

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE by Rich Ervin

It is hard to believe it is August. Gardens are in full swing. Flowers are blooming; vegetables are bursting forth; apples, gooseberries, currants, cherries, and haskaps are fattening daily. Every evening I am out in my vegetable garden collecting dinner and deciding what to harvest now and the next evening.

Of course I always spend a lot more time than needed because there are always weeds that need pulling and vegetables that need checking. My goal every year is to remove all the weeds so I won't have any next year. Been trying for 40 years and I never seem to get there. Sure could use some help. I've even had to spend time on the no-dig bed that Charles Dowding put in and seemed to imply there is very little weeding.

Well...speaking of needing help weeding, I want to remind everyone of the 15 hours of volunteer service that AMGA is now requesting members perform yearly to stay in good status as a member. One of the core values of Master Gardeners is volunteerism and passing on our knowledge and experience. This is not something we are going to demand proof of, but we hope that you will get more involved with giving a helping hand to AMGA and the gardening community. There are countless volunteer opportunities and, no, helping me weed is not one of them. However, there are many places that do need help weeding, planting, digging, watering, collaborating, etc. You can teach, write articles, answer emails for AMGA, join the board (or another gardening board), or help with our plant sales to name a few. Most of you know about the

opportunities that are available but I am going to write a few of them down as a reminder and to let you know that there are countless ways to contribute to Alaska's gardening community.

This is a small list of available volunteer opportunities: The **AMGA Board of Directors** is always looking for new board members. It is a great

way to help your fellow AMGA members maintain an active club. You may have an **elderly neighbor** or friend who needs help. You may know **children** who want to learn how to plant and get a garden growing. If you've enjoyed the summer **garden tours**, Janie Odgers would love to have you help her plan and coordinate the tours. Susan Miller needs help every Wednesday at the **Pioneer Home** maintaining the beautiful flower garden she and several volunteers take care of yearly. Emily Becker could always use a hand at **Airport Heights, Lake Otis, and Fairview Elementary** where she has multiple projects from teaching children how to plant and garden to raising fruit trees and vegetables for the school. Nick Riordan can always use help at the corner of Benson and Cheechako with the **Garden Depot**. His **Yarducopia** project needs help with

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clean up, weeding, organizing and making compost piles. Keenan Plate at **Grow North Farms and Fresh International Gardens** has volunteer opportunities in Mountain View that help the immigrant community in Anchorage maintain garden plots. They grow many interesting and unusual vegetables and have weekly sales. **Alaska Botanical Garden** has many gardening projects that need volunteers. They are also involved with many schools teaching children/gardening. John Horstkoetter at the **Downtown Soup Kitchen** needs help maintaining and harvesting vegetables from his impressive rooftop garden that is feeding many homeless individuals. **Don Bladow** is also involved with growing an impressive vegetable garden for the needy. **Anchor Gardens** is a neighborhood based gardening club. They are a wonderful organization, have multiple events and want you involved. There are many more opportunities! Please get out there and get involved!



Butterball rose blooming in the ABG Herb Garden. Photo by Mary Contrary.

JUNE 2025 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 5/31/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 17,900.47
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,164.83
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/27	\$ 11,431.66
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/26	\$ 10,476.96
Total Assets	\$ 56,979.17

Interest/Dividends	\$183.49
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This month's revenue

Membership	
Donations	
Fundraising/Plant sale	
Advanced M.G course	
Total revenue	\$ 0

This month's expenses

Grants	\$0
Operations	\$ 646.55
Website Hosting	\$
Website Maintenance	\$
Postage/Box Rental	\$318
Fundraising/plant sale	\$ 812
Newsletter	\$ 34.99
State Fair Crop Donation	\$
Speaker Fees and costs	\$ 319
Total Expenses this month	\$ 1811.54

Balances On 5/31/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 16,088.93
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,172.59
CD General 2 Year 2.71%, (1/23/25)	\$ 11,502.91
CD General 1 Year 4.07% (1/30/25)	\$10,581.44

Total Assets on 6/30/25	\$ 55,351.12
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Prepared by Jan van den Top

HOW MANY TREES DOES ANCHORAGE HAVE?

The new Anchorage Bowl tree canopy assessment, funded by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry & Fire Protection Community Forestry Program, has been completed and is nearing official publication.

An urban tree canopy assessment is an analysis of the location and extent of tree canopy across a study area. It uses high-resolution aerial imagery, computer models, and other technology to produce a sophisticated estimate of tree canopy cover.

Anchorage has undertaken three prior urban tree canopy assessments in 2009, 2018, and 2024 to track changes in its tree cover over time.

