



ALASKA MASTER  
**GARDENERS**  
ANCHORAGE

**NEWSLETTER**  
July 2026  
**VOLUME 28, ISSUE 7**

## **VOLUNTEERS SUSTAIN PIONEER HOME GARDENS** by Susan Miller

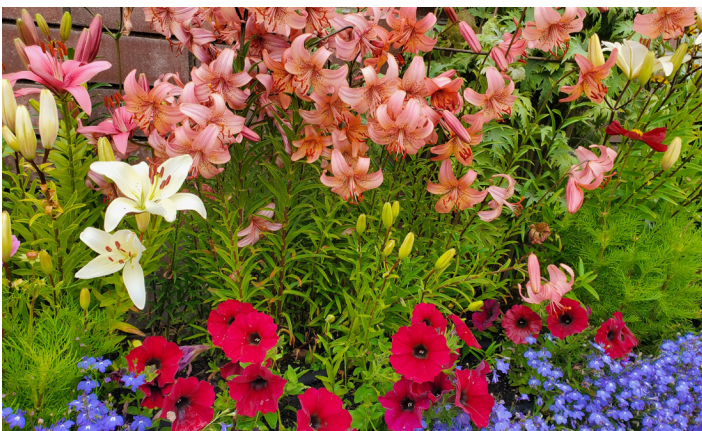


*Susan Miller, Rae Petrie, Ruthe Rasmussen, Gabrielle Schlicht (in back), Sharon Schlicht, Julie Ginder. Elaine Hammes photo.*

The Anchorage Master Gardeners have been taking care of the Anchorage Pioneer Home gardens for over 30 years. There are 15 separate beds in the gardens - in front of and to the east of the Pioneer Home. Every year, from May through September, volunteers clean up and prepare the beds, plant annuals, then weed, water, and deadhead the plants all summer, then finally clean up the gardens in the fall. Besides providing volunteers to do this work, AMGA also pays part of the cost of the annual plants and pays for some tools and equipment. The Pioneer Home also pays part of the cost of the annuals and provides some fertilizer and compost.

The cold weather we had this spring delayed planting day by about a week. It finally occurred on June 3, with over 300 annuals put in the beds (including 33 dahlias provided by Jan van den Top). Among the other annuals were alyssum, amaranthus (“love lies bleeding”), aster, bacopa, bachelor’s buttons, bee balm, cosmos, delphinium, geranium, impatiens, lobelia, marigold, osteospermum, parsley, petunia, phlox, rudbeckia, and snapdragons. Airport Heights elementary students also grew and donated some of the flowers.

This year, the **volunteers meet every Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 to 2:30 or 3:00** to work in the garden. Volunteers also come on other days to water some of the beds. It’s a great group of people who enjoy each other and the beautiful flowers. The gorgeous peonies will begin flowering in the next week or two. **Join us!** For more info, contact Susan Miller: [smiller.ret@gmail.com](mailto:smiller.ret@gmail.com)



*Pioneer Home flowers in 2022. Fran Durner photo.*

*Cover: Primula auricula in Rich Ervin's garden.*

## VOLUNTEER CATALOG

Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage and the Alaska School Garden Network have compiled this list of public gardening projects in Anchorage. Why not join one?

### Updated 2026 Anchorage

Connect with other gardeners, have fun, learn something new! [Check out our catalog of gardening volunteer opportunities](#) in Anchorage.

## Volunteer Needed!

Live in South Anchorage and have an interest in beautifying the non-profit [Holy Spirit Center](#)? New Executive Director Michelle Waclawski is looking for advice on how to beautify the grounds. She'd love for someone to walk the property with her and give some general advice to help her plan. Email: [waclawskim@gmail.com](mailto:waclawskim@gmail.com)



*Nancy Tone and Julia Brown enjoy lilacs in Sharon Davies' lovely garden.*

### Balances on 4/30/2026

Checking S-88	\$19,166.60
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,230.05
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/27	\$ 11,720.13
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/26	\$ 10,893.54
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 59,015.57</b>

<b>Interest/Dividends</b>	<b>\$4.39</b>
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### This month's revenue

Membership	\$971.86
Donations	\$378.15
Fundraising/Plant sale	\$
Homer garden tour	\$4034.90
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$ 5,384.91</b>

