



# Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

## Newsletter ~ May 2024

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### Message from the Presidents

Sunshine! What a very welcome sight! Spring was evident everywhere on a recent walk around the yard. Yellow primroses are always the first to bloom (and always a lovely sight) while tulips are bursting along with the rhubarb and, of course, the dandelions! We're amazed at how quickly the snow is leaving even if some patches are stubborn and continue to hang around.

Cleanup after a long winter and has (finally!) begun. And what a cleanup it is. It seems like a million pinecones were blown off our trees. We've never seen such thick piles of them. Only in Alaska do you mow your lawn (easier than raking) when there is still snow in spots. We didn't think we would have that many critters visiting this winter, but multiple piles of moose poop declare otherwise! Unfortunately, the mosquitoes are also out in full force. But soon we'll begin the hardening off process with our plants! Isn't spring wonderful?

We thank all of those who volunteered at the Children's Marigold Giveaway at the Midtown Mall. Everyone had a blast, and many marigolds went home with our youngest gardeners. Mark your calendars for May 16th, 10:00-12:00 for the Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail Maintenance – this is a different date than the yearbook date. Coming up also is the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center annual spring Checkup. Lots of treasures can be found at our Annual Plant Sale on June 1st. We look forward to seeing you there and hearing how your summer gardens are coming along. **Christie and Kellie**

Moms are the  
biggest blooms  
in the  
Bouquet of Life...



## What's Growing Now

ABG's Rachel Shedd conducted a sold out workshop on sharpening your tools on April 18<sup>th</sup> at Alaska Wholesale Flower Market. Ten participants brought two items to sharpen and received a set of sharpening tools to take home. The workshop was informative and fun. Rachel is looking into repeating the workshop in the fall for additional participants. We will keep the club posted on developments.



The Midtown Mall Spring Garden Show and Wildflower Marigold Giveaway took place on April 27<sup>th</sup>. The mall was packed with eager gardeners. Club members volunteered at our booth for our annual service project of having children plant marigolds to take home. Kids and their families planted about 170 marigolds grown by our members! Plants and crafts were also available for purchase. Many thanks to the members who volunteered to kick off Spring in such a fun way and staff this well-attended event.



## Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

Deb Blaylock, Janet Hartmann, Kathy Liska, Mary Moline, Jaime Rodriguez, and Cindy Walker



**Lily of the Valley and Hawthorne** are the two birth flowers of May. Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) has the flower meaning of humility, chastity, sweetness, purity and is said to bring luck in love. It also means "the return of happiness". Technically lily of the valley is not a lily at all, the plant belongs to the botanical family *Asparagaceae*, not the lily family *Liliaceae*. The blooms of this tough and reliable perennial are very fragrant and attract people as well as many insects such as bees who like to collect the pollen. Best as a ground cover for shady areas where aggressive spread is desired. It grows well in a woodland setting under the shade of trees and shrubs.

Every part of lily of the valley is toxic to humans and animals if ingested. When handling it, caution should be taken to wash hands afterwards so as to not have any remnant on the hands to ingest accidentally.

Hawthorns symbolize happiness, faith, long-life, beauty, and hope. In folklore, hawthorns are thought to house fairies, in return for their guardianship. They are often thought to represent fertility, as they are one of the few species to have leaves, flowers, and berries at the same time. Traditionally, the hawthorn is called the Mayflower and has been used to make Maypoles and to make hedgerows throughout the United Kingdom.



Happy Birthday

## The Flower Moon – Thursday, May 23



The Flower Moon, also known as the Milk Moon or the Corn Planting Moon, is a full moon that occurs in the month of May. This moon holds great significance in many cultures and has been celebrated for centuries.

The Flower Moon gets its name from the abundance of flowers that bloom during this time of the year. As spring reaches its peak, the landscape becomes a vibrant tapestry of colors, with flowers blossoming in all their glory. The full moon in May beautifully illuminates these blooming flowers, creating a visually stunning sight.

