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AMGA
NEWSLETTER

February 2015
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Message From Lynne Opstad Co-President AMGA

We are off to a good start for 2015. The board elections are finalized, with a 51% return rate on ballots and all four candidates receiving overwhelming support for their term on the board. Our newest board members are Harry Deuber, Phyllis Rogers and Melanie San Angelo, with Cheryl Shroyer returning for another term. Each brings their own unique talents and ideas to the board and the rest of the board is very happy to welcome them to our team. We will be picking board positions at the February board meeting and will announce the decisions at the February educational meeting and in the next newsletter.

Did you know that January's newsletter started the 17th year of publication? Gina Docherty started as the first newsletter editor in 1998 and continues on today doing as excellent a job as ever. The recent Newsletter Survey confirmed that our members are very happy with the AMGA newsletter. Jane Baldwin just finished storing every issue of the newsletter on disc for the AMGA archives. Jane also archived every Directory that has been published. Without these two volunteers the AMGA would not be what it is today. And let's not forget Sandy Harrington who continues to provide us with that all important Directory, and Mary Rydesky who handles the Survey Monkey election balloting for us.

It feels like we are going full throttle with projects for 2015. Julie continues to work with the contractor to set up the new "Master Gardener Volunteer Central" system. The goal is to have one central location for Master Gardeners to volunteer through and to document the thousands of volunteer hours provided by Master Gardeners every year.

The educational meeting programs for the next year are finalized, thanks to Greg Kalal. The Advanced Master Gardener course on Propagation continues through this spring. We are putting the final touches on the Grant Program and collecting ideas on how as a group we can help celebrate the Anchorage Centennial.

Membership is at 247 and growing. The 2015 Directory is almost ready, look for it in your mailboxes around the first week of March.

Pioneer Home planning is underway with Erma MacMillan taking over the design, and Julie Ginder and Joyce Smith stepping up to coordinate the volunteers.

Cindy Walker and her committee are collecting and organizing books and magazines for AMGA book sale at The Mall at the Sears Garden Show on April 4th. Also mark your calendars for the August 8th second annual AMGA plant sale.

And last but not least, Anchorage will be hosting the 2016 statewide Master Gardener Conference. If you have ideas on topics or speakers you would like to see at the conference let a board member know, and of course, we will need lots of volunteers. If you are interested in helping with the conference don't wait for someone to ask, let a board member know, whether you can help for one hour or serve on a committee. Planning for the 2016 Master Gardener Conference starts this month.

There are so many volunteers that work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep our organization functioning. We thank each and every one of you!

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AMGA January Meeting Recap

The AMGA Annual Meeting was held in conjunction with our Educational Meeting on January 19th with 41 people in attendance. The 2014 Annual Report was presented and minutes from the previous annual meeting were accepted. Next we discussed ways to commemorate the Anchorage Centennial, with Debbie Hinchey introducing the idea to spruce up the Anchorage Centennial Rose Garden. Members were asked to submit any other ideas to the board.

Gretchen Fowler's presentation on Vertical Gardening was very informative. People install green walls to liven up spaces. They can be considered living art. She showed us examples of green walls, small desk top cubes, full inside wall installations, and outside constructions around the world. Some considerations she brought up are that the lighting and watering needs of the plants need to be consistent, drainage needs to be well thought out, and that green walls are high maintenance. Gretchen showed us four examples of construction materials, different wicking types and described the pros and cons of them. For more information on Green Walls refer to the December issue of our Newsletter, page 4.

Growing Young Gardeners: Valentine's Day by Amy Reed, MG

I have always felt that Valentine's Day is a manufactured greeting card holiday. Our significant others run out and spend \$79.99 at the florist for the dozen roses that a week prior were only \$12.99. We buy pink and red cards that profess our dying love for one another, recycled or stuffed in a filing cabinet soon after. We make reservations at expensive restaurants that push our wallets and waistbands to the limit. My preschooler and I pour over



her class list and select the perfect lollipop flavor for each of her friends to go with the store-bought cartoon Valentine's. Do these all seem like familiar scenarios?

We collectively decided as a family we will use Valentine's Day this year for experiences, not gifts. No store bought cards, no chocolate, and no overpriced roses that will wilt in a week. We will have to do the Valentine's Day lollipops for the preschool class, but that is unavoidable. Peer pressure in preschool!