### This month's expenses

NEON 1	\$125.00
Grants	\$4,500.00
Operations	\$ 306.81
Website Hosting	\$
Pioneer Home Garden	
Postage/Box Rental	\$
Fundraising/plant sale	\$417.00
Newsletter	\$39.99
Postage/Box rental	\$
2026 Special Events	\$
<b>Total Expenses this month</b>	<b>\$ 5,388.80</b>

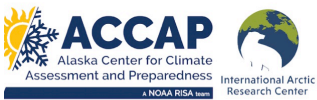
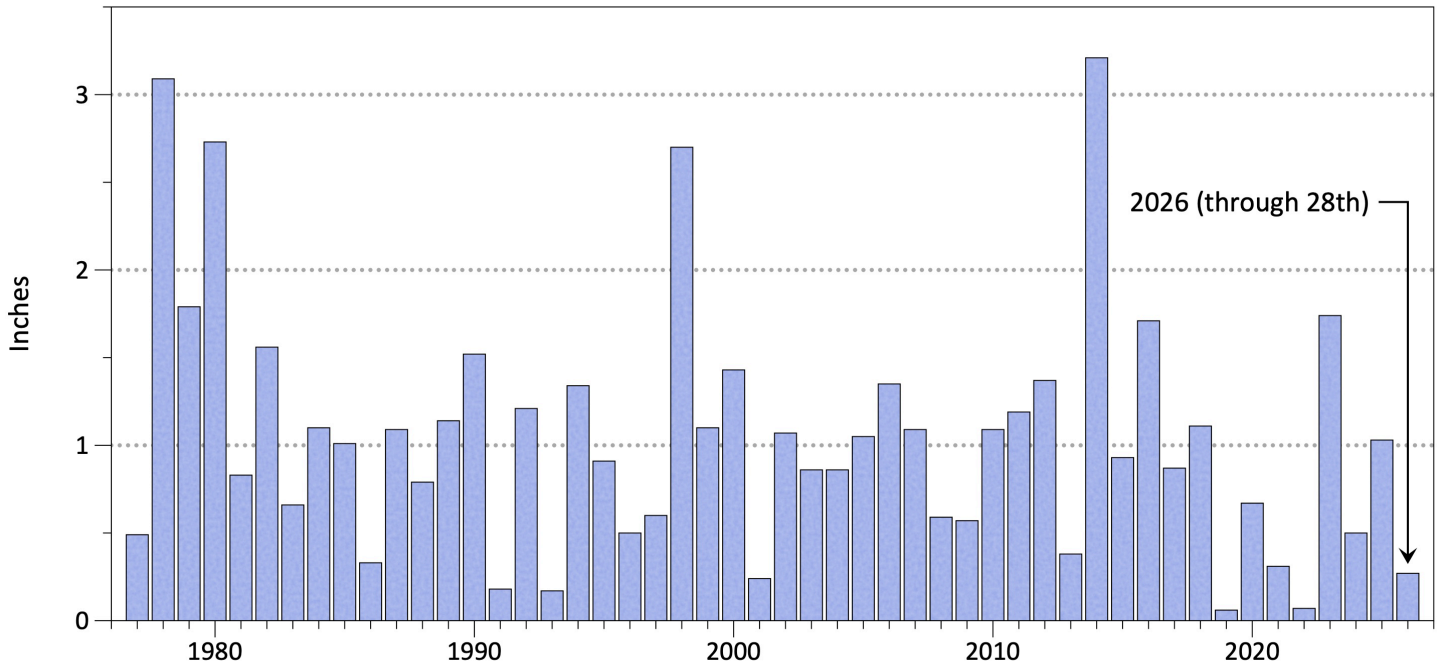
### Balances On 5/31/2026

Checking S-88	\$ 18,972.68
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,234.44
CD General 2 Year 2.71%, (1/3/27)	\$ 11,720.13
CD General 1 Year 4.07% (1/30/27)	\$10,893.54
<b>Total Assets on 5/31/26</b>	<b>\$ 58,826.04</b>

**Prepared by Jan van den Top**

# A DRY JUNE

## Anchorage (Airport), 1977 to 2026 Total June Rainfall



Data source: NOAA/NCEI & NWS

June average temperatures ran very close to normal in the Anchorage area. The big story was the lack of rain. With two days to go (*at print time!*), it is likely to finish up in the top five lowest June rainfalls since 2000. In the past 50 years, the wettest June was 2014 with 3.21 inches and the driest 2019 with 0.06 inches of rain. *Map and caption courtesy Rick Thoman, Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Preparedness, International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.*

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



## LATE SEASON PLANT SALE

HARDY PERENNIALS ❁ UNIQUE HOUSEPLANTS ❁ OUTDOOR ART ❁ GARDENING ADVICE

**AUGUST 15, 2026**  
10 AM-3 PM



It's not too early to get ready for the AMGA late-season plant sale on August 15 from 10 am to 3 pm outside the Alaska Botanical Garden! Look around your yard and pot up those plants you can share with others. Requirements for participating in AMGA plant sales are [on our website](#). Please call or email organizer Nancy Grant at [nancy.grant@live.com](mailto:nancy.grant@live.com) with any questions.