The of the name "Flower Moon" can be traced back to Native American traditions. Many Native American tribes used the moon as a way to mark the passing of time and the changing seasons. They named each full moon based on the natural events or agricultural practices that occurred during that time.

Overall, the Flower Moon represents a time of growth, beauty, and appreciation for the natural world. It serves as a reminder to embrace the cycles of life and find joy in the simplest pleasures. As we witness the blooming flowers under the luminous moonlight, we are reminded of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of nurturing our environment.

## Club Business

### April 2024 Treasurer Reports

#### Denali Federal Credit Union

Business Savings	\$7,582.67
Business Checking	\$2,814.08
CD-9 month (matures 7/30/24) 6%	\$5,148.78
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$15,545.53</b>

**Morgan Stanley Balance** \$47,887.19

**Total Funds 4/30/24** \$63,432.72



## Upcoming Meetings, Projects, & Workshops

**Thursday, May 16 – Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail at the Alaska Botanical Garden from 10am-Noon.**

This is the first one of the Wildflower Trail clean-up events with repeated visitation by volunteers throughout the gardening season. Volunteers at ABG must attend the safety briefing before doing any work in the garden. There are three opportunities to attend the briefing. **To attend one of the orientations you need to use SignUp Genius to register through the links below:**

**Monday, May 13** evening or **Tuesday May 14** daytime

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/orientation2024#/>

**Thursday, May 16** just before the clean-up session - **Specifically for WGCA**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/abg2024wildflowercleanup>

**Saturday, May 18 – Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center from 11am-1pm.** The planned date for the post winter clean-up of the native plant garden. The weather there is often tenuous, so the *alternate date is June 8<sup>th</sup>* (the week after the plant sale). The wind is very strong at the garden site, so please dress in windproof (and rainproof) gear. Volunteers can contact Paul Marmora to sign up for the session.

**Saturday, June 1 – Wildflower Plant Sale!!!**

Look for an email coming soon with the plant sale SignUp Genius schedule of when and where volunteers are needed to make this a successful event. We need volunteers to help on both Friday, May 31 from 1-7pm for plant drop off and Saturday from 7am-5pm. It is required that all who sell plants volunteer for a portion of the day. Please use this link <https://wildflowergardenclub.org/plant-sale.html> for instructions of correctly tagging your sale plants and the flyer to share with friends and/or print and post at a local store with permission. Let's get the word out! As always there will be a potluck for all volunteers. Contact Paul Marmora at 907-360-3728 or [pmarmora@aol.com](mailto:pmarmora@aol.com) for more information.



**Thursday, July 11 – Palmer Garden Tours**

We have planned tours beginning at 11am of the Alaska State Fair gardens with Becky Myrvold and the Palmer Visitors Center with Jaime Rodriguez. We will enjoy a bring-a bag lunch at one of these locations. **This is a Member and Family Only event.** Carpooling is encouraged. More information to come soon.

# **Know It and Grow It – Bucket Planting**

**Source: The Spruce**

When you want to grow fresh vegetables, herbs, and beautiful blooms, don't be stymied by a small space. Consider using white, plastic buckets; an easy and inexpensive way to grow a lush, productive garden even on a deck or patio. It's also a nice way to repurpose plastics that would otherwise be headed for recycling or a landfill.

Any plant suited for a container can successfully grow in a 2 or 5-gallon plastic bucket. Restaurants, bakeries, and groceries use food-grade buckets for transporting and storing ingredients. Once emptied they can be purchased for next to nothing or even procured for free. Add drainage holes in the bottom and you have affordable 'pots'.

