Jul-Sep 2026

President's Patch

By President Jenny Weaver, photos by the author

Master Gardeners Transform Our Rebarchek Farm Plot

Thanks to our dedicated MMGA members, the Rebarchek 1/8-acre plot has undergone a major evolution. Although David Thompson diligently plowed a large U-shaped bed last summer, it sat untended, and weeds reached waist height. We began this past spring by covering the previously plowed area with road fabric until the soil was dry enough to work. And work we did! The plots were defined by placing cants from the original milking barn along the outer edges. Then every section needed major attention to loosen soil and pull rampant weeds.

Volunteers included Jana Gooch, Rhonda Schneider, Kristen Buchta, David Thompson, and the Weaver Family. We purchased compost from the Valley Recycling Center, and after screening, added it to several raised beds. Rhonda Schneider and family installed the first 8-foot bed using dimensional lumber with a filling of VRC compost.

Jana Gooch claimed a corner, and with Jerry, installed a raised bed using corner bricks. After nurturing bare-root Seascape strawberries at home, she transplanted them to the new bed. They grew big and tasty!

Kristen Buchta, with husband Steve, built a stepped herb bed. In a raised bed frame donated by Rebarchek, she began a bed featuring the 3 Sisters: corn, beans, and squash. And with help from our members on Rebarchek workday, she installed a cinderblock bed, eventually planted with a variety of herbs. Kristen later filled the cinderblock cavities with colored recycled glass from Valley Recycling.

Continued on page 5.

Inside This Issue

President's Patch	1, 5-6
Somewhere in Thyme	2
MMGA Special Awards, ASF Entries	3
September Meeting Information	3
August 1 Garden Tours Recap	4
Allison's Rhubarb Cider Recipe	6
Photos of Spring/Summer Activities	7-11
Garden Links	12
Contacts	13
Calendar of Events	13

Regular Meetings

First Monday of the Month

Next meeting

Sep 14th, 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

Rebarchek Farm, Sojdin Barn, East Rebarchek Road, Palmer, Alaska

AGENDA

Guest Speaker: Interactive discussion with Jodie Anderson, Director, Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension (IANRE)

Business Meeting follows with a slide presentation of summer MMGA spring and summer activities

SOMEWHERE IN THYME

WAYBACK ARTICLES FROM PAST MMGA

PEASANT'S PERSPECTIVE, BY CURT MUELLER, MASTER GARDENER
Photo by Curt Mueller. Published in the September 2015 newsletter.

Marge and the peasant have been growing a variety of tasty and healthful vegetables for a good many years. During that time, we have made changes to our methods in an effort to improve yields and quality and to extend the season of productivity.

One of our favorites is bush beans. Our Alaska climate is not always favorable for this endeavor, although this summer has been an exception. Beans like warmth, plenty of sunshine, and timely but not excessive moisture. As often as not we have had cool, wet summers with much overcast, and growing beans is marginal. We can expect more of those years, even though our earth is warming. The peasant would like to tell you about the various methods we have developed over the years that have resulted in a consistent harvest.

Our vegetable gardening began with growing on a flat surface and over time it evolved into growing everything in raised beds. There are advantages to this system for most vegetables and for the gardeners as well. For beans it provides better soil drainage and allows better air circulation around the plants. If planted near the outer edges of the bed this is especially so. There is also less contact with the soil.

Provider has been consistently good as a seed variety. Pre-sprouting the seed has become the norm, giving us an even stand and earlier start to allow the plants to develop. Along with this came covering the raised bed with clear plastic to raise the soil temperature. The seeds are sown and the plastic is slit directly above the seed-row at that time. The slits are interrupted about every foot and a half and an uncut part of about two inches left to help hold the plastic in place. Then cuts about three inches deep are made at right angles to the first slits and on both sides. These cuts are about an inch apart. This creates little flaps that lie on the soil until the seedlings emerge.

The seedlings push the flaps up on their own with no help required by the gardener. We use six-mil plastic that is good for two or three seasons. It is removed in the fall.

There is very little weeding required during the growing season. The bed is thoroughly weeded before planting, and the plastic cover helps hold down weeds. Any large weeds that grow close to the beans can be removed by carefully reaching through the slits in the plastic. Once the beans are well grown they will shade the whole area of the bed and weeds are no longer a factor. The quarter inch drip hose which waters the beans is placed next to the rows before covering. A turn of a valve does the watering. Moisture level can be monitored by feeling the soil through the slits.