# SUMMER GARDEN TOURS CONTINUE!

Tours on this list are free and are for AMGA members and their guests. All tours start at 6 PM. Details will be emailed to members. Make sure your membership is up to date by emailing [president@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:president@alaskamastergardeners.org). The special Homer garden tour scheduled for July is sold out; stay tuned for info on other special tours.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Garden</i>	<i>Features</i>
July 6	Lighthouse Gardens	Unique and inspiring must-see.
July 13	English Potager Garden	Garden antiques, apples, cherries, and more.
July 20	Brown Hen Gardens	Orchard and peony farm.
July 27	Barb and Hank's Garden	Water features, rock garden, conifer garden, and unique containers.
August 3	Jane McClure's Garden	Large city garden. Perennial flowers, berries, apple trees and wandering paths.
August 10	Maureen Pinter's Garden	A "little bit of everything" plus a bonus pottery sale by Maureen's husband!
August 11	Palmer Garden Tour!	Details TBA; this tour will have a fee.
more to come!		

## Free Soil pH Tests continue at July 6th and 13th Garden Tours

The interest in the soil pH testing has been great and the Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District will continue to offer this service.

Healthy soils grow healthy plants! While many gardeners collect soil samples to submit to a laboratory to test for essential nutrients, a simple pH test can be done in the field and can give gardeners reassurance that available nutrients can be used by plants. pH is the fundamental part of any soil test; the "one test" to rule them all! Collect a sample from your garden about 4-6 inches below the surface of the soil. About a quarter cup will do! Place the sample in a jar or other container and bring it with you to the tour. We will add distilled water and use an electronic pH meter to test your soil.



*Your sample should be collected from the root zone, about 4-6 inches below the soil surface. Remove any grass or leaves. That's it!*

# CAPTURE A TASTE OF SUMMER by Emily Becker

If you have ever wanted to capture the scent of lilacs to hang on to summer for just a bit longer, here's just the trick: make simple syrup.

The basic idea works for any edible flowers. You gather a bunch of flowers, pour boiling water over them, let them steep for about 10 minutes, and then add some sugar to your liking. Lilac simple syrup is a perfect combo of sweet with a hint of bitter that works well in sparkling water of all flavors and your favorite mixed drinks. Store in the fridge and use it within a week or so.

If you want to keep the syrup for longer, it's possible to can it with a boiling water bath, but be warned: **there is no Cooperative Extension tested recipe for simple syrup that guarantees food safety.** As prepared with just water and sugar, the pH of lilac simple syrup is not acidic enough for safe water bath canning; you must add lemon juice or another acid to lower the pH. Usually a tablespoon per batch is enough to reach below the 4.6 pH level deemed acidic enough for safe water bath canning, but for an accurate reading, you need a reliable digital pH meter. The batch I made recently tested at 6.6 pH with just sugar and water; after adding a Tbs of lemon juice, it was 3.32. I then felt confident I could can it using a hot water bath.



**Step 1.** Harvest about a dozen panicles of lilac flowers. Strip the panicles of the petals, removing as many stems as is practicle.



**Step 2.** Pour four cups of boiling water over the flowers and stir. Put a lid on the pot and let it steep for about 10 minutes. (If you let it steep too long, it will taste "planty," which is not a good thing!

**Step 3.** Strain the petals and put the infusion back in the saucepan. Add sugar to your liking; I usually add 1/4 cup. Adding a bit of lemon juice, about 1 Tbs., will enhance the color of the syrup and help lower the pH, which is essential if you plan on canning it. You can also stop here and put it in the refrigerator, where it will keep for about a week.



**And voilà!**

After confirming the pH is satisfactory, I put the jars in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes, turn off the stove and rest for 5, then remove.

I made three batches; one from white flowers, far left; pink flowers, middle; and purple flowers, far right.

