



NEWSLETTER

February 2026
VOLUME 28, ISSUE 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Dawn Groth

Your AMGA board met via Zoom in mid-January and approved the previous meeting minutes and a new slate of officers for the coming year. Officer names and positions will be posted on the AMGA website soon. The draft 2026 budget now includes funding for Master Gardener scholarships and future special events. Volunteers are researching potential garden tour excursions to either the Mat-Su Valley or Homer. The board also focused on strengthening internal collaboration through shared online tools, a board buddy system, and twice-monthly informal President's Office Hours. I want to hear from you! Please email me (dawn@alaskamastergardeners.org) for the Zoom link for office hours.

Several social and educational opportunities were approved or proposed, including a [members-only Glass Fusion Workshop](#) (see details in this newsletter) and partnerships with local organizations and clubs. Operational updates included continued progress on Neon One, AMGA's new membership and communications platform, with launch timing dependent on final setup. The board voted to align with Alaska Cooperative Extension Service standards by encouraging—though not requiring—20 hours of annual volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education. A future newsletter article will highlight the abundance of available options for completing these hours.

[Membership renewals](#) were due January 1. Thank you to those who have already renewed, and a reminder to

anyone who has not yet done so to complete their renewal soon. We have 98 current members, with many still yet to renew. Tie a string on your finger and get it done! 170 participants enrolled in the 2025–2026 Master Gardener online course. These students will be offered a free year's membership in AMGA. Nearly 40 students enrolled in the Advanced Master Gardener Soil Class.

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Help Wanted: Volunteer AMGA Zoom Support:

1. Manage the zoom invitation for monthly board meetings and general meetings. AMGA has a Zoom account.
2. Attend the general meetings in person with a zoom compatible laptop.
3. Set up the BP Energy Center Room for the zoom meeting.

Contact Dawn for more info! Thank you.

Cover photo: *Typha latifolia* at Westchester Lagoon. Emily Becker photo.

SPRING PLANT SALE START YOUR PLANTS!

SELL THEM AND MAKE MONEY FOR
YOURSELF AND AMGA.
THEN BUY MORE PLANTS.

DATE TBA. For more info,
contact Susan Negus,
senegus@gmail.com, or 907-
227-6288



WORK FOR THE STATE FAIR

Hello from the Alaska State Fair! The Fair is currently recruiting new superintendents for both the Crops Department and the Flowers Department. The main requirements for these positions are organization and communication skills. Superintendents need to be able to recruit and coordinate many volunteers to receive, judge, and display entries. Both departments have two entry days, receiving close to 1000 entries each day. Past superintendents have provided contacts and instructions on previous department operations. The wheel does not have to be reinvented; however, change is encouraged to facilitate growth and development of the Alaska State Fair. Our Exhibits Superintendents are an intricate part of the Alaska State Fair, please visit our website or contact me for more information.

Lara Stanley
Exhibits Manager, Alaska State Fair
lara@alaskastatefair.org

DEC. 2025 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 11/30/2025

Checking S-88	\$18,252.74
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,208.68
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/27	\$ 11,575.39
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/26	\$ 10,688.12
Total Assets	\$ 57,730.18

Interest/Dividends \$4.38

This month's revenue

Membership	\$452.10
Donations	
Fundraising/Plant sale	
Advanced M.G course	\$296.24
Total revenue	\$ 748.34

This month's expenses

NEON 1	\$125
Grants	\$0
Operations	\$ 167.23
Website Maintenance	\$225.00
Pioneer Home Garden	\$6.00
Postage/Box Rental	\$
Fundraising/plant sale	\$
Newsletter	\$ 39.99
Postage/Box rental	\$
Speaker Fees and costs	\$
Total Expenses this month	\$ 557.22

Balances On 12/31/2025

Checking S-88	\$ 18,443.86
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,213.06
CD General 2 Year 2.71%, (1/23/25)	\$ 11,648.33
CD General 1 Year 4.07% (1/30/25)	\$10,795.88
Total Assets on 12/31/25	\$ 58,106.38

Prepared by Jan van den Top

HERB STUDY: DILL presentation by J. Miyashiro; summary by E. Hammes

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is believed to have its beginnings in the Mediterranean area. It has had a long and ancient history in many countries as a culinary and medicinal herb. The earliest known record as a medicinal herb was in Egypt 5,000 years ago and was referred to as “soothing medicine.” Dill has been found in the tomb of Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep II, dated around 1400 BC. and the Egyptian “Ebers” papyrus, from the 1500s B.C., is one of the earliest records of dill used medicinally (as a painkiller). It has also been widely used in Greek culture and medicine and in Greek mythology, a young man named Anethus was transformed into the dill plant.

