

WHAT MAKES GARDENING SO SPECIAL? by Brenda C. Adams

We all love to garden. Some of us love annuals, some perennials. Some of us have a passion for trees and shrubs. Some of us could not make it through a year without the special flavor of vegetables and herbs that we have grown in our own gardens. And some of us cannot resist bulbs. For those of us who are totally hooked, we pour our energies into all of these things. Do you ever wonder why?

Why do we garden while others do not? When you tend your plants, do you ever think back to the first plant you grew, to the first garden in which you worked? What was it that caused you to place that first plant into the ground? I am not posing a pragmatic question, but rather a spiritual one.

I have asked a lot of people this question in one form or another. In an overwhelming majority of the responses there is a story about someone else. A friend, a parent, a neighbor, or a mentor of some sort introduced each of us to the joy of gardening. In so doing, that person gave us a very special gift. It was a gift of optimism, of exploration, of accomplishment and of beauty; a gift that has led each of us in our own way to experience the thrill of the earliest bit of green peeking through the snow in spring, or a carefully planned garden maturing into something perhaps even more than we had envisioned.

That dear person who led us by the hand and showed us the beauty of a daisy, a tree or a melon or had us smell a sprig of lavender or a rose, planted a seed of knowledge in us that led us to become gardeners. Do you remember

when that happened to you? Stop reading this article for a bit and savor that memory. Relish it! It was an important event in your life.

Now, you may wonder, why I have asked you to go back to that moment in time? Well, the first reason is to provide you with the impetus to reflect on that person who gave you this gift and to think about how it happened. The second is to suggest that each of us has the opportunity, perhaps even the obligation, to give someone else the same special gift. In this way the joy of gardening can propagate.

It is the same with the Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage organization, AMGA. Many have come before us and given of themselves to help this club come to fruition and grow. And many continue to do so. But like a garden that benefits from a fresh infusion of compost, love and care, so too will AMGA benefit from new people joining the ranks of volunteers.

As an organization, we have a purpose and a mission to enhance and supplement the UAF Cooperative Extension Service. As Master Gardeners, we are tasked to “perform special tasks and engage in continuous activities related to the MG Program by fostering,

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promoting and disseminating knowledge.” You can do this through volunteering in the community as many of you do. You can also fulfill your commitment by volunteering to promote and guide our club.

AMGA has a large number of committees and working groups that would welcome your participation. One of these is the Board of Directors. You need not be the best or most experienced gardener to be on the Board, but rather a person who believes in our mission and is enthusiastic about contributing to it.

The Board guides the direction of the club, sets a budget and approves expenditures. Members of the Board also lead many of the working groups. For example, Board members were very active in selecting Neon One as our new membership management program as well as implementing it. We have created ways for you to learn new skills, like the glass fusion class. We're currently working on a special garden tour to Homer.

The Board meets monthly usually via Zoom for an hour and a half to discuss these issues and review progress. As a result, we get to know each other well and we have fun! This creates a sense of comraderie as we guide our organization through the year. If you've ever wished that AMGA did something new or different, the Board is where you can influence those things.

There are many other ways in which you can contribute. You can help with plant sales, speak at one of our member meetings on a topic for which you have a passion, manage our Facebook and other social media presences, bring refreshments to member meetings, help select recipients in the Grants Program, determine and manage garden tours and work on the newsletter or write articles for it. If you have technical expertise, we have many roles you can play, be it broadcasting emails to the group, setting up and overseeing the computer and projector at meetings and managing the member database. Any of these projects can help you complete your required volunteer hours.

And now you may be able to guess the third reason I asked you to think back to the person who gave you the gift of gardening. It is because I wish to ask you to give the gift of your time to your club. You will find the experience to be much like planting a little seed. It will grow and flower. The result will reward you immensely.

Balances on 2/28/2026

Checking S-88	\$19,280.74
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,221.41
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/27	\$ 11,648.33
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/26	\$ 10,830.19
Total Assets	\$ 58,985.92

Interest/Dividends

\$139.54

This month's revenue

Membership	\$137.48
Donations	\$68.01
Fundraising/Plant sale	
Advanced M.G course	
Total revenue	\$ 205.49

This month's expenses

NEON 1	\$125
Grants	\$0
Operations	\$ 174.58
Website Hosting	
Pioneer Home Garden	
Postage/Box Rental	\$
Fundraising/plant sale	\$
Newsletter	\$39.99
Postage/Box rental	\$
2026 Special Events	\$600
Total Expenses this month	\$ 939.57

Balances On 3/31/2026

Checking S-88	\$ 18,546.66
Savings S-2	\$ 5.25
Savings S-29	\$ 17,225.80
CD General 2 Year 2.71%, (1/23/25)	\$ 11,720.13
CD General 1 Year 4.07% (1/30/25)	\$10,893.54

Total Assets on 3/31/26

\$ 58,391.38

Prepared by Jan van den Top

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Want to volunteer but not sure where to start? [Fill out this Volunteer Survey](#) and an AMGA Board member will get back to you.