Some highlights from the new report:

- 32.1 square miles (20,517 acres) of tree canopy including trees and woody shrubs, an average of 29% canopy cover. This is an 19% (4,716 acres) decrease since 2018 and a 17% (4,193 acres) decrease since 2009.
- 32.5 square miles (20,769 acres) of impervious surface including roads, structures, and parking lots
- 35.3 square miles (22,608 acres) of pervious surface including turf, grasslands, and other low-lying vegetation
- 10.1 square miles (6,429 acres) of bare soil including unvegetated areas and tidal planes
- 1.7 square miles (1,097 acres) of open water including lakes, rivers, and streams

- Among Community Councils, Basher has the highest level of tree canopy (59%), followed by Hillside (48%) and Huffman/O'Malley (40%). Hillside also has the greatest amount of tree canopy acreage (2,713 acres) within the Bowl. Downtown has the lowest canopy cover (8%) with 42 acres.
- 15.6 square miles (9,944 acres) of tree canopy is on public-owned parcels, representing 48% of all tree canopy in the Bowl.
- 11.34 square miles (7,260 acres) of tree canopy are in recreational and open space areas, including trails and parks. The average canopy cover in recreational and open space areas is 52%.
- Far North Bicentennial Park has the greatest amount amount of tree canopy (2,249 acres) within the Bowl. The average canopy cover in parks is 56%. Total tree canopy in parks has decreased by 18% (-1,288 acres) since 2009 and decreased by 19% (-1,404 acres) since 2018.

For more info, email the Community Forestry Program Coordinator: josh.hightower@alaska.gov



Birch trees show off in Campbell Tract. Dan Ruthrauff photo.

LADYBUGS AND OTHER BIOCONTROLS: an interview with CES Entomologist Alex Wenninger *by Emily Becker*

A simple question about where to buy ladybugs for aphid control led to a vigorous discussion in our Google group and a VERY vigorous debate on social media about their effectiveness and legality. **To recap: ladybugs (*Hippodamia convergens* is the species found in stores, and they are not native to Alaska) are not legal to import, so businesses should not be selling them.** Also, they are not especially effective because their instinct is to disperse when released. I asked Alex Wenninger, CES Entomologist, some follow up questions about the topic. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Emily: Ok, let's talk about alternatives to ladybugs. What about praying mantises?

Alex: Praying mantises, for biocontrol purposes, are a hard NO in Alaska. They are not allowed, and they are all illegal to import. Most of the mantids that are sold are often non-native to any part of the US, and in some areas of the Lower 48, where they've already been introduced, they are now invasive. In a controlled greenhouse setting, where all you have for them to eat is aphids, that's one thing. But in an outdoor setting, mantis are indiscriminate predators. They don't care what they're eating. They'll eat each other. They will eat pollinators. They're not good pest control, because they're eating everybody.

Emily: I thought, well, if they're not native to Alaska, and they can't survive here, they'd be okay?

Alex: No. Right now we're pretty lucky that that's the case. But especially the more we get these weird years, and our climate starts to warm, it starts to get a lot scarier because they do end up overwintering in places like Wisconsin and Minnesota. Granted, their climate is different than ours, but they do have pretty cold winters, and so for us, I think the length of our winter can be a benefit to us, but we don't know that it's always going to stay that way.

Emily: Got it, so mantises are not allowed.

Alex: If APHIS (Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, responsible for regulating the interstate transport of these types of insects) finds out which companies are importing



A Transverse Lady Beetle (Coccinella transversoguttata), one of the more than 30 species of lady beetles native to Alaska, photographed by Alex Wenninger in Fairbanks.

them, that company is sent a letter telling them that they aren't allowed to, and if they continue to do it, then they start making civil penalties.

Emily: So what options do gardeners have?

Alex: We do have a couple of companies that have approved permits for importing biocontrols to Alaska, like beneficial mites, parasitoid wasps, things like that. This is really relatively recent. And so we're pretty excited about it, because before it wasn't legal. No one had approved permits, and so we couldn't really do research on it. Now we are able to start doing some research on those. But unfortunately, right now, it's still in its infancy. So we don't have a lot of data on what really works well in Alaska. We're still kind of experimenting with that. But we do have options.

Emily: Who are the companies with approved permits?

Continued on next page.

LADY BUGS (continued)

Alex: Koppert and Beneficial Insectary. It's a specific list of organisms, and companies can come on and off of that list as they go through the permit cycle. We might have more options soon.

Emily: Are these for greenhouses?

