

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE by Rich Ervin

Spring is coming! Yay! The planting bug has hit. My begonias, dahlias and sweet peas are planted and I am checking them daily. I have some lady slipper orchids (*Cypripedium guttatum*) that Shirley Kelly was very kind to share with me and I anxiously am awaiting spring and summer to see if they will show.

Last year AMGA visited Les Brake's garden. He was kind to provide many of us with some of his starts and I am very excited to see how they do this year. *Incarvillea zhongdianses*, *Nomarchis* and *Paeonia veitchia* are among the gems I anxiously await. This fall in the Tucson area I picked up some live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) acorns in a restaurant parking lot. These are hard to procure in the wild because the birds and bugs get them first—as it should be. But in the restaurant parking lot they were untouched and abundant. So I took one and planted it. It is under light and hopefully I will have another tree to add to my bonsai collection. Tomorrow I will plant tomatoes, celery, broccoli, peppers and cabbage. I will also plant two varieties of marigolds. Emily Becker gave me seeds of La Ribera marigold and Mike gave me seeds of Kilimanjaro White marigold. I am getting overwhelmed but remain excited for the upcoming growing season.

Our visit to Les Brakes' Coyote garden last year was a highlight for many of us, made possible by many volunteer hours of coordinating this event. Thank you everyone involved! This year we are continuing with garden tours and many hours will be spent planning these events. It is impossible for AMGA to maintain programs without dedicated volunteers.

I have been involved in many conversations delineating the reasons for the decrease in volunteering with AMGA and will not enumerate them here. However, one of AMGA's basic principals and tenets is volunteering. We bring evidence-based solutions and hands-on help to our community. This spring we are noticing that volunteerism, the xylem and phloem of AMGA, is sluggish and enthusiasm is waning. Hopefully, as it warms, the lifeblood of AMGA will begin flowing better. I have met many wonderful, engaged members who fuel my passion for gardening. Several of our members have participated in AMGA programs for countless years and are discontinuing their involvement. We need to thank them profusely and get involved ourselves. We need members to keep us vibrant and relevant.

Please consider volunteering for this wonderful organization. Let's get the xylem and phloem flowing again and get our organization filled with helpers. Every little bit counts. 🌱

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VOLUNTEER AT THE APRIL 27 SPRING GARDEN SHOW!

As usual, AMGA will be participating in the April 27 Spring Garden Show at the Midtown Mall.

[SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER HERE](#)

This year's event is open to the public from 10 am to 4:30 pm at on April 27. The doors open at 9:30 am for setup.

This is a popular, fun event where you can meet other Master Gardeners and earn volunteer hours. Many other clubs participate in the event. AMGA is jointly participating with the Cooperative Extension Service, which furnishes the gardening handouts.

Master Gardeners can bring up to two flats of plants/starts to sell. The plants need to be identified with a white label. You will also need a yellow label with the sale price and seller's initials. The yellow labels can be picked up from Susan Negus (907-227-6288 or sene-gus@gmail.com) who lives near the Zoo.

Please contact Susan if you have any questions!



AMGA celebrity volunteers at the 2023 Spring Garden Show.

FEB. 2024 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 1/31/2024

Checking S-88	\$21,264.72
Savings S-2	\$5.25
Savings S-29	\$17,039.61
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/25	\$11,120.14
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/25	\$10,000.00
Total Assets	\$ 59,429.72

Interest/Dividends

\$ 7.45

This month's revenue

Membership	\$ 340.50
Donations	\$ -
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$ -
Advanced M.G course	\$ 23.71
Name Tags	\$ -
Total revenue	\$ 364.21

This month's expenses

Postage	\$ -
Pioneer Home Plants	\$ -
Operations	\$ 138.00
Website Hosting	\$ 199.98
Website Maintenance	\$ 185.00
Directory	\$ -
Fundraising/plant sale	\$ -
Newsletter	\$ 29.99
State Fair prize donation	\$ -
Adv. MG speaker fee	\$ 404.00
Total Expenses this month	\$ 956.97

Balances on 2/29/2024

Checking S-88	\$ 20,671.96
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,047.06
CD General 2 Year 1.95%, (1/23/25)	\$ 11,120.14
CD General 1 Year 1/30/25	\$ 10,000.00
Total Assets on 1/31/2024	\$ 58,844.41

Prepared by Jan van den Top

MARCH AMGA MEETING HIGHLIGHTS by Keenan Plate

Dr. Caley Gasch, Assistant Professor of Soil Science Research at the Matanuska Experiment Farm joined AMGA at our March 18 member meeting to share a presentation titled “Breaking it Down: Decomposition and Nutrient Cycling in Soil.”

