



# Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska

## Newsletter ~ January 2026

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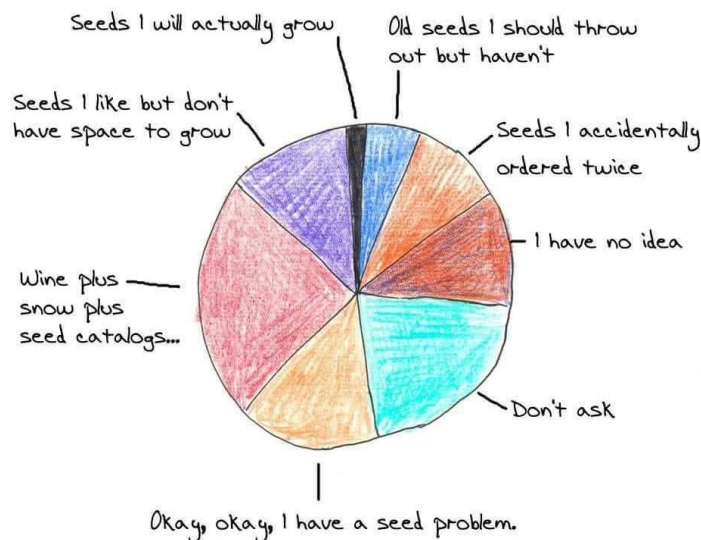
### Message from the President

Happy New Year! The holidays are winding down, which means we have time to settle back and start reading the seed catalogs in our mailboxes. It's always fun to see what's new, and in our current color-deprived world the colors always seem so vibrant! Lots of wishing taking place at my house. As I was putting items into my "cart" I reminded myself that I should get out my seeds from last year and inventory what I really need. There's an invisible clock in my head that ticks and says, "hurry, hurry, buy now!" In reality, I only need to buy a few. There's no need for multiples of everything when I only grow a handful every year (I'm also determined to slim down my garden, which I've been saying since 2020). And while I enjoy starting seeds, I really love visiting all the local garden club sales and greenhouses in the spring. And who can resist not buying anything at those sales? Certainly, not I!

On that note, Eagle River's Fred Meyer once again donated leftover seeds from 2025 to our club. You can comb through them at any of the upcoming meetings to see if they meet your needs. Hopefully, many will. We found a wonderful way to use the seeds that don't grow well here: fun "flowers" crafted from dyed seeds. We'll be making those at one of our future craft events, so stay tuned!

**Christie**

Contents of my boxes of seeds:



Joseph Tychonievich

## What's Growing Now

We had to cancel the January 8th in-person meeting again this year due to treacherously cold temperatures. Thankfully, Zoom was available for our members to join in. Presenter Jozef (Joey) Slowik of the Cooperative Extension addressed the group about our garden pest problems, gave some slug prevention suggestions such as a dual wire electrical barrier, a twice bent galvanized fence, and essential oil formula of thyme, peppermint or spearmint oil to 1 quart of water. This brought a feeling of hope for our coming year's gardening. Jozef suggests the use of [AkPestreporter](#) for questions, photo identification, and infestation reports.



## Special wildflowers that bloomed this month

**Sally Byrne-Flores, Christie Holshouser, Merry Johnson, and Beth Terry**



January is the first month of the new year. It's flowers hold an important place as the first flowers of the year. January boasts the Carnation and the Snowdrop as its floral offerings.

The Carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*) has been in cultivation for at least 2,000 year—it was much desired by Greeks and Romans for its many colors, its sweet fragrance and its longevity. Hybridization has developed a multiplicity of

colors, and many times the color of the carnation bloom has a distinct meaning. Overall, the carnation carries a meaning of love and devotion, distinction and fascination. It is one of the main focal flowers in many floral arrangements and is prized for its lasting powers. It is considered edible and is said to have a lightly spicy flavor.

The Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) truly is one of the earliest blooming flowers – often right through the snow after which it is named. This resilience brings hope of better, warmer days and growth. The snowdrop flower is a symbol of hope, rebirth, purity, and the promise of a new beginning. As symbols of remembrance, these flowers are often planted in cemeteries and memorial gardens. They are toxic to eat, but were used topically for medicinal reasons.



