ALASKA MASTER GARDENERS ANCHORAGE

NEWSLETTER
November 2026
VOLUME 28, ISSUE 11

HAVE WE GOT A JOB FOR YOU! by Nancy Tone

We launched our October member meeting with hundreds of 2026 garden photos, and then carried on to our main event: the celebration of all of us…volunteers in this great club!

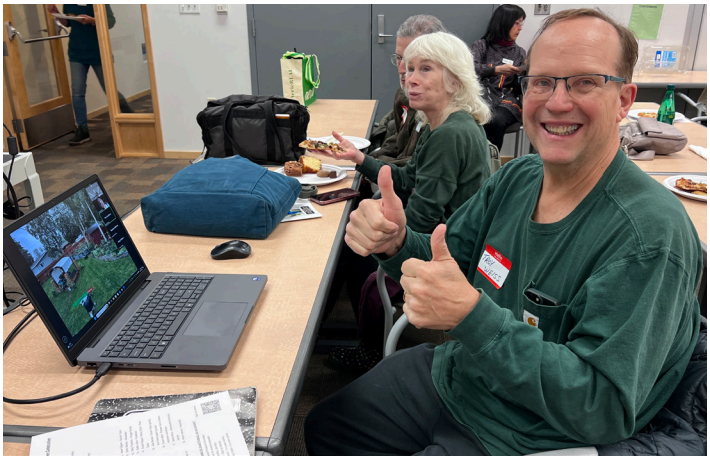
We enjoyed a delightful evening of stories, delicious food, and recaps from the lead volunteers for each of our numerous club and community projects. This event gave us a broad overview of our member-led, widespread community involvement and the newly created innovations to which our club members have contributed this year. We all volunteer and this was truly a great acknowledgement of our combined efforts. If you weren't present, we say thank you now for your help.

The AMGA Board members who are rotating out have created vacancies and opportunities for our members to join and become part of the fabric that has grown this club. They each delivered a brief description of their work and benefits of each role. Our board has adopted a "buddy system" which directly connects new members to have a "phone a friend" at any time.

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So, in closing, as our club has reached the 300-member mark, please come play with any of the projects and the board, as we look forward to November when we have you stand up to join us on our Board or any of our projects this this year. Email dawn@alaskamastergardeners.org. Thank you all!



Got tech skills? Longtime AMGA Board Member Troy Weiss is looking to train a new volunteer to run Zoom for member meetings.



AMGA members new and old listen to Treasurer Jan van den Top, who is ready to pass the torch to someone new. Details for the Treasurer position are on page 2.

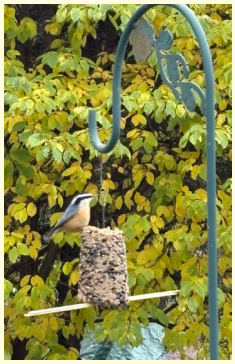
Cover: Double blush-style peonies seen on the August 2026 Palmer tour. All photos this page by Tony Flores.

SEPTEMBER 2026 TREASURER'S REPORT

Balances on 8/31/2026		
Checking S-88	$13,770.19	
Savings S-2	$ 5.25	
Savings S-29	$ 17,249.59	
CD General 2 year mature; 1/3/27	$ 11,793.18	
CD General 1 year; mature 1/30/27	$ 10,988.60	
Total Assets		$ 53,806.81
Interest/Dividends		$175.50
This month's revenue		
Membership	$39.99	
Donations	$200.00	
Garlic sale	$16.43	
Botanical Garden scarecrow	$92.99	
Total Revenue		$349.41
This month's expenses		
NEON 1	$125.00	
Grants	$300	
Operations	$206	
Website Maintenance	$	
Pioneer Home Garden	$	
Postage/Box Rental	$	
Fundraising/plant sale	$3,154.25	
Newsletter	$39.99	
Postage/Box rental	$	
2026 Special Events (scarecrow)	$200	
Total Expenses this month		$ 4,025.24
Balances On 9/30/2026		
Checking S-88	$ 10,094.36	
Savings S-2	$ 5.25	
Savings S-29	$ 17,253.84	
CD General 2 Year 2.71%, (1/23/27)	$ 11,867.49	
CD General 1 Year 4.07% (1/30/27)	$11,085.54	
Total Assets on 9/30/26		$ 50,306.48
Prepared by Jan van den Top		

November Member Meeting

Buzz Scher: *Birds You Can Expect at Your Backyard Bird Feeders and Flowers to Plant to Feed Them Through the Winter*



Bitsy Lawhorn photo.

and a craft activity:

Build a Bird Seed Log

and Board elections!