One experience that is making our Valentine's Day to-do list (lovely it is on a Saturday this year!) is a hike in the Chugach State Park. Not only is my daughter in charge of finding trail markers along the way but also picking out the perfect walking sticks. She is fascinated with the fact that she can touch cow's parsnip stems in the winter, but not in the summer. She also likes that the stems are hollow and can be megaphones or telescopes, depending on her mood. It is a good time to collect fallen pinecones and point out birds along the way.

Another experience for Valentine's Day is making paint-

ed stones to decorate around the indoor flower pots. We use river stones that you can buy at Michaels or the craft section at Walmart. Tempera paint, while chalky, washes off easy, making it a good choice for kids. Acrylic paint makes a glossy finish. After painting the rocks, let them dry at least an hour between coats, and overnight for the best effect. To keep the paint from chipping, spray on clear sealer.

On the menu for Valentine's Day is a Garden Stromboli. Our recipe includes:

1 13.8 oz Pillsbury Refrigerated Pizza Crust tube (if you have a favorite pizza crust recipe, you can substitute)
1/4 cup tomato sauce
1/4 cup onion
1/4 cup green or red bell pepper
1 cup mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup tomatoes
1/4 tsp basil or dried Italian seasoning
**add any favorite ingredients you desire...we love to add pineapple and Canadian bacon

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Spray cookie sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Unroll the dough and place on sprayed cookie sheet in the center, pressing dough into a 12 X 8 inch rectangle. Spread the sauce within 2 inches of the long sides and 1 inch of the short sides. Place ingredients down the center and finish with the cheese and seasoning. Fold long sides over filling and press edges to seal. Bake at 400 degrees F for 15-20 minutes until crust is brown.

May your Valentine's Day be filled with love and cherished experiences!

Treasurer's Report

Balances 11/30/14		
Checking account	7915.91	
Savings account	11684.49	
	<u>\$19600.40</u>	
Dedicated Funds		\$6468.52

Revenue:	
Donation	260.00
Interest	6.19
Membership	1974.45
	<u>\$2250.64</u>

Expense:	
Operations	49.99
	<u>\$49.99</u>

Balances 12/31/14		
Checking account	10100.37	
Savings account	11685.98	
	<u>\$21786.35</u>	
Dedicated Funds		\$6483.22



On the Joy of Pain Free Knees By Brenda C. Adams

In October I had my other knee replaced. Now I have a matching pair each with a cute little zipper-like line running down the middle. They're oh so attractive! AMGA past-president Nickel LaFleur recently ventured into having her first knee replacement, and I am sure there are many other Alaska Master Gardeners also working on their bionic physiques or giving it some serious thought.

Since we gardeners tend to bang our knees around and stress the heck out of them, I thought it might be helpful to share some painfully earned thoughts on both the experience of replacement and its results and some of things you can do to avoid needing new knees in the first place.

First, what would I do differently? I'd do it sooner. Call me chicken, but I was simply scared to do what is in essence elective surgery. Oh, yes, I rationalized that the technology was improving every year, and this or that shot helped me limp along sufficiently. But the reality is that each year I compromised my activities. I no longer skied. I stopped hiking, dancing, and even walking for exercise. I got totally out of aerobic shape.

I still gardened intensely both in my own gardens and those of others that I design and build with my team of employees at Gardens By Design. Nonetheless, I compromised here too. I could no longer carry things around the gardens. I struggled to dig up a large perennial that needed dividing. I had to hire someone to mow my sloping lawn. In short, I leaned on my team - a lot!

Finally, one day one of them told me she'd had her knee replaced in her thirties due to an injury from a car accident and suggested I should get on with it. Then she said the magic words. She said she could dance again after the surgery. At once, I remembered how much I enjoyed dancing. Oh, to be able to do that again! It's funny what creates a tipping point, but for me the thought of dancing again was it.

While there is risk in any surgery, particularly a major one like a knee replacement, and not all new knees come out perfectly, I am so glad I finally had mine done. I am pain free for the first time in more than 15 years! That's a long time and I am enjoying a fabulous outcome.

So, can I dance now? You bet. I can also mow my own lawn again, walk a couple of fast-paced miles without panting, and I know I could snowshoe, if only we had some snow.

It takes a lot of work to get good results. Your surgeon's skill is vitally important, but personal commitment is the key to true success. Based on what I learned from my first replacement, I worked much harder at the prescribed exercises leading up to the second one. For six weeks prior to surgery, I exercised twice a day for more than an hour each session. I began walking distances on level ground even though it hurt. Ice and aspirin became my close companions, but I was in much better condition going into the second surgery. The result was the muscles around my knee were stronger and "woke up" faster after surgery than the first time when

I did just the bare minimum of pre-surgery exercise.