The name “dill” means to “calm or soothe” and originates from its known ability to calm troubled stomach and colicky infants. Dill is a member of the Apiaceae (Umbelliferae) Carrot Family. The genus *Anethum* comes from “ano” and “theo” which together mean upward. The specific epithet (species) *graveolens* is from “gravis” meaning heavy or weighty, and “oleo” meaning producing a smell or odor.

While dill is technically a biennial, it is most commonly grown as an annual. The upright one to four feet tall stems are hollow, ending with broad inflorescences at the top. The inflorescences are arranged in umbels and topped with yellow, scented, hermaphroditic flowers. The flowers develop into schizocarps (dry fruits) each holding two seeds. The dill seeds are oval, progressing from bright green to dark brown at maturity. The leaves (known

as dill weed) are aromatic, lacy, feathery, thread- or needle-like. Each dill plant has a single taproot that grows deeply under ideal conditions.

Plants need moist but not waterlogged soil. Overhead sprinkling on plants taller than two feet can cause stem breakage, premature seed shattering, and disease susceptibility. Staking may help. Full sun is recommended, but it's a cool-weather crop (43-70 degrees F). Hot weather can cause it to bolt and stop leaf production. Fusarium root rot, mildew, and aphids can be problems. Since dill is mainly culinary, avoid chemical pest or weed control near the plants.

Harvest dill weed early in the morning for better flavor due to higher moisture content. Regularly trim it and harvest before flower buds open. Refrigerate fresh dill with stems in water for two to three days, or dry or freeze it. Harvest dill seeds when they turn brown, dry for two weeks in a ventilated area, and store in an airtight container in the dark.

Ancient Greeks used dill to treat hiccups, aid sleep, and alleviate flatulence. It also aids digestion and helps mothers increase milk flow. Recent studies suggest dill may be effective for indigestion, ulcers, and stomach acid secretion inhibition, potentially preventing stomach lining ruptures.

Dill, known for its pickle flavoring, pairs well with salmon, soups, salads, cheese rolls, and more. Cooks love dill leaves for their strong flavor. Dill seeds release flavor slowly, so add them to recipes early. Use whole or powdered seeds as a condiment or combine with vegetables, meats, and spices. A tablespoon of minced fresh dill weed equals one teaspoon dried dill weed, and one dill head equals 3/4 of a teaspoon of seeds.

Dill is easily propagated by direct sowing in the garden or winter sowing in a mini plastic greenhouse (clear or opaque food containers.) Young seedling starts transplant well but are less successful if the taproot is well developed. Alaska's cool temperatures and long days are ideal growing conditions for dill, so give it a try.



Dill and cucumber, best friends forever. Emily Becker photo.

DESIGNING WITH FOLIAGE by Brenda C. Adams

Foliage may not be the reason for a garden, but from a design point of view, it is the most important element in creating a season-long sensation. For one thing, foliage is there all season while each flower carries with us for but a brief period. For another, foliage dominates the overall space of the garden. Therefore, for best results, we need to give serious thought to the foliage of plants when creating or enhancing a garden.

Foliage offers us an enormous range of texture, shape, size and color with which to work. There are two aspects to texture. The first that comes to mind is the finish of the leaves. Are they smooth or fuzzy, shiny or matte, prickly or soft, meaty or delicate, crinkled or flat? Additionally, texture refers to the overall impression of the foliage. It can be airy, frothy and frilly or bold and bodacious. It might be spiky, lax or upright. This aspect of foliage texture is influenced by the size and shape of the leaves. Small or deeply cut foliage seems frothy. Big or fleshy leaves are bold. Sword-like foliage is spiky.