Alex: We never recommend biocontrols for outdoor use. Some of these can have unintended consequences outside, even though they are something that we would recommend for a greenhouse. Outside is just not a controlled space. A lot of times they're just going to leave, and it's not really your most effective option. But if you are in a greenhouse setting, for aphids, there are several species of parasitoid wasps that might be effective, depending on the both humidity and temperature of your greenhouse, because different species have different optimal ranges. If people reach out to us, we can take a look at the list and narrow down what might be recommended. Reputable companies also have that information on their website when you're looking at the species. If your issue in your greenhouse is mites, there are several species of mite predators that are good. It just sort of depends on what kind of problems you're dealing with.

Emily: How are companies able to import insects like ladybugs if it's not allowed?

Alex: They just do it anyway.

Emily: Do you think they don't know the laws?

Alex: In some cases they don't know. There's certain insects in the Lower 48 that you don't need a permit for. Just recently APHIS told a company, "Hey, you do need a permit to import these insects to Alaska." The company felt so bad, and they were more than happy to comply. They were very apologetic.

They might even be filling out a permit for Alaska at some point.

And then there are some companies that know. They have gotten letters from APHIS. They have applied for permits to import certain organisms and been denied, and they continue to do it. The gears of getting this under control are slow. It just takes a while. And so in the meantime, we've been trying to educate people about why this isn't a good idea.

I'm mostly worried about the ecological detriments. But also, it's not really fair to people because they're not really effective, especially outdoors. And so they're spending money on something and being told that it is going to fix their problems. And in most cases it doesn't.

Emily: Are imported ladybugs really a big issue here?

Alex: We have over 30 different species of native lady beetles in Alaska. I used to do crop research in Wisconsin and a lot of their lady beetles are similar to our native lady beetles. They've already been nearly entirely wiped out in a lot of the Lower 48 and even parts of Canada because of the introduction of non-native lady beetles and the introduction of new diseases. **I'm just watching Alaska make the same mistake, and it makes me really sad.**

Emily: We will help get the word out! How can people

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Are you a member of iNaturalist? Join Alex's Lady Beetle Community Science Project to learn more about lady beetles native to Alaska. [Follow this link.](#)

Ladybugs, continued:

find approved companies and species?

Alex: We've been talking with the Division of Agriculture about making a website that makes it easier for people to see which companies to order from and which organisms from those companies are approved. Right now, unfortunately, I do feel badly that it's not easier for the public to just automatically access that information. But if anyone does want to use a biocontrol in their greenhouse or other enclosed growing space, like hydroponics, they are always welcome to reach out to us. We're able to help them pick something out to try. We have been working, too, on a CES publication about attracting native lady beetles to your garden. It's not ready yet.

Emily: What do you recommend people do about aphids?

Alex: **Aphid control in the garden really starts with good monitoring.** Check those plants a couple times a week so you can start taking action early while the problem is small, before it gets out of hand. Small infestations of aphids can be wiped off the plant with a damp cloth or the leaf can just be plucked from the plant. Folks can also use a neem oil or insecticidal soap product that is labeled for use on their site of application (Standard disclaimer: with any pesticide product, follow all label directions for application). Another thing to keep in mind with aphids is to avoid overfertilizing, especially with nitrogen. Overuse of nitrogen can cause plants to put out excessive new, soft growth which aphids are really good at taking advantage of.

Contact Alex: akwenninger@alaska.edu



Another native lady beetle, the Three-banded Lady Beetle (Coccinella trifasciata), photographed by Alex in Anchorage.