The scent is captured in the jar and is a great reminder of our glorious summers. Next up: peony syrup!

# MASTER GARDENERS IN SERVICE



*Sharon Schlicht pulls bird cherry seedlings in Valley of the Moon park. Not to worry, she saved some for you!*



*Jerelyn Mirashiro volunteering at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park Community Garden. The opportunities for weeding are endless!*



*Soil pH testing has been popular, fun, and informative! Most samples show pH in the neutral range of 6 to 8, but a few have been in the low 5s, which might be appropriate for certain plants such as blueberries or azaleas, but is on the low side for vegetables and fruit crops. A fruit tree in Jane McClure's yard had never flowered, and the soil beneath the tree showed a pH around 5; she plans to lime the soil to slowly raise the pH and give the soil more ability to transfer nitrogen and phosphorus to her tree. Testing will be available again at the garden tours on July 6 and 13. Bring as many samples as you'd like.*



*Debbie Hinchey, left, teaching the gardeners of Chanshtnu Muldoon Park Community Garden how to fertilize in mid-summer. This was an incredible knowledge exchange event and made us wonder if it is possible to have an experienced gardening mentor for each of Anchorage's community garden plots!*

# VOLUNTEER IN PARKS! SUMMER 2026 SCHEDULE

## INVASIVE PLANT PULLS

Tuesdays: 5-7 pm Saturdays: 10 am-1pm

- JUNE 9** CHUGACH FOOTHILLS PARK
- JUNE 20** EASTCHESTER PARK
- JULY 7** THE TRIANGLE 16<sup>TH</sup> & LAKE OTIS
- JULY 18** BUNKER STREET WEST VALLEY OF THE MOON
- JULY 28** TAKU LAKE
- AUGUST 8** TIKISHLA PARK
- AUGUST 25** CAMPBELL CREEK PARK (LAKE OTIS)
- AUGUST 29** ANCHORAGE SMACKDOWN!  
VALLEY OF THE MOON
- SEPTEMBER 8** CHESTER VALLEY PARK
- SEPTEMBER 19** CHENEY LAKE
- OCTOBER 3** WINDSONG PARK

Biggest pull of  
the year  
T-shirts & raffle prizes!



## TREE PLANTING

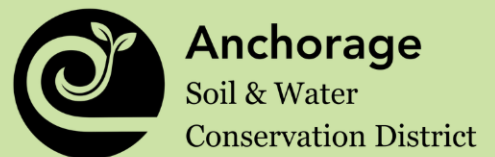
Weekdays: 4-6 pm Saturdays: 10 am-1 pm

- MAY 18** NUNAKA VALLEY NORTH
- Rescheduled for ~~JUNE 27~~  
**JUNE 25**
- JULY 8** CHESTER CREEK  
BEHIND KENDALL FORD
- JULY 25** CHANSHTNU MULDOON  
PARK
- AUGUST 8** VALLEY STREET PARK
- AUGUST 15** STANDISH PARK
- AUGUST 26** GOVERNMENT HILL  
GARDEN
- SEPTEMBER 12** BUNKER STREET  
WEST VALLEY OF THE MOON
- SEPTEMBER 26** NUNAKA VALLEY NORTH



### REGISTRATION:

<https://pointapp.org/orgs/5686>



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

## AMGA Board of Directors

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

### Committees, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

Casey Matney	CES Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator
Roz Goodman	Broadcast Email
Nick Riordan	Calendar of Events
Brenda Adams	Advanced MG Course
Kathy Liska, Cindy Walker	Facebook
Nancy Tone	Meetings/Programs
Janie Odgers	Garden Tours
Mary Rydesky	Google Group Manager
Ellen Kirchner, Nancy Tone, Rich Ervin	Grants Program
Merlin Hamre	Hospitality
Diane Peck	Membership Database
Emily Becker	Newsletter Editor
Vacant	Ask a Master Gardener
Board of Directors	Lifetime Achievement
Susan Miller	Pioneer Home Garden
Board of Directors	Volunteer Coordinators
Nancy Grant, Sue Negus	Plant Sale Coordinators

## Renew/Join AMGA

**[Join or renew your AMGA membership here.](#)**

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](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: [dawn@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:dawn@alaskamastergardeners.org)

General emails: [AskMG@alaskamastergardeners.org](mailto:AskMG@alaskamastergardeners.org)

Mail: AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