My better conditioning and a new pain abatement procedure devised by Dr. Liu at Regional saw me out of bed the night of surgery and doing laps around the nurses' station. Six weeks of intense rehab with a daily regimen of two hours plus of exercise on my own at home and I was at full speed and flexibility after eight weeks. Each person's recovery varies. I am particularly lucky to be a good healer, and the results are fabulous. Being pain free is just wonderful.

On the other hand it's possible there are some things I could have done earlier in my life to still have pain free natural knees. Here are a few of them you might consider, especially those of you who still have young healthy knees!

ALWAYS use a kneeling pad when gardening on your knees. **NEVER** fall to your knees from a standing position. Kneel down gently. Take similar care when you stand back up to avoid stressing the knee joint.

Use equipment to lighten the load on your knees. Rather than walking around the uneven terrain of a garden carrying weight like a bag or two of mulch, put it on a dolly or in a cart or wheelbarrow to move it.

Avoid jumping from rock to rock to get from place to place. Take the time to walk around instead. The same goes for jumping from heights; find a low impact way to get down from on high.

Don't jump on a shovel when digging up a large plant. Use a pick or other tool to loosen the soil or lift the plant using a fork. A lifting fork will go into the soil so much easier than forcing a shovel into a compressed area or one full of roots.

Reduce the duration of repetitive activity that stresses your knees. Vary your routine in the garden. Take a few minutes from time to time to sit and rest. This is a good opportunity to assess how your knees, back and other highly used or stressed parts of your body are feeling.

Do warm up and cool down exercises before and after you garden. Stretch your thigh muscles.

Make it a lifetime habit of strengthening the muscles that surround and support your knees. They are the "core" of your legs.

Beyond gardening, try fast walking rather than jogging as an aerobic exercise or even better, swim. High impact sports can be fun and enjoyable, but they can take a toll on your knees.

Genetics play a role in all this and in who will need new knees, but I encourage you to give your knees a break whenever you can do so. After all, we need to save them for gardening - and dancing, of course.

Brenda Adams is a Master Gardener and author of *There's a Moose in My Garden: Designing Gardens in Alaska and the Far North*. See her design work at www.gardensbybrenda.com.

Cleaning Garden Tools
Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor
University of Vermont
<http://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articleS.htm>
[Reprinted with permission]

Cleaning your garden tools regularly after use is ideal, but at the least they should be cleaned before putting them away for winter. Clean tools work more effectively, so are easier to use, and they last longer.

Keeping blades sharp improves cutting, which is easier on you and the plants. Keeping tools used in soil cleaned keeps their edges sharper too, preventing rust from forming, and removes possible disease-laden soil particles. Cleaning tools even more often when working on infected plants is essential to prevent disease spread. If pruning diseased limbs from trees, keep a container of rubbing alcohol, bleach (one part to 9 parts water), or disinfectant (such as Lysol) handy to dip blades in between pruning each plant to avoid spreading disease.

For tools such as shovels, hoes and garden forks that are used in soil, wash them after use with a forceful stream of water from the hose. For stubborn soils such as clay, use a wire-bristle brush or dull implement if needed. Then dry tools with a rag. For blades of saws and pruners that end up with sticky plant sap, such as from evergreens (pines, spruces and the like), use some paint thinner to remove the sap before wiping with a rag.

Even after cleaning, the worn metal can rust, even more so if higher grade steel. To prevent this, wipe tools or spray with a very light coat of motor oil. Some dilute this with kerosene, 2 parts oil to one of kerosene. Others recycle their old oil from mowers for this use. You can wipe the oil on with an old rag or paper towel, spray it on with a hand sprayer, or make a mix of the oil with sand to push tools into after each use. The latter is easy, quick, and the sand helps provide some abrasion to remove soil in the process. The oil breaks down rapidly in the soil, and little is used, so you shouldn't have any negative soil effects.

For hand tools, some use a strong black tea. Brew up enough in a pan or kettle to cover the tools, then let them, or blades at least, soak for a few hours after the tea is cooled. Rust should wipe off easily with a rag. If tools aren't very dirty or rusty, a balled up handful of wax paper rubbed over surfaces may be sufficient—both cleaning and leaving some protective wax on them.