She also shared exciting updates about the Matanuska Experiment Farm’s work on a statewide soil health survey. The goal of the project is to evaluate soil health on agricultural lands from across the state and develop a database of soil health.

The experiment farm also is conducting cover crop trials across the state, experimenting with perennial legumes, annual legumes, spring annuals, winter annuals. It was interesting to learn that sorghum did well in Fairbanks! Apparently warm season grasses are better in the interior.

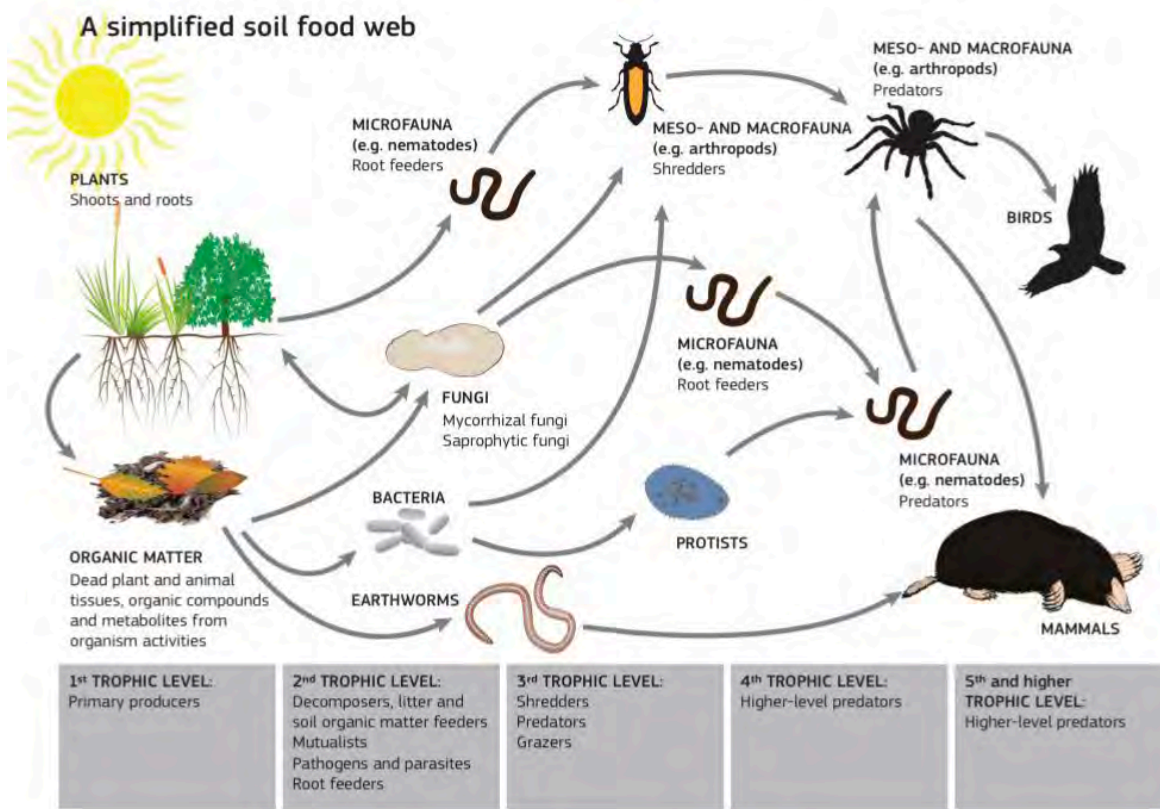
Dr. Gasch invited the public to attend a field workshop day on August 1st at the Experiment Farm to see cover crops and conduct experiments.

After sharing general informaton about the soil food

web (see graphic below shared in her presentation) and how decomposition works, and how carbon and nitrogen ratios affect decomposition speed.

Some of her key points included the following:

- Abiotic conditions are strong controls on decomposition
- Organic matter quality and quantity are important
- We can’t control the exact decomposer community and activities
- We can support them and feed the soil with organic matter
- High carbon materials will break down slowly and release fewer nutrients
- Nutrient-rich materials will break down fast and release excess nutrients



Source: [Global Soil Biodiversity Atlas, Chapter IV - Ecosystem Functions and Services](#)

AMGA GRANTS AVAILABLE

Applications Due April 15!

