Sign up and view more dates and times here: <https://bit.ly/CCSC-Work-Parties>.

## JOBS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.

**Alaska Seeds of Change** is hiring an Agricultural Specialist. Contact Sara Renard at [srenard@akbh.org](mailto:srenard@akbh.org) for a detailed job description and job preview.

The **Alaska Botanical Garden** is hiring a [Facilities Maintenance Associate](#) this fall.

The Alaska Food Policy Council is hiring a Regional Food Business Center Director. [Read the job description](#).

**First come, first served! Sign up for a [free soil test](#) this fall from the Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District.**

# AMGA SUMMER 2023 GARDEN TOURS: LAST CHANCE!

Date	Time	Name	Description	Location	Host
Tuesday, Sept. 5	6:00 PM	Boyer's Orchard	A unique orchard and greenhouse with hundreds of Alaska-hardy fruits.	Midtown	Yael Hickok
Monday, Sept. 11	6:00 PM	Moose Gardens	Awesome garden with dahlias and gnomes.	East Anchorage	Marya Morrow



Garden tours are an AMGA membership benefit and attendance is for members and their guests. Directions are emailed to members the week before the event. Email Membership Coordinator Jamie Lang at [jamie@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:jamie@alaskamastergardeners.org) with membership questions. Photos above (clockwise from top left) are from the 2023 tours at Grow North Farm, Gary Masog's orchard/vegetable garden (2), Lighthouse Garden, and Chanshnu Food Forest (2).

Many thanks to our Garden Tours Committee, comprised of Troy Weiss, Janie Munson-Odgers and Rich Ervin, for organizing some great tours in summer 2023.

Also, thank you to all the gardeners who allowed us to visit their gardens this year!

# BIRD CHATTER



BUCKET LIST #7... BC and MG Cheryl Chapman experienced one of the major thrills available to people with dirt-stained knees: We got the professionals at the Botanical Garden all excited by bringing them a plant they had never seen before.

It all began when Cheryl, on one of her walks, noticed a neighbor's lawn had suddenly turned pink. The culprit was—well, what was it? (see photo). Several Google searches later, her best guess was some kind of fungus. But BC objected. Something so pretty could not be (ugh) a fungus.



Slight trespass and minor theft occurred and we took a sample to the ABG, where excitement ensued and scholarship was promised. We await results.

GREEN THUMBS TO GREENBACKS...Can't we please call it the Mid-Season Plant Sale? Why force us to admit you-know-what is almost over. Whatever. MG Sharon Schlicht says shoppers were in good spirits for our annual August plant sale despite the crappy weather. Buyers came from as far away as Girdwood and many said they were repeat customers. "Best plant sale ever," one told Sharon.

Jan Van Den Top, our magic money man (aka our Treasurer) reports 15 sellers sold 673 plants for a total take of \$4,400. Good, but all the numbers were down from last year. Not sure why. All the rain maybe? Or maybe we're just getting old and lazy.

A special thanks to Jeff Lowenfels for the nice plug he gave the sale in his ADN column -- the best place available if you want to talk to gardeners.

TIME TO GO....Have you finally figured out that you have too much STUFF -- including gardening books? You can dump the other stuff on relatives and Value Village but take the gardening books to the Botanical Garden. They do free pass-along from a collection that ebbs and flows depending on contributions.

YUCK....Did you see the ADN story about invasive

black slugs, complete with a picture and the delightful information that they "eat dog poop! and each other"? As if that's not gross enough, they want us to kill them if we spot one along a trail.

And how are you going to do that? Don't have a pocket full of nematodes or a can of beer? (salt makes them suffer) Well, you know the answer. You gotta SQUASH it! Double yuck!

SHE'S GOT PULL...And who won the AKRR train tickets at the Airport Heights/Tikishla Park Bird Cherry rip-out on Aug. 19th? Our very own president, Emily Becker. Hmmm. BC loves the AKRR but, really, BC wonders if it goes anywhere Anchortowners want to go? Fairbanks? Seward? Emily pointed out that, yes, they canceled the State Fair train this year, but they still go to Denali. BC is mollified.

IT'S TRUE....None of the greenhouses in town will be accepting hanging baskets/containers etc. for wintering over. So BC has been told. It's a service they've been offering for a zillion years, so why no more? If there's a single compelling reason, BC couldn't find it. Jennifer at Dimond Greenhouses said concern about power failures, freezing temperatures and other acts of God and Chugach leading to major hassles and big damage costs for the greenhouses is the reason. But is that new?

Perhaps the nurseries need the space for their own plants. Or perhaps they just got tired of people whining and complaining. People do that, you know.

Jennifer said she called other nurseries in town and the Valley, looking for some place she could refer customers, but no go. Apparently, they're all out of the business.

So what to do? She suggested cutting the plant back and putting it in a garage or crawl space where the temperature never gets warmer than 40-50 degrees. It doesn't have to be particularly dark. Water it about once a month. In April, bring it inside the house, water and fertilize it regularly. You can put it outside once the temperature is reliably above 40 degrees.

*What's new, interesting, confounding and delightful? Send your bits of interesting garden news to [stoomey@ymail.com](mailto:stoomey@ymail.com).*

# VOLUNTEERS 4 GARDENS

**Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage and the Alaska School Garden Network have compiled [this list of public gardening projects in Anchorage](#). Why not join one?**

**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](mailto: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, 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, 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](mailto:newsletteramga@gmail.com) and send Bird Chatter items to [stoomey@ymail.com](mailto:stoomey@ymail.com).

## Connect with AMGA

Website: [www.alaskamastergardeners.org](http://www.alaskamastergardeners.org)  
 Facebook: [facebook.com/Alaska-Master-Gardeners-Anchorage](https://facebook.com/Alaska-Master-Gardeners-Anchorage)  
 YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCvZehJprKkjQzivQvNDKopQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvZehJprKkjQzivQvNDKopQ)  
 Google Group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/AkMGA>  
 Membership issues/address updates: Jamie Lang, [jamie@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:jamie@alaskamastergardeners.org)  
 General emails: [AskMG@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:AskMG@alaskamastergardeners.org)  
 Mail: AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