Opportunities include teaching, writing, organizing, and of course, planting, weeding and watering!

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

Click the above link to see some of the gardening projects currently seeking volunteers.

AMGA GRANT AWARDS

We are proud to announce this years grant winners: Boyer's Orchard, Alaska Botanical Garden, Yarducopia, Anchorage STREaM Academy, College Gate Elementary's School Garden Committee, Greater Eagle River Garden Club, Bear Mountain Nursery, Harvest of Hope Memorial Garden, Grow North Farms, Downtown Soup Kitchen Hope Center, Anchor Gardens, and Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District's Invasive Species program.

Looking ahead, AMGA is also launching a dedicated fundraising effort and business sponsorship plan to grow the program. Starting in 2027, members will have an even greater voice, with opportunities to recommend organizations that reflect our shared values as well as opportunities to donate. We hope you will consider a donation. This work reflects the Board's commitment to responsible stewardship and continuous improvement—building a grant program that is more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful for years to come. The updated process will be available on the new website by mid-summer.

May Member Meeting

Monday, May 18th
6:00-6:30 mix n' mingle
6:30-7:30 presentation

**Grow North Farm:
Our Programs and How You Can Help!**
Cecilia Karoly-Lister

BP Energy Center
all are welcome

Last meeting until Sept. (Garden tour schedule coming soon!)

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

May 8 – Plant Exchange TBD

GET READY FOR GARDEN TOURS!

An important benefit of AMGA membership is local garden tours! During the summer, we offer free weekly tours of gardens to learn, share, and enjoy. Tour locations and directions will be emailed to members each week, and you are welcome to bring a friend. Please nominate gardens to add to the tour list by emailing vicepresident@alaskamastergardeners.org and janie@alaskamastergardeners.org. In addition, AMGA is offering the following two special tours for members, for a fee:

July 22, 23 *Homer Garden Tour with beautiful, handpicked gardens!*

We will tour six beautifully curated gardens showcasing the best in local design and style and two private working farms featuring the abundance of gardening.

Enjoy the luxury of a private coach for the scenic drive to Homer and overnight accommodations at Aspen Suite Hotel.

It is the perfect opportunity to gather your AMGA friends and turn this into a memorable mid-week getaway offering fresh inspiration, connection and discovery!

Our first stop will be in Sterling at "Cranberry Hill" a lovely private garden boasting overflowing flower beds, berry bushes, greenhouse and she is famous for delphiniums.

Next stop, Soldotna Creek Park along the Kenai River. Wednesday's are alive with booths & food trucks, where we have the opportunity for lunch before heading on to Homer.

Our first glimpse of Homer is from the lookout high above the city, with breathtaking views! Homer is known as The City of Peonies and has 25 peony farms! We are thrilled our first garden is *Alaska Perfect Peony* who process about 100,000 peony stems in a season! Then the Adams Garden, a lush, mature and extensive garden with a backdrop of incredible views of the bay. A real treat – after the tour, enjoy a catered dinner on the deck!

Day two is filled with three spectacular private gardens offering fresh inspiration. And finish with Synergy Gardens, fabulous market garden using Bio-Intensive market gardening techniques! We bid farewell and head back to Anchorage inspired by gardens we saw!

Cost \$195*: Limited to 20 AMGA members

This covers the coach, catered dinner and the garden tours. Other meals and the Aspen Hotel (\$335 (2) queen beds per room) are to be paid directly to the restaurants and hotel by participants.

Palmer Garden Tour – a Summer Favorite – August 11, cost \$25pp

We were so successful last year we are offering another summer tour to Palmer!

We have a private coach for the scenic daytrip to Palmer. *Limit 35 people.*

Questions: dawn@alaskamastergardeners.org

These tours are organized for AMGA members only

ANOTHER PLANT SALE IN THE BOOKS!



Thank you to all the volunteers who made the April 18 Midtown Mall plant sale a huge success again this year, including new AMGA member Deborah Barta, above left, as well as Board members Nancy Tone and Jan van den Top. Sales totaled \$2,560; sellers keep 75% and 25% goes to AMGA. The event is a great outreach opportunity and seems to be more popular each year. The wet weather probably helped keep people indoors! AMGA also hosts a fall sale sometime in August. Interested in selling plants? [Find all the details on our website.](#)

TOO MANY PLANTS? COME TO THE SEEDLING SWAP!

Who? Hosted by Anchorage Permaculture Guild and Anchor Gardens. All are welcome.

What? Annual seedling exchange

When: Sunday, May 17, 1 - 4 PM.

Where: Bridget's spacious and beautiful fenced lot at W. 36th Ave. in Woodland Park, between Willow St. and Kirby Pl. It has ample parking across the street at the former Boys & Girls Club.

Bring: Marked seedlings to share, if you have extras, plus anything else garden-related that is in good usable shape. **Optional:** Light potluck snacks and beverages to share, and a camping chair for visiting around a campfire.

