



NEWSLETTER
March 2024
VOLUME 26, ISSUE 3

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE by Nick Riordan

Hello fellow gardeners!

Inspired by Jodie Anderson's engaging presentation at our February 19 AMGA meeting, I've been dreaming of compost.

Like growing humongous cabbage or productive peonies, composting is another part of this multifaceted hobby we call gardening. Or in Jodie's words, "consider yourself a zookeeper for millions of microorganisms."

It seems fitting that a gardener would tend to the produce(rs) as well as the decomposers. I don't feel very much like a zookeeper of anything outside right now. I stuck a long thermometer into my compost pile yesterday though, and would you believe it, the core of the pile is above freezing! While I wear slippers and drink tea indoors, the bugs are still at work.

I also left Jodie's talk with a newfound appreciation for how lucky we are in Anchorage to have an abundance of wood chips and leaves—essential ingredients for happy (not stinky!) compost piles. How would we compost kitchen scraps, grass, garden trimmings, etc without the chips and leaves from trees? I'm sure I'm not alone in also enjoying these materials for garden paths and mulch—what a gift!

I've also been mulling over amounts. How much of Anchorage's pesticide-free yard debris and herbivore manure is still heading to our landfill?

A single horse produces about 10 tons of manure per year. Multiply this by a conservative estimate of 2,000

horses in the Anchorage Bowl and we have 20,000 tons of manure. With a loss of ~50% weight and volume during composting, that leaves 10,000 tons (about 20,000 cubic yards) of compost, and that's just from the horses. I suspect the amount of grass, leaves, and other highly compostable yard debris would double if not triple that estimate.

Gardeners rejoice—that's nearly a ½ a cubic yard of compost per Anchorage household per year.

I usually wake from my compost dreams right around the time I get to imagining composting operations slightly scaled up from the typical backyard pile or bin. Would it be run by neighbors, a small business, a school or churches or non-profit, the municipality perhaps? For example, the W.C. Equestrian Center at Ruth Arcand Park could manage much of South Anchorage's horse manure, an entrepreneurial lawn care business could make their own compost 'in-house,' or schools could compost leaves and grass from their property to use on their landscaping.

The list goes on and on. 🌱

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IT'S TIME TO START YOUR PLANTS FOR THE SPRING GARDEN SHOW!

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

This year's event will be 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 senegus@gmail.com) who lives near the Zoo.

A Signup Genius for volunteers will be available in April.

Please contact Susan if you have any questions!



AMGA celebrity volunteers at the 2023 Spring Garden Show.

JAN. 2023 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 12/1/2023

Checking S-88	\$ 28,044.44
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,023.70
CD General 2 year 1.95%; 1/23	\$ 11,060.20

Total Assets \$ 56,133.59

Interest/Dividends \$ 67.89

This month's revenue

Membership	\$ 1,213.10
Donations	\$ 20.00
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$ -
Advanced M.G course	\$ 1,024.12
Name Tags	\$ -
Total revenue	\$ 2,257.22

This month's expenses

Postage	\$ -
Pioneer Home Plants	\$ -
Operations	\$ 113.00
Website	\$ 105.00
Directory	\$ -
Fundraising/plant sale	\$ -
Newsletter	\$ 29.99
State Fair prize donation	\$ 25.00
Lifetime achievement	\$ -
2023 AMGA conference	\$ -
Total Expenses this month	\$ 272.99

BALANCES ON 9/30/2023

Checking S-88	\$ 30,028.67
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,031.65
CD General 2 Year 1.95%, (1/23)	\$ 11,120.14

Total Assets on 12/31/2023 \$ 58,185.71

Amount in PayPal at yearend \$161.91

Total Assets on 12/31/2023 \$58,347.62

Prepared by Jan van den Top

IPM CLASS: “TMI” ABOUT SLUGS by Elizabeth Bluemink

Anchorage gardeners “enjoy” fewer garden pests than our Lower 48 counterparts. Slugs are one of the exceptions.

In a February 6 class titled, “Way too much information about slugs,” instructor Joey Slowik shared an hour and a half of slug biology and research findings with students in AMGA’s Integrated Pest Management (IPM) course.

Slowik is an IPM technician based at the Matanuska Experiment Farm in Palmer. He corresponds with slug researchers in Oregon, where slugs are a serious agricultural pest, causing an estimated \$60 million in damage annually to Oregon’s grass industry alone.

Slugs are agricultural pests in Alaska, too, prompting some experiments at the experimental farm to help develop IPM recommendations for Alaskans.

What is a slug?

A slug is a snail without a shell. It’s a gastropod, a very ancient mollusk.