November 16th
6:00 - 7:30 pm
BP Energy Center

All are welcome.

Good with numbers?
Reliable and efficient?

We want you to be our next AMGA Treasurer!

Longtime Treasurer Jan van den Top is ready to train a new volunteer. Duties include:

- Attend board meetings on the second Monday of each month, 5:30–7:00 PM
- Write 3-5 checks per month, download financial documents, and create online record
- Training includes: Neon One reports, financial recordkeeping, reporting, and other Treasurer responsibilities. After six months of training, you will transition into the Treasurer lead role.

Email dawn@anchoragemastergardeners.org

Herb Study Group: Flax by Jerelyn Miyashiro

Did you know that the flaxseed meal, used in smoothies, comes from the same plant that produces your favorite linen shirt and linoleum floors? Humans have used *Linum usitatissimum* for thousands of years, and the Latin name "usitatissimum" means "most useful."

Humans have historically used flaxseed oil for industrial purposes, plant fiber for textiles, and recently as a dietary supplement. Linseed and flaxseed are names for the same seed. "Flax" refers to the plant, its fibers, and edible products, while "line" or "lin," from Old English origins, refers to the oil-rich seed for industrial use.

Flax is a short-lived annual subshrub with a solitary erect stem and multiple branches. It produces pale blue flowers with five petals, 1/2" across, that last a day and wilt quickly. The flowering season is from June to August. The leaves are alternate, stalkless, pale green, and lanceolate in shape. The fruit is a globular pod with distinct cells containing 10 brown seeds, about 1/4" long. It's native to Turkey, West Asia, and Iran.



Common flax, Linum usitatissimum, photographed in Hamburg, Germany, by iNaturalist user phygelius. CC-BY-NC

A notable property of the flax plant is that immature seedpods are poisonous, and all other plant parts contain cyanogenetic glucosides that can convert to hydrogen cyanide as a defense against herbivores and pathogens when tissues are damaged.

Flax prefers moist, well-drained, mildly acidic to alkaline soil but tolerates dry rocky soil and grows in full sun in zones 4a through 8b. Canada grows 40% of the world's flaxseed, and the US grows flaxseed for oil in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana.

Linseed oil is a unique drying oil that hardens into a tough solid film. The oil penetrates wood deeply, soaking into fibers instead of forming a plastic film on the surface. It highlights wood grain and is used as a drying oil finish or varnish in the arts. It's an important ingredient in printers' ink and paint.

