



## AMGA NEWSLETTER

November 2015  
Volume 17, Issue 11

### President's Message By Barbara Baker, Co-president

Our mild fall weather seems to be viewed in one of two ways: where's the snow so we can start enjoying winter activities? Or (like me) thank goodness it's lasted this long because I've procrastinated on many of my garden projects! While I'm not crazy about all of the rain we've received, there is an upside. I have luscious mosses appearing on boulders in the garden and my trees and hedges are welcoming the moisture they were deprived of earlier this year.

I was especially concerned about the health of the spruce trees on my property, since needle die-off appeared to be heavier than usual. Fortunately, local scientists from UAF/CES-IPM (Jessie Moan) and the U.S. Forest Service are on watch for environmental changes and collaborate with each other about what they observe. They look at such things as temperature, moisture, infestations, and changes to the development of the land surrounding trees. Through their collective efforts we can remain informed of upcoming trends that may affect some of the most valuable parts of our landscape. Regarding my situation, I learned that needle die-off was occurring throughout the Anchorage bowl; and warmer temperatures and dry weather were the principle culprits in stressing the trees. So, I have decided to embrace the rain knowing it will bring better health to the thirsty trees of South Central.

Fall welcomed in a new class of Master Gardeners. Julie Riley has fifty students pursuing their certification as Master Gardener. The proceeds of AMGA's successful Book and Late-Season Plant Sale enabled us to fund three scholarships for students who had a financial hardship. Class fees are \$300 per student. According to Julie's demographics, almost all of the students (91%) have experience growing vegetables. Lynne Opstad will speak to the MG class about the benefits of our association and invite them to attend our meetings. If you sit next to a new face at upcoming meetings, please introduce yourself and welcome them to our group.

The Election of AMGA Board Members is underway. A big "thank-you" goes out to the candidates who have stepped forward to keep the AMGA strong and vibrant. I hope you exercise your right to vote! Voting closes on November 7.

Happy Thanksgiving to each of you.

### 2016 Election for Board of Directors

If you haven't yet voted, you will receive automatically generated reminder messages to do so. [A good incentive for early voting!] Members without email addresses have been mailed paper ballots to manually vote and return by U.S. mail. In the case of dual memberships sharing the same email address, one of the dual members will be mailed a paper copy to vote manually. **Mailed ballots must be received or postmarked by November 7th.** If you need assistance with your electronic ballot contact the elections committee by responding to MG Mary Rydesky; her contact information can be found in the MG Directory.

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### October AMGA Meeting: Bonsai!

Things looked a bit different in the classroom for our October meeting. Paul Marmora's bonsai demonstration was centered in the middle, with members circled around for the best visual opportunity. It worked well!

The word "Bonsai" (pronounced "BONES EYE", not "BONZ EYE") literally means: 'tree in a tray'.

Bonsai is one of Paul's passions - he's been involved with bonsai for over 20 years, and cares for about 300 of them, 30 of which are indoor bonsai. The rest of them are wintered over outside. One of his points of discussion was appropriate bonsai plants for Alaska - indoor plants are tropicals, and outdoor plants are hardy, with a few temperate trees thrown in, in both categories.

Paul brought a lot of interesting bonsai plants for discussion and demonstration. His handouts on "Bonsai Species for Alaska" and a general information sheet on bonsai with style descriptions, soil requirements and care were very informative.

We looked at many photos of ancient bonsais and were reminded of the patience it takes to grow bonsai. Paul also showed many varieties of trays to use, and what trays NOT to use (anything with a design on it which will take the eye away from the bonsai itself).

Paul gave a demonstration planting a bonsai - he used a small leafed scented geranium and poked the planting media into the roots with a chop stick. For the pruning demonstration, he used a bonsai that Nickel LaFleur donated for the cause. Paul said it was too tall, so he immediately cut it back to a few inches, which caused a lot of wide eyes and deep breaths!

The Bonsai Study group meets every 2nd Sunday at Dimond Greenhouses from 1- 4 most months. They have a Facebook page too.