If tools have gotten severely rusted, you may need to use rough sandpaper, and even perhaps a wire bristle brush. For the most rusted, you may need to use a drill with wire brush attachment. For the latter in particular, make sure to wear safety glasses. Then make sure to wipe and coat with oil.

Sharpen tools too, at least at the end of the season. Best is to sharpen them regularly as used during the season. This is more important if tools have rusted. For dull large tools such as shovels, axes, and spades, you can use a hand file available from hardware or home stores. If very dull, you may need a high speed grinding stone or drill attachment. As with cleaning, make sure to wear eye protection if using a high-speed grinder.

If using a grinder made for this purpose, as some do with lawn mower blades, it is easy to get carried away. If the metal heats up too much it can lose its "temper", meaning it won't hold an edge well again. If grinding, keep the metal from heating by dipping in cold water. It should remain cool to the touch. Improper sharpening of mower blades can make them out of balance, which can harm the mower motor as it turns at high speeds.

For finer tools such as pruners and loppers, an oil stone or honing stone is what many gardeners use. I spend a bit more for a good quality handfile, such as with cut diamond or carbon surface, to make the job go much better and more quickly.

Whatever sharpener you use, follow any directions so they work properly. If using a stone, slide the blade along the stone in one direction, doing so repeatedly until sharper. If using a file, such as "mill file" from a hardware store, get one with a handle so you can maneuver it more easily. Draw the cutting teeth of the blade along the edge of the tool in one direction. Keep the file at an angle to the edge of the tool surface you're sharpening.

So how sharp is enough? Anything of course helps. Tools such as shovels and hoes don't need to be as sharp, and pruners should be more sharp. You can feel the sharpness with fingers (be careful of sharp knives or pruners), or just look at the "bevel" and angle. The bevel is the sharpened edge, the angle is between the two edges or bevels. Duller tools have a shorter edge or bevel, and generally wider angle—perhaps 30 degrees between the sides or bevels. Sharper tools have a longer bevel, and more narrow angle between each side—perhaps 15 degrees or so.

Many tools now have plastic handles, but if you have one with wood, treat it as well for longest life. Rub wooden handles with a rag, slightly moistened with linseed oil or other wood protection oil product.

Once tools are cleaned and sharpened, store them properly in a closet, garage, or shed out of the weather. Keeping them off the floor helps prevent any moisture and rust, and dulling. I like to hang mine by the handles. If straight handles, I hang upside down with ten-penny nails used to hold the tool itself. When buying new tools consider stainless steel ones, if available, that are easier to keep clean.

Weird Weather: What's A Gardener to do? By Cheryl Chapman

It finally happened: Winter packed its bags and headed south with the snowbirds in October to wait out the cold and dark, leaving Anchorage gardeners wringing their hands over snow-starved perennials. As of Jan. 22, every sprint sled dog race in Anchorage had been canceled due to lack of snow, and there were even rumblings of moving the Iditarod's restart to Fairbanks, though that may change with the storm that moved up the Kenai the weekend of Jan. 23. As of Jan. 25, Anchorage had recorded only 6.2 inches of snow for the month, to the 8.7 inches considered normal. Only 18.4 inches total had fallen since the season began; the average by Jan. 27 typically is almost 4 feet, or 47.5 inches.

Until the week of Jan. 19, temperatures had mostly lost their bite as well. On Jan. 5, Tyler, Texas, "Rose Capital of the World," posted a 22-degree high compared with Anchorage's 34 degrees, and it looks as if 2014 will go down as the warmest year on record for the city. Sunday, Jan. 25, was the first time in 394 days that temperatures officially dropped below zero, the Alaska Dispatch News said.

Balmy (for Anchorage) temperatures for months. Not enough snow to reach a vole's nose in some places. But, says horticulturist Mike Monterusso, gardens and facilities manager at the Alaska Botanical Garden, there is hope, and hard years are not unprecedented. The winter of 2013, for instance, was one of freezes and thaws, a nightmare for perennials.

"We had adequate snow cover, but we had such warm temperatures, we lost all the snow in April and May," he said. "Then it got really cold again. Some people reported losing 50 to 60 percent of their perennials." Winter's encore that mid-May came long after the willows had budded and plants had begun stirring. Late snow May 17 and 18 stretched the season to a record 232 days and temperatures plunged to 26 degrees two weeks before Memorial Day, putting icicle beards on barbecues that had been dragged from garages to patios.