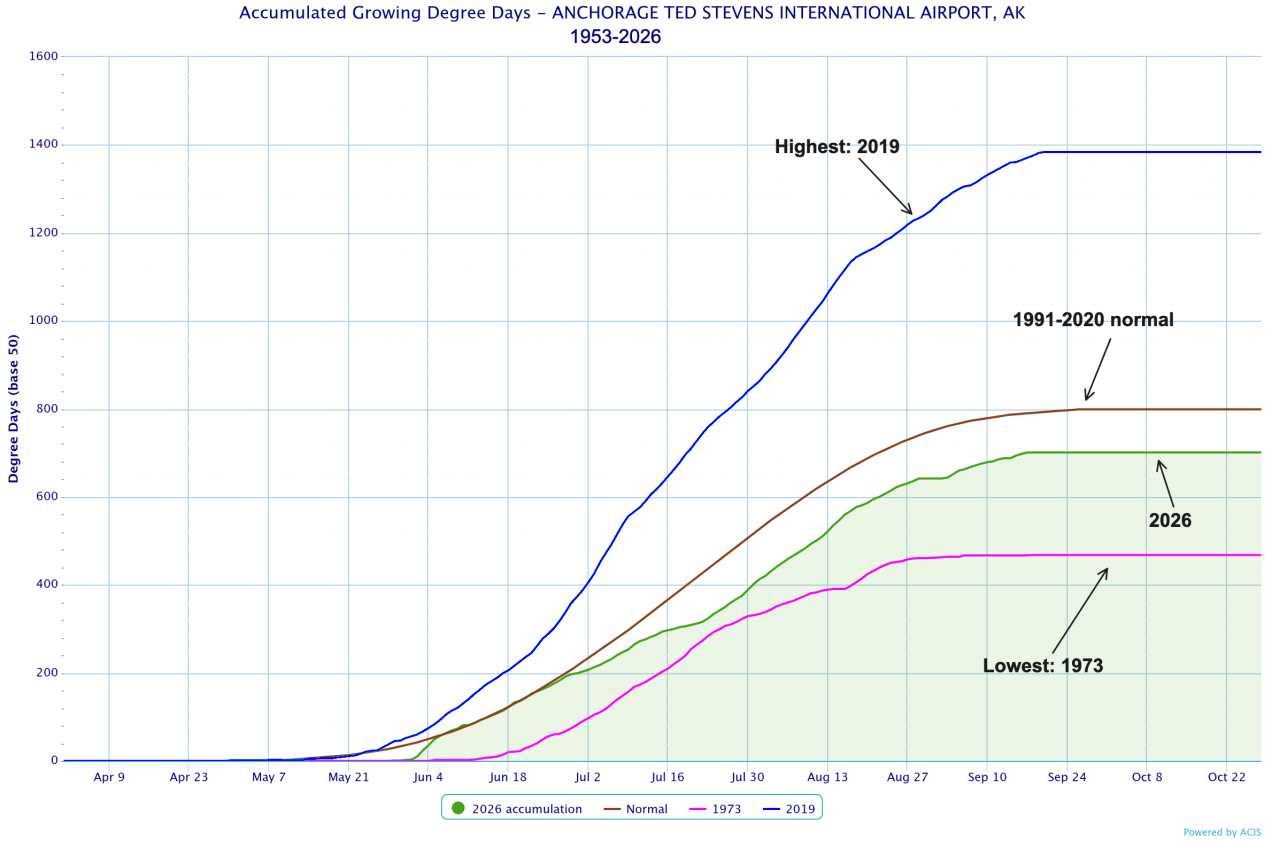
Linoleum, invented in England in 1860 by Frederick Walton, uses linseed oil's oxidative polymerization properties to form flooring and consists of linseed oil, pine rosin, cork dust, wood flour, and limestone. No chemicals are required in this eco-friendly manufacturing process, and linoleum is gaining popularity as consumers seek 100% recyclable, natural products.

Flax fiber for linen, twice as strong as cotton and naturally smooth and straight, was the primary plant-based cloth until the 19th century. With the invention of the cotton gin, cotton soon replaced linen and led to the demise of the U.S. linen industry. Once the world's main fiber for clothing, linen is making a comeback as the world seeks sustainable and regenerative fiber sources. Cotton requires massive amounts of water, fertilizer, and pesticides to produce versus flax, which requires much less water, is resistant to pest pressure, and is a drought-tolerant crop, making it more climate-resilient. Check out the **PA Flax Project** for efforts to revive Pennsylvania's fiber flax industry and promote regional, sustainable textile supply chains. Also, listen to the podcast "**The PA Flax Project & the Return of American Linen**" by Eric Hurlock. It's inspiring and makes you think about what you are wearing.

The flaxseed health hype is real, as science and medical research have shown that the nutrients in flaxseed meal and oils, high in vitamins and minerals, provide benefits improving energy metabolism and cell function. The fiber (soluble and insoluble) from flaxseed meal slows digestion to stabilize blood sugar and supports beneficial gut bacteria and gut health.

Flax, a highly useful plant in ancient times, could again be a solution to modern problems in the face of climate change.

2026: BELOW AVERAGE GROWING DEGREE DAYS



This season had the lowest accumulated warmth (base 50ºF) since 2012 and about 13 percent below the 1991-2020 average. Graphic shows the highest season, 2019, and the lowest season, 1973. ***Map and caption courtesy Rick Thoman, Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Preparedness, International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.***

Herb Study Group dates and topics for 2026-2027:

2026
November 14 - Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)
December 11 - Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*)

2027
January 8 - Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*)
February 12 - Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*)
March 12 - Curry plant (*Helichrysum italicum*)
April 9 - Arnica (*Arnica montana*)
May 14 - Herb Study Tea Party
May 21 - Plant Exchange

email: anchorageherbstudygroup@gmail.com



Volunteers assisting Debbie Hinchey, seated, in the Centennial Rose Garden on Oct. 20th.

