

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Rich Ervin

There are many AMGA events and happenings over the next few months.

First is the picture sharing that will happen at the next general membership meeting on October 20, 2025, at the BP Energy center. Please get your garden-related pictures to Troy Weiss. We will show them at the meeting. Be prepared to give us a brief description of your photos. Email your 2-5 photos to troyweiss@gmail.com. The Cooperative Extension Service has assured us that there is going to be a Master Gardener Class in December. Originally it was November. If you wish to take the course, please give them a call at (907) 786-6300 and sign up as able. Also, pass this information out to your friends. Rumor has it there is a huge amount of interest and space will be limited.

Elections for new officers and board members are coming right up. There is quite a shake-up coming so stay tuned. We need board members and folks to take on officer positions. You don't need to have any experience on a board and it is a good way to get volunteer hours. If you have expertise or experience with finances, technology, organizing, etc., please step to the front of the line and get on the board! This is your chance to meet and interact with some very talented, interesting, and fun people. And make good friends along the way. We need you!

Please join us.

January 15, 2026, will begin an Advanced Training for Master Gardeners. The title is Soil Management. Its

main focus is going to be soil health. It will be a weekly class for 7 sessions that will run for 2 hours from 6 to 8 PM and cost \$75. It will be presented by the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District and has many prominent speakers who are highly educated and knowledgeable regarding soil health in Alaska. Hope you can attend. If you have any questions, please contact me.

On a personal note, the harvesting of my garden, fruit trees and bushes is still in full swing and stressing me out because it's hard to keep up with everything coming ripe and ready. I bet many of you fellow gardeners can relate. My age isn't helping and now we have more produce than ever. We have been freezing, drying, canning, making liqueurs, shrubs, and juicing. We have enough to feed a small army and to keep them properly sauced. Now there's sauerkraut to make and bulbs to be planted, beds to be tended, root vegetables to be harvested, bonsai to put to bed, compost piles to finish off and I have to clean the greenhouse. I am overwhelmed with the bounty and work this year! It's a great problem to have!

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BON VOYAGE, GINA DOCHERTY!

We bid farewell and bon voyage to longtime AMGA volunteer Gina Docherty, who has sold her house and all her beloved plants. She is moving to New Zealand! Gina will be staying in Motueka on the South Island to begin with, close to Abel Tasman National Park. She will be touring around before finding a place to live and is looking forward to seeing the botanical garden in Dunedin and the pohutakawa trees in bloom on the North Island. She has even lined up some garden tours already! Gina served in too many volunteer positions to count for many years, including editor of this newsletter and the brains answering our "Ask a Master Gardener" emails. Thank you, Gina. We wish you well.



In addition to AMGA, Gina volunteered with many other Alaska plant organizations, including the Rock Garden Society. Here she is helping with their plant sale in 2017. Gina Docherty photo.

AUGUST 2025 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 7/31/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 16,025.84
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,180.61
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/27	\$ 11,502.91
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/26	\$ 10,581.44
Total Assets	\$ 55,296.05

Interest/Dividends	\$8.03
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This month's revenue

Membership	\$158.69
Donations	\$101.66
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$4,394.21
Advanced M.G course	
Total revenue	\$ 4,654.56

This month's expenses

Grants	\$0
Operations	\$ 167.41
Website Hosting	\$
Website Maintenance	\$
Postage/Box Rental	\$
Fundraising/plant sale	\$2,722.85
Newsletter	\$ 34.99
State Fair Crop Donation	\$
Speaker Fees and costs	\$
Total Expenses this month	\$ 2,925.25

Balances On 8/31/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 17,755.15
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,188.64
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	\$ 57,033.39
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Prepared by Jan van den Top

FOOD PRESERVATION WITH REBECCA LIGLER by Diane Peck

Rebecca Ligler shared a lively presentation on food preservation, showcasing the many ways Alaskans can make the most of our abundant natural resources to get us through the long winters.