Happy Birthday

# **Club Business**

## **2025 Annual Report**

Our meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month offering both in person and Zoom. Zoom meetings continue to be a challenge. Two additional routers were added to help with this issue.

### **Eight Monthly Meetings:**

**January 9<sup>th</sup>** – **“Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail: Past, Present & Future”** Rachel Shedd, volunteer coordinator at the Alaska Botanical Garden, shared facts and memories of the Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail development over the decades. She was able to share some of the goals of ABG for the trail and listened to suggestions and memories from club members. This meeting was ZOOM only due to icy road conditions.

**February 13<sup>th</sup>** – **“Challenges and Rewards of Alaska Container Gardening”** by John Horstkoetter. John is responsible for making and maintaining the Hope Center’s Downtown Soup Kitchen Rooftop Garden. They serve over 600 meals daily there. John prefers to purchase and use individual essential elements for precise NPK needs. Instead of general fertilizers such as 20-20-20, he recommends purchasing Blood Meal 12-0-0 (N=Nitrogen) for promoting leaf growth, fruit quality, and reducing diseases; Bone Meal 3-15-0 (P=Phosphorus) which encourages flowering, fruiting, and ripening; Langbeinite 0-0-22 (K=Potassium) that enhances overall growth and regulates root and top growth.

**March 13<sup>th</sup>** – **“Crafting Round Tables”** We gathered together to do some hands-on garden crafts. Kathy Liska introduced us to making Pressed Flowers Greeting Cards, taught to her years ago by Verna Pratt, and used flowers preserved by Verna herself. Kathy also showed us how to make simple Teacup Bird Feeders to hang from a branch or set on a stake in the garden. Sally Byrne-Flores was generous with her donation of beads so we could assemble Fairy Wands, which dress up houseplants or outside containers with colorful bling!

**April 10<sup>th</sup>** – **“Anchorage Gardens: From Concept to Reality”** Claire Kaufman, owner of Boreal Bioscapes, gave a delightful presentation on three projects she has been involved in in the last few years. One was a project for a new house on previously untouched land, one was a change of landscape on an older home, and one was a redo for a neglected ancient garden on a historic building in downtown Anchorage. Her use of before and after pictures made it all very clear.

**September 11<sup>th</sup>** – **“Prune the Stump or Stump the Pruner”** Landscape Horticulturist and fellow member Debbie Hinchey gave an informative presentation on pruning in our yards. She covered what time of year is best, how to choose which limbs to cut, and how to plan for the future.

**October 9<sup>th</sup>** – **“Orchid Hangups”** Paul Marmora taught us about mounting orchids on cork bark. Most orchids in the world are epiphytic, so this is a much more natural way for them to grow. It is quite a simple process, as he demonstrated a few times during his presentation.

**November 13<sup>th</sup> - “Holiday Craft Workshop, Friendsgiving Potluck & Food Drive”** We gathered for our annual Friendsgiving meeting and craft event. What a delight to get together with like-minded people and share delicious food, but also to act creatively together. Many thanks to our craft leaders: Marilyn Barker - macramé snowflakes and Kellie Staples & Paul Marmora- ribbon tree ornaments. In addition, we were able to share in our abundance with others less fortunate than us. Especially poignant in light of the flooding in Western Alaska this year, and the high number of displaced people in Anchorage right now. Thanks to Central Lutheran Church for allowing us to add to their food collection for those in need.

**December 11<sup>th</sup> - “Holiday Party”** - Our traditional holiday get-together is always fun to be together celebrating with food and the fast-paced gift exchange which kept everyone’s spirits up and hilarity abounding. Many thanks to Merry Johnson, Paul Marmora, Mary Moline, Alis Schmitt and Kellie Staples who decorated tables with some very lovely decorations. It was so nice to be together and chat with friends old and new. A very fun fellowship indeed. And the food....!!!

### **Community Service Projects:**

**April 19<sup>th</sup> - Children’s Marigold Giveaway** at Midtown Mall Spring Garden Show, 9am to 4pm. We offered marigolds to plant to all children attending the show and provided instructions on how to care for them once home. We also offered some plants and limited craft items for sale.