"No snow combined with cold is a bad scenario, but what happens this spring will be the important thing," said Monterusso. "What we want to do is to keep perennials under stable conditions."

"The best way to prepare perennials for winter is to promote healthy plants all year long," he said. "You need to see that they're getting all the water and nutrients they need and don't go into winter stressed. Some people spread a couple of inches of compost in the fall or in the spring. We do it in the fall (the ABG has more than 1,300 different kinds of perennials to be blanketed) because that's when we have large volunteer groups."

"Sensitive plants, marginally hardy plants and new plantings, especially trees and shrubs, should have at least 3 inches or more of winter mulch. Winter

mulch is different from seasons-long mulch because it should be applied after the first hard freeze and then removed in spring. It's for insulation rather than for moisture retention or weed suppression. It evens out extremes.

"It should be kept away from the bark or trunks but spread over plant roots, though not too early or it will prevent dormancy. We use shredded hemlock, and collect leaves that fall on the paths as well. Any shredded bark is good. Lots of people use thick blankets of dry leaves. Straw is fine, but messy. The wind blows it, birds carry it here and there and by spring there'll be trails of straw all over the garden.

"In the nursery, we overwinter our plants that are in pots by packing them together on their sides, then covering them with bark, then with a porous tarp and then more bark." Come snow, Monterusso paces around the holding areas, tramping the snow down hard so voles, shrews and mice can't tunnel into what amounts to an ABG smorgasbord of captive perennials. He scatters pellets of fragrant mint and rosemary around the perimeter; rodents recoil at the scent, he said.

Pest surges appear to be more cyclical than temperature-related, he said, but it would be good, if warmer conditions, for gardeners to start checking for them early, and also to be alert to perennial water needs. "If it's warm but there's no rain, those plants will be looking for water," he said. "Add it, even if the soil is still fairly frozen. Wind desiccation, especially for evergreens, is also something to watch for."

A new ABG trailside shade garden is heavily mulched with leaves, the leopard plants (*Farfugium japonicum*), the yellow globeflowers (*Trollius europaeus*) and faithful *Dicentra* (bleeding heart), along with a new Evans Sour Cherry, self-pollinating, fruit-prolific and beloved of bears, who ransacked the previous Evans Sour Cherry in Lyle's Garden so mercilessly that they snapped it off. An introduction this year is Sea Berry (*Hippophae*), or sea-buckthorn, "a new type of plant for us," said Monterusso, with edible ornamental clusters of orange berries, also deep under leaves. Later, come planting time, there will be a new Heritage Vegetable Garden, marking Anchorage's centennial.

"Another 6 inches of snow this year wouldn't hurt," said Monterusso. "It would buffer things a bit, but it's still not too late for people to winter-mulch their bare areas or areas of thin snow."

Janice Chumley, an IPM technician for the Cooperative Extension Service on the Kenai, said a lot of people were having questions there as well about the lack of snow cover and the warmer weather.

"As far as insects, I think it's going to be kind of hit and miss," the Integrated Pest Management tech said. "We have not had a very deep freeze into the ground that would take the frost super deep. That really is what tends to take out a lot of things, so I think the insect population is going to be just fine, thank you."

The season's not over yet, though, and the slugs and mosquitoes may be putting on party hats prematurely. The ADN reminds gardeners of the 9.9 inches of snow that fell through Jan. 31 for the 1995-96 winter -- followed by a 52.1-inch snow dump in February.



Bird Chatter



*"Man, despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication, and his many accomplishments, owes his existence to a 6 inch layer of topsoil & the fact that it rains."
Chinese Proverb*

Winston Churchill said that he'd never gotten indigestion from eating his words.

Recent Losses in the Horticulture Community Nickel LaFleur

On December 1st, Master Gardener Della Colver Barry passed away at home at the age of 86. Della was active in the Anchorage Garden Club, Bartlette Democratic Club, Alaska Master Gardeners, Wildflower Club, National Garden Club Judge, Alaska Pioneers of Alaska, Hospital Auxiliary at Regional, usher for Anchorage Performing Arts, member of the Alaska Club. Della enjoyed and filled every day of her life to the fullest, and will be missed by her wide following of friends and family.

On December 4, Master Gardener Marcy Vreeland passed away at the age of 96. Marcy took care of the landscape/flowers at the Anchorage Senior Center for many years. About six years ago, she organized a group of Master Gardeners and Community Tree Stewards to volunteer a weekend of time to improve the landscaping at the Senior Center. Marcy's experience as a Lieutenant in the Marine Corps helped her manage the volunteer group. Marcy's family has set up the Marcella Vreeland Garden Memorial to help with the future landscaping projects at the Anchorage Senior Center.