This presentation blended ancient food preservation traditions with modern methods and tools. Rebecca reminded us that refrigeration and freezing are relatively new conveniences. For thousands of years, preservation techniques like drying – at least 12,000 years old – fermenting, and pickling helped people store food.

While these older traditions continue today, modern equipment has added new options. Electric canners save time with large and small batches. Freeze-drying drew special attention from the crowd, noting how well it preserves everything from eggs and herbs to spinach and pineapple. Freeze-dried foods last for years, keep their flavor and color, and are convenient to store in jars. While dehydrating also works well, freeze-drying often provides a fresher taste and lighter texture.



Rebecca's home-canned peaches and bone broth. Rebecca Ligler photo.



Rebecca freeze-dries many different foods, including lemons, fresh herbs and onions. Rebecca Ligler photo.

The presentation also touched on the importance of preserving our own food for food security and supporting local growers, with recommendations to check out farms, U-pick orchards, and markets across the state. Rebecca highly recommended the Alaska Cooperative Extension and the National Center for Home Food Preservation as trusted resources.

Whether through canning salmon, freeze-drying cilantro, or filling the pantry with home-milled flour, this session underscored that preservation is about more than storing food—it's about health, sustainability, resilience, and making the most of Alaska's natural abundance.

PLAN YOUR YEAR WITH THE HERB STUDY GROUP

The first HSG meeting of this season was held by Zoom on Friday, Sept. 12. It was great to get together after spending a good part of our summer days enjoying our gardens. The main purpose of the meeting was to determine topics for discussion and activities through next spring and possibilities beyond. Meetings continue, as in the past years, to be scheduled on the 2nd Friday of each month through May from Noon to 1:30 PM. The following topics and dates are planned, subject to possible changes closer to the activity date.

October 10 – Roses and Hips

November 14 – Turmeric

**December 12 – Aegopodium
podagraria (Bishop's Weed)**

2026

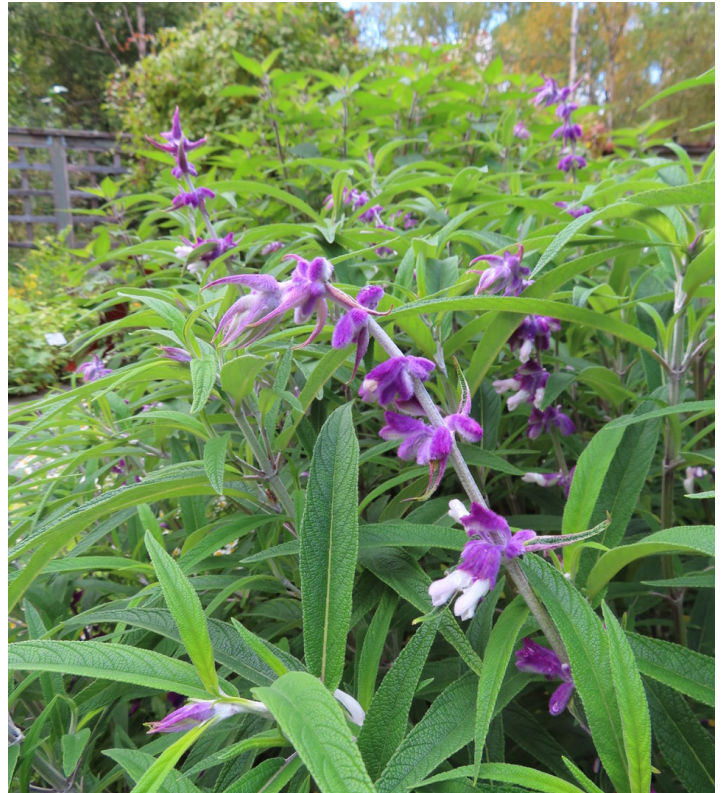
January 9 – Dill

February 13 – Borage

March 13 – Cottonwood

April 10 – Tea Party TBD

May 8 – Plant Exchange TBD



Mexican Sage (Salvia leucantha) photographed in the ABG Herb Garden on Sept. 5, 2025. Photo by Mary Contrary.