Initially we grew three rows in a 54-inch-wide bed. The beans were too crowded and picking difficult, so we went to two rows close to the outsides of the bed. This system gave us a good crop yield most years, but summers with a lot of inclement weather were still causing problems, thus another change was made.

A light framework of 2x2s and 1x2s was constructed and covered with 6 mil plastic. The sides could be raised at varying heights and openings were left at each end for air circulation. Now the rain could be kept off the plants and the sides lowered to contain the heat. On a sunny day, the interior temperature could reach 100 degrees, and the sides rose enough to keep the temperature within a satisfactory range. It worked quite well but the plastic on top sagged and trapped rain, requiring pushing the plastic up to dump the water and keep the plastic from bursting and dumping the water on the beans.

After using that setup for a couple of years we purchased some corrugated greenhouse covering to eliminate the sagging. That rigid material is removed and stored over winter so as to keep snow from collapsing the structure. The twelve-by-four-and-half-foot bed provides us with beans for the summer table and some for the freezer and dilly beans.

It's not perfect, but it does work quite well.
Thanks, folks.

Did you know that the Mat-Su Master Gardeners sponsors several special awards for both entries in the Alaska State Fair Crops and Flowers Department?? The 2026 theme is "90 Years with You"

Crops Department

·Veg Heads	Division 16, Class 01, Junior (ages 6-12), first place	$ 50
·Veg Heads	Division 16, Class 02, Junior (ages 13-17), first place	$ 50
·Veg Heads	Division 16, Class 03, Open, first place	$ 50
·Veg Heads	Division 16, Class 04, Classroom, Elementary only, first place	$100

Flowers Department

·Trees & Shrubs	Division 5 Champion	$ 50
·Collections	Division 10 Champion	$ 50
·Artistic Design	Division 13, Class 4, Fair theme design, first place winner	$ 50

Crops & Flowers Exhibit Entry Days:
1st Entry: Tuesday, August 25, Noon – 8 pm
2nd Entry: Tuesday, September 1, Noon – 8 pm

Information on entries and how to enter: https://www.alaskastatefair.org/site/exhibits/

Download the exhibitors guide for more information on each department:
https://www.alaskastatefair.org/site/exhibits/

SEPTEMBER MEETING BUMPS TO SECOND MONDAY 9/14 by Jenny Weaver

September marks our first official business meeting since May! However, since September 7th is Labor Day, we will meet instead on Monday, September 14, at 7 pm in the Rebarchek Barn. Join us for an interactive discussion with Jodie Anderson, Director extraordinaire of the Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension (IANRE) which is home to the Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service in Palmer.

After Jodie provides a recap of the weather conditions from the fall of 2025, through the 2026 spring and summer, she will lead us through a group discussion on how the weather affected our growing season, plant health, and harvest. Be prepared to share what happened in your gardens. What was seriously late in showing up? What perennials, shrubs, and trees failed to return at all or failed to produce fruit? How was your garden affected by extremes of this gardening season? What can we do to help moderate weather extremes in the future?

As part of our business meeting, we will view a slideshow of our successful summer activities, starting with the Annual Plant Sale (May 30), Rebarchek Workday (June 6), Planting the Veterans and Pioneers Home (June 8), Arts in the Garden (July 18), and multiple Garden Tours (June 20 and August 1). If you have pictures to share please, send them to me at <jweaver@mtaonline.net>.

Hope to see you on the 14th!

August 1st Garden Tours Recap
By Jenny Weaver

Our August 1st Garden Tours were absolutely fantastic! We joined forces with the Valley Garden Club and featured six gardens: three in the morning, three in the afternoon, with a pitstop at Rebarchek midday. We simply couldn't have asked for better weather—the sun shone brightly all day!

Our host gardeners were so welcoming and their gardens were beautiful—each one unique and each one with special features to admire.

The morning began with three great gardens. Ann Eagerton's urban backyard Spirit Garden is complete with a sweet greenhouse, 5-gallon buckets of healthy corn, and lots of serendipity. Dawn and Paul Wolski's extensive gardens are on the way to Butte. Wolski's features lawns, planters, baskets, tubs, veggies, a greenhouse, berries, and bees! Not to mention white fireweed and white bleeding hearts. (Wait! What???). Such a treat, and Dawn is so knowledgeable! And last but not least, David and Kristy Thompson's outrageous Palmer Fishhook expanse including a bountiful greenhouse, flowers throughout, and rows and rows of healthy veggies. Does anybody need a cabbage??