## Meet the Candidates for the 2016 AMGA Board of Directors:

### Kathy Liska



Kathy has been a part of the Alaska State Fair Crops Department for 20 years, the past 10 in the position of Superintendent. She is a self-employed gardener for both home and commercial properties.

For numerous years she was a member of USFSA, ISI and the Alaska Association of Figure Skaters as a Coach, Judge, Board Member and Chairperson for many local ice skating competitions. She is a devoted wife, mother and grandma and likes spending her free time with family enjoying summer and winter sport adventures.

Kathy has interacted with many Master Gardeners over the years in her State Fair activities and became a Master Gardener in 2013. With much Alaska gardening experience -- including fruit growing -- she is interested in becoming more involved in AMGA.

### Fran Pekar



Fran got started gardening at a young age mentored by her father, an excellent farmer -- gardening in the high desert of Nevada until moving for a short time to Louisiana before coming to Alaska in February 1978. The summer of 1978 started the ever-changing garden in Anchorage. An organic vegetable garden has been the primary focus since

1978. The most valuable asset has been a fence around a portion of the garden for those vegetables that the moose enjoy. Fran retired from teaching Biology in 2012. By summer of 2013 she completed the Master Gardener program and volunteered at the Cook Inlet Housing raised bed gardens and with the International Gardens. Most recently she took the Advanced Master Gardener course on Plant Propagation.

## 2016 AMGA Gift Memberships

### Sheila Toomey



Sheila has been digging in the dirt around her Airport Heights home for more than 20 years. After retiring from Daily News' life as a reporter/editor, she decided to get serious about that dirt and took the Master Gardener course in 2012. The next step down the garden path

for Sheila was jumping into the local garden community by joining the Alaska Master Gardeners Anchorage Board of Directors in 2014. Two years later, she's now digging in 'soil' and looking forward to continuing her involvement with AMGA's Board.

### Marjorie Williams



Primarily focused on ornamental perennials and herbs, Marjorie also finds room for growing food in her gardens and greenhouse. She also does indoor-year-round gardening -- including experimenting with hybridizing African violets.

Continuing her quest for learning more about what she can successfully grow in our climate, Marjorie completed the Master Gardener course in 2012, the recent Advanced MG Propagation course, and is active in the Herb Study Group and ABG's herb garden. She looks forward to participating and contributing to AMGA as a Board member.



Don't Forget to vote!

We all have friends who either share or envy our interest and knowledge in gardening and good gardening practices. Think about gifting a one-year membership (\$20) with AMGA to friends for Christmas.

Remember you do not need to be a Master Gardener to be a member of AMGA and to benefit from or participate in AMGA's educational programs or volunteer projects, associate with like-minded people who support education based growing and a shared desire to protect our earth. Nor do you need to be a member to gift an AMGA membership.

Contact Jane Baldwin, Membership Coordinator at [ak.jbaldwin@gmail.com](mailto:ak.jbaldwin@gmail.com)

to request a gift membership form to complete and return with your payment check. Once the membership gift form is received, a gift membership card will be mailed to the recipient which provides your name unless otherwise instructed. If you wish the gift card to be mailed to you rather than mailed directly to the recipient, please note that at the bottom of the gift membership form.

With an AMGA gift membership you can share with friends nine monthly educational programs; three months with garden tours for members only; a large, active gardening association actively involved in the local gardening community; garden networking with experienced gardeners who learn, share, and exchange methods, techniques and best practices for growing food and flowers alike in our climate.

## Treasurer's Report for November 2015

### Balances 8/31/15

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Checking account | 9813.03         |
| Savings account  | <u>11697.65</u> |
|                  | \$21510.68      |
| Dedicated Funds  | \$6512.57       |

### Revenue:

|          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| Interest | <u>16.35</u> |
|          | \$16.35      |

### Expense:

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Operations | 49.99         |
| Website    | <u>115.00</u> |
|            | \$164.99      |



### Balances 9/30/2015

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Checking account | 9648.04         |
| Savings account  | <u>11699.09</u> |
|                  | \$21347.13      |

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Dedicated Funds | \$6527.48 |
|-----------------|-----------|

## Growing Young Gardeners: A Time of Gratitude By Amy Reed, MG

Alaska's fall is such a short season; it tends to be overlooked at times. Because it is my favorite time of year, I have a tendency to decorate the house with pumpkins and leaf collages as early as August! With the garden beds put to sleep for the year, now is the time to reflect on the wonderful and long growing season we had and give thanks.



