

## **PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE** by Rich Ervin

For an interesting and wonderful read about what is new and being discovered about plant life, try *The Light Eaters* by Zoë Schlanger. The main theme is plant intelligence and communication. Despite this being a controversial topic among scientists, this book poses a very good argument and several scientific studies by botanists that has me thinking a lot differently about plant life.

Miss Schlanger speaks with many scientists about the research they are doing and what they are finding. The professional botanists she interviews are all pretty quick to dismiss describing plants as intelligent. She describes a lot of anathema and fear among scientists to speak of plants as intelligent despite multiple examples and findings that seems pretty clear that plants are somehow coming up with ways of growing, reproducing, attracting beneficial insects, mimicking, and defending themselves that defy an explanation of the world as we know it.

There are multiple examples of plants manipulating their environment to their benefit. One of these is a corn plant that somehow senses a caterpillar eating its leaves. Incredibly, it deduces by the chemicals in the saliva of the caterpillar what type of wasp it needs to attract that feeds on that particular caterpillar. The corn plant then releases a chemical that attracts the type of wasp that is attracted to the smell released and then to the particular caterpillar it preys upon. The wasp lays its eggs inside the caterpillar and the result rids the corn plant of the caterpillar. How does it do this? Where is its "brain"?

*Boquila trifolata* (Chameleon Vine) is a plant that grows in Chile. It is able to mimic several plants that grow nearby by mimicking the leaves, including the shape, vein pattern, size and color. It seems that *Boquila's* mimicking might be a mechanism to keep it from getting eaten as it then appears to be similar to the plant it is beside and therefore won't be eaten by predators that prefer it.

Common lungwort in England is able to color itself to look like there are bird droppings on the plant that make it unattractive to animals that may want to eat the leaves. Some types of parasitic mistletoe are able to mimic the leaves of its host plant. Not only is mistletoe able to use the host plant's hard work but it also takes on its identity. Several other interesting examples are discussed in depth throughout the book and it is quite fascinating.

*The Light Eaters* is a must-read book for those interested in plants. I have only touched on a few of the themes. If you want to broaden your perspective about the wonder of plants consider adding it to your list.

### **IN THIS ISSUE**

- » Treasurer's Report
- » Herbies Visit FIG
- » Free Spruce for public lands
- » Charles Dowding Was Here!
- » Adios, Snow!
- » Garden Tours and Blossom Fest



## NOTES FROM SEC. DIANE PECK

At the May AMGA board meeting, two new committees were formed to lead our ongoing projects: the Tech Committee will identify how we should keep track of all the passwords, phone numbers, and individuals in our multiple databases; and the Advanced Master Gardener Planning Committee will continue addressing logistics and developing the classes to be held in the fall. Additionally, the board approved the Grant Committee's recommended garden grant recipients.




**FALTZ Landscaping**

With the largest plant nursery and acres of trees, shrubs, perennial, hardscape and even garden art!

**AMGA Garden Tour**



**MONDAY  
JUNE 2, 2025  
6:00 PM**

1401 Labar St





*Calypso bulbosa* blooming in Kenny Lake in May. Rich Ervin photo.

## APRIL 2025 TREASURER'S REPORT

### Balances on 3/31/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 21,442.24
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,149.07
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/25	\$ 11,431.66
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/25	\$ 10,476.96
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 60,505.18</b>

### Interest/Dividends

\$7.75

### This month's revenue

Membership	\$420.32
Donations	\$ 101.86
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$ 2,044.72
Advanced M.G course	\$ -
Dowding Event	\$ 637.42
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$ 3,204.32</b>

### This month's expenses

Charles Dowding	\$ 500.00
Grants	\$ -
Operations	\$ 562.80
Website Hosting	\$ -
Website Maintenance	\$ 195.00
Directory	\$ 408.31
Fundraising/plant sale	\$ 768.00
Newsletter	\$ 34.99
State Fair Crop Donation	\$ 50.00
Alaska State Fair Steve Brown Memory	\$ 500.00
<b>Total Expenses this month</b>	<b>\$ 3,019.10</b>

### Balances On 4/30/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 21,627.46
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,156.82
CD General 2 Year 2.71%, (1/23/25)	\$ 11,431.66
CD General 1 Year 4.07% (1/30/25)	\$10,476.96
<b>Total Assets on 4/30/25</b>	<b>\$ 60,698.15</b>

**Prepared by Jan van den Top**



## A DAY TO REMEMBER WITH CHARLES DOWDING by Diane Peck

On May 15, 2025, the Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage had the incredible honor of spending a full day with Charles Dowding, the legendary UK gardener and pioneer of the No Dig gardening method. From start to finish, the day was filled with learning, community, and inspiration!