The pit-stop at Rebarchek went beyond my expectations! As folks arrived, some immediately checked out our progress on the 1/8-acre plot, while others hightailed it to the barn to take five and enjoy a snack, a drink, and chat with friends. So many folks stopped by, the parking lot was full! So many new and familiar faces joined some MMGA members I had not previously met, and lots of folks from the Valley Garden Club. In spite of visiting 3 great gardens that morning, people still had positive support and comments regarding Rebarchek. Our individually tended plots had really started to take off, the narrative signs provided interesting details of each bed, and MMGA members took note of the transformation of our presence there. Thank you all so much for your enthusiasm for our Rebarchek project!

The afternoon also offered three wonderful gardens to visit. Kristina Tornqvist's house on the hill, with a beautifully terraced front, lovely flower baskets, huge tubs and planters, and a wealth of color and whimsical garden art, wowed visitors. Dorte Mobley's midtown home boasts a lovely mix of perennials with an overflowing array of pots and tubs. Everywhere you look is something to "ooooh" and "aaaah" at, with lots of different groupings and fun garden art spread throughout.

Joanne Collins tends a lovely, manicured estate with giant delphiniums and ligularia, overflowing nasturtiums, and not one, but two greenhouses packed with growing goodies. It was a delight to just stop for moment and sit at her dining table within the larger greenhouse (yes, it had a dining room table that seats six!). We enjoyed iced tea and white wine while chatting with MMGA members and newly met friends!

Thanks to Kristina Tornqvist for her help organizing this event! Thanks to Ann, Dawn and Paul, David, and Kristy, Dorte, Kristina, and Joanne for sharing their wonderful gardens with us. Thanks to Todd and Pearl for setting up the Rebarchek barn for the pit shop, helping make snacks and drinks, and doing clean up. And thanks so much to everyone who attended and shared their Saturday, their complements, and kind comments with us!

Continued from page 1.

David Thompson used his bed to demonstrate various trellis configurations. Emphasis was on the trellises and utilizing materials from around his home/farm.

With the donation of plants from Deb Blaylock, the Weavers planted a kale forest. It's going gaga. We also planted an annual flower bed with starts of rudbeckia, calendula, and snapdragons. Our transplanted strawberry bed finishes the East corner of the back row. A cover crop of Hazlet rye fills an 8' plot on the East side. Seeds were donated by Chelsea San Roman, MMGA member and farm and research technician in the Palmer Extension office. Next is a perennial bed loaded with flowers including Maltese cross and allium donated by Kristina Tornqvist. Delphiniums, phlox, bachelor buttons, pansies, yarrow, and pasque flower are growing strong there. Next up is the sunflower bed, with many plants provided by MMGA members. A pea arch provides a little break in the east side and is filled with pods ripe to harvest right now.

Rhonda Schneider returned from a trip to the lower 48 and promptly planted her original bed. It has gone bonkers ever since, loaded with broccoli and cauliflower, peas, and petunias. In addition, Rhonda solicited donations from Fred Meyer and planted the two remaining, empty, long beds with an assortment of broccoli, Brussel sprouts, and tomatoes. As the season progresses these beds are going strong.

Jana and the Weavers utilized a purchased aluminum planter from Amazon to install a brassica bed. Again, with an assist from Deb Blaylock, we planted kohlrabi, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. Marigolds were added to provide color and bug protection. Radishes were seeded later.

The solid high bed, formerly planted with a Maltese cross perennial, was supplemented with donated plants from Rebarchek and a blast of nasturtiums planted by Pearl and me. We also managed to fill a portion of the L-shaped high bed with lettuce transplants, and seeded spinach, lettuce, radishes, and onion bulbs.

Only one pergola perennial survived the winter—a lone Arctic kiwi. Other perennials finally took hold later this summer, including two clematis and two hops. Kristen Buchta's zinnias took off, and Rebarchek sweet peas provide lovely color and that magnificent smell to this focal point.
The long-lasting in-ground perennial bed was slow to emerge but grew strong, filled with a couple Columbine, Alaska Iris, trollius, and Blaylock's comfrey. This bed could use some creative trellising next summer.