We like to stress the importance of gratitude with our children and grandchildren. Janice Kaplan wrote a wonderful book, *The Gratitude Diary*, in which she spent a year writing down just a sentence a day about what she was thankful for. This simple act put gave her a fresh approach to her life, career, and family.

I thought this was a fantastic idea, however I wanted to turn our thoughts of gratitude into a craft project with my child. We made a "Gratitude Wreath" that was fun, easy, and a wonderful addition to our fall decorations!

### Gratitude Wreath

14 inch Styrofoam wreath (found at any craft store)  
Hot glue/gun or fabric glue  
2-inch fabric in a fall color  
Cardstock paper in fall colors: orange, yellow, brown  
Sharpie marker  
Straight Pins  
Acorn or leaf embellishments

Wrap the Styrofoam wreath in the fabric and hot glue the ends to the wreath to secure. Cut out many leaf shapes in the cardstock to have on hand. I used a leaf cookie cutter for my leaf shape template. Each night before bed, you and your child or grandchild can write down with a Sharpie on the leaf one thing you are grateful for. This leaf can then be pinned to the wreath. Our goal is that by Thanksgiving we can have a beautiful



fall wreath full of gratefulness! The acorn and/or other fall embellishments can be glued on at any time to add to the wreath's décor.

We love looking at our Gratitude Wreath and realize how much we have to be thankful for. Happy Thanksgiving!!

## Alaska Horticultural History: Mann Leiser by Nickel LaFleur

Oliver "Mann" Leiser started his first nursery (Mann's Garden & Greenhouse) in Alaska in 1949, and from 1954-1955, he operated the Palmer Nursery before leaving Alaska for 10 years to help operate his mother's business. Mann returned to Anchorage in 1965 as the city's horticulturist, and during his tenure he oversaw the erecting of the 36-x-40-foot solarium in Russian Jack Park off Lidia Selkregg Drive, personally filling it with tropical garden plants. Mann knew how important greenery and birds were to Alaskans, who for the past 50 years have enjoyed the fruits of his efforts.

In 1969, Mann built Anchorage's first commercial year-round greenhouse at the corner of DeBarr and Muldoon roads and called it "Alaska Greenhouses Inc." It quickly became a destination spot for all of Anchorage.

Mann also wrote weekly columns for the newspaper and drew from those columns to compile two concise gardening books - *Alaska Gardening Volumes 1 and 2* -- to help residents understand the unique growing and gardening challenges in northern latitudes. Each book starts with a short letter to the reader and lays out Mann's goal of writing down what has worked for him.

In 1968, when the first book was written, the Cooperative Extension Service was in Room 29 in the Old Federal Building downtown on Fourth Avenue. Mann encouraged readers to search out CES for answers to questions in addition to making use of his books, but he also generously offered personal involvement: a favorite line, "If you are planning a greenhouse, I am available to help in any way I can." What a Mann!