## **What You'll Need**

### **Equipment / Tools**

- Hand drill with 3/4 inch panel bit
- Trowel

### **Materials**

- Buckets
- Rock or coarse gravel for weight
- Compost
- Garden soil
- Sand, perlite
- Gloves
- Plants and/or seeds



## **Instructions**

### **Source Your Buckets**

Local restaurants, bakeries, and delicatessens are good places to start looking for free food-grade buckets for your container garden. Low-cost buckets can be found at home improvement stores and online. A #2 recycling symbol on the bottom ensures buckets are designated only for food-grade products.

### **Clean the Buckets**

Clean previously used buckets with a solution of mild dishwashing soap and warm water and rinse well. Use a sponge, soft cloth, or soft brush, and avoid scrubbers that scratch or damage the plastic surface.

### **Drill Drainage Holes**

Fit the 3/4 inch panel bit onto your hand drill and set the drill in the reverse position to avoid cracking and damaging the bucket.

Start by placing the drill bit in the center of the bucket bottom. Keep the bit straight and pulse the drill slowly until a hole forms and the plastic disc drops away.

Move the drill 1 1/2 to 2 inches from the outside edge of the bucket bottom and drill five additional holes evenly spaced.

### **Weigh Down the Bucket with Gravel or Rocks**

Adding some weight to the bottom helps stabilize buckets and improve drainage. Look for products labeled specifically for drainage. Pea gravel and landscape rock are well-suited for this purpose.



## **Fill Buckets With Growing Medium**

Combine garden soil and aged compost with sand or perlite for an adequate growing medium. The goal is a soil mix loose enough to drain well but still hold moisture and provide nutrients. Two cubic feet of planting mix fills three 5-gallon buckets.

## **Add Your Plants**

Grow large plants like tomatoes and peppers with deep tap roots singly in 5-gallon buckets. Lettuce and herbs thrive in 2-gallon buckets. You can also use a 5-gallon bucket for annual flower combinations. or rapid spreaders like mint.

## **Vegetables to Grow in Buckets**

Choose compact or dwarf varieties of tomatoes to plant in 5-gallon buckets. Cucumbers, beans, tomatoes, tomatillos, and some peppers need a trellis or support to keep them upright. Plant cole crops (plants that belong to the mustard (Brassica) family and are all descendants of wild cabbage. As a group, these plants grow better in cool weather), including cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower one to a 5-gallon bucket. Lettuce and other greens with shallow roots grow easily in 2-gallon buckets.

- |                |                            |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Beans       | 7. Lettuce or other greens |
| 2. Broccoli    | 8. Peppers                 |
| 3. Cabbage     | 9. Tomatoes                |
| 4. Cauliflower | 10. Tomatillos             |
| 5. Cucumbers   | 11. Zucchini               |
| 6. Eggplants   |                            |

## **Annual Herbs To Seed Or Plant in 2-gallon Buckets**

- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Basil    | 7. Parsley  |
| 2. Cilantro | 8. Rosemary |
| 3. Chives   | 9. Sage     |
| 4. Dill     | 10. Thyme   |
| 5. Mint     |             |

## **Tips For Bucket Gardening**

Water Frequently and Fertilize.

Most container plants, especially vegetables, need to be irrigated more often than plants grown in the ground. Aim to keep soil evenly moist watering several times a week up to every other day in place of adequate rainfall.

Herbs thrive in a quality potting mix but vegetable plants use soil nutrients rapidly and require regular feeding with fertilizer appropriate for the plant type.

**Add a Decorative Element** - Look for colored buckets or paint white ones with outdoor paint to give your container garden a more pleasing look. You can also build a frame to hold several buckets in rows or tiers.

**Store Buckets For a Longer Life** - Plastics eventually break down after constant exposure to heat and sunlight. You can extend the life of your buckets up to six years with good care and winter storage.

At season's end, add bucket contents to your compost pile. Clean them with warm, soapy water, rinse well, and store them in a shaded location. If an indoor location is unavailable, stack your garden buckets upside down on pallets in an outdoor shady spot and cover them with a tarp.

**“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt” ~ Margaret Atwood**