Continued on page 6.

Continued from page 5.

Rebarchek requires quite a bit of maintenance. Todd continues to mow and weed whack weekly. Watering is an ongoing job, especially when the wind blows and the sun shines. Weeding is constant, especially in the newer beds. One more good weeding and most beds will be ready to cover/mulch for winter.

The middle bed, planted by Michael Kircher last summer, really blossomed with constant TLC of weeding and watering. The rhodiola was absolutely beautiful. The edelweiss came on late but thrived. The iris grew and briefly blossomed. Kircher's Welsh onions thrive in their raised bed.

Our invite for folks to visit Rebarchek during the August 1st Garden Tours was very well attended. Educational signs helped visitors learn how and what was built and what plants were added. Lunch was served in the barn—"thank yous" were aplenty. It was so fun to share our success here!

Yet to transpire is the installation of Steve Brown's memorial plaque, along with a more stable means to anchor the bench purchased through Sue Wallin's efforts.

Fall plans include eventually closing down the plot for the winter using landscape fabric on annual beds and mulching perennials. This fall, I would love to add a peony bed, and plant some bulbs (crocus, daffodils, tulips, narcissus), as well as install a garlic bed. Any and all donations are welcome!

If you have an opportunity to stop by Rebarchek, please do! There is a picnic table available to use for lunch or a snack, and a nice bench to sit for a moment and chat with a fellow visitor. Come by to enjoy the view…or weed or water the communal beds!

Last Monday afternoon, Greg Kalal stopped by as I re-staked some sunflowers. It was great to see Greg (who unfortunately was flooded out from his farm) on his way home to Anchorage. Puppy dog Annie enjoyed romping through the area while we chatted.

October 10 is the official Harvest Day at Rebarchek. We will participate in that event - harvest some of our beds and wrap some up for winter. Join us if you can!. Bring your hand tools, gloves, a bucket for weeds, and something to take home some goodies.

Thanks to all the folks who helped make this transformation possible—mostly our members who claimed a bed (or two or three), and especially Todd and Pearl Weaver, my two partners in crime. All the donations of plants were appreciated, as well as those folks who came by to weed regularly. We see you, Eva Cohnen-Brown and Leslie Scott! Thanks to those who helped on our June 6th workday and/or stopped by during the Garden Tours.

Additional thanks to LaMarr Anderson who coordinates Rebarchek activities and provided all kinds of support both in supplies and equipment, as well constant moral support. Also, thanks to Jeff Smeenk of the Palmer Water and Soil Conservation District for advice, plants, and equipment.

We battled weeds, wind, and mischievous ravens this season. But next summer we won't need to weed, or broad fork (as much) and our season should have an easier start. Won't you join us in this endeavor? Can you design a plot at Rebarchek? Could you partner with someone and tag team the maintenance of a bed? Please consider donating time, plants, or ideas for our ongoing Rebarchek presence. We've only just begun!

Allison's Rhubarb Cider – from Dawn Wolski

6 cups rhubarb and 6 cups water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain using food mill or cone strainer into a large bowl to just have the juice.

Add ½ C. dehydrated cane sugar (from Wholy Living), stir to dissolve, and pour cider into glass mason jar. If using regular white cane sugar, sweeten to taste. Delicious hot or cold.

Note...I don't add ice cubes. I keep it cold in the fridge. Ice cubes water it down.

Photos From Our Spring and Summer Events

Photo credits to Eva Cohnen-Brown, Rebecca Emerson, Dawn Wolski, Kristina Tornqvist, & Jana Gooch

Due to the volume of photos, there won't be any individual photo captions or credits. Thanks for your understanding.