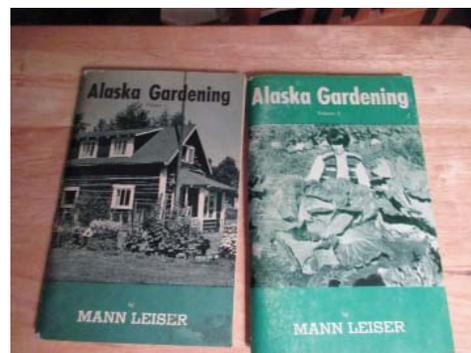


Photo by Nickel LaFleur

## Spruce (*Picea* spp.) Roots for Winter Use

Marylynne L. Kostick

Glance out your window in Alaska and you'll likely spot a spruce tree (*Picea* spp.). Alaska's state tree, the Sitka spruce (*P. sitchensis*), is the largest and longest living spruce species, known to grow as high as 225ft and up to 8ft in diameter with a lifespan that can reach to 700yrs. Accompanying the Sitka spruce in Alaska, the white spruce (*P. glauca*), which can reach about half the size and lifespan of the Sitka spruce, and black spruce (*P. mariana*), smaller yet, are distributed throughout the state from the Alaska Peninsula (Sitka) throughout south central and the interior (white and black). While the Sitka spruce is easy to distinguish by its height and habitat, the white and black spruce can usually be identified by differences in cone shape (white = oblong, black= round) and color of inner bark (white = white, black = yellow). It is not uncommon to see multiple species of spruce trees contributing side-by-side to the same ecosystem and it's a good practice to observe and note the identifying characteristics.

Alaska's spruce trees are harvested by many stakeholders for many purposes such as lumber by the timber industry (for pulp, guitars, etc.), biomass (e.g. wood pellets) by regional corporations, habitat by wildlife, and household and craft materials by individuals. Traditionally across Alaska, as well as other regions of the world where spruce trees proliferate, their versatility has promoted the use of the trees in the construction of fish nets, snare lines, homes, and tools for survival and everyday life.

With the ground still absent of ice and snow, I take a walk around the property to the spruce trees. Down on the ground, I take my hands and gently push aside a few inches of earth where I find the shallow root system that allows the spruce trees of Alaska to endure harsh environmental conditions, such as wet and/or poorly drained soil and permafrost. The roots can run 20ft+, with large and small diameter (old and young). The sensations of the soft and shallow earth that cover the strong and pliable roots is something to be aware of - the textures, the shapes, the lengths of roots, moss, needles, and squirrel droppings should be given time for observation and appreciation.

In the fall, the roots are what I'm out to gather from older trees to process and store away for winter uses such as basketry, cordage, and medicine in the form of tea, tinctures, and salves (note medicinal benefits may include clearing sinus infections, soreness/stiffness, sap for wound cover, and that the cones and needles of this coniferous evergreen can also be used medicinally and that bows can be gathered for garden bed covers). This is in contrast to the spring harvest of spruce tips for food and medicine. In keeping practice with responsible harvesting, I only gather what I will use. After pulling up some roots and replacing the land, I clean off

the outer bark of the root, saving it to dry for tea, and roll up my bundle of roots to store for future use in a winter's night project by the fire while sipping some tea and watching the snow fall.



Black spruce (*P. mariana*) spring cones.  
Photo by Marylynne L. Kostick



Spruce roots bundled for winter.  
Photo by Marylynne L. Kostick



## Bird Chatter

AGGGHHH. . . It was bright orange. It had a fat body and eight -- count 'em -- eight legs. It had google-eyes but one of them fell out. It was still more than a week to Halloween but Cheryl Chapman's mutant carrot riveted folks at the October AMGA meeting. When last seen, it was in the refrigerator at CES. It should still be there -- unless someone got hungry.

FOR THE RECORD . . . Sixty people registered for the fall MG course in less than a week. Julie wants to thank AMGA for providing \$900 worth of scholarships, which paid for three new MGs. Half the graduates from last year's class say they have attended AMGA meetings. But only one went on a field trip. BC isn't sure what that means.

WARMING? WHAT WARMING? . . . Nickel LaFleur says she's got spring bulbs coming up in her front yard, and a couple of red poppies that are "thinking real hard about blooming. Nickel also wants to remind folks that the Save the Times project is back on the calendar. Friday is the usual day for taping (and candy eating and gossip) duties at the Consortium Library, but check with Nickel for details.

SAVE THE DATE . . . An MG tweeter saw on Brenda Adams' FB page that a snazzy international garden tour has scheduled a 2016 visit to South Central Alaska. Anyone got more info on this? Bird Chatter would love to share.