**May 8<sup>th</sup> -** A small, but dedicated and efficient group of hardy wildflowers met at the **Verna Pratt Wildflower Trail** at the Alaska Botanical Garden to the get area ready for the Mother’s Day opening of ABG.

**May 17<sup>th</sup> - Annual Cleanup at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center.** Lots of weeds, but the depredations of the voles were at a minimum this year. The nub the voles left of the Douglas maple has even sprouted some tiny new branches. The arctic birch has grown quite large and is becoming windswept.

**May 31<sup>st</sup> - Annual Plant Sale.** Thanks again to the Hinchey family for the generous use of their facility at 1300 W Benson. It is an ideal location for a plant sale. Although the day started with rain, many helping hands set up the sale in record time. The customers appreciated the presence of the Cooperative Extension booth. The tools were a positive addition, although it was not a huge presentation. Alaska Rock Garden Society was thankful to sell a lot of the hard goods they had been donated, and the shoppers were delighted by the enormous selection of plants that were available. Of course, we all had loads of fun working together, greeting and helping customers, and enjoying a lovely day focused on plants and gardening.

**WGCA Grant** - Annually offers a variety of grant opportunities. With a goal to encourage botanical education, fund scholarly studies, scientific research projects or work in the area of Horticulture, Floriculture, Landscape Design, Forestry, Botany, Agronomy, Plant Pathology, and/or allied subject. In 2025 unfortunately we did not have any applicants.



**Alaska State Fair** – We sponsor the following Special Awards:

**Junior Zucchini Contest** – To promote the study of horticulture the Club sponsors a Zucchini-growing contest for children ages 6-12 and 13-17. This year the awards totaled \$90.

**Perennial/Biennial Division Champion** – the club gave two Special Awards in the Flowers Department Division Champion Perennial/Biennial entries for a total of \$50.

### **Club Workshops & Tours:**

**Saturday, June 14<sup>th</sup> – “Creating a Garden Trellis with Willow”** Wildflowers gathered at member/instructor Carol Norquist’s home for a workshop to learn the artful skill of constructing an easy to make Willow Trellis for our gardens. The biggest hurdle of the day was – making sure our finished project would fit inside our vehicles! After choosing our wood pieces, sawing them to the perfect size, figuring out how the drills worked, the creativity began and a fun time was had by all.

**July 10<sup>th</sup> – “Summer Garden Tours”** Wildflowers had the pleasure of touring 3 gardens: It is always extremely interesting to see what people have done with the space available to them and to hear of their tribulations and successes.

**Paul Marmora’s.** Paul embraces the natural look (including many native plants [aka weeds]). Paul’s theory is that the more abundant the flora in the garden, the less obvious are the weeds. He explained a bit about his rock garden, the evolution of the plantings from an 8-foot square to a flowing expanse, showed some very old plants (mock orange, Clematis tangutica, Rosa glauca, Douglas maple and Scarlet Hawthorne) and ended on his deck with the bonsai.

**Downtown Soup Kitchen**, where member John Horstkoetter has truly made a miraculous rooftop garden. It was a delight to hear John talk so enthusiastically about the challenges, evolution and successes of the garden. The way he has been able to maximize space usage is truly awe-inspiring. John also detailed the successes of the job training program brought about by having the vegetables grown on site and teaching people the best way to utilize them in cooking for a healthier and productive lifestyle.

We ended the pleasant afternoon at the home of **Stan and Kellie Staples**, where Stan grilled for us and where we enjoyed a potluck lunch. Afterward, we toured the lovely gardens and heard the stories of how the house was brought to its current beauty by the hard work of the family.

**July 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> – “Flower Plate Art Workshop”** Club members had a workshop building flowers from plates, bowls, beads and other baubles under the guidance of Jean Krause of the Valley Art Alliance. Jean was very knowledgeable about the mechanics of the craft and was an absolute expert at encouraging participants to allow their creative juices free reign. Six people participated in the workshop, held in the spacious garage at the Staples’ home in Eagle River. Day one was putting the sets together, and letting the glue dry for 24 hours, day two was used to mount the chosen backing for the final setting. Some folks opted to place their flowers on stakes of various kinds; some chose to hang them on walls.