2026 Annual Plant Sale – behind the scenes with the unsung heroes.

Garden Tour One

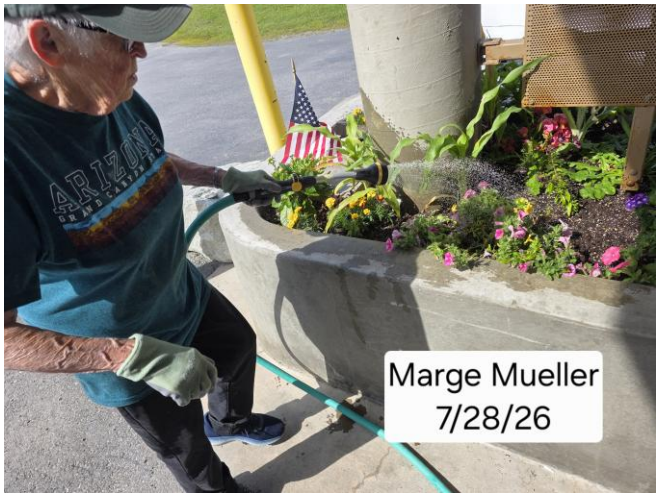
Wednesday, June 24th, Sutton Area Gardens.

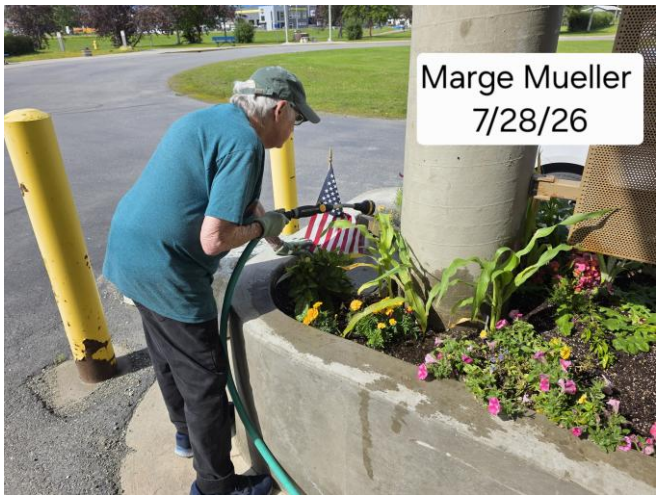
Many thanks to:

Sandy Belk, Laurel Flynn, Sutton Library, and Becky Myrvold

Rebarchek MMGA Workday, June 6th

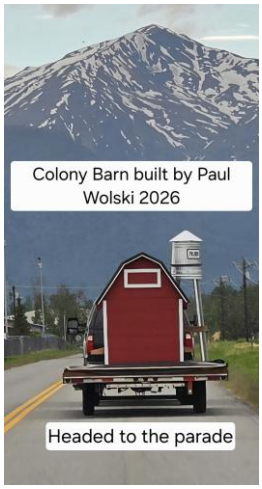
The Palmer Veterans and Pioneer Home planting was June 8th. No one sent any photos of the planting. Dawn Wolski sent some photos of her Mom, Marge Mueller, showing off her good form on watering and caring for the flower bed at the front door of the Home.





June 13th Colony Days Parade - "Rooted in Community"

Many thanks to the Mueller clan for creating this beautiful float. The MMGA won 1st place for our float category.



July 18th, Palmer Arts in the Garden.

August 1st Garden Tour, Palmer Area. Many thanks to: Ann Eagerton, Dawn & Paul Wolski, David Thompson, Kristina Tornqvist, Dorte Mobley, and Joanne Collins. Our Rebarchek plot was a waystation for a mid-day break.

Garden Links (updated March 2024)

Alaska AgrAbility Program **New Mar 2024**
https://www.uaf.edu/ces/agriculture/agrability/index.php

Alaska Botanical Garden
http://www.alaskabg.org/

Alaska Center for Conservation Science
http://aknhp.uaa.alaska.edu/botany/

Alaska Community Forestry
https://forestry.alaska.gov/community/index

Arbor Day Foundation
www.arborday.org

Alaska Division of Agriculture
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/

Alaska Garden Clubs
http://www.alaskagardenclubs.org

Alaska Grown
http://www.buyalaskagrown.com/

Alaska Master Gardeners Association, Anchorage
http://alaskamastergardeners.org/

Alaska Native Plant Society
http://www.aknps.org/

Alaska Non-Native Species List
https://accs.uaa.alaska.edu/invasive-species/non-native-plant-species-list/

Alaska Orchid Society
http://www.akorchid.org/

Alaska Peony Society
https://www.alaskapeonysociety.com/

Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association
http://www.apfga.org/