Despite similar looks, many slug species evolved separately and are more related to the snails they descended from than to other slugs.

Those evolutionary divergences led to different behaviors among slug species; they don’t necessarily respond in the same way to control methods.

Slugs are hermaphrodites, meaning that a single slug can establish a brand-new population. They are longer-lived than many garden pests—up to 1.5 years if they survive winter.

Slugs in Alaska

Slowik described 11 species of non-native slugs

in Alaska and three native species. Some are hard to identify without dissection and/or genetic testing.

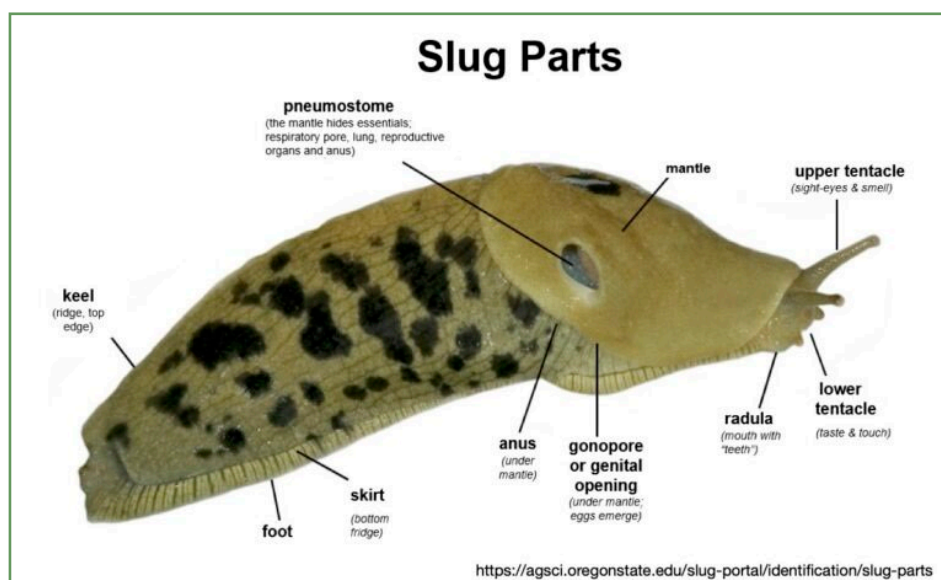
The two major pest slugs in Alaska are grey garden slugs and black slugs, which look similar but evolved separately.

The grey garden slug is the most common slug in Alaska, found as far north as the Brooks Range. Until recently, black slugs were mostly found south of Whittier but are now being found in the Anchorage area.

Last year, a Master Gardener found a three-banded garden slug in a Wasilla greenhouse. This is a non-native

species that has the potential to transfer a nematode that causes meningitis.

It was the first identification of a three-banded garden slug in Alaska, and it probably arrived on nursery stock. Fortunately, it was killed promptly, Slowik said.



The three native species are meadow slug, taildropper slugs (multiple species) and banana slugs.

Slug ID

Slowik provided three main identification resources for slugs in Alaska.

- [Oregon Dept. of Agriculture Slug Guide](#)
- [Cooperative Extension Slug class](#)
- [AlaskaPestReporter.org](#)

The Cooperative Extension slug course is free online, unless you are taking the class as an Alaska Certified Pesticide Applicator, in which case it costs \$15.

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Common Name	Scientific Name	Where found in Alaska	When to report
Grey Garden Slug	<i>Deroceras reticulatum</i>	Brooks Range south	Report if found in northern or very rural or remote areas.
Black Slug	<i>Arion ater</i> , <i>A. rufus</i> , <i>A. vulgaris</i>	Southeast across the maritime area to the Aleutians	Report if found north or west of Whittier or in any natural or remote settings.
Garden Slug	<i>Arion hortensis</i> , <i>A. distinctus</i>	Sitka	Anytime
Dusky Arion	<i>Arion subfuscus</i> , <i>A. fuscus</i>	In urban gardens in temperate areas across the state	Report if found in northern urban areas, or non-urban locations south of the Alaska range.
False Keel Slug	<i>Arion circumscriptus</i> , <i>A. silvaticus</i>	Sitka	Anytime
Milky Slug	<i>Deroceras agreste</i>	Kenai peninsula, Mat-Su Valley	Anytime
Leopard Slug	<i>Limax maximus</i>	Across maritime areas	Anytime
Three Banded Garden Slug	<i>Ambigolimax valentianus</i>	Only known from nursery stock intercepted in Wasilla	Anytime
Brown Field Slug	<i>Deroceras invadens</i>	Not known to occur in the state	Anytime
Yellow Cellar Slug	<i>Limacus flavus</i>	Not known to occur in the state	Anytime

Pest slugs in Alaska. Source: <https://invasiveslugs.open.uaf.edu/module-4/>

Controlling slugs

Slowik generally discouraged use of internet recipes to kill slugs. For example, ammonia can kill slugs, but fatal concentrations could harm your garden plants or soil biology.