On January 13, landscape entrepreneur Peggie A. Reynolds passed away at the age of 70. Peggie was honored to represent the territory of Alaska as Ms. Matanuska Maid in a parade in Chicago, Ill. in 1958, as Alaska pursued statehood. Peggie and her husband Sherm owned Bush Landscaping and Nursery in Anchorage and provided many of the trees and shrubs used in this area. Peggie's artistic flair can be seen all over Anchorage with the landscape plantings she put together throughout the years.

Please take a moment to thank the stars for an opportunity to have these icons in our lives.

Herb Study Group By Sharon Schlicht

Savory—the 2015 Herb of the Year—was the topic at the January 9 meeting of the Herb Study Group. The savories are members of the genus *Satureja*, which comprises about 30 species. Summer savory (*S. hortensis*) and winter savory (*S. montana*) are the best known. Lemon savory (*S. biflora*) aka African Savory is lesser known. Summer savory is an annual with bushy, finely haired stems and is highly aromatic. It has a peppery flavor that is sweeter and more delicate than winter savory. Winter savory is a hardy semi-evergreen perennial (hardy in Zones 5-8). It has a woody base and forms a compact bush. It has a heavier aroma than summer savory and a piney taste. Lemon savory is a dwarf semi-woody perennial (hardy in Zones 8-9).

Savory has been used to enhance the flavor of food for over 2,000 years. It's flavor is so peppery and bold that since the time of the Saxons "savory" has come to denote not only the herb itself but also is synonymous with tasty and flavorful foods. During Caesar's reign it is believed the Romans introduced savory to England where it became popular as a medicine and a cooking herb. The Italians may have been among the first to grow it as a kitchen herb. Winter savory shrubs were popular as hedges in Tudor herb and knot gardens and in shrub mazes. The 17th Century herbalist Nicholas Culpeper wrote that savories were valuable for their "heating, drying and carminative [action], expelling wind from the stomach and bowels, and are good in asthma and other affections of the breast." He also said "it is much commended for pregnant women to take inwardly and to smell often unto." He recommended savory as a cure for deafness too. Savory also has a reputation as an aphrodisiac. Noted French herbalist Messegue claimed savory was an essential ingredient in love potions he made for couples.

Today's culinary uses include: as a complement to egg dishes, as a garnish with parsley, cooked with beans, lentils and peas, and combined with breadcrumbs for stuffings. Summer savory is delicate and goes well with tender green beans. It has been suggested to use this herb as a seasoning for salt-free diets. Winter savory has tougher leaves and works well in soups, stews, and beans that require long, slow cooking. The German word for the herb is *Bohenkraut*, meaning bean herb as it aids the digestion of sometimes problematic legumes. One efficient way to preserve fresh savory is to bottle it in vinegar at the height of the season. It also dries well and is an integral part of many herb mixtures such as Herbs de Provence, fines herbes, and bouquet garnie. Lemon Savory is used in herbal teas as well as vegetable, chicken and fish dishes that call for lemon flavoring.

Summer savory requires light, rich soil and full sun; it is ideal for growing indoors. It will reach a height of about 1.5 feet. Because the leaves are so tender, they can be added fresh to salads. Winter savory likes well drained soil and full sun. It can grow to a height of 15 inches. If planted near beehives, it can add a wonderful flavor to honey. Today winter savory is used in commercial preparation of salami and in marinades for olives. Because of savories' pungent oils, it is commonly used in toothpaste and soaps.

The Herb Study Group will meet again at 12:00 noon on Friday, February 6 at Cooperative Extension Service, 1675 C Street, Suite 100.

The topic is "Herbs as Houseplants."

Time to Consider Onions

By Jane Baldwin

[Sources: The Avant Gardener, January 2015 electronic issue; Dixondale Farms, www.dixondalefarms.com]

Onion plants have two growth phases: at first they concentrate on growing roots and leaves. During the second growth phase plant concentration is on bulb formation. The size of an onion bulb is determined by the size of the top growth. Each hollow leaf corresponds to a ring within the bulb: lots of large leaves results in large bulbs.

Bulb formation is triggered by a combination of daylight hours and temperature. Onion varieties are classified as short-day, intermediate-day and long-day. The different classifications are best for growing in different geographic (think latitudes) areas.