Alaska Plant Materials Center
http://plants.alaska.gov/

Alaska Rhodiola
https://www.akroseroot.com /

Alaska Rock Garden Society
http://www.akrockgardensociety.org/

Flora of North America
http://floranorthamerica.org/

Good Earth Garden School
https://www.goodearthgardenschool.com/

Georgeson Botanical Garden
https://georgesonbotanicalgarden.org/

iNaturalist ***New May 2024***
https://www.inaturalist.org/

Integrated Pest Management Program
http://www.uaf.edu/ces/ipm/

IPM Alaska Pest Reporter
https://plw.man.mybluehost.me/

Junior Master Gardener
http://www.jmgkids.us/

Landscape Plants for Alaska
https://visionplusapps.com/alaska-plants/

Mat-Su Borough Rain Garden Program
http://www.matsugov.us/environment/raingardens

Mat-Su Master Gardener Website
www.matsumastergardeners.com

Master Gardener Research Link (Extension)
https://extension.org/search/

Master Gardeners of the Tanana Valley
https://fairbanksmastergardeners.wordpress.com/

Mat-Su/Copper River Cooperative Extension Service
https://www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/matsu/

Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Services
https://www.uaf.edu/afes/places/palmer/

National AgrAbility Program **New Mar 2024**
http://www.agrability.org/

Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District
http://palmersoilandwater.org/

Society of American Foresters, Cook Inlet Chapter
https://forestry.org/cook-inlet-seedling-sale/

South-Central Alaska Beekeepers Assoc.
http://www.sababeekeepers.com/

Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners Association
http://seak-mastergardeners.org/index.html

Sustainable Agriculture – UAF
https://www.uaf.edu/ces/agriculture/sare/

UAF Cooperative Extension Service
https://www.uaf.edu/ces/

UAF Cooperative Extension Service Publications
http://www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/

UAF CES Citizen Pest Monitoring Portal
https://pestreporter.alaska.edu/

UAF Herbarium
http://www.uaf.edu/museum/collections/herb/

UAF Alaska Master Gardener Program
https://www.uaf.edu/ces/garden/mastergardeners/

University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program
www.fruit.usask.ca

USDA/NRCS Plant Database
https://plants.usda.gov/home

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska
https://wildflowergardenclub.org/

BOARD OF DIRECTOR CONTACT INFO

President:	**Jenny Weaver**	**907-982-5446**
Vice President:	**Kristin Buchta**	**907-350-4429**
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Member at Large:	**Deb Blaylock**	**907-746-6045**

If you have gardening news, photos, or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please send to the MMGA email.

Website: www.matsumastergardeners.com/
Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEP 2026 AND BEYOND

Aug 21 – Sep 7, Palmer, Alaska State Fair, "90 years with You"
Sep 14, Palmer, Regular Meeting, Jodie Anderson, Interactive Discussion
Oct 5, Palmer, Regular Meeting, TBD
Oct 10, Palmer, Rebarchek Harvest Day
Oct 27-29, Juneau, Alaska Invasive Species Workshop
Nov 2, Palmer, Annual Meeting, TBD
Nov 12-14, Anchorage, Alaska Agriculture Conference, **https://akagconference.com/**
Dec TBD, Holiday Party

2027

Apr 30 – May 2, Wasilla, 2027 State Master Gardener Conference

Don't forget to check out the photos tab on our webpage! It is periodically updated with photos from activities our Association participates in.
https://www.matsumastergardeners.com/photos.html

Club Membership

Each membership year runs from January to December. Annual individual memberships are $15, and family memberships are $20. Family memberships are only for family members living in the same household. The deadline to join is **March 2, 2026**, to be listed in the annual membership directory.
Join or renew online.

Thank you!

How and What to Submit for the Monthly Newsletter

Your submissions are appreciated and make our newsletter what it is – so do not be shy about submitting items for publication.
However, there are a few rules which we all must pay attention to:

Articles, stories, poetry, upcoming events, and pictures (garden-related) are needed for inclusion in the newsletter. Please submit pictures in JPEG format and other items in Word format with no special formatting other than paragraphs. When submitting pictures, please provide a brief caption or explanation as to who or what is in the picture.

If you are not the author or photographer, please ensure you have permission of the author or photographer to use their material in the newsletter. The newsletter publisher is not responsible for obtaining this for you.

Please do not provide magazine articles or pictures from the internet unless they are public domain items.

Deadline for submission of articles and info: 20th day of each month ~~ Thank you~~

Jul/Aug/Sep 2026

Like us on Facebook

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