YOUR 2027 AMGA BOARD CANDIDATES

The AMGA Board of Directors Election will take place at the member meeting on November 16th. The following members are staying on: Dawn Groth, Rich Ervin, Roz Goodman, Ellen Kirchner, Nancy Tone, and Jerelyn Miyashiro. Here are your new Board member candidates, to be elected by acclamation:



Linda Uttech: As a dedicated self taught home gardener, I have a passion for all things gardening, in particular, the designs of English gardens. I love learning, teaching, and sharing knowledge with others. Gardening is an incredibly valuable endeavor for anyone young or old, improving overall health, building community and so rewarding. Plus it's just plain fun!

My career as Director of Property Operations at the Hilton Anchorage Hotel and later as Director of Facilities Operations for Northrim Bank designing and building new banks across the state of Alaska has been instrumental in curating my love of design. I look forward to the opportunity to serve on the Board helping to facilitate the growth of AMGA.



Julie Becker: My name is Julie Becker and I became a Master Gardener in 1990, while also supporting another board. A few years ago, I took Brenda Adams' excellent Advanced Master Gardener design class, which continues to inspire me to enhance my garden, especially in the winter. Most recently, I helped bring our Dahlia Pardon scarecrow to life. This coming year, I'm looking to help garden tour hosts get garden-reveal ready with the Dream Team. I'm also interested in making a commitment to our wonderful Board of generous-hearted gardeners.



Ashley Saupe is an Alaska-born outdoor educator, risk management expert, and founder and host of **The Sharp End Podcast**, where adventurers share lessons from wilderness accidents and survival experiences. With over a decade of experience guiding and teaching for Outward Bound and NOLS, Saupe is a certified EMT and wilderness safety manager with expertise in remote logistics and survival television.

Beyond her passion for mountaineering, climbing, and backcountry exploration, Saupe has loved gardening since childhood, inspired by helping her Grandma Bernice tend her flower garden in College Village. In 2026, she completed her Master Gardener course and looks forward to displaying her certification in her first home in Government Hill.



Jason Warta is a lifelong Alaskan and software developer with a background in building and maintaining technology systems. Outside of his professional work, he enjoys gardening, experimenting with indoor hydroponics, and exploring ways to extend Alaska's short growing season. As a board member at-large, Jason will bring his technical experience to support AMGA's use of Neon One and other technology-related initiatives.

Your AMGA Dues in Action! Reports from Grant Recipients



From Yael Hickok, ***Friends of Boyer's Orchard:*** *While every year is a little different, the 2026 growing season was by far the strangest. A very long and cold winter refused to let go of its grip, morphed into a cold and cloudy spring (if you could even call it spring), and then into a warm and very dry June.*

July and August gave us whiplash of weather changes, and the autumn was brilliantly beautiful. At Boyer's, we saw a record-high number of visitors and a record-low fruit harvest. Still, we enjoyed some beautiful events and activities, and made many new friends. We thank you all for the many ways you have shown love. Whether you attended a book reading or a celebration, volunteered, donated, or sponsored a tree, we felt your support, and so did the trees!



Update from Sharon Schlict: *Thirty-five years ago, Friends of Town Square Park in Anchorage began selling commemorative bricks to raise funds to complete the park project. Those bricks became part of the park's walkways. This summer the bricks were removed prior to the start of reconstruction of the park, and they were made available to the people who originally purchased them. Julie Riley, our former Cooperative Extension Services horticulture agent, purchased one of those bricks and had it inscribed with Master Gardeners. She is graciously donating her Master Gardeners brick to be placed in a garden maintained by Master Gardeners at the Anchorage Pioneer Home. The exact location for the brick has not been determined yet, but look for it in the future resting among the flowers.*

Got an idea for helping AMGA?
Fill out this questionnaire!

Want to help with a specific task from your own home?
Sign up here.

Ready to get hands-on?
Check out this catalog of projects!

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
Vacant	Calendar of Events
Brenda Adams	Advanced MG Course
Kathy Liska	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
Brenda Adams	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
YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCvZehJprKkjQzivQvNDKopQ
Google Group: https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/AkMGA
Membership issues/address updates: diane@alaskamastergardeners.org
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