Take: Anything you see that you want for your own garden! After the event, all excess seedlings and garden supplies, etc. will be donated to Yarducopia's Community Garden and Midtown Garden Depot at Benson Blvd. & Cheechako St.



Happy swappers at last year's seedling exchange!

HERB STUDY: TEA PARTY

Herb Study members and friends met for a soiree at the home of AMGA Board member Jerelyn Miyashiro. Attendees tasted a variety of delicious teas, beverages, and homegrown or foraged treats. It was a pleasure to sample various herbs like mint, sage, lemon balm, and even fireweed! Highlights included mocktails with rose, peony, and rhubarb syrups, as well as Alaskan shrimp, smoked salmon with nasturtium capers, herbed deviled eggs, tundra berry tarts, and lemon verbena ices as well as other Alaskan cranberry, raspberry and rhubarb desserts. Here's the recipe for Jerelyn's fantastic soup:

Moroccan Sweet Potato Soup

SAUTE until soft:

- 2 t olive oil
- 1 c onions diced
- ½ c celery diced

ADD and sauté till fragrant

- ½ c green pepper chopped
- garlic- 1-5 cloves minced
- 2 t grated ginger root

ADD spices and mix well

- 1 t cumin
- 1 t curry powder
- 1 t coriander powder
- 1 t chili powder
- ½ t salt
- ¼ t pepper

ADD remaining ingredients,

- 4-8c vegetable broth
- 3 c cubed sweet potatoes (or two 13 oz cans)
- 1 can tomatoes (19 oz)
- 1 can chick peas (19 oz)
- 2 T lemon juice

Bring to boil: reduce heat and simmer, covered, 20 min.

Stir in: 1-2 heaping tablespoon of peanut butter.

Partially blend soup to smooth texture if desired.

Top with:

- cilantro, sour cream/yogurt, and /or chopped peanuts



Tea party hats modeled by Sharon Schlicht, left, and Shirley Mathews. Emily Becker photo.



Herb Study tea party attendees. Yes, plant tags for name tags! Jerelyn Miyashiro photo.

The Herb Study Group picks one herb per month for a deep dive and knowledge exchange. See previous newsletters for articles about studied herbs. The last spring meeting of the Herb Study Group will be a plant exchange on May 8th. All are welcome! Email: anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com.

ALL ABOUT HERBS with Jerelyn Miyashiro and Debbie Hinchey

Herb mavens Jerelyn and Debbie presented to a packed AMGA member meeting on April 20th about growing herbs in Alaska. They shared numerous tips and tricks for propagating a wide assortment of culinary herbs. Here's a handful:

Cilantro: Bolts easily; plant in succession.

Oregano: Cold temps reduce flavor. Heads up, there are culinary and ornamental types; bees love the ornamentals but they aren't for cooking.

Sweet cicely: Tastes good, tolerates shade, but reseeds prolifically and has large roots (audible grumbling from audience.)

Lovage: Extremely hardy, tall, and shade-tolerant. Fantastic perennial, what are you waiting for.

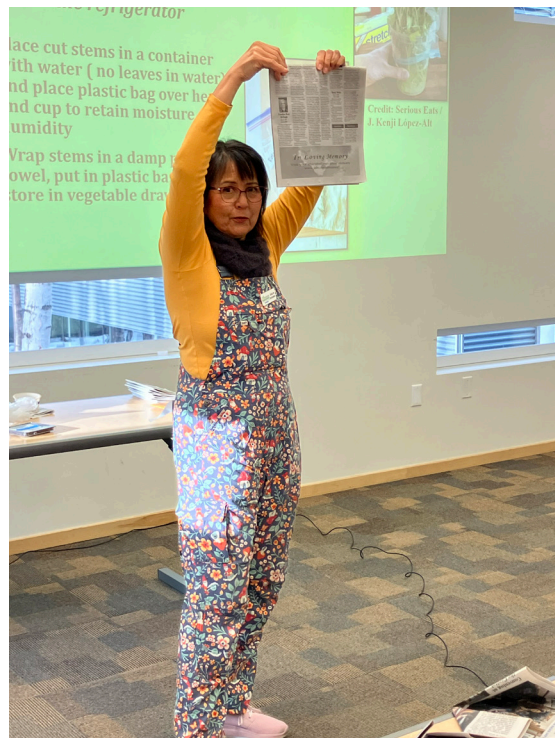
Lemon verbena: Aspirational for most, but are you a master gardener or not?

Rosemary: Overwinter at 40°F; do not prune before hibernation.

Basil: Give up trying outside; use an Aerogarden.

Garlic: Requires deep mulch, approximately 10 inches.

Chives: The flowers are edible, but don't put them on cake.



Jerelyn teaches us how to make an origami planting pot.



Go to YouTube and look up how to make a "seed snail." This garden trend is an innovation in seed starting!



Success! Barbara Bachmeier with her origami pot.

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
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
Jan van den Top, 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

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](https://www.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