Each year, AMGA awards grants up to \$500 to individuals and organized groups for gardening education or community gardening projects that promote the purposes of AMGA, including community education, responsible gardening practices, and promotion of volunteerism.

The grant deadline is coming up on April 15. Visit the [AMGA grant webpage](#) for program requirements and the grant application.

The **Educational Grant** can cover:

- Educational supplies and materials
- Course, registration and materials fees for

continuing education through course offerings through AMGA, UAF/CES, university courses and other horticultural workshops and conferences

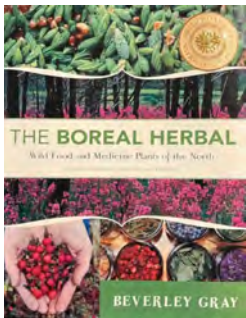
- Travel fees related only to training

The **Gardening Project Grant** can cover

- Supplies and materials used in development, improvement and maintenance of a garden
- Gardening tools and equipment
- Hardscape, such as signage, fencing, gravel and water installation

HERB STUDY: A BOOK REVIEW by Jerelyn Miyashiro

The Boreal Herbal-Wild Food and Medicine Plants of the North (Beverly Gray)



The book by Beverly Gray is a guide to identifying and using northern plants for food and medicine. It contains profiles of 74 plants found in the boreal forest and the northern part of the planet. In the introduction she explains an herbal is a book combining information on botany, medicine and traditional lore, and

that this book is part plant identification guide and part medicine and food making guide.

This book is laid out with beautiful photographs of each plant on almost every page. It reads more like a colorful magazine or coffee table photo book.

The plant profiles section, the largest portion of the book, is divided into herbs, berries, and trees. The pages are sprinkled with interesting tidbits of traditional uses, plant lore, or her personal anecdotes or connections between other plants and organisms of the forest such as fungi, insects and animals.

Part I of the book, “Getting Started,” is a practical guide for anyone wanting to learn how to forage, or in her words “harvest,” in the forest. There are guidelines for safety, lists of useful equipment and tools needed,

and most of all an emphasis on mindfulness and respect for the ecosystem and all the organisms in it.

Part III of the book, “Plant Preparations and Recipes,” has extensive information and photos on how to process, store and create medicines from plants as well as all the different types of medicinal products that can be created. It is very comprehensive, from a simple herbal tea to easy spit poultices that can be made out on the trail, to the much more intensive preparations of essential oils and hydrosols.

What intrigued me the most in the book’s recipe section was the recipe for Chickweed-Garlic Green Dip. The bane of most gardeners, the lowly chickweed has 13 recipes listed and surprising stats on its nutritional profile and medicinal benefits. It is high in vitamin C and A, minerals, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, niacin, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. It has cosmetic uses to heal acne, rashes and rosacea. Its demulcent and moisturizing properties help alleviate dry itchy skin. It also has uses as a digestive aid.

Who knew chickweed would be a multivitamin with minerals, relieve itchy skin or help you “go.” I guess the chickens and I will be looking at chickweed a little differently this gardening season. 🌿

APRIL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

To reduce redundant efforts by our member volunteers, we're merging the AMGA event calendar with Yarducopia's [Currant Affairs](#). A link to the most recent Currant Affairs calendar will be featured here and you can also [subscribe](#) to have it delivered to your inbox. This section will focus on AMGA events and local volunteer opportunities. Please continue to send event fliers to newsletter@alaskamastergardeners.org.

<p>April 15 AMGA Member Meeting “Soil Conservation & Nutrient Management” Presented by Schwing Sayako BP Energy Center, 6:30-8 pm</p>	<p>April 27 Spring Garden Show Midtown Mall Sign up to volunteer/sell plants!</p>
<p>View a detailed list of volunteer opportunities for AMGA members! Check out the April 1 Currant Affairs event calendar!</p>	



[Currant Affairs](#) is a compilation of food and garden events, workshops, and opportunities in and around Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska and offered by the many awesome organizations and individuals who support gardening, agriculture, and local food systems in Alaska. For the last few years, the AMGA event calendar has been largely compiled from Currant Affairs. Email garden@akaction.org to sign up.