**August 14<sup>th</sup> – “Beautiful Bouquets of Garden Bounty”** Dennis and Annie Ronsse opened up their home and gardens to our club members to create flower bouquets from the bounty of their gardens. We had a fun time perusing what was growing and choosing flowers to make a couple of bouquets to bring home or give away to friends. Many thanks to Dennis and Annie for their generosity!

**December 4<sup>th</sup> –** We gathered at **Dimond Greenhouses** for our annual workshop. The club attendance pre-registration was low, so we invited members of the Anchorage Garden Club to join us if they wished. Many thanks to the ever-entertaining Darryl Leiser and his son Matt, who is continuing the family tradition.

### December 2025 Treasurer Reports

#### Nuvision Federal Credit Union

Business Savings	\$8,001.15
Business Checking	\$6,929.06
CD-9 month (matures 5/1/26) 5.37%	\$5,114.76
<b>Balance 12/31/25</b>	<b>\$20,044.97</b>

**Morgan Stanley Balance 12/31/25** **\$58,717.37**

**Total Funds 12/31/25** **\$78,762.34**



## Upcoming Meetings, Projects, & Workshops

**February 12 – “Meet and Greet Dr. Richard Benfield” with a potluck brunch!**

**Presented by: Board of Directors / Members Only Event**

10:30am-12:00pm at Central Lutheran Church followed by Annual Business Meeting.

**February 12\* – “Around the World in 80 Gardens”**

**Presenter: Dr. Richard Benfield    \*Sign-Up Genius Registration required**

5:30-7:30 at the BP Energy Center, 1041 Energy Court, Anchorage

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C45AFAF2EA6F9C70-61298917-aspecial>

**February 15-21 – Time to sow seeds for the “Children’s Marigold Giveaway” at the Midtown Mall Spring Garden Show on April 18.** Please let us know if you are sowing & growing by sending an email to [akwildflowers@gmail.com](mailto:akwildflowers@gmail.com)

**March 12 – “Crafting Round Tables”**

**Presenters: WGCA Members**

10:30am-12:00pm at Central Lutheran Church

## **Announcements**

The **2026 Yearbook/Directory** were mailed out January 7, so keep your eyes peeled for them in your mailboxes soon! If you have not received your yearbook by January 20th, please let us know at [akwildflowers@gmail.com](mailto:akwildflowers@gmail.com)

### **WGCA 2026 Grants – This is the last month for applications to be submitted!**

Please share this opportunity and web link with those you know who may be interested in applying. Information and the application can be found using the following link to our website. <https://wildflowergardenclub.org/wgca-grant-application.pdf>

The goal of the **Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska** Grants Program is to encourage botanical education by funding scholarly studies, scientific research projects, or work in the areas of Horticulture, Floriculture, Landscape Design, Forestry, Botany, Agronomy, Plant Pathology and/or allied subjects.

- Individuals, Schools and Non-Profit entities engaged in work in the above listed fields may apply for grant funding until the **deadline of January 31, 2026.**
- Organizations must have 501(c)(3) status.
- All applicants must be based in the State of Alaska.



### **Committee Positions Open – Contact Kathy Liska for more information**

Publicity

Yearbook Chairperson – 2027

Social Media – Facebook & Instagram – Even just some help to keep WGCA visible online.  
(Don't be shy or intimidated, it isn't brain surgery ... everything is set up and ready to go!)

## **Member Share**

Give these links look from **'Empress of the Dirt'**

[How To Cold Stratify Seeds \(Including Fridge Stratification Method\)](#)

[How To Scarify Seeds Before Sowing For Better Germination Rates](#)

### **Wildflower's Motto ... Show, Share and Tell!**

The purpose of the Member's Corner section is to inspire and encourage each other.

Submit items: articles, garden ideas, photos, recipes, etc. for our newsletter by the last day of each month. Send to Kathy Liska at [akliska@aol.com](mailto:akliska@aol.com) or Paul Marmora at [pmarmora@aol.com](mailto:pmarmora@aol.com)