Shape refers to the outline of a leaf. Some are simple and oval; others are compound, made up of many leaflets, or have deeply cut edges. Foliage can be round, arrow-shaped or have the complex outline of a maple or fern. The fan-shaped ginkgo was a childhood favorite of mine. Whatever shapes attract you, foliage can be used to make your garden more cohesive by repeating the shape to create a pattern or using a very bold look as a focal point.

Size is rather obvious. Some leaves are tiny while others are huge with much mid-sized foliage between the two. In general, plants that enjoy sunny locations have smaller leaves than those that do better in a shady spot. This has to do with evaporation. The plant needs to maintain its hydration wherever it is planted. In coastal Alaska, we are able to utilize many plants designated as shade plants in hotter or lower latitude gardens, in full sun in our gardens because it is cooler here. This gives us a design advantage because we have a greater range of leaf sizes available to us in our sunny gardens.

Foliage color is much more than green, though it's important to remember there are many, many shades of green to consider as well. Additionally, we can make use



Repeating a color in different sized foliage is very effective. Backlighting makes everything sizzle. Brenda Adams photo.

of gold, chartreuse, burgundy, purple, blue, gray, silver, orange, rust, black, red, and pink foliage. Then there are all the multi-colored or variegated options. Happily, there is nearly as broad a range of foliage color as there is of flower color.

While a garden comprised completely of plants with simple, oval, mid-sized, matte, green leaves would be bland and totally dependent on flowers for its impact, a garden with too much variety in its foliage can feel frenetic. It's the balance between these extremes that works best.

One approach to achieving balance is to use plants with similar shaped leaves in different sizes. The repetition of the shape offers continuity while the range of size adds variety. Another strategy is to select equally bold leaves in different shapes and textures or similar colors in a variety of textures and shapes. The technique is to use variety in one or two of the four characteristics of foliage and similarity in the others. This will make interesting

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Foliage, continued from previous page.

combinations while offering enough compatibility in the plantings so that they make sense together. And while contemplating color, remember the special impact of repeating a color in both blooms and foliage. This will add real zest to your design.

For an in-depth discussion of foliage, may I suggest Nancy J. Ondra's *Foliage*. It's well organized, easy to read and packed with ideas and information. There's also a chapter about foliage in my book, *There's a Moose in My Garden*.

Make your vegetable garden more vibrant by mixing foliage textures and colors. Brenda Adams photo.



FUSED GLASS FOR THE GARDEN

An Alaska Master Gardeners Creative Workshop - No prior glass experience required.

You're invited to a hands-on fused glass class, brought to you by DBee Flowers, designed for gardeners who appreciate artistry inspired by nature.

Instructor: Charlene Howe

Class Length: 1½ hours 6:30pm - 8pm

Location: 8050 Resurrection Drive

Class Dates & Projects:

- **March 3rd** — \$40 — Garden Stakes
- **March 10th** — \$60 — 8×12 Plate/Tray

Classes will be held with a minimum of 5 participants.

Sign up early to secure your spot.

**Sign Up: Fused
Glass for the Garden**

PROBLEMATIC PLANTS by Diane Peck*

At our January 20, 2026, AMGA Member Meeting, Mel Langdon, a Master Gardener and volunteer with the Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District, gave an eye-opening presentation on invasive plant species—and why they matter more than we might think. Mel explained that invasive plants are those that come from elsewhere and cause harm to the environment, ecosystems, or even human health. She highlighted the serious threats posed by *Prunus* species like European bird cherry (Mayday tree) and chokecherry.

These invasives don't just crowd out native plants. They can poison moose calves, reduce insect populations that fish depend on, and alter entire habitats. Mel also pointed us to excellent resources from the [UAA Center for Conservation Science](#) and [Alaska Exotic Plant Information Clearinghouse \(AKEPIC\)](#)'s invasive plant mapping tools and Invasiveness Ranking System.

The good news? There's a lot we can do. Many agencies and organizations are tackling invasives, and locally the Municipality of Anchorage's [Adopt-A-Patch](#) program makes it easy to help. Volunteers choose a park area, receive training, bags, vests, and even tools—and the MOA horticulture crew helps with chipping, stump grinding, and larger removals. In 2025 alone, volunteers cleared invasives from 10 Anchorage parks!