**Hands-On No Dig Workshop:** The day kicked off with an intimate afternoon workshop where 25 lucky gardeners gathered to learn directly from Charles. In just under two hours, he demonstrated how to build a complete No Dig vegetable garden—from laying down cardboard and compost to planting out a variety of vegetables. It was a powerful, practical look at how simple, quick, and effective the No Dig method can be. Seeing the garden come together so smoothly left everyone buzzing with motivation to start (or expand!) their own No Dig beds.

**Shared Potluck Lunch:** Following the workshop, attendees shared a warm and welcoming potluck lunch with Charles, featuring Alaska grown and harvested foods. It was a beautiful gathering of local flavor, shared stories, and genuine connection—an unforgettable moment of community with Charles at the heart of it.

**Evening Presentation at UAA:** Later that evening, Charles gave a rich and thoughtful presentation at Rasmussen Hall, University of Alaska Anchorage, diving deep into his No Dig theories. With decades of experience and a calm, encouraging presence, he spoke about soil health, composting, minimizing disturbance,



*Charles enjoying the Alaska-themed potluck lunch held after the workshop.*

and maximizing productivity. The room was filled with inspired gardeners, soaking up every bit of wisdom.

We are so deeply thankful and grateful for Charles' time, insight, and generosity. His approach to gardening is more than just a method—it's a mindset of respect for the earth and joy in growing.

Want to keep learning? Pick up one of Charles' wonderful books! Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned grower, his books are packed with practical tips, beautiful photos, and gentle guidance.

Check out his website and YouTube videos! Charles offers online classes and free resources at [www.charlesdowding.co.uk/](http://www.charlesdowding.co.uk/).



*Stepping on soil?!? Yes, Charles encourages this during the building stage just to “firm up” (NOT compact) the compost and provide a good anchorage for your new plant’s roots.*



**Volunteer**  
**for Boyer's and receive**  
**free entry to the festival! Sign**  
**up here!**



*An apple tree blooms at Airport Heights Elementary. Soak in the beauty of the season!*



## FREE SPRUCE FOR PUBLIC LANDS

The Alaska Community Forestry Program (CFP) has received a grant from the USDA Forest Service to provide seedlings for reforestation projects in Alaska. Projects on non-federal public lands statewide are eligible. CFP will provide tree seedlings to public agencies, municipalities, soil and water conservation districts, park foundations, and other non-profit organizations **free of charge**.

A total of 10,000 seedlings will be available for planting. Seedlings are expected to arrive in late July or early August 2025. Seedlings are 2-year-old white spruce, grown from Alaskan seed stock. The seedlings will arrive in plug form and will be approximately 8" – 12" in height.

[More information is available here](#) or contact Josh Hightower, Community Forestry Program Coordinator: [josh.hightower@alaska.gov](mailto:josh.hightower@alaska.gov)

Boyer's Orchard & Greenhouse

# BLOSSOM Festival

SATURDAY | June 14 2025 | 12:00 - 4:00 pm

**Josh Smith of Bear Mountain Forest Nursery**  
**Beautiful Blossoms - Live Music - Kids Activities**  
**Free Chair Massage - Plant & Tree sales - Grafting**  
**Photo Booth - Learn about Bees - Orchard Tours**

  
**\$10 Admission**

**[www.alaskaorchard.org](http://www.alaskaorchard.org)**  
645 East 81st Ave. Anchorage AK



## HERB STUDY VISITS FIG by Jerelyn Miyashiro

Fresh International Gardens, known as FIG for short, is a program sponsored by Catholic Social Services, Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services. The Herb Study Group met in early May with FIG program director Keenan Plate for a tour of this unique community garden to learn more about the program.