Shiso (Perilla frutescens) photographed at the ABG Herb Garden on Sept. 5, 2025. Photo by Mary Contrary.

Summer – volunteer at ABG Herb Garden

Possible summer field trips and/or additional activities

June – Visit to Midtown Depot community garden

July – Cooking with herbs

August – Liqueurs, juices and simple syrups

The HSG would like to express our thanks and appreciation to **Jerelyn Miyashiro** for continuing to keep us notified of meetings as well as hosting the Zoom meetings. Anyone interested in joining any of the meetings may contact the group at anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com. Other than your interest, there are no requirements or dues.

YAK DUNG FOR ALASKA GARDENS by Janice Berry



Look for the blue bags of yak dung outside the Alaska Zoo near the greenhouses. Janice Berry photo.

Anchorage residents have a unique source of enrichment for their gardens by way of the Alaska Zoo on O'Malley Road. Yak dung! Most gardeners are familiar with animal manures from chickens, goats, horses, and cows. They are some of the best ways to help our gardens grow amazing plants, in combination with other fertilizers and compost.

The zoo has several Tibetan yaks (including one adorable baby), animals whose native habitats are the Himalayan mountains of Tibet and Nepal. The Tibetan people have used the dung for fuel as well as their gardens for millennia.

The Alaska Botanical Garden has been adding yak dung from the zoo to their compost piles for years. They like it because it has fewer weed seeds than other animal manures. Another reason ABG likes yak dung is because it's the perfect fertilizer for their Himalayan poppy collection. Since both "transplants"

originated from the same region, using properly aged yak manure on their poppies makes them thrive better than other fertilizers. When I learned about the yak dung from the zoo a couple of years ago I began using it on my blue poppies: They've never looked better.

Lately I almost always see blue bags of yak dung outside free for the taking. Perhaps this article will encourage more gardeners to take advantage of this unique garden enhancement. The dung bags are placed outside the zoo in the parking lot next to the greenhouse. The zoo wins because it doesn't have to find a way to dispose of the manure, and Anchorage residents get free fertilizer.

As with all animal manures, yak dung should be aged or composted before use. However, if you don't want to wait to compost it, you can also create a nutrient-rich "tea" by steeping yak dung in water and using the diluted solution to water plants that will not be used for food. Be careful not to make it too potent as it can burn the roots and foliage of your plants, especially seedlings and young plants.