He also noted the “slimy logic” of using eggshells, diatomaceous earth, and coffee grounds. Eggshells will attract slugs to an area, and the latter two lose effectiveness when they become wet.

Household products considered safe by the Environmental Protection Agency for use as a pesticide include essential oils, soaps, and alcohol. After the talk, however, Slowik shared that the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation considers anything that kills an insect, slug, or plant a pesticide and shouldn't be used unless registered with the state. This is confusing, but personal use of things as a pesticide is OK, the liability is on the user. Just don't sell them or use them commercially. Gardeners should be cautious, Slowik said, testing small areas at first and taking lots of notes.

Also make sure to read labels. Iron phosphate, the main ingredient in the organic Sluggo product, is sometimes mixed with general insecticides, which are not organic. Also, slug baits made with metaldehyde will poison dogs and cats, Slowik cautioned.

An effective household bait for slugs is bread dough.

Trials have shown that this is more effective than commercial products, Slowik said.

The experimental farm has conducted several experiments with slug control—including using water glass (cement floor sealer) as a barrier, and an essential oils spray to kill slugs in a slug-infested field.

The essential oils (thyme and spearmint) spray killed grey garden slugs but were not as effective on black slugs. Also, the spray treatment was short-lasting and required contact with the slugs.

The water glass treatment worked as a barrier, but it also attracted more slugs to the surrounding area, Slowik said.

He said the only barrier that worked very well was electrified copper tape, which is expensive.

Slowik shared several garden strategies that might reduce slug pressure. Buffers like a gravel strip or row of slug-resistant flowers (roses, peonies, and geraniums) can separate your trees or lawn, which are both slug “reservoirs,” from target plants.

In the end, there is no silver bullet for slugs, Slowik said. “They are diverse, they are persistent, and they are pretty flexible and adaptable.” 🌿

MARCH EVENT CALENDAR

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Friday, March 1, 2-3:30 pm

ABG: Drawing Plants with Ink & Colored Pencil. All materials included. \$40 members/\$48 non-members.

[Register here.](#)

Thursday, March 7, Noon-1pm

Matanuska Experiment Farm: Winter tree identification can be done on trees of all sizes by examining their dormant buds. We will show pictures and talk about the descriptions of the most common trees in Alaska, and a few of the invasive trees too.

[Register here.](#)

Tuesday, March 12, Noon-1 pm

RurAL CAP Grow Program: Community Composting Solutions, via Zoom. [Register here.](#)

Wednesday, March 13, Noon-1 pm

Vermicomposting in the Classroom. Everything you need to know to set up and maintain a small-scale worm composting system to engage students in lessons on decomposition, soil science and ecosystems. [Register here.](#)

Thursday, March 14, 6-7 pm

Homer Soil & Water Conservation District: Know Your Land Series. Local Grower Spotlight with Bill Bartee. [Zoom registration](#)

Tuesday, March 19, 5:30-7

Kenai Peninsula CES: Spring Gardening webinar series with Dr. Casey Matney. Starting Seeds from Scratch.

[Register here.](#)

Tuesday, March 26, 5:30-7

Kenai Peninsula CES: Spring Gardening webinar series with Dr. Casey Matney. Large Seed Starts: Corn, Pumpkins and Potting Soil. [Register here.](#)

Thursday, March 28, 6-7 pm

Homer Soil & Water Conservation District: Know Your Land Series. Effective Irrigation Systems with experts from Dripworks. [Zoom registration.](#)

Saturday, March 30, 4:30-5:30 pm

Anchorage Greens: Monthly Curiosity Classes (in person): Bee Keeping in Alaska. Bruce Seppi, from Seppi Apiaries, will talk about the challenges and opportunities of keeping bees year round in Alaska. \$20. [Register here.](#)

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Monday, March 4, 6:30-8:30 pm

Alaska Native Plant Society monthly meeting: "St. Isidore Farm: An Alaska wildflower seed company," presented by Sarah Jansen. Also with 5-minute talks on medicinal and aquatic plants. [Via Zoom only.](#)

Thursday, March 7, 7-9 pm

Anchorage Garden Club: Growing Vegetables in Containers. Open to the public. Central Lutheran Church.