Member Dawn Groth shared her success organizing neighbors to remove *Prunus* at Scenic Foothills Park, earning rave reviews from parents and kids who enjoy the brighter, safer space. Mel encouraged Master Gardeners to recognize and report invasives at 1-800-INVASIV or email hannah@anchorageswcd.org; take pictures for ID and location; remove problem plants at home, educate neighbors, and commit a few hours next summer through the Adopt-A-Patch or the Muni "Smackdown." Small efforts really do add up!

** The article was drafted by ChatGPT and edited by Diane Peck. Newsletter editor Emily Becker is the District Manager of the Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District.*

February Member Meeting



Monday, February 16th
6:00-6:30 mix and mingle
6:30-7:30

Josh Smith
Come learn from the
master of growing fruit!

BP Energy Center
all are welcome

Josh Smith, owner of Bear Mountain Forest Nursery, will speak at the February AMGA meeting.

Herb Study Calendar

The Herb Study Group meets the 2nd Friday of each month from noon to 1:30 PM. The following topics and dates are planned, subject to possible changes. Interested in joining any of the meetings? Email: anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com

February 13 – Borage
March 13 – Cottonwood
April 10 – Tea Party TBD
May 8 – Plant Exchange TBD

Anchorage Soil & Water Invasive Tree Removal Program

2025 Accomplishments and Results



Project Background

European Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) and Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) trees have been spreading into parks and public lands.

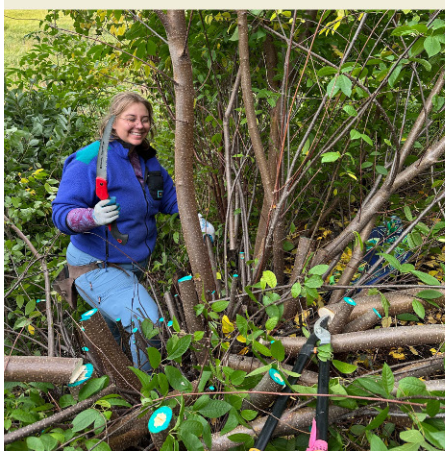
Working with private landowners to remove *Prunus* on their property is key to slowing the spread!

With funding from the AK Division of Forestry and the US Forest Service, ASWCD developed incentive strategies to work with private landowners.

Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District (ASWCD) collaborated with Paul's Tree Service and Boreal Tree Care to assist landowners with invasive tree removal.

2025 Accomplishments Included:

- 113 landowners applied for assistance
- Posted flyers at over 40 locations and on Facebook, which reached 38,000 views and 750 interactions
- Assisted 21 landowners remove trees, educated over 100 landowners on how to do-it-yourself
- 90 trees were removed by tree companies or treated for free by ASWCD staff
- Average discount was 48% and ranged from 21% off – 100% off (aka FREE!)



The program will continue helping landowners in summer 2026. Funding is limited!

**Fill out our interest
form to apply!**

Visit our website for more resources:
www.anchorageswcd.org



<https://arcg.is/P8SC40>

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, all are welcome to observe. Email president@alaskamastergardeners.org for details.

AMGA Board of Directors

Dawn Groth	President
Vacant	Vice President
Jan van den Top	Treasurer
Diane Peck	Secretary
Merlin Hamre, Brenda Adams, Roz Goodman, Ellen Kirchner, Rich Ervin, Jerelyn Miyashiro, Janie Odgers, Nancy Tone, Troy Weiss	At Large

Committees, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Casey Matney	CES Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator
Roz Goodman	Broadcast Email
Vacant	Calendar of Events
Board of Directors	Advanced MG Course
Kathy Liska	Facebook
TBA	Meetings/Programs
Troy Weiss, Janie Odgers, Rich Ervin	Garden Tours
Mary Rydesky	Google Group Manager
Jan van den Top, Lili Naves, Brenda Adams, Roz Goodman	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. Please disclose use of AI. 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
 General emails: AskAMG@alaskamastergardeners.org
 Mail: AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