ADVANCED TRAINING FOR MASTER GARDENERS

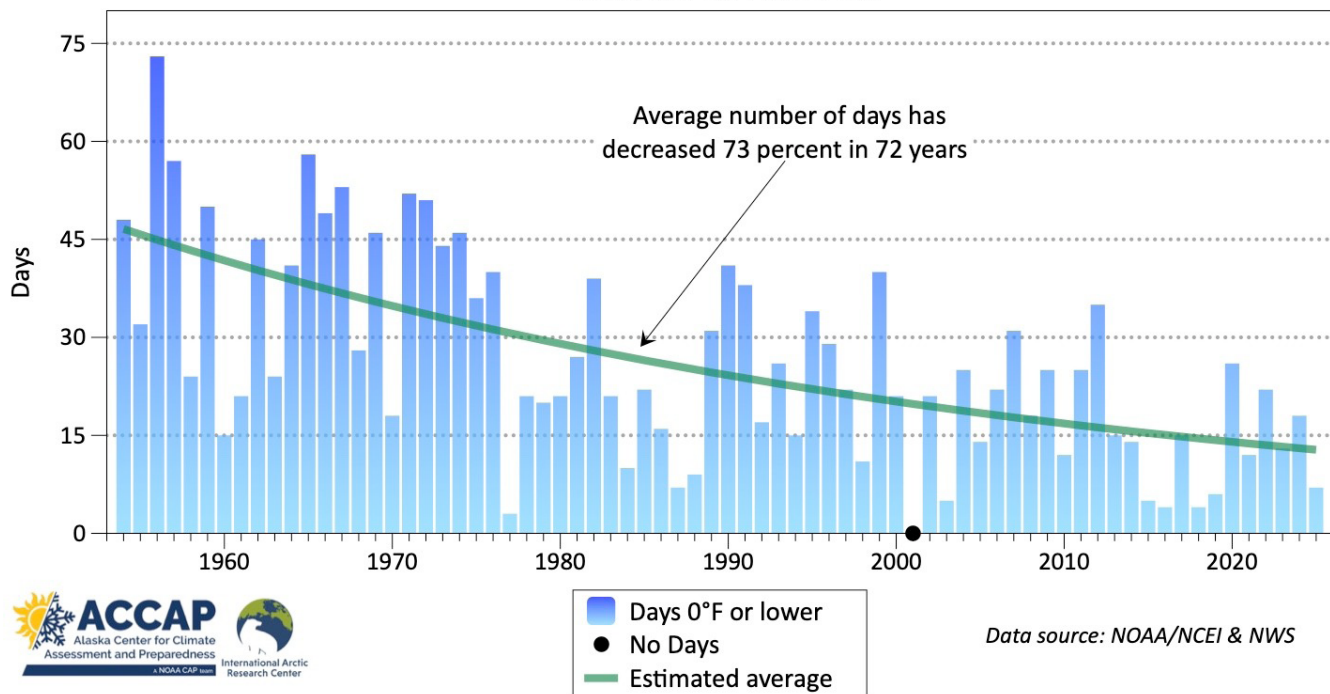
We will have an in-depth, six-week class for Master Gardeners on **Soil Management**. The classes will cover topics such as soil health, soil testing, soil microbiology, mycorrhizal fungi, the great mulch study, cover crops, season extenders including soil considerations within these special environments, irrigation and water management, seed saving, winter propagation of saved seeds, and how to make NRCS programs work for you.

Classes begin on Thursday, January 15th, from 6-8 PM and continuing weekly on Thursdays at the same time. There will be a seventh optional session during which students in the class may present a project plan based on what has been learned. Feedback on projects will be provided by senior members of AMGA. All classes will be offered via Zoom. Tuition is \$75.00 for the full course.

Registration will begin shortly. Stay tuned.

WHAT WILL THIS WINTER BRING?

Anchorage International Airport, Alaska Days per winter with low temperature $\leq 0^{\circ}\text{F}$ (-18°C) 1953-54 to 2024-25



Anchorage (Airport) days per winter with a low temperature of 0°F (-17.8°C) or lower since 1953-54. There has been a 73% decrease over the past seven decades in the average number of cold days per winter. *Map and caption courtesy Rick Thoman, International Arctic Research Center, UAF.*

Editor's note: On September 30th, the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States was shuttered due to canceled funding from the National Science Foundation. [Read more about ARCUS and the loss of scientific data and research here.](#)

October AMGA Member Meeting

At our October 20, 2025, general meeting, AMGA will be hosting a fun and informal "Show and Tell" session! This is your chance to share highlights from your summer gardening adventures—whether it's a lesson you learned, a plant you're especially proud of, or even a puzzling situation or pesky pest you'd like advice on. Please plan to share 2–5 photos and email them to troydweiss@gmail.com by October 15th. Troy will gather everything into a PowerPoint so we can enjoy the stories together. Photos will be grouped by presenter, and when your pictures come up, it'll be your time to "Show and Tell." We can't wait to see your snapshots and hear about your gardening experiences from summer 2025!



AK Native Plant Society volunteers working in the garden at Campbell Creek Science Center. Elizabeth Bluemink 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
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
Roz Goodman	Broadcast Email
Nick Riordan	Calendar of Events
Board of Directors	Advanced MG Course
TBA	Directory Editor
Kathy Liska	Facebook
TBA	Meetings/Programs
Troy Weiss, Janie Odgers, Rich Ervin	Garden Tours
Mary Rydesky	Google Group Managers
Jan van den Top, Lili Naves	Grants Program
Lynn Hansen	Hospitality
TBA	Membership Database
Emily Becker	Newsletter Editor
Dawn Groth	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.

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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