Short-Day onions start the bulbing phase when day length reaches 10-12 hours and is best for growing in the South. Can be grown in northern states but will not get very large.

Intermediate-Day onions start bulbing when day length reaches 12-14 hours.

Long-Day onions start the bulbing process when day length reaches 14-16 hours and do well in northern states.

Tips for growing large onions:

- Plant seedling transplants over sets
- Plant as early as possible since they tolerate mild frosts
- Feed every 2-3 weeks with a high nitrogen fertilizer.
- Begin feedings 3 weeks after planting and continue until onions start to bulb.
- Don't apply to leaves and leaves should be dry when applying.

Dixondale Farms has long been a source for ordering onion seedling plants for Alaskan gardeners. Long-Day plants perform best for our area. Onion plants are ordered in "bunches" which contain 50-75 plants. Going together with a friend(s) to share an order works well if you can't envision space for 75 onion plants!

Check out www.dixondalefarms.com for available varieties of Long-Day onion seedling plants. 'Copra' is an "all-time favorite" Long-Day onion.

I'm wondering what variety those beautiful, HUGE onions from the Valley found at Farmers' Markets last summer might be. Perhaps 'Ailsa Craig', aka 'Kelsae Sweet Giant'? From the Dixondale website: "Ailsa Craig' is a Long-Day yellow globe-shaped, sweet onion with size potential to 8" - up to six pounds - and "is by far the largest onion you can grow in a short growing season".

Garden Event Calendar

MEETINGS and EVENTS

Monday, February 2

**Alaska Native Plant Society Monthly Meeting: Flora of Iceland by Annie Nevaldine and Julie Riley; Mini-Botany: Plantain, Fireweeds by Glenn Brown; Plant Family: Astragalus nutzotinus and aboriginum by Dennis Ronsse. 7:00 pm. Campbell Science Center, Anchorage.

**Mat-Su MG's Monthly Meeting: Horticulture Therapy, by Lois Rockcastle, NP, 6:30 pm. MTA building, Palmer.

Thursday, February 5

Anchorage Garden Club monthly public meeting: Plant Toxicity & Your Pets by Pet Emergency Vets, 7:00 pm, Pioneer Schoolhouse 437 E 3rd Avenue, Anchorage.

Friday, February 6

Herb Study Group, Topic: Herbs as Houseplants. 12:00 - 1:30 pm. CES - 1675 C Street, Suite 100, Anchorage.

Wednesday, February 11 - Sunday, February 15

NW Garden Show, Seattle, WA. Details: <http://www.gardenshow.com/>

Thursday, February 12

**Wildflower Garden Club Meeting: Summer Song Birds of Alaska. 10:00 - 11:30 am. Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova Street.

**Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers: 6:30 pm, BP Energy Center, Corner of Northern Lights and New Seward HY. Details at: <http://www.apfga.org/>

Monday, February 16

Anchorage AMGA Meeting: Summer Photo Recap, Seed Exchange and Annual Harvest Potluck, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm, CES - 1675 C Street, Anchorage.

Tuesday, February 24

Alaska Orchid Society Monthly Meeting: Annual Meeting Party, 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm at the BP Center. Details at: www.akorchid.org.

CLASSES and WORKSHOPS

Thursday, February 5

Wasilla & Palmer Soil Water & Conservation Series: High Tunnels: Compatible Plant/Retrofitting by Dave Ionson, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. Mat Su College. Space limited. Free. Preregistration: ChuckKaucic: dismgr@wasillawcd.org.

Wednesday, February 11

Potato Lovers Bash: Join potato lovers for potato tasting-baked, boiled, and in prepared dishes. Learn potato nutrition, growing facts, potato trivia, potato songs and cooking tips. Held at Sons of Norway, Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood St. Tickets available at Cooperative Extension Service. Bash is limited to 40 participants. Cost: \$15.

Thursday, February 12

Wasilla & Palmer Soil Water & Conservation Series: Vegetable Production the Organic Way by Bob Shumaker, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. Mat Su College. Space limited. Free. Preregistration: ChuckKaucic: dismgr@wasillawcd.org.

Thursday, February 19

Wasilla & Palmer Soil Water & Conservation Series: How To's of High Tunnels by Keith Griswold and Jeff Smeenk, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. Mat Su College. Space limited. Free. Preregistration: ChuckKaucic: dismgr@wasillawcd.org.