VOLUNTEERS 4 GARDENS

AMGA and the Alaska School Garden Network have compiled [this list of public gardening projects](#) in Anchorage. We encourage AMGA members to join one!

AMGA is seeking volunteers to help out at events or fill a vacant role on one of our committees. Contact one of the following to learn about current openings.

Lifetime Achievement: Rich Ervin, president@alaskamastergardeners.org

Hospitality: Rich Ervin, president@alaskamastergardeners.org

Pioneer Home: Susan Miller, smiller.ret@gmail.com

Garden Tours: Troy Weiss, troydweiss@gmail.com

Plant Sale Coordinator: Susan Negus, senegus@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER SURVEY!

We're conducting a survey about the AMGA newsletter to assess our members' reading habits and preferences.

The survey will close at the end of April.

[TAKE THE SURVEY!](#)

BIRD CHATTER



WELCOME SPRING! YEA!! OK—so, not quite. BC is weary of finding different ways to say “It’s coming.” Let’s just keep our eye on the prize: Our perennials are growing nicely beneath the slush, just waiting to meet us. Really. (So are the weeds, but nevermind that.)

GODDESSES OF EARTH... How many times do we have to say it: The biggest positive response we get from the community is for our work on the downtown Pioneer Home Gardens. Plus, working on them is fun: light gardening chores, good company, showy results.

Susan Miller, with help from Julie Ginder and Sharon Schlicht, is pulling things together again this year. Plants have been ordered and a May plant day will be chosen as soon as the weather lets us know what’s what.

Presumably everyone will show up as usual on Plant Day. But let’s talk about the rest of the summer. There was a depressing and unacceptable vanishing of maintenance volunteers last year. Which is pretty pathetic since all anyone had to do was show up for two hours on two days for one week. That’s a total of four hours in four months!

How embarrassing is it that not enough people signed up!

Susan is considering a new idea for this summer: Just set Wednesdays as maintenance day and have everyone show up for that one tour of duty. BC thinks this has real potential—massive numbers once a week. Even if everyone came just one Wednesday a month, that would mean 25% of our membership per week. And it’s just more fun when lots of people are there.

Susan says get in touch with her and let her know what you think of all this. She’s at smiller.ret@gmail.com.

WHERE THE ’60’s WENT... Hey, want to start a commune? Or perhaps just become a Gentlewoman farmer down on the Kenai?

There’s a huge “farm” for sale — a mere \$150,000 asking price. Reportedly farmed organically for some years then apparently abandoned, judging by the condition of things once you get past the beautiful aerial photo. High tunnels (in bad condition), fruit trees and, they claim, grapes. Looks like it was quite an enterprise at one time.

Anyone out there know what happened?

It stirred up BC’s old “back to the earth” feelings.

A great project for a group of people who don’t know how much work it’s going to be.

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



The beautiful Pioneer Home Gardens maintained by AMGA volunteers, photographed in 2022.

April 15 Member Meeting "Soil Conservation & Nutrient Management"

Presented by Schwing Sayako
6:30 pm, BP Energy Center

Member Mtgs: 3rd Monday of the month, 6:30 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

Rich Ervin & Nick Riordan	Co-Presidents
Troy Weiss	Vice President
Jan van den Top	Treasurer
Keenan Plate	Secretary
Jamie Lang, Brenda Adams, Rebecca Ligler	At Large

Committees, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Steve Brown	CES Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator
Emily Becker	Broadcast Email
Nick Riordan	Calendar of Events
Don Bladow, Troy Weiss, Emily Becker, Deb Blaylock, Rebecca Ligler	Advanced MG Course
Janice Berry	Directory Editor
Kathy Liska, Cindy Walker	Facebook
Troy Weiss	Meetings/Programs
Troy Weiss	Garden Tours
Mary Rydesky, Gina Docherty, Jane Baldwin	Google Group Managers
Jan van den Top, Lili Naves, Sheila Toomey	Grants Program
Vacant	Hospitality
Jamie Lang	Membership Database
Elizabeth Bluemink	Newsletter Editor
Gina Docherty	Ask a Master Gardener
Vacant	Lifetime Achievement
Susan Miller	Pioneer Home Garden
Emily Becker, Keenan Plate	Volunteer Coordinators
Vacant	Plant Sale Coordinator

Renew/Join AMGA

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 the 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 newsletter@alaskamastergardeners.org and send Bird Chatter items to stoomey@gmail.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