FIG is at the very north and east end of the Mountain View neighborhood and is located on Anchorage Parks and Recreation land. The garden is bordered on the north by JBER and on the east by the McPhee Street Community Garden, which was started over 20+ years ago and was the first community garden established in Anchorage.

An interesting bit of history and background from Keenan: FIG “was started in 2007 by Cooperative Extension agent Julie Riley as a job skills development program for newly arrived refugees. Since its inception, FIG has taught refugees from all over the world how to grow vegetables in Alaska’s unique climate. Most of the produce grown is sold through farmers markets, CSA, and wholesale. All earnings from sales are paid to program participants as an hourly wage. In recent years, the program has expanded beyond vegetable sales to other value-added products like spices, teas, and vinegars.”

In addition to the usual CSA crops such as carrots, lettuce and potatoes, the garden has recently planted



*The Herb Study group tours Mountain View’s Fresh International Gardens.*

asparagus and haskap berries and is trying out wine cap mushrooms in their wood piles. Perennial herbs such as chives, lovage, and mint anchor the vegetable beds throughout the garden and add to the spice and tea products. When the growing season is done these value-added products extend work activities and job skills into the fall and winter. Grow North farmers market, on Mountain View Drive, is the public retail site for FIG’s produce and products. (Be on the lookout for garlic braids at the end of this season)

Since 2007, FIG has been using organic growing methods in addition to incorporating “no dig” practices into the garden. They make their own compost with on-site source materials and utilize waste vegetables from the St Francis House Food Pantry and Costco.

FIG received a USDA Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act grant to add an orchard of 50 apple trees and a large raspberry patch on the north side of the existing 8000 square foot garden.

FIG is an inspiring community garden connecting people, utilizing local resources and sharing knowledge on how to grow food in Alaska.

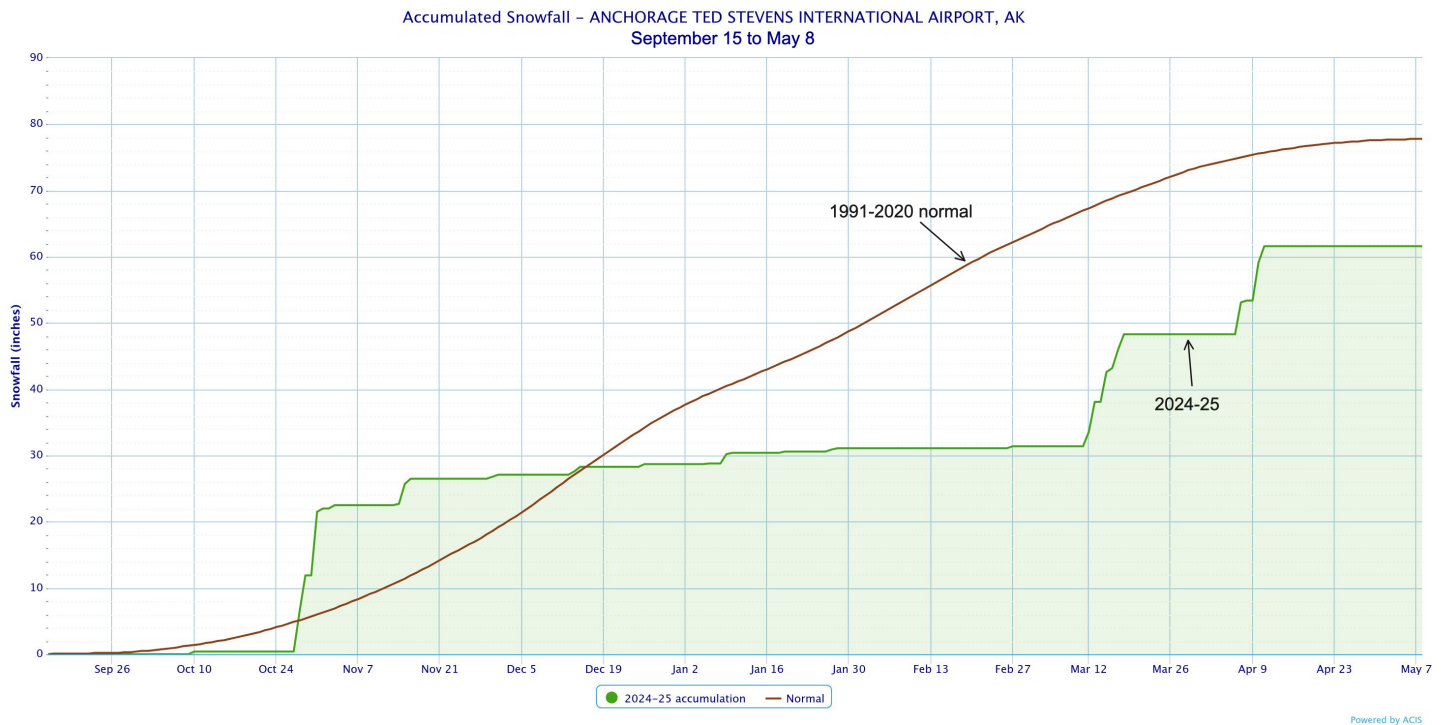
Keenan said they are always looking for knowledgeable volunteers and this is a rewarding opportunity to help your community and gain volunteer hours towards your Master Gardener certification. Keenan can be contacted at 907-222-7313 or [kplate@cssalaska.org](mailto:kplate@cssalaska.org)