OMG . . . Someone grew 60 pounds of watermelons in Tyonek this summer. (There was a story in the paper). WHY NOT . . . Board elections are this month -- so don't forget to vote. Unfortunately, only four people volunteered to run for the four open seats, so the winners aren't that big a mystery. The board is concerned at the absence of candidates, so we asked those attending the October meeting to tell us why they weren't interested in running.

Sixteen people responded. The answers were pretty much what one would expect: "Too committed already. ... Been there, done that. ... Not consistently available. ... Too much volunteer work already ... Work full time and feel I would not be reliable. ... Travel . sorry." And BC's favorite: "Cause I'm better with plants than people!"

REMINDER. . . Now is the time to make a note in your gardening journal re: what plants didn't make it this year -- do you want to buy more and try again? Or remember NOT to buy more? And yes, everyone should have a gardening journal.

(BC saw a sign for sale in a garden store that read: "I swear, I've never seen this plant before.")



### AMGA 2016 Conference Speaker Profile: Ed Buyarski

Ed Buyarski was transplanted from Upper Michigan through Southern Idaho to Alaska in 1983 after a visit in 1977 via bus, train, ferry and thumb. He and his wife Janis raised two children in Alaska and now visit them in California and pick fruit in the winter with their grandsons.

Ed has been gardening in Southeast Alaska since 1984 in Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Juneau and Haines. He started his business - Ed's Edible Landscaping - to give people a chance to have beautiful as well as tasty plants in their yards. Many fruits and berries have been planted with success resulting in a lot of fresh eating, jams, jellies and pies over the years. Growing and propagating many species and varieties of Primulas has become another profitable part of his business.

Ed has been a past President of The American Primrose Society as well as Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners and enjoys teaching gardening classes. He has also volunteered for Alaska Public Radio as a host of Garden Talk on KTOO in Juneau and KFSK in Petersburg for many years.

### AMGA 2016 Conference Information:

Grow Your Own  
From the Ground Up

April 16, 2016  
Lucy Cuddy Center on UAA Campus

Learning Opportunities  
Silent Auction  
Garden Market  
Door Prizes

## Elections.....cont. from page 1

If you did not receive an electronic ballot, it may be due to: (1) email inbox is over capacity; (2) it may have been sent to your junk/spam folder depending upon your email filters' settings; (3) you have changed email addresses without updating your AMGA membership contact information; or (4) you may have previously opted out from receiving Survey Monkey mailings.

Opting out to any Survey Monkey mailing will remove you from receiving any future emails from any organization using Survey Monkey mailings to conduct their business. Survey Monkey does provide for changing your status from "opt out" to "opt in":

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/optin.aspx>

Be sure to enter your email currently on file in AMGA's database.

## Membership Drive 2016 Info.

AMGA is beginning the 2016 Membership Drive - with drawings for several prizes for early renewals received or postmarked by November 14th to be held at the November 16th AMGA meeting. Members who are already paid through December 31, 2016 will also be included in the drawing. Join/renewal memberships can be done online at AMGA's website [www.alaskamastergardeners.org](http://www.alaskamastergardeners.org). Click on AMGA on the top menu and then on Join/Renew AMGA on the drop down menu. Blank forms can also be downloaded and/or printed from the website and manually completed and mailed with your dues check

(Individual \$20, Dual membership \$30) to AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage AK 99522.



# Garden Event Calendar

## MEETINGS and EVENTS

### Monday, November 2

\*\*Ak Native Plant Society Monthly Meeting: Dutch Harbor 2015 AKNPS Field Trip Slide Show Coordinated by Glen Brown. Mini-Botany: *Gentiana aleutica* by Mike Monterusso; Plant Family: *Chrysosplenium* by Marilyn Barker. 6:00 pm at Campbell Science Center, Anchorage. Details at: <http://aknps.org/Pages/Meetings.php>.

\*\*Mat-Su Master Gardener's Monthly Meeting. 7:00 pm at MTA building, Palmer. Details at: <http://www.matsumastergardeners.com/calendar-of-events.html>.