OUTSIDE THE ALASKA BOTANICAL GARDEN
4515 CAMPBELL AIRSTRIP ROAD, ANCHORAGE, AK



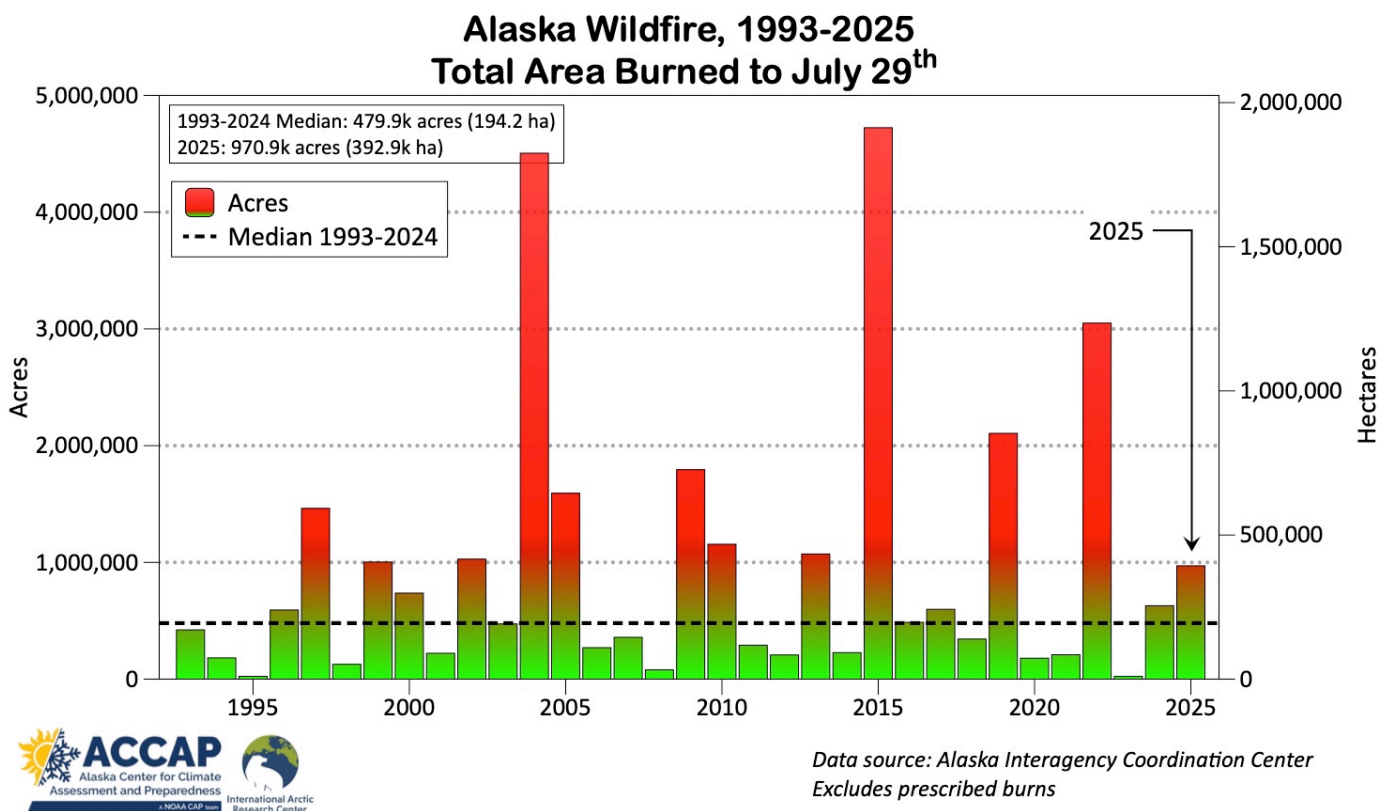
LATE SEASON PLANT SALE

HARDY PERENNIALS ❁ UNIQUE HOUSEPLANTS ❁ OUTDOOR ART ❁ GARDENING ADVICE

AUGUST 9, 2025
10 AM-3 PM



HAS ANCHORAGE BEEN SPARED IN 2025?



Wildfire in Alaska has burned about 970,000 acres (393,000 ha) so far in 2025 according to AICC analysis. This is twice the 1993-2024 median to this point in the season but far below the big years. Historically, only about 10 percent of the total wildfire acreage for the season burns after the end of July.

Map and caption courtesy Rick Thoman, International Arctic Research Center, UAF.

Editor's note: On May 6, 2025, NOAA/NCEI announced the retroactive termination of funding for data sources used by Dr. Thoman. [Read more about the loss of scientific data here.](#)

August Garden Tours

Details are emailed to members. Tours are a benefit of AMGA membership and are for members and their guests. Make sure your membership is up to date: email rebecca@alaskamastergardeners.org

Date	Time	Garden
8/4/25	6:00 PM	Maureen Pintner's garden
8/11/25	6:00, 6:30, 7:00 PM	Josh Smith's Bear Mountain Forest Garden (His food forest is very wild, so small groups will traipse through on the half hour. You can also see his plant nursery.)
8/18/25	6:00 PM	Solstice Gardens (Meg O'Mullane) and Emily Becker's Garden
8/28/25	5:00 PM	Grow North Farm: Volunteer Day, bring a friend!



Rich Ervin is probably still working on finishing this turnip.



Tim Hatfield's blue poppy display for a Homer 4th of July float. His step-by-step process is on his Facebook page.



AMGA members toured gardens in the Valley. How many van den Tops can you find? Rich Ervin photo.



Roses blooming on the July 7th tour of the Centennial Rose Garden. Mary Contrary photo.

Join our Meetings

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 details.

AMGA Board of Directors

Rich Ervin	President
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Jan van den Top	Treasurer
Diane Peck	Secretary
Merlin Hamre, Brenda Adams, Rebecca Ligler, Roz Goodman, Ellen Kirchner, Dawn Groth	At Large

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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), calendar items and announcements. Educational articles qualify for MG volunteer hours. Contact/send items to the editor at newsletter@alaskamastergardeners.org.

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: rebecca@alaskamastergardeners.org
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