*FIG on May 9th. Betcha it looks different now!*



# ADIOS, SNOW!



Anchorage airport snowfall for the 2024-25 winter was 61.6 inches (156 cm), the lowest total since the winter of 2017-18. More than 90 percent of the total fell outside of the December through February mid-winter season. The 1991-2020 normal seasonal snowfall is 77.9 inches (198 cm). *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.](#)

## Learn your weeds!?

*Gina Docherty shared this photo from a friend, taken at a homestead park in Washington. What do you think about this idea?*





## Herb Study Group Schedule

Volunteers have been planting seedlings in the Herb Garden! Borage, calendula, sage, canary bird vines, nasturtiums, two varieties of chamomile and more have been planted. As usual, the chives and many other perennials are doing well. More volunteers are welcome! The schedule for Herb Garden volunteers is Tuesdays and Fridays from 1-3 PM. All volunteers must first contact and attend ABG's orientation.

Contact Elaine at [chammes@hotmail.com](mailto:chammes@hotmail.com) or the Herb Study Group at [anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com](mailto:anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com) to get on the list to be notified of announcements.

## Summer Garden Tours!

### All Tours Start at 6 pm

- **June 2:** Faltz Nursery
- **June 9:** Boyer's Orchard
- **June 16:** Rich Ervin's garden
- **June 23:** Volunteer Day at Airport Heights Elementary
- **June 30:** Downtown Soup Kitchen Garden

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](mailto:rebecca@alaskamastergardeners.org)

## Before and After: a new vegetable garden in Lime Village





## 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](mailto:president@alaskamastergardeners.org) for details.

## AMGA Board of Directors

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

## Committees, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Casey Matney	CES Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator
Troy Weiss, Emily Becker	Broadcast Email
Nick Riordan	Calendar of Events
Board of Directors	Advanced MG Course
Janice Berry, Cheryl Chapman	Directory Editor
Kathy Liska	Facebook
TBA	Meetings/Programs
Troy Weiss, Janie Odgers, Rich Ervin	Garden Tours
Mary Rydesky, Gina Docherty	Google Group Managers
Jan van den Top, Lili Naves, Sheila Toomey	Grants Program
Lynn Hansen	Hospitality
Rebecca Ligler	Membership Database
Emily Becker	Newsletter Editor
Gina Docherty	Ask a Master Gardener
Board of Directors	Lifetime Achievement
Susan Miller	Pioneer Home Garden
TBA	Volunteer Coordinators
Nancy Grant, Sue Negus	Plant Sale Coordinators

## 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](mailto:newsletter@alaskamastergardeners.org).

## 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: [rebecca@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:rebecca@alaskamastergardeners.org)  
 General emails: [AskMG@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:AskMG@alaskamastergardeners.org)  
 Mail: AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