\*\*Meadow Lakes Bloomers Garden Club Monthly Meeting: Green Manure/Cover Crops by Ellen Vande Visse of Good Earth Garden School. 10:30 am at Meadow Lakes Senior Center, Wasilla.

### Thursday, November 5

Anchorage Garden Club Monthly Meeting: Horticultural Therapy- The Science Behind Our Passion by Lois Rockcastle. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at Pioneer Schoolhouse, 437 E 3rd Avenue, Anchorage. Details at: <http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org/anchorageclub.htm>.

### Friday, November 6

Herb Study Group: Tea Herbs. 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm at Anchorage Cooperative Extension Service 1675 C Street, Suite 100.

### Thursday, November 12

Alaska Wildflower Garden Club Monthly Meeting: The Fragrant Bouquet of Herbs in Cooking by Julie Riley of Cooperative Extension Service. 10:00 am - 11:30 am at the Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova St, Anchorage. Details at: <http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org/apps/calendar/>.

### Monday, November 16

AMGA Monthly Meeting: Asiatic Lilies: Selection Considerations and Care of Hardy Varieties by Annie Nevaldine. 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at Anchorage Cooperative Extension Service 1675 C Street, #100. Details at: [http://www.alaskamastergardeners.org/2015\\_2016\\_AMGA\\_Programs\\_2.pdf](http://www.alaskamastergardeners.org/2015_2016_AMGA_Programs_2.pdf).

### Saturday, November 21

Alaska Rock Garden Society Monthly Meeting. 2:00 pm at Anchorage Cooperative Extension Service 1675 C Street, Suite 100. Details at: <http://www.akrockgarden-society.org/Calendar.html>.

### Tuesday, November 24

Alaska Orchid Society Monthly Meeting: Orchid Swap and Group Question and Answer Session. 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm at BP Energy Center, Seward Hy and Benson Blvd. Details at: <http://www.wayne-toups.squarespace.com/events/>.

The Year of Unusual Veggies!



Cheryl Chapman's "Octo-Carrot"  
Photo by Julie Riley



Gina Docherty's "Big Boy" potatoes - 90% of the entire crop from Greg Kalal's seed potatoes weighed over 1 pound. Shown here clockwise from left: Caribe, Red Pontiac, & White Rural New Yorker. Photo by Julie Riley



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.

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 Board of Directors**

|                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Barbara Baker      | Co-President                |
| Lynne Opstad       | Co-President                |
| Phyllis Rogers     | Co-Vice President           |
| Melanie San Angelo | Co-Vice President           |
| Cindy Walker       | Treasurer                   |
| Cheryl Shroyer     | Secretary & Parliamentarian |
| Sheila Toomey      | At large                    |
| Harry Deuber       | At Large                    |

**Committee Chairs, Program Coordinators & Volunteers**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| CES Liaison:            | Julie Riley                             |
| Broadcast Email:        | Lynne Opstad                            |
| Calendar of Events:     | Martha Farris                           |
| Advanced MG:            | Ginny Moore                             |
| Directory Editor:       | Sandy Harrington                        |
| Field Trips & Programs: | Melanie San Angelo & Phyllis Rogers     |
| Google Group:           | Mary Rydesky                            |
| Hospitality:            | Harry Deuber                            |
| Volunteer Coordinator:  | Sue Looney                              |
| Membership & Database:  | Jane Baldwin                            |
| Newsletter & Website:   | Gina Docherty                           |
| Member at Large:        | Sheila Toomey                           |
| Lifetime Achievement:   | Lynne Opstad                            |
| Grants:                 | Barbara Baker                           |
| Pioneer Home Design:    | Erma MacMillan (design)                 |
| Volunteer Coordinators: | Julie Ginder, Joyce Smith, Lynne Opstad |

**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.

For information about membership or upcoming programs, contact:  
Cooperative Extension Office  
1675 C St, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Phone: 786-6300  
Fax: 786-6312