Saturday, March 9, 9 am-4 pm

Alaska Peony Society: Peony Convention featuring expert speakers, held at the St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Anchorage. \$30 entry fee. [Register here.](#)

Thursday, March 14, 10-1 pm

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska: Craft Roundtable with WGC Board of Directors. Central Lutheran Church and via Zoom. [Contact club](#) for more info.

Saturday-Sunday, March 23-24

ABG Spring Garden Conference at the Dena'ina Center. Saturday night social followed by all-day Sunday presentations and workshops. [Learn more.](#)

JOBS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.

The AMGA directory is in progress! We plan to have copies available (for those who who requested them) during the March 23-24 ABG conference, and at the April 15 in-person member meeting.

The Alaska Division of Agriculture's 2024 **Micro Grants for Food Security** Program is accepting applications until March 15. [Check here for details.](#)

RurAL CAP's **Orchards and Food Forests GROW-OFF Grant Program** is accepting applications until March 14. [Learn more.](#)

The Anchorage Parks Foundation is offering a Neighborhood Forest Grant and Community Challenge Grant until March 20. [Learn more.](#)

BIRD CHATTER



YIPPEE...It's March. People who keep track of this stuff swear that spring is coming early this year—March 19th at 11:06 p.m. So, planning and planting time . . . gardens and seeds. Life returns to normal. And BC stops whining.

Snow? What snow?

SEATTLE SHOW...The annual Northwest Flower and Garden Festival went off as usual last month. And, almost as usual, Ginger Hudson and Patrick Ryan were listed among the presenters.

Patrick was on for his ABG class on how to make a hypertufa stone planter; Ginger, who runs the Jensen-Olson gardens in Juneau (primula capital of the known universe) was down for a class on picking the right tools for good garden care.

Other Alaska horticulture experts in the line-up: Palmer "floriculturist" and author Misty Vanderweele (dahlias); and Cindy Warbelow, Fairbanks teacher and a founder of the Tanana Valley Farmers Market (hardy perennials).

SPEAKING OF...garden shows, ABG is holding theirs at the Dena'ina this year, on March 23 and 24. Lots of expert presentations and all kinds of demonstrations. The ads say "this year's conference joins nature with design." Sounds interesting, whatever it

means.

AMGA will have a general info table so watch for a sign-up- sheet. The two hour shifts are easy and actually fun—BC has done them plenty of times. People are invited to ask questions, but mostly they just want to talk about their gardens. And who doesn't?

ALL GOD'S CREATURES?...BC asked for a comment on the IPM class. Here's the favorite:

"Grossest thing I've heard in a while - you can't wash off slug slime because it's "hygroscopic." Not even with soap! Best to dry rub it off. But apparently it does degrade.... eventually ugh!"

JUST IN CASE...there's still snow on the garden, Emily has another book recommendation: "North Woods" by Daniel Mason. "This was a knockout. 5 out of 5 stars! Really clever, fun, moving, and thoughtful," she said. "It's the story of a piece of land in New England and the people who inhabit it over the course of a few hundred years. Apple trees feature prominently. One of the characters is afflicted with a condition he calls 'pomomania,' an invented word, which means crazy for apples."

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

HERB STUDY SCHEDULE

The Herb Study Group generally meets via Zoom on the 2nd Friday of the month, September through April, from noon to 1:30 p.m., before transitioning outdoors.

March 8: Book review and discussion: wild foods and medicinal plants, led by Jeryln Miyashiro.

April 12: Herb seedling exchange (no Zoom)

May: Transplanting plugs at ABG (dates to be determined)

June-September: Volunteering at ABG Herb Garden.

Anyone interested in participating in the Herb Study Group should contact anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com to get on the list for announcements.



**REGISTER NOW FOR THE ABG
MARCH 23-24 CONFERENCE**

Peony Convention

March 9th, 2024

Guest speakers:

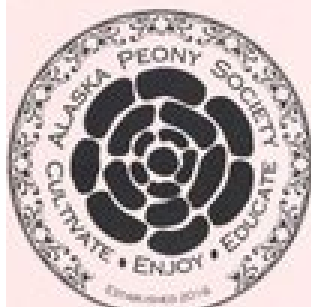
**Carol & David Adelman of Adelman's Peony
Gardens, Salem Oregon
and**

**Nick Maycher founder of Prairie Peonies Display
Gardens, Edmonton Canada**

**Located at the Saint Mary's
Episcopal Church
from 9am - 4pm**

**\$30 entry fee which Includes
lunch if registered by February
29, 2024**

Scan the QR code below.



**Sponsored by:
Alaska Peony Society**



March 18 Member Meeting

"Breaking it Down: Decomposition & Nutrient Cycling in Soil"

Presented by Caley Gasch

6:30 pm, via Zoom

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
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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