**Fridays, February 20, 27, March 6, 20, 27 and Field trip
Saturday March 28**

Good Earth Garden School: Organic Gardening: The Comprehensive Growers Course, by Ellen Vande Visse, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm, Mat-Su Valley Community College, Rm SNOD 117. Cost: \$154. Details: <http://www.goodearthgardenschool.com/>

Tuesdays, February 24 - March 31

Sustainable Container Gardening in Southcentral Alaska: A beginning ornamental and vegetable gardening course that will cover soil, plant nutrients, variety, selection, season extension, soil warming techniques, seed starting and transplanting, disease and pest control, weed control, planning a garden and more, by Greg Terry, UAA Adjunct Horticulture Instructor, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm, 707 A St, Rm 201G. Details: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/continuing-education/upload/continuing-education-schedule.pdf>

Thursday, February 26

Wasilla & Palmer Soil Water & Conservation Series: Planting for Beauty and Wildlife by Julie Riley, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. Mat Su College. Space limited. Preregistration: Free. Chuck Kaucic: dismgr@wasillawcd.org.

Saturdays, February and March

Gardening Workshop Series with the ABG: Basic Garden Design, Starting Seeds & Heritage Seeds, Fruit Trees for Alaska, & Composting 101. Four Saturdays in February & March; specific dates, times & locations TBA. Check back for upcoming details at www.alaskabg.org/events

CONFERENCES

Saturday, February 21

Alaska Produce Growers Conference: Cooperative Extension Service, 1509 S Georgeson Dr., Palmer.

SAVE THE DATE

Friday and Saturday April 10th & 11th

ABG's 9th Annual Spring Garden Conference & Annual Meeting, Alaska Pacific University, Additional details and registration will be available soon at www.alaskabg.org/events

AMGA Board of Directors

Barbara Baker	Co-President
Lynne Opstad	Co-President
Cindy Walker	Treasurer
Cheryl Shroyer	Secretary
Sheila Toomey	At large (Parliamentarian)

New Board Members:

Harry Deuber
Phyllis Rogers
Melanie San Angelo

Committee Chairs, Program Coordinators & Volunteers

- Broadcast Email Coordinator - Lynne Opstad
- Directory - Sandy Harrington
- Education/Advanced MG - Julie Riley, Ginny Moore
- Events Calendar - Martha Ferris
- Google Group - Mary Rydesky - Administrator: Jane Baldwin, Gina Docherty, Nickel LaFleur - Managers
- Hospitality -
- Lifetime Achievement -
- Membership/Databse - Jane Baldwin
- Newsletter - Gina Docherty
- Pioneer Home Gardens Coordinators - Erma MacMillan, Julie Ginder, Joyce Smith, Lynne Opstad
- Programs & Field Trips -
- Volunteer Coordinator - Sue Looney
- Website - Gina Docherty

**Anchorage Cooperative Extension Service Presents:
Potato Lovers Bash**

What: 15+ varieties to taste, baked, boiled and in prepared dishes; nutrition and growing facts; trivia and songs; cooking tips and more.

When: Wednesday, February 11, 6-9 p.m.

Where: Sons of Norway Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood Street, Anchorage

Cost: \$15 - Tickets are available at CES office, 1675 C St. Call 786-6300 for more information.

Important: Purchase tickets early, as seats are limited to only 40 tasters.



Newsletter Submission Deadline

The deadline for submitting an item for publication in the following month's edition of the AMGA newsletter is the 20th of every month. Items arriving after this date may or may not be included.

Educational or garden related articles, Bird Chatter, calendar items and announcements are always welcome.

The Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. Contact the editor, Gina Docherty, at:

Mail: 14051 Fejes Road
Anchorage, AK 99516
Phone: 345-4099
Email: amga@alaska.net
AMGA Web Site: www.alaskamastergardeners.org

AMGA Google Group:
<https://groups.google.com/forum/?fromgroups#!forum/AkMGA>

To send concerns or information to the AMGA directly, mail to:
AMGA
P.O. Box 221403
Anchorage, AK 99522-1403

If you have questions or want to make address or email corrections, please contact Jane Baldwin at:
ak.jbaldwin@gmail.com

AMGA regularly meets at 7:00pm every third Monday of the month, September through May (except for December).

Meetings are held at the
Anchorage Cooperative Extension Center
1675 C Street, Suite 100
(access off of 16th Avenue)

Monthly educational programs are free and open to the public.
Visitors and guests are welcomed and